‘He is a gentleman. I am a gentleman’s daughter. So far we are equal’: Gender Performance in Twenty-First Century Adaptations of Jane Austen’s *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*

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Abstract

The core focus of this thesis is gender performance in two of Jane Austen's novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma,* and twenty-first-century adaptations of these novels. The thesis revolves around six key texts: Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice,* its 2005 film adaptation of the same name directed by Joe Wright, and the transmedia modernisation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries;* as well as Austen's novel *Emma,* its 2020 film adaptation of the same name directed by Autumn de Wilde, and the transmedia web series, *Emma Approved.* There have undoubtedly been shifts in gender performance over the two hundred years since Austen published her novels, but these are not always reflected in the adaptations. In part this is due to the surprisingly progressive nature of some of Austen's meditations on gender, with Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice* presenting as a pre-feminist and George Knightley from *Emma* performing as a pre-feminist man. These aspects of gender performance are extended by Keira Knightley's portrayal of Elizabeth Bennet in Wright's film, which reframes the character as a Romantic feminist, and Johnny Flynn's performance of Mr. Knightley as a hero positioned under the female gaze in de Wilde's film.

Yet, the thesis also reveals that Austen's feminist precursors are not always developed in contemporary adaptations. Indeed, Lizzie Bennet in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a postfeminist who is far from being an autonomous twenty-first century woman and is dependent on family and male suitors to provide her with opportunities. Likewise, the opportunity to reimagine Austen's characters in a twenty-first-century gender context is also ignored in some adaptations, particularly the transmedia web series, with Emma in *Emma Approved* continuing to endorse patriarchal structures in the same way that she does in Austen's original novel. The dandyism of Frank Churchill in Austen's *Emma* is also undercut in *Emma Approved* through a performance of heteronormativity that sidelines the queer potential initiated by previous adaptations, such as the 1995 film *Clueless*. Most striking is the stagnant

gender performance of Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* who remains the embodiment of hegemonic gentry masculinity in both the film and the web series. This thesis reveals that the lack of change in gender performance in some contemporary Austen adaptations demonstrates the persistence of hegemonic masculinity in the twenty-first century, while postfeminist performances of gender at times seem regressive.

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Lastly, I would be remiss not to mention my family and friends, whose belief in me has kept my spirits high during this process. I would particularly like to thank my sister for providing me with entertainment and reminding me to eat more than toast and coffee as I embarked on this project at odd hours.

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Introduction

Like some other twenty-first-century Janeites, I found *Pride and Prejudice* as an adaptation before I was introduced to the original text. However, instead of Colin Firth and his wet white shirt in the 1995 BBC television adaptation, my introduction was Keira Knightley in a period dress gallivanting around the English countryside. As a child, when I first watched Joe Wright's film, I had no notion of what a feminist was, but I thought Knightley's Elizabeth Bennet was a woman I could take inspiration from. And then she went and asked her father for permission to marry Matthew Macfadyen's Mr. Darcy.

I refused to read *Pride and Prejudice* after that. How could I read it, knowing that this wonderfully inspirational character would throw away a happy life with her family to marry someone awful because he was rich and had a nice house? It was not until I was having a movie night with my friends a few years later that I reconsidered. Along with other period drama films, Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* was on the night's agenda, only because we did not have time for the six-hour BBC adaptation. My friends spent most of the viewing complaining that Macfadyen was not as good as Firth.

In the BBC television series adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* Firth as Mr. Darcy sports a wet white shirt in once scene, and this is the most enticing scene of a Jane Austen adaptation.[1] The six-hour long mini-series is responsible for luring many viewers into the wider world of Austen, and some fans have even created a rap dedicated to Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy.[2] After watching the television show, audiences all over the world went back to the original novel, and perhaps even beyond that text, to more of Austen's works and adaptations, becoming Janeites

[1] Claire Harman, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2009), p. 4.

[2] Sense and Spontaneity, *Dear Mr. Darcy*, online music video, YouTube, 5 May 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekVdhO7P4Nw> [accessed 7 September 2021].

in the process.[3] I am not one of those viewers. My first foray into the literary world of Austen did not entice me to read more. After I went to the library and picked up a copy of *Pride and Prejudice* that looked like it had never been taken off the shelf, I still did not get it. How could Elizabeth Bennet marry Mr. Darcy?

Now, a decade later, I have a better understanding of Elizabeth Bennet's choices, though as a citizen of the twenty-first century, I can only empathise. However, I still do not understand why society chooses to remember Colin Firth's Mr. Darcy as the ideal male figure over the feminist portrayals of Elizabeth Bennet, so cleverly performed by Keira Knightley in 2005 and by Jennifer Ehle in the BBC adaptation. It is not just I who thinks those performances deserve praise. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association both nominated Knightley for a Best Actress Oscar and Best Actress in a Motion Picture Musical/Comedy Golden Globe for her performance in *Pride and Prejudice*.[4] Ten years previously, Jennifer Ehle was awarded a BAFTA for her performance as Elizabeth.[5] Despite not receiving as much critical acclaim as his female counterpart,[6] modern audiences still choose to glorify Firth as the personification of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, a text now considered pre-feminist by some critics.[7] This global fascination with Firth as Mr. Darcy got me thinking: why does society celebrate an attractive man, when it could be celebrating the achievements of female actresses? Why are Ehle and Knightley not the people we remember

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[3] Deborah Yaffe, *Among the Janeites: A Journey Through the World of Jane Austen Fandom* (New York: Marine Books, 2013), pp. 71-72.

[4] Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 'The 78th Academy Awards: 2006', *Oscars* (2006) <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/2006>, [accessed 9 July 2021]; Hollywood Foreign Press Association, 'Winners & Nominees 2006', *Golden Globe Awards* (2006) <https://www.goldenglobes.com/winners-nominees/2006>, [accessed 9 July 2021].

[5] British Academy of Film and Television Arts, 'Television in 1996', *BAFTA* (1996) <http://awards.bafta.org/award/1996/television/> [accessed 9 July 2021].

[6] Colin Firth was nominated for a BAFTA but did not win. See British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

[7] Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (London: The Athalone Press, 1997), p.1, ProQuest Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=436635>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

as the figureheads of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations? Why is Austen's novel overshadowed by a wet shirt?

Inspired by the connections between Austen scholarship, adaptations of her novels, and discourse about gender representation, this thesis will examine the performance of gender in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* and interrogate whether this performance changes in twenty-first-century adaptations, reflecting societal shifts in gender norms. The results are somewhat surprising, revealing that while the depiction of Austen's male characters in recent films and web series remains remarkably constant, the female characters at times lose some of the feminist potential present in Austen's texts.

This introduction will firstly discuss scholarship on Jane Austen, most importantly, scholarship that focuses on gender and adaptation, as this is of particular importance to this thesis. As this thesis aims to analyse the impact of gender on how twenty-first-century filmmakers have adapted Jane Austen, it is important to discuss how Austen fits into these wider fields. Secondly, adaptation studies will be discussed, with a particular emphasis on transmedia adaptations, as they are central to the argument of this thesis. This introduction will end with an outline on the theory of gender and define and discuss key concepts that are of significance to this thesis, such as postfeminism, hegemonic gentry masculinity, and anti-feminism.

Austen Scholarship across Gender and Adaptation Studies

The field of Jane Austen scholarship is vast. Austen, according to Margaret Kirkham, is 'the first major woman novelist in English'.[8] Claire Harman also declares that Austen is now so much more than just an author: she is a 'global phenomenon'.[9] However, this was not always

[8] Kirkham, p. 1.
[9] Harman, p. 1.

the case. Austen struggled to get published initially, and even had to buy back *Northanger Abbey* from a publisher who had bought the rights for the novel, but had not yet published it.[10] Being an author during the nineteenth century was particularly fraught, especially for females; even Austen's brother, Henry Austen, tried to convince her readers that she 'wasn't a proper author, and never considered herself one' in his *Biographical Notice of the Author*, the frontispiece to the posthumously published *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*.[11] When Austen finally published *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811, at the age of thirty-six, it was mildly successful.[12] Her most financially successful novel (in terms of sales) published during her lifetime was *Emma*.[13] She died in 1817, at the age of forty-one, before she could see how successful her books 'By A Lady' would become.[14]

Austen's novels continue to appear on bestseller lists in book shops today.[15] As an author, she is recognised for her wit, irony, and her ability to gently critique the mores, customs, and affectations of her day. Austen uses the comedy of manners to satirise aspects of Regency society: from her subversion of the popular Gothic novel in *Northanger Abbey*, where the heroine Catherine Morland unlocks a cabinet expecting some terrible discovery and finds only 'a washing-bill';[16] to her critique of romantic sensibility in *Sense and Sensibility*, where she

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[10] Kirkham, pp. 102-103.

[11] Though, as Helena Kelly points outs in *Jane Austen, the Secret Radical* (New York: Knopf, 2017), this may have been because he was aware of 'how very unsympathetically female authors were treated', pp. 19-21.

[12] Harman, pp. 52-57.

[13] Harman, pp. 99.

[14] Christopher O'Brien, 'Jane Austen's Early Death in the Context of Austen Family Morality', *Persuasion: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line,* 38.1 (2017), <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/docview/2309520484?pq-origsite=primo> [accessed 12 August 2021].

[15] Whitcoulls, 'Top 100', *Whitcoulls* (2023), <https://www.whitcoulls.co.nz/recommends/top-100>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[16] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, (New York: Open Road Media, 2015), p. 226, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=1986602#> [accessed 12 August 2021].

uses duality to compare the dangers of sentimentality to the superiority of sense.[17] Austen's heroines also negotiate the complex world of nineteenth-century romance, with her novels deeply embedded in the marriage plot, which she both uses and interrogates. Her novels have been praised for highlighting the economic need of women during the nineteenth century to marry well, emphasising the importance of the marriage trope in nineteenth-century fiction.[18] During the nineteenth century, women without a husband were dependent on their closest male heir and were a marginalised group in society, though being unmarried was not necessarily a woman's choice and could be a mere coincidence of fate.[19] Austen's love stories showcase gender relations in the early nineteenth century, and her detailing of the lives of her heroines make for powerful insights to modern readers.

Since the first publication in 1811, Jane Austen's novels have met with some disparagement. While the first one hundred years of Austen criticism was mostly an appreciation of her work, John Jeaffreson noted in 1858 that her work was 'but little read, and even when read [will] gain few sincere admirers'.[20] Almost a year later, George Henry Lewes claimed that while she was a genius of sorts, Austen had not used her talent to her full potential.[21] Lewes maintained that Austen's novels had an 'absence of breadth,

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[17] Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, (New York: Open Road Media, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?pqorigsite=primo&docID=4353536>, [accessed 12 August 2021].

[18] Lisa O'Connell, *The Origins of the English Marriage Plot: Literature, Politics and Religion in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[19] Amy M. Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Oxford Scholarship Online, <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199270606.001.0001/acprof-9780199270606- chapter-1>, [accessed 16 August 2021].

[20] John Cordy Jeaffreson, *Novels and Novelists, From Elizabeth to Victoria, Vol. II* (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1858), p. 86, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/novelsandnoveli06jeafgoog/page/n8/mode/2up>, [accessed 18 August 2021].

[21] According to George Henry Lewes, Jane Austen could not be the highest type of genius, because she was not a man. See 'The Novels of Jane Austen', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 86 (1859), pp. 99-113, Hathi Trust Digital Library <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31210001790938&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021>, [accessed 16 August 2021].

picturesqueness, and passion' that made them inaccessible to uncultivated minds.[22] However, most of the criticism was overwhelmingly positive, Jeaffreson asserted that Austen's work would 'be much studied five hundred years hence by scholars anxious to obtain a true insight into the family life'.[23]

In the later twentieth century, feminist criticism of Jane Austen became a major field of study with the rise of second wave feminism. While there were many other critical approaches during the last quarter of the twentieth century, feminism was one of the most influential fields in Austen scholarship.[24] In 1975, Patricia Meyer Spacks claimed that Austen's heroines grew from adolescents to adults in her novels, and that their choice to marry was conscious.[25] This conscious decision was not made to find love and happiness in marriage, but instead a choice to take ownership of the self as a woman in a patriarchal society.[26] In contrast, Margaret Kirkham explores Austen as a revolutionary pre-feminist woman, who was 'often most radical, *as a feminist,* where she sounds most out-dated'.[27] Claudia Johnson endorses Kirkham's argument, and posits that not only were Jane Austen's novels feminist, they were also political novels, with the satire previously mentioned in *Northanger Abbey,* for example, 'reclaim[ing

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[22] Lewes, p. 107.
[23] Lewes, p.113.
[24] Examples of other criticisms from 1976-1990:
- Narratology, see: David Monaghan, *Jane Austen: Structure and Social Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1980); John Odmark, *An Understanding of Jane Austen's Novels: Character, Value and Ironic Perspective*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981); John Dussinger, *In the Pride of the Moment: Encounters in Jane Austen's World*, (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1990).
- New psychology, see: Bernard J. Paris, *Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels: A Psychological Approach*, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978).
- Sociological studies, see: (Richard Handler and Daniel Segal, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Culture: An Essay on the Narration of Social Realities,* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990).
- Marxism, see: Mary Evan, *Jane Austen and the State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1987); James Thomas, *Between Self and World: The Novels of Jane Austen* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1988).

[25] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination: A Literary and Psychological Investigation of Women's Writing,* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), p.115.
[26] Spacks, p. 121.
[27] Kirkham, p. 47, emphasis original.

gothic conventions] in distinctly political ways'.[28] The major work by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar demonstrates how Austen wrote to appear safe to men and conform to her society's patriarchal norms, while also demonstrating how dissatisfied she was with the current position of women.[29]

Twenty-first-century scholarship has mainly focused on the ongoing impact of Jane Austen's works. For example, Devoney Looser examines how society's idea of Jane Austen as an old maid has changed perceptions of her as an author, as well as shifting observations on what Austen's feminist sensibilities might have been.[30] Claire Harman has explored in depth Jane Austen's rise from anonymous author in the nineteenth century to cultural phenomenon in the twenty-first century. Joanne Wilkes goes further than Harman by collating important critical reviews on Jane Austen's novels from a female perspective. Wilkes showcases how a female critic reviewing a female-authored novel does not always make the most unbiased analysis. Wilkes argues that some claims of critics could perhaps reflect their own societal beliefs in their analysis, rather than Austen's own.[31]

Austen's novels have been adapted numerous times since the invention of moving pictures in the early twentieth century. The Jane Austen Society of North America, or JASNA, have listed all the Austen adaptations they know of on their website.[32] These include: ten adaptations not directly from the novels, like *Death Comes to Pemberley* and *Becoming Jane*; seven *Sense and Sensibility* adaptations; four for *Persuasion;* three for *Mansfield Park;* and two for

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[28] Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 34.

[29] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth- Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020), JSTOR Books <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/j.ctvxkn74x.1?refreqid=excelsior%3A371a0774b70fe96503babb2c1aa9294a&seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents>, [accessed 20 August 2021].

[30] Devoney Looser, *Women Writers and Old Age in Great Britain, 1750-1850* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008).

[31] Joanne Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain: the Critical Reception of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010).

[32] JASNA, 'Austen on Screen', *Jane Austen Society of North America* (2023), <https://jasna.org/austen/screen/>, [accessed 19 June 2023].

Northanger Abbey. The two novels and their respective adaptations that this thesis will focus on, *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice,* are the two Austen works that have been adapted the most: *Emma* a total of eight times, and *Pride and Prejudice* a total of ten. *Pride and Prejudice* also boasts the oldest adaptation, with the first film, starring Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier, released in 1940.[33] Alongside JASNA, there is other scholarship on Austen on the screen, including Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield's *Jane Austen in Hollywood;*[34] Deborah Cartmell's *Screen Adaptations: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Close Study of the Relationship between Text and Film;*[35] and John Wiltshire's *Recreating Jane Austen.*[36] These scholars, and their theories, play a foundational role in Austen adaptation studies.

The work done by early critics is still influencing Austen scholarship today. While there are disagreements over whether Austen was apolitical, pre-feminist, or a genius, most critics agree that her ironic stories are still compelling to an audience. Not only are her novels wonderfully told, but they also provide an in-depth look into gender relations in the nineteenth century. Austen's narrative and character-driven stories and the tension between the sexes in her novels are some of the reasons they are so appealing to adaptors and audiences.

Adaptation Theory

The 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* has gone down in history as *the* Jane Austen adaptation. No other Austen adaptation has come close to what Andrew Davies achieved with his six-hour miniseries. The 1995 television series, *Pride and Prejudice,* is not only the most

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[33] JASNA.

[34] Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield, *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

[35] Deborah Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: The Relationship Between Text and Film*, (United Kingdom: Metheun Drama, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=692120>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[36] John Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

popular adaptation among fans, it was also commercially successful and critically acclaimed. While Davies drew on Austen's original novel for the adaptation, and had the screen time to do it well, he also took some liberties with the original text, creating scenes that are for visual appeal, as well as reinterpreting the classic characters. The classic example of such a liberty is the famous wet white shirt scene, now immortalised on YouTube, so fans can watch it on repeat whenever their heart desires.[37] While Colin Firth in a wet white shirt walking the grounds of Lyme Park is what drew some viewers to Austen's original texts, for others it is a ridiculous addition because this scene is not in the original novel.[38] The idea of fidelity to the original source is a theme that permeated early adaptation studies. Linda Hutcheon comments that '"fidelity criticism", as it came to be known, was the critical orthodoxy in adaptation studies' for many years.[39] This has led to that common phrase so often heard when leaving a movie theatre after viewing an adapted film: "the book was better".

Adaptation essentially re-tells the original story in a new, and often exciting, way. Just as William Shakespeare adapted stories to plays in Elizabethan England, today Jane Austen is re-told via a film, a comic, or YouTube, engaging a wider audience than the original novels. Because of this emphasis on "retelling the story", a lot of work in the early years of adaptation studies focused on fidelity discourse. In 1936, Allardyce Nicoll asserted that films with a unique screenplay should be granted the same consideration as unique theatre shows, however, a film that merely copied a novel was not a film worth watching, as it should be up to the filmmaker 'not to copy the method of the novel but to transform it into a kindred method true

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[37] BBC Studios, *The Lake Scene (Colin Firth Strips Off)—Pride and Prejudice—BBC,* online film clip, YouTube, 12 February 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hasKmDr1yrA>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[38] Yaffe, p. xix.

[39] Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan o'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* 2nd edition, (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 6-7, Taylor and Francis eBooks <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mono/10.4324/9780203095010/theory-adaptation-linda-hutcheon> [accessed 30 August 2021].

to the conditions of his own craft'.[40] George Bluestone famously started the trend of fidelity criticism in the late 1950s, when he argued that adapted films can never be considered as good as the original masterpieces that are the novels.[41] In 1975, fidelity still remained the dominant discourse, and while Geoffrey Atheling Wagner claimed that 'Film has often performed the task of restoration on fiction', he also argued that for a film to be a great adaptation, it should translate the book to the screen perfectly. [42] As Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins state, 'adaptation in the last fifty years has reinforced our willingness to ignore the *fundamental* differences between literature and the cinema and to look, instead, for *surface* differences'.[43]

Since the turn of the century, adaptation studies have increasingly taken a new direction. Instead of judging adapted pieces of work through the structure of fidelity discourse, critics continuingly look at adapted pieces as a work of art. This was championed by Robert Stam in 2000, who argued that while fidelity criticism has its place in acknowledging whether a film paid correct homage to a book or not, it did not capture the essence of adaptation, which is to continue the dialogue of the original text in a different medium.[44] Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon further this argument by claiming that adaptation is more of a biological transformation rather than a direct retelling of a text. Telling and retelling stories has always occurred, and therefore stories change through those retellings, in 'a manner parallel to

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[40] Allardyce Nicoll, 'Literature and the Film', *The English Journal* 1 (1937), pp.1-9, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/804615?sid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents> [accessed 30 August 2021], p. 8.

[41] George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley: University of California Presss, 1961).

[42] Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1975), p. 221.

[43] Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins, 'Introduction: New Beginning for Adaptation Studies' in *Adaptation Studies: New Approaches*, ed. by Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins, (Madison, New Jersey: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), pp.11-22, (p. 14), emphasis original, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=3115957#>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[44] Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation, in *Film Adaptation,* ed. by James Naremore (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2000).

genes'.[45] Brian McFarlane contends that because reading a text is an individual experience, the same should therefore apply to adapting a text: 'how is any film version…ever going to produce the same responses, except by the merest chance?'[46] Linda Hutcheon also contends that adaptation as a process has been occurring throughout human history: 'Adaptations are obviously not new to our time…Shakespeare transferred his culture's stories from page to stage.'[47] By the end of her *Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon concludes that adaptation is both a 'process', in that a story changes across mediums, and a 'product', in that it can be considered something entirely different to the original source.[48] Hutcheon urges her readers to jettison outworn and inaccurate perceptions of adaptations as second rate to the original work (often a novel). For Hutcheon, adaptations differ from their source in more than just medium and are intensely creative in their own way.[49]

Expanding on the work of Linda Hutcheon, other contemporary adaptation scholars have debated how to define adaptation studies in a world where the possibilities of adapting are endless. For example, Thomas Leitch has argued that in the world of adaptation, there are four pillars that encourage audiences to 'view an adaptation as an adaptation'.[50] These are : 1) a period setting; 2) a costume drama feel and look (music, clothing, etc.); 3) an obsession with the original author, or even books in general (for example, titling a film *Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol,* or having the main characters read novels, whether it is related to their

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[45] Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon, 'On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and 'Success': Biologically', *New Literary History* 38.3 (2007), pp. 443-458, <https://muse-jhu- edu.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/article/225303/pdf>, [accessed 20 August 2021], (p. 444).

[46] Brian McFarlane, 'Reading film and literature,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 15-28, (p. 15).

[47] Hutcheon and o'Flynn, p. 2,

[48] Hutcheon and o'Flynn, pp. 169-171.

[49] Hutcheon and o'Flynn.

[50] Thomas Leitch, 'Adaptation, the Genre' in *Adaptation: the journal of literature on screen studies* 1.2 (2008), pp. 106-120, < https://academic-oup-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/adaptation/article/1/2/106/5998>, [accessed 30 August 2021], (p. 111).

characterisation or not); and 4), inter-titles.[51] Leitch's definition may only fit a certain subset of adaptations, such as the costume drama, as these adaptations encourage audiences to constantly compare adaptations to the original source if they are familiar with it.

Indeed, one of the primary adaptation modes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is the costume drama. The first television costume drama was *The Forsyte Saga,* produced by the BBC and broadcast in 1967, 'based on a cycle of novels by John Galsworthy about the tempestuous lives of an aristocratic family between 1879 and 1926'.[52] Austen's novels had a particular influence on BBC television costume dramas, with all of her novels being produced for television by the BBC at least once since the 1970's, with some of the more popular novels, like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma,* being produced again in the 1990's and 2000's as well.[53] While the costume drama 'is not always easy to pinpoint…[as] a distinct genre', it includes 'elements of the soap opera…[an] accent on human relations, romantic tension, and…drama', as well as an emphasis on 'interior furnishings…clothing…and music'.[54] The costume drama has continued to be popular, with *Downton Abbey*,[55] *Bridgerton*,[56] *Little Women,*[57] and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*[58] amongst the most popular. Two of the films that will be discussed in this thesis, *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) and *Emma* (2020) also fit into the costume drama category.

Another key adaptation scholar is Sarah Cardwell, who argues that the loosening of definitions around what constitutes an adaptation has convoluted the notion of what adaptation

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[51] Leitch, pp. 111-112.

[52] James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, 'Introduction', in *Upstairs and Downstairs: British Costume Drama Television from The Forsyte Saga to Downton Abbey*, ed. by James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), pp.11-25, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=1901105>, [accessed 22 June 2023], (p. 11).

[53] JASNA.

[54] Leggott and Taddeo, pp. 17-18.

[55] *Downton Abbey* (ITV, 2010-2015) [on DVD]; *Downton Abbey,* dir. by Michael Engler (Universal Pictures and Focus Features, 2019) [on DVD]; *Downton Abbey: A New Era,* dir. by Simon Curtis (Universal Pictures and Focus Features, 2022) [on DVD].

[56] *Bridgerton* (Netflix, 2020-) [on Netflix]; *Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story* (Netflix, 2023) [on Netflix].

[57] *Little Women,* dir. by Greta Gerwig (Sony Pictures Releasing, 2019) [on DVD].

[58] *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* dir. by Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre (Netflix, 2022) [on Netflix].

scholars do: 'The adaptation studies scholar no longer requires an adaptation, but instead needs only take the appropriate attitude to the work under scrutiny. This is an ontological fissure.'[59] This has resulted in 'a candy store of available approaches' for adaptation scholars.[60] Cardwell proves the point that while all adaptations 'are intertextual', whether intentionally or not in the adaptor's case, not every example of intertextuality is also an adaptation.[61] Cardwell argues that adaptation is 'a creative process with an end-product', while intertextuality is an interpretation by both the creator and the viewer.[62]

An example of how adaptation studies encompasses more than just the traditional "literature-to-film" adaptation is transmedia adaptation. Transmedia adaptations are an even bigger step away from the original text, in that a story may have a familiar setting, but will 'tell new stories or provide new information'.[63] The first use of the term 'transmedia' was in 1991 by Marsha Kinder, who used it to describe how children's media both assimilates and accommodates 'whatever objects they encounter, including traditional modes of image production like cinema and new technological developments like interactive multimedia'.[64] This description of transmedia adaptations still holds true today, with many adaptors engaging in storytelling across multiple media platforms: a film, a book, a video game, perhaps also a

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[59] Sarah Cardwell, 'Pause, Rewind, Replay: Adaptation, intertextually and (re)defining adaptation studies', in *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, ed. by Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs and Eckart Voights (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 7-17, Taylor and Francis eBooks, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/edit/10.4324/9781315690254/routledge-companion-adaptation-cutchins-dennis-krebs-katja-voigts-eckart> [accessed 30 August 2021], (p. 8).

[60] Brett Westbrook, 'Being Adaptation: The Resistance to Theory' in *Adaptation Studies: New Approaches*, ed. by Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins, (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), pp. 25-45, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=3115957>, [accessed 02 October 2021], (p. 43).

[61] Cardwell, p.12.

[62] Cardwell, pp. 12-13.

[63] Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Transmedia Storytelling as Narrative Practice' in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, 1st edition, ed. by Thomas Leitch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 524-541, Oxford Handbooks Online, < https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199331000.013.30>, [accessed 14 February 2023], (p. 529).

[64] Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 4.

YouTube web series and a podcast. Transmedia adaptations are adaptations in the traditional sense (they take an original source and turn it into a new medium) but they are also untraditional, not only in their use of other forms of media, but also in their frequent omission of an overt link to the original source text. Transmedia adaptations also have commercial appeal. As highlighted by Matthew Freeman and Renira Rampazzo Gambarto, 'transmediality…is characteristically understood as a commercial practice, enabling…for multiple revenue streams'.[65] For example, big corporations such as the Disney company have had massive success and revenue from their transmedia productions, like the *Star Wars* franchise, where fans can engage in multiple different stories across TV shows, films, video games, and even cookbooks and theme parks.[66]

While transmedia adaptations of Austen's original novels are not at a *Star Wars* level (though a video game was launched and did fail), there have been YouTube adaptations of her works, often accompanied by Twitter and Pinterest accounts of the characters, that have engaged a new audience in Austen's fictional world.[67] These adaptations were produced by Pemberley Digital, a production company that has adapted a few nineteenth-century novels to this transmedia format, such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (now *Frankenstein M.D.* on YouTube), and *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (produced as *The March Family Letters*).

In this thesis, the transmedia productions that will be discussed are *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* and *Emma Approved,* an adaptation of Austen's novel *Emma.* Both productions are noteworthy for their focus on the performance of gender roles. While many scholars have called transmedia adaptations by different names, as briefly

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[65] Matthew Freeman and Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, 'Introduction: Transmedia Studies—Where Now?' in *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies,* ed. by Matthew Freeman and Renira Rampazzo Gambarato (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 1-12 (p. 1).

[66] Freeman and Rampazzo Gambarto, p. 2.

[67] The failed video game, *Ever, Jane,* was finally cancelled in 2021 after the global pandemic (https://lithub.com/the-jane-austen-multiplayer-role-playing-game-ever-jane-has-shut-down/) but there have also been a collection of board and card games released that can be purchased from many websites (https://janeausten.co.uk/collections/jane-austen-games).

mentioned above, the adaptations produced by Pemberley Digital will be referred to as "web series", because their main format is short YouTube videos, and because many scholars have referenced the series in this way.[68] Because of the use of many different platforms in both *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and *Emma Approved* (such as YouTube, Pinterest, LookBook, and Twitter), "web" is an all-inclusive term here that references the use of all of these forms of media in these adaptations.

The use of "series" is also important to note here. All of the episodes produced and released by Pemberley Digital were done on a scheduled basis, in a similar way to a television series. Series is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'the order in which things are placed within such a sequence or succession'.[69] This definition not only suggests a correct order of how to engage in these episodes, but also how the producers planned their audience to engage them.[70] Television series, as discussed by Michael Hammond, include 'shorter, more contained plot-lines that come to an end within one episode' and 'the serial format of the long story arc with open storylines'.[71] *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and *Emma* both contain elements of the television series, as they tell one long romance plot, and include many little subplots that are resolved quickly. These web series, while scripted, appear to be shot like a vlog, as if the

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[68] See: Stephanie Russo, "Austen Approved: Pemberley Digital and the Transmedia Commodification of Jane Austen", *Women's writing: the Elizabethan to Victorian period,* 25.4 (2018), pp. 512-524, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2018.1510884> [accessed 15 February 2023]; Zoe Weinstein and Holly Luetkenhaus, *Austentatious: The Evolving World of Jane Austen Fans* (Iowa: Iowa University Press, 2019), JSTOR Ebooks, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/j.ctvh4zjgf> [accessed 15 February 2023]; and Jennifer Camden and Kate Faber Oestreich, *Transmedia Storytelling: Pemberley Digital's Adaptations of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2018).

[69] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/176458?rskey=KxiVWe&result=2#eid>, [accessed 15 February 2023] s.v. series, n.

[70] See: *The Contemporary Television Series,* ed. by Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), JSTOR Ebooks, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r29hq> [accessed 15 February 2023]; Jason Mittell, "Narrative complexity in contemporary American television", *The Velvet Light Trap,* 58 (2006), pp. 29-52 (p. 29); Manuel Garin, "Infinite Wounds: Redefining Narrative Structure and Serial Dynamics in Television Series", *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 24 (2017), pp. 27-41.

[71] Michael Hammond, 'Introduction: The Series/Serial Form,' *The Contemporary Television Series*, ed. by Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon, (Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 75–82 (p. 76), *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r29hq.11>, [accessed 21 June 2023].

characters are not reading from a script, and are reacting to events that are occurring in reality. They follow a similar format to 'docusoap' reality television, like *The Kardashians,* that includes 'scripted dimensions, commercial manipulations, recombinant tendencies, and stage-managed emotional appeals.' [72] While this thesis will not comment on the societal impact of the docusoap format, it is important to note here as it will be included in part of the analysis of these web series.

The trope of "fissuring" or "splitting" adaptations is common across the discourse and has been a way for scholars to distinguish between different types. For example, during the 1970s, most adaptation scholarship focused on fidelity discourse, evident in the large focus on Shakespeare, with critic Jack Jorgens splitting adaptations of Shakespeare into theatrical, realist, and filmic.[73] In 1975, Geoffrey Wagner was one of the first commentators to identify three different types of film adaptation, these being: transposition, where a film is the original novel in visual form; commentary, where the film aims to alter a key part of the original novel in some way; and analogy, where the original text struggles to be identified in the film version by audience members either not aware of the original novel, or unaware that the film is an adaptation.[74] In the 1980s, Dudley Andrew split adaptations as a whole into borrowing, intersecting, and transforming, with transforming, in his view, being the best in that it showed its faithfulness to the original source.[75] As recently as 2003, Kamilla Elliot suggested that there were in fact six models of adaptation as opposed to three: psychic, international, ventriloquist,

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[72] Laurie Ouellette, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to Reality Television,* ed. by Laurie Ouellette (Malden, MA and Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), pp. 1-8 (pp. 20, 1). ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=1565908>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[73] Jack J. Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

[74] Wagner, pp. 21-231.

[75] J. Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), ProQuest Ebook Central, < https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=253386> [accessed 30 August 2021].

decomposing, genetic, and trumping.[76] While there are lots of different types of adaptations, as noted by the scholarship, there is a certain model of adaptation defined by Patrick Cattrysse that will be particularly useful to this thesis; however, only two "categories" will be discussed. Cattrysse has discussed that an evolutionary view of cultural adaptation includes only two types of distinct types: 'ipsative' and 'additive'.[77]

Cattrysse defines additive adaptation as adaptation that 'adapts something into something else that becomes a separate entity'.[78] Additive adaptation is what directors like Joe Wright and Autumn de Wilde have achieved with their films: they have taken Austen's original work and made changes and added to it in changing the form from a novel to a film. As Thomas Leitch has discussed, 'a period setting' is one of the 'markers' of an adaptation, and 'the adaptations most likely to be packaged, consumed, and analysed as adaptations are costume dramas.'[79] Both Wright and de Wilde's adaptations fit with the definition of a costume drama as provided by Leitch. On the other hand, ipsative adaptation, according to Cattrysse, is 'a phenomenon that adapts itself…it changes its proper features…during the course of generations in order to better fit its new and changing environment'.[80] A cultural example of ipsative adaptation is the evolution of gender roles across different genres, characters, and mediums of adaptation. Cultural ipsative adaptation will be a focus of this thesis, as it explores how the gender performances of Austen's characters have changed across the different mediums of adaptation.

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[76] Kamilla Elliot, *Rethinking the Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[77] Patrick Cattrysse, 'An Evolutionary View of Cultural Adaptation' in *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, ed. by Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs and Eckart Voights (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 40-54 (p. 41), Taylor and Francis eBooks, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/edit/10.4324/9781315690254/routledge-companion-adaptation-cutchins-dennis-krebs-katja-voigts-eckart> [accessed 30 August 2021].

[78] Cattyrsse, p. 41.

[79] Thomas Leitch, 'Adaptation, the Genre', *Adaptation: the journal of literature on screen studies.* 1.2 (2008), pp. 106-120, <https://academic-oup-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/adaptation/article/1/2/106/5998?login=true> [accessed 27 February 2023] (p. 111).

[80] Cattrysse, p. 42.

Gender Theory

It is a truth universally acknowledged by gender theorists that gender is a performance. But what does "gender as a performance" mean in the wider framework of gender theory? To give this context, it is important to define the difference between gender and sex. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, sex is a category you are divided into based on your reproductive functions,[81] and you can only be one of two, either male or female.[82] Gender, on the other hand, is something an individual actively chooses to identify as, and will consistently perform in a way that aligns with that identity. Judith Butler is the leading academic on gender performance and has discussed how 'gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*.'[83] Butler also argues that:

> Gender can denote a unity of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender—where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self—and desire—where desire is heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires.[84]

This is integral to this thesis because the lack of queer theory in adaptations of Jane Austen's novels is telling, so the knowledge that femininity and masculinity only work in the context of a heterosexual binary is important.

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[81] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/dictionary/sex_n1?tab=meaning_and_use#23485890>, [accessed 21 July 2023], s.v. sex, n.1.a.

[82] There are individuals who are born intersex, meaning that they have sex characteristics of both genders, as discussed in Matteo Cresti, Elena Nave & Roberto Lala, 'Intersexual Births: The Epistemology of Sex and Ethics of Sex Assignment', *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 15 (2018), pp. 557-568 <https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/article/10.1007/s11673-018-9880-7> [accessed 18 September 2021]. While this is currently being discussed in the academic field of gender studies, it is beyond the scope of this thesis because it was not a category of sex in the nineteenth century, when Jane Austen was writing.

[83] Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal,* 40.4 (1988), pp. 519-531 (p. 519), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893> [accessed 27 February 2023], emphasis original.

[84] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 30.

Butler is not the only gender academic who has made this claim. R. W. Connell in 2005 acknowledged that 'Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation.'[85] Femininity, as discussed by Mimi Schippers, 'includes physical vulnerability, an inability to use violence effectively, and compliance' which is in direct opposition to masculinity, which is characterised by 'physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority'.[86] In contemporary society, these performances and categories are a lot more fluid. Many women choose to engage physically demanding and potentially dangerous activities, and it is not uncommon for men to be vulnerable. In the twenty-first century, gender is regarded as fluid, and society often engages in the deliberate disruption of gender binaries and gender stereotypes. But in the nineteenth century, the period when Austen was publishing, the categories of gender were fixed.

As a girl, Austen was raised in a society where gender roles were rigid. Women tried to be as desirable to men as possible, 'but in terms which will contain that desire within the publicly sanctioned form of marriage'.[87] Conduct books of the period instructed women to maintain their '"natural" femininity', so their traits of silence, submission and chastity were readily apparent for society to see, but especially potential husbands.[88] These "feminine" characteristics were considered ideal for the marriage market, as they confined 'women to a private, separate, domestic sphere.'[89] However, women were not the only members of society

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[85] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities,* 2nd Edition (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005), p. 44.

[86] Mimi Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony', *Theory and Society,* 36.1 (2007), pp. 85-102, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-007-9022-4>, [accessed 27 February 2023], (p. 91).

[87] Vivien Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, (London; New York: Routledge), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=178290>, [accessed 20 November 2021], p.14.

[88] Jones, pp. 57, 15.

[89] Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London: Routledge, 1997), Taylor & Francis Ebooks, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mono/10.4324/9781315842523/gender-eighteenth-century-england-hannah-barker-elaine-chalus>, [accessed 20 November 2021], p. 2.

expected to uphold a rigid gender role; men were also expected to maintain strict social codes and conventions in public settings. For example, men were encouraged to be polite as politeness 'promoted easy and sincere social interaction'.[90] Masculinity during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was concerned with domestic values, as being a man meant 'forming a household, maintaining it, protecting it and controlling it'.[91] There was also a focus on class, as class structures began to change with a rise in commercialism. As discussed by John Tosh, there was a

> transition from a genteel masculinity grounded in land ownership to a bourgeois masculinity attuned to the market. …The man of substance and repute came to be someone who had a steady occupation in business or the professions, instead of receiving rents or trading in stocks.[92]

While many men did join the army or the navy, there was a lack of bearing arms, and duels became a thing of the past, something that perhaps men perhaps struggled with during this period, as 'the bearing of arms had been the central attribute of manhood since feudal times'.[93] This transition of masculinity did not give women any more rights, and further entrenched them under patriarchal authority. In the nineteenth century, this started to be challenged.

While the nineteenth century as a period may not automatically make readers think of the fight for equality of the sexes, it was the start of feminism. Throughout the Age of Enlightenment, early female activists started challenging male dominance, and in the eighteenth century they were particularly inspired by the societal change that came with the French Revolution.[94] Mary Poovey has claimed that philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft,

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[90] Barker and Chalus, p. 34.
[91] John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2016), Taylor & Francis EBooks, < https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mono/10.4324/9781315838533/manliness-masculinities-nineteenth-century-britain-john-tosh >, [accessed 2 March 2023], p. 66.
[92] Tosh, p. 63.
[93] Tosh, p. 66.
[94] June Hannam, *Feminism* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 4.

who wrote during the Age of Enlightenment, started the feminist movement with their writings.[95] In response to Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideas about the female mind and abilities, Wollstonecraft famously wrote 'I do not wish them (women) to have power over men; but over themselves'.[96] Wollstonecraft originally published her work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women,* in 1792,[97] when Austen was seventeen.[98] Poovey has pointed out that while Austen's life and interests were very different to Wollstonecraft, Austen was similarly concerned with 'the complex relationships between a woman's desires and the imperatives of propriety,' though she was not as obvious or vocal about her feminist values as Wollstonecraft.[99] Feminists, or liberal feminists as they are now known,[100] continue to believe that achieving individual rights for women and equality amongst the sexes is only possible through 'legal and social policy changes'.[101]

There were many significant social movements after the nineteenth century that have shaped the way we view gender today, but feminism had a major impact. From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, women protested for the right to vote, in what is now known as the suffrage movement, or first-wave feminism.[102] From the late nineteenth century, many women's suffrage movements had the same goal worldwide, that being 'women should have a role as active citizens in formal political life'.[103] This included the right to vote, and the right to own property.[104] In many Anglo-American countries, the goal of the suffragettes was accomplished by the end of the First World War, and feminism went quiet for

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[95] Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Work of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984).
[96] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 73.
[97] Wollstonecraft.
[98] Harman.
[99] Poovey, p. 172.
[100] They are known as liberal feminists because there are many different "schools" of feminism now included in feminist thinking, which will be discussed at length in this chapter.
[101] Hannam, p. 144.
[102] Hannam.
[103] Hannam, p. 33.
[104] Hannam.

a while.[105] However, in the late 1960s, second-wave feminism initiated a dialogue about a range of issues relating to women's rights. Despite gaining the vote, many women still lacked rights in their home countries, such as full legal rights within marriage, the lack of access to social welfare, and the inability to gain equitable and unjudgmental healthcare.[106] So, once again, women came together to rally for the same political and working rights as their male counterparts. The second wave feminist movement was also the start of modern gender studies.

A work that influenced both gender studies and second-wave feminism was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, published in 1949. While this text was inflammatory at the time it was published, it profiled the gender inequalities in Western society, with pointed comments such as 'the whole of feminine history has been man-made'.[107] de Beauvoir was also the first scholar to make the distinction between sex and gender. de Beauvoir argued that 'one is not born but becomes a woman', essentially, someone born a female at birth is then moulded and trained to become feminine.[108] de Beauvoir's feminist argument is focused on the impact this has on women and their capacity to make impactful choices for themselves; however, it is also now understood that those born with male sex characteristics are also nurtured to have masculine traits. While ideal feminine and masculine traits have changed over time, as will be discussed at length throughout this thesis, this nurturing as described by de Beauvoir is still the same: 'No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature'.[109]

Simone de Beauvoir was not the only female author making headlines for her progressive thinking during the mid-twentieth century. Over a decade late, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, a work that demonstrated the lack of fulfilment experienced by housewives

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[105] Hannam, p.44.
[106] Hannam, p. 76.
[107] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Cape, 1953), p. 148.
[108] de Beauvoir, p. 273.
[109] de Beauvoir, p. 273.

in America through their own personal accounts. One such account detailed how their experience of dissatisfaction impacted their identity as a person:

> I've tried everything women are supposed to do—hobbies, gardening, pickling, canning, being very social with my neighbours, joining committees, running PTA teas. I can do it all, and I like it, but it doesn't leave you anything to think about—any feeling of who you are. …I begin to feel I have no personality. I'm a server of food and a putter-on of pants and a bedmaker, somebody who can be called on when you want something. But who am I?[110]

From researching these women and their experiences, Freidan gained insight into how women were 'still treated as second-class citizens' in suburban America.[111] This work stoked the fire of second-wave feminism, a fire that burned for almost twenty years while women fought for equality in political, social, and economic spheres.

While women coming together to fight patriarchal rule was essential to the success of second wave feminism, this 'was difficult to sustain' as differences like race, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation increasingly created fissures in the bonds of feminism.[112] This led to multiple different schools of feminist thinking, such as radical feminism, Marxist feminism,[113] cultural feminism, and ecofeminism.[114] These schools have not only been used to critique society at certain points, but also literature. In the context of this thesis, two crucial schools of thought are cultural feminism and radical feminism. Radical feminism 'opposes male domination' and strives for 'a genuine human status for women outside male definition

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[110] Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 21.
[111] Freidan, p. 374.
[112] Hannam, p. 87.
[113] Marxist feminism, which will not be discussed in this thesis, analyses the exploitation of women's rights through capitalism; for more information, see Evelyn Reed, *Problems of Women's Liberation: a Marxist Approach* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970).
[114] Ecofeminism, which will not be discussed in this thesis, explores how the decline and domination of both the natural Earth and women are a consequence of a capitalist, patriarchal society; for more information on ecofeminism, see Douglas A Vakoch, *The Rougtledge Handbook of Ecofeminism and Literature* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2022).

and control'.[115] Radical feminism will be of importance to this thesis as it will clearly highlight the lack of status that female characters in adaptations of Jane Austen's novels have without their male counterparts. Cultural feminism will be explored through the lens of postfeminism, a major method of analysis in this thesis.[116] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'post-feminism' is:

> An ethos of the period following the feminism (and improvement in women's status) of the 1960s and 1970s, characterized by further development of or reaction against feminism, esp. in acceptance of masculine ideals or of aspects of the traditional feminine role.[117]

However, according to Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon, postfeminism 'is neither a simple rebirth of feminism nor a straightforward abortion…but a complex resignification that harbours within itself the threat of backlash as well as the potential for innovation.'[118]

As previously discussed, Butler has been at the forefront of the gender performativity movement. Their theories have evolved with time, and they ask important questions about how gender is performed by individuals, and how this can be impacted by things like sex, sexuality, and culture. Butler argues that gender is not something we are born with, but instead something taught to us by society, and something that changes as social norms change:

> Terms such as "masculine" and "feminine" are notoriously changeable; there are social histories for each term; their meanings change radically depending upon geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imaging whom, and for what purpose. That

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[115] Denise Thompson, *Radical Feminism Today* (London: SAGE, 2001), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=334510>, [accessed 2 March 2023], pp. 3, 4.

[116] I choose to omit the hyphen in postfeminism, following the same thought as Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon, who also choose to omit the hyphen 'to avoid any predetermined readings of the term that imply a semantic rift between feminism and postfeminism.' See Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon, *Postfeminism,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 25.

[117] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/dictionary/post-feminism_n?tab=meaning_and_use#10505857>, [accessed 21 July 2023], s.v. post-feminism, n.

[118] Genz and Brabon, p. 32.

> the terms recur is interesting enough, but the recurrence does not index a sameness, but rather the way in which the social articulation of the term depends upon its repetition, which constitutes one dimension of the performative structure of gender.[119]

Butler's theories of gender are integral to this thesis, not only in that they provide a valuable context for gender as a performance, but also because they can be used to analyse the gender performance of a work of art, like a film.

While gender studies has stemmed from feminism, as discussed above, masculinity is also a topic that has been interrogated at the same time. During second wave feminism, the male role was also in "crisis." While women fought for their rights, scholars analysed the role that men played in society, and how the expectations of men was the source of female oppression. From these studies, a term was coined in the 1970s that has been in use ever since: hegemonic masculinity.[120] Hegemonic masculinity is a distinct type of masculinity that, while not the most statistically normal, is normative in that it embodies 'the currently most honoured way of being a man'.[121] Hegemonic masculinity can change with societal expectations and norms of what it means to be a man. Because of this, and the fact that not all men can perform this expected type of masculinity, it has received much criticism.[122] However, hegemonic masculinity is often the type of masculinity portrayed in the media and in fiction, which is why it is of importance to this thesis.

One aspect of gender studies that is necessary to note here is intersectionality. First coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a framework that looks at the different ways that a

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[119] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 10, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=183001#> [accessed 20 September 2021]

[120] R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept' *Gender and Society*, 19:6 (2005), pp. 829-859, <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/doi/pdf/10.1177/0891243205278639> [accessed 20 September 2021], (p. 832).

[121] Connell and Messerschmidt, p. 832.

[122] Any scholarly theory is bound to receive some criticism; however, in the case of hegemonic masculinity, most of the criticism stems from the vagueness of the theory.

person may be discriminated against. Crenshaw argues that feminism of the 1980s is only a 'single-axis analysis' and that this 'erases' Black woman's experiences.[123] Other significant intersectionality academics include bell hooks, who has argued that African American men face patriarchal discrimination: 'When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then black males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity.'[124] While some academics now critique intersectionality, it is important to mention here not only because of its impressive contribution to gender studies, but also because it is of particular importance when analysing the transmedia web series, *Emma Approved*.[125]

Shape of Thesis

This thesis explores the portrayal of gender as a performance in adaptations of two Austen novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. The first chapter will examine the discourses of feminism in *Pride and Prejudice,* with a primary focus on the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. This chapter will include an analysis of female gender performance across three texts: *Pride and Prejudice,* the novel; the 2005 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* directed by Wright; and the web series adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.* The second chapter will analyse the same texts, but from the perspective of masculinities, with a focus on the hero, Mr. Darcy. The third chapter will interrogate antifeminist heroines with an analysis of the characterisation of Emma Woodhouse in three key texts: *Emma,* by Austen; *Emma,* the 2020 film adaptation, directed by de Wilde; and *Emma Approved,* Pemberley Digital's transmedia adaptation. The fourth chapter

[123] Kimberlié Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', in *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender,* ed. by Katharine T. Bartlett and Roseanne Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 57-80 (p. 57).

[124] bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity,* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. x.

[125] Such as Anna Carastathis, who argues that 'theorising identity…is not, in itself, a sufficient condition for feminist solidary'; see "The Invisibility of Privilege: A critique of intersectional models of identity", Les ateliers de l'éthique / The Ethics Forum, 3.2 (2008), 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1044594ar>.

will again look at these key texts but will discuss how postfeminism and the patriarchy are performed through male characters, in particular Mr. Knightley, Mr. Elton, and Frank Churchill. This thesis will discuss the films as a collaboration, but emphasise that the directors, Wright and de Wilde, have a key role in adapting the text, as their creative decisions impact how the story is retold. Throughout these chapters, this thesis will argue that despite Wright's adaptation strengthening the characterisation of Elizabeth into a feminist, and de Wilde placing Mr. Knightley under the female gaze in her film, these characters change to a postfeminist woman in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and a hegemonic man in *Emma Approved.* Mr. Darcy and Emma Woodhouse, on the other hand, remain constant throughout the adaptations, continuing to perform hegemonic gentry masculinity and patriarchal supporter, respectively. This analysis will demonstrate that despite societal shifts in the performance of female roles, patriarchal societal values and hegemonic masculinities continue to influence twenty-first-century reimagining's of Jane Austen.

Chapter One – Discourses of Feminism in *Pride and Prejudice*: From Feminist Rebellion to Postfeminist Discord

> 'I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them.' – Elizabeth Bennet, *Pride and Prejudice*[1]
>
> 'What the eff?!" – Lizzie Bennet, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*[2]

Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* has been characterised as a pre-feminist heroine, as this chapter will explore. However, when she is adapted in a twenty-first century context, her characterisation frequently changes into something less nuanced and more complicit with patriarchal values. While Austen received few reviews from critics during the nineteenth century, with only twelve contemporary reviews currently known,[3] the few that were received for *Pride and Prejudice* were mainly positive. An unsigned notice in the *British Critic* commented that 'it is very far superior to almost all the publications of the kind which have lately come before us',[4] and this was echoed by an unsigned review in the *Critical Review* published a month later: '…very superior to any novel we have lately me with in the delineation of domestic scenes'.[5] However, some reviewers during the nineteenth century were critical of

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[1] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* ed. by Vivien Jones (Penguin: London, 1996), p.104.

[2] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, The Insistent Proposal – Ep: 39,* web series, YouTube, 12 August 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmZzaAsPHNo>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[3] B. C. Southam, 'Introduction', in *Jane Austen Volume 1, 1811–1870: The Critical Heritage,* ed. by B. C. Southam, (London and New York: Routledge, 1968), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=179692>, [accessed 27 June 2023], p. 2.

[4] 'Unsigned notice, *British Critic*, February 1813, xli, pp. 189–90' in *Jane Austen Volume 1, 1811–1870: The Critical Heritage,* ed. by B. C. Southam, (London and New York: Routledge, 1968), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=179692>, [accessed 27 June 2023], p. 41.

[5] 'Unsigned review, *Critical Review,* March 1813, 4th series, iii, pp. 318–24', *Jane Austen Volume 1, 1811–1870: The Critical Heritage,* ed. by B. C. Southam, (London and New York: Routledge, 1968), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-

Austen's work because her characters did not always follow nineteenth century social conventions. Madame de Staël, a political theorist influential during the French Revolution, pronounced Austen's novels '*vulgaire*' in a letter to Sir James Mackintosh,[6] while others simplified her work to be just a warning about cads, or a story with 'a good moral'.[7] All of Austen's novels have a particular moral framework, where 'concern for the proprieties…is not the mark of shallowness but rather an appropriate acknowledgement of the obligations of sociability, with ethics and etiquette deeply intertwined'.[8] Consequently, Austen's heroines have a strong moral compass, although they are also prepared to act counter to social norms if they are not in their best interest.[9] In so doing, an independent heroine such as Elizabeth displays pre-feminist qualities that align with some of Mary Wollstonecraft's philosophies.

This chapter will analyse Jane Austen's most well-known heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, and how she can consistently be coded as some sort of feminist figure in both the novel *Pride and Prejudice* and some adaptations of said novel. Firstly, the characterisation of Elizabeth as pre-

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com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=179692>, [accessed 27 June 2023], p. 43.

[6] Sir James Mackintosh, *Memoirs of Sir James Mackintosh,* ed. by Robert James Mackintosh, 2nd ed. (London: Edward Moxon, 1835), p. 472.

[7] Mary Waldron, 'Critical Responses, Early' in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. by Janet M. Todd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 83-91 (pp. 84, 87).

[8] Jenny Davidson, *Reading Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), CambridgeCore, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1017/9781108367974> [accessed 17/03/2023], p. 75.

[9] As discussed by Davidson, Catherine Morland develops her morals throughout *Northanger Abbey* 'where Austen makes her clearest and most explicit defence of fiction as a way of improving morality' (Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, (New York: Open Road Media, 2015), p. 226, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=1986602#> [accessed 12 August 2021], p. 78). Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* believes that 'politeness protects others against our own aggression' (Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, (New York: Open Road Media, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?pq origsite=primo&docID=4353536>, [accessed 12 August 2021], p. 81). Anne Elliot recommends reading lots of poetry by great moralists to fortify the mind (Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 140). Fanny Price is tested with a moral quandary in *Mansfield Park* when Henry Crawford asks her to marry him and she rejects him, much to the dismay of her family; but when it is revealed that he has been having an affair with Maria Bertram, she is 'thoroughly vindicated' (Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park,* (London: Oxford U.P., 1970) pp. 90-93). Interestingly, Emma Woodhouse is left out of this discussion of morals in Austen's novels.

feminist in Austen's novel will be examined and juxtaposed with the characterisation of other women in the novel, namely Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Charlotte Lucas, Jane Bennet, and Lydia Bennet. This analysis will continue with an examination of gender across adaptations in the twenty-first century, including gender performances in a "classic" costume drama film adaptation (Joe Wright's 2005 *Pride and Prejudice*) and gender performances in transmedia adaptations, namely the YouTube web series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. The section on Joe Wright's film will frame Elizabeth as a Romantic feminist who inhabits a pastoral space in the film, while the analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* will examine the contradictions of major female characters as they struggle to maintain feminist values in a twenty-first century commercial society. This chapter will argue that from Austen's novel through to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Elizabeth has developed as a character from pre-feminist to a Romantic feminist heroine, yet in recent transmedia adaptations, she is presented as a postfeminist woman with no liberation from the patriarchy.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Mr. Bennet describes his second daughter, Elizabeth Bennet, as having 'something more of a quickness than her sisters', and throughout the novel she is presented as wilful, independent, and stubborn.[10] These were not considered marriageable traits, nor desirable for a young lady of the nineteenth century to possess. Instead, a woman was taught to be the opposite: willing, dependent on her father or husband, and conforming 'to the conventional model of feminine propriety'.[11] Elizabeth further displays herself to be an unconventional nineteenth-century woman in her vehement rejection of Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage. Elizabeth is not

[10] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* pp. 7, 36, 170, 336.
[11] Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Work of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), p. 116.

looking for a husband, and at the start of the novel claims that while she desires to be well married, she is not determined to find a husband.[12] Even in her rejection of Mr. Collins, Elizabeth reinforces that she is not 'an elegant female' but instead 'a rational creature, speaking the truth from her heart'.[13] This quote is similar to Mary Wollstonecraft's statement that 'women, considered not only as moral, but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the SAME means as men'.[14] Heather Nelson, a modern scholar, has pointed out that in the Regency period 'people did not…view young women as rational adults'.[15] Here, Elizabeth claims rationality as a female virtue, not only a male one, which enables her to stand her ground in her rejection of Mr. Collins, something women were not expected to do. Yet her rejection of Mr. Collins is irrational, and even selfish, for the era in which she lives.

Marriage in the nineteenth century was significant for women, especially a woman in Elizabeth's precarious situation. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet do not have any male children, and because Mr. Bennet's estate is under the law of entail, it means on his death it will pass to the closest male heir.[16] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines entail as 'The settlement of the succession of a landed estate, so that it cannot be bequeathed at pleasure by any one possessor; the rule of descent settled for any estate; the fixed or prescribed line of devolution'.[17] In the case of the Bennet family, Mr. Collins inherits Longbourn, because no woman can inherit the

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[12] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 23.
[13] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 106.
[14] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 1792), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=563875> [accessed 15 March 2023], p. 330.
[15] Heather Nelson, 'Elizabeth Bennet's Proposal Scenes and Nonconsenual Consent', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal,* 42 (2020), pp. 194-206, < https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=waikato&id=GALE|A688554548&v=2.1&it=r> [accessed 20 March 2023], (p. 195).
[16] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 62.
[17] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/dictionary/entail_n2?tab=meaning_and_use#5474719 [accessed 21 July 2023], s.v. entail, n.2.

estate according to the current entail agreement on the property. Therefore, while Mr. Collins behaves absurdly, and is not a romantic match for Elizabeth, her choice to refuse him is more absurd that Mr. Collins himself.[18] Elizabeth's rejection of Mr. Collins cements her status as an unconventional, pre-feminist woman, for Elizabeth is not only possibly condemning herself to a life of spinsterhood, but she is also condemning her sisters to that same possibility. Elizabeth is aware of these implications in her rejection of Mr. Collins:

> 'In making me the offer, you must have satisfied the delicacy of your feelings with regard to my family, *and may take possession of Longbourn estate whenever it falls*, without any self-reproach.'[19]

As discussed in the Introduction, women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were expected to be submissive, especially to men.[20] Elizabeth, in her rejection of Mr. Collins, is not being submissive. Instead, by asserting her right to choose, she establishes herself as a woman with agency. Austen again echoes Wollstonecraft, who in 1792 claimed that women who are 'not permitted to choose for themselves, have indeed been overgrown children…. Their minds were quiescent'.[21] Elizabeth's choice to reject Mr. Collins is selfish in that it could have negative implications for her sisters, but it is pre-feminist in that it goes against what society expects of her.

Given that Mr. Collins is not a match in any way for Elizabeth, a reader can perhaps be sympathetic to her refusal, even if she may be condemning her sisters to a life of destitution. However, it is hard to feel similar sympathy towards her rejection of Mr. Darcy's proposal. Her

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[18] Mrs. Bennet's outrage at the entail initially seems ridiculous; however, as there were some estates where women could inherit (as detailed in Todd's *Jane Austen in Context*), her outrage at the entail is perhaps more understandable, and Mr. Bennet's unwillingness to do anything about it to ensure his daughters future less so.

[19] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 105; emphasis my own.

[20] Vivien Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, (London; New York: Routledge), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=178290>, [accessed 20 November 2021], p.14.

[21] Wollstonecraft, p. 330.

initial refusal of his offer of marriage is more selfish but also more pre-feminist. From Chapter Six in *Pride and Prejudice,* the reader is aware that Mr. Darcy does find Elizabeth attractive, even though he initially claims she is 'not handsome enough to tempt me'.[22] Despite this initial judgement, the reader learns that:

> no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. …he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness.[23]

However, this attraction is never shown to Elizabeth, who is astonished by the proposal, which takes place in the middle of the novel, approximately six months after she has met Mr. Darcy. Although she is astounded, Elizabeth does not give Mr. Darcy an abrupt refusal. Elizabeth is aware of what social script she should follow, but she chooses not to perform it:

> 'In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, however unequally they may be returned. It is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could *feel* gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot…'[24]

By the end of her rejection of Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth is speaking with 'energy', and she proclaims: '"You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it."'[25] Again, Elizabeth is rejecting a man because she does not love him, and the feelings she has toward Mr. Darcy are, at this time in the novel, very negative. She is standing her ground as a woman with agency, although the choice to reject Mr. Darcy is even more concerning from a financial perspective than her rejection of Mr. Collins.

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[22] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 13.
[23] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 25.
[24] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 186, emphasis original.
[25] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pp.187-188.

Mr. Darcy has a 'large estate in Derbyshire', making him much richer than Mr. Bingley's 'four of five thousand [pounds] a year'.[26] As highlighted by Nelson, single women were often encouraged 'to accept their initial suitors, regardless of character or compatibility, rather than risk spinsterhood'.[27] Elizabeth, in her rejection of Mr. Darcy, is possible subjecting herself to a life of spinsterhood.

Spinsterhood in the nineteenth century is not the same as the concept of singleness is in the twenty-first century, where women can work and live independently of men. Work was not an option for every woman in the nineteenth century, and with the decline of opportunities for work in agriculture after the industrial revolution, opportunities were limited, with the main avenues of employment for unmarried women being domestic service or an artist of some sort.[28] While being a writer, like Austen, provided an income for some, it did not necessarily make a woman financially independent, as it depended on the success of their novels.[29] As Bridget Hill contends: 'Spinsterhood was a condition more easily accepted by women with a roof over their heads and either a saleable skill or an independent income.'[30] Spinsters 'were seen as a threat to a society that assumed that all women would marry and be subject to the control of their husbands'.[31] However, Austen rewards Elizabeth's initial choice to refuse Mr. Darcy, and the pair get married at the end of the novel after she has disregarded her prejudice, and he has jettisoned his pride. This reward endorses Elizabeth's choices, and it also endorses pre-feminism, or the right to female agency. As noted by Bernard Paris, 'it is not submissive virtue but self-assertive merit that is primarily rewarded'.[32] Austen celebrates the idea that

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[26] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 6 and 12.
[27] Nelson, p. 195.
[28] Bridget Hill, *Women, Work & Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), Taylor & Francis Group, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mono/10.4324/9780203986318/women-work-sexual-politics-eighteenth-century-england-bridget-hill>, [accessed 21 July 2023], p. 231.
[29] Hill, p. 231.
[30] Hill, p. 231.
[31] Hill, p. 231.
[32] Bernard J. Paris, *Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels: A Psychological Approach*, (Piscataway: Routledge, 2006), p. 96.

women should be able to marry on their terms, and for the right reason, rather than the fear of a life of poverty. Similarly, Wollstonecraft argued the need to educate women to be 'rational creatures and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives'.[33] Austen endorses this, as Elizabeth can only accept Mr. Darcy's proposal, and become a good wife, when she has gained her 'freedom from…oppression'.[34] While Elizabeth's choices are rewarded, she is faced with a challenge in the form of another independent woman, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. Darcy's wealthy widowed aunt.

Elizabeth Bennet's independent spirit is on display throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, but nowhere is it more obvious than in her confrontation with Lady Catherine de Bourgh at the end of the novel. While this analysis has argued that Elizabeth is an unconventional woman for the nineteenth century, nowhere is this clearer in the novel than in Chapter Fifty-Six. What is most important in this scene is how Lady Catherine, a woman of wealth and status in the novel, expects a particular conversation and outcome with Elizabeth, an unmarried woman who ranks below her. Lady Catherine expects that Elizabeth will reassure her that she is not engaged, and that she has no plans to be engaged to Mr. Darcy.

> 'Tell me once for all, are you engaged to him?'
>
> …
>
> 'I am not.'
>
> Lady Catherine seemed pleased.
>
> 'And will you promise me, never to enter into such an engagement?'
>
> 'I will make no promise of the kind.'
>
> 'Miss Bennet, I am shocked and astonished. I expected to find a more reasonable young woman. …'[35]

[33] Wollstonecraft, p. 317.
[34] Paris, p. 96.
[35] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 337.

While Lady Catherine is haughty to Elizabeth, and her expectation of an answer is rude, as a woman of rank, she can expect to be treated in a particular way by members of society. However, as noted by John Philips Hardy, 'Elizabeth does not permit herself to feel inferior to Lady Catherine'.[36] Elizabeth not succumbing to Lady Catherine's will is not only the reason Mr. Darcy loves her but is another reason why she shines as a pre-feminist beacon in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The portrayal of Elizabeth Bennet throughout the novel is one of a woman who lives for herself and not according to the expectations of society. Elizabeth 'will never admit the submissive role traditionally ascribed to women'.[37] One very early example of this is her walk to Netherfield to see her sick sister Jane. Netherfield is three miles from Longbourn, the Bennet family home, a small distance when considered by twenty-first-century standards, where people have access to the modern conveniences of a motor vehicle.[38] However, in the nineteenth century, this was not a small distance when the only option for the Bennet family to travel was by carriage, horseback, or on their own two feet. Most citizens of the nineteenth century 'were accustomed to walking more regularly than we do today',[39] and Elizabeth does not 'wish to avoid the walk', especially as she is 'no horse-woman'.[40]

The activity itself is not the concern, but instead her appearance when she arrives at Netherfield, as Mrs. Bennet worries that 'in all this dirt…you will not be fit to be seen when you get there'.[41] While Elizabeth does enjoy the walk, though she has 'weary ancles' and 'dirty

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[36] John Philips Hardy, *Jane Austen's Heroines: Intimacy in Human Relationships,* (London: Routledge, 2011), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=1039330>, [accessed 17 March 2023], p. 37.
[37] Hardy, p. 47.
[38] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 33.
[39] Pat Rogers, 'Transport' in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. by Janet M. Todd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 425-433 (p. 425).
[40] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 32-33.
[41] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 32.

stockings',[42] her appearance at Netherfield is surprising, not only in her reason for coming alone, but also her physical appearance upon arrival:

> That she should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by herself, was almost incredible to Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and Elizabeth was convinced that they held her in contempt for it.[43]

While the reactions of Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley are a means of critiquing the societal expectation of women at the time, it is not an unusual reaction for the situation. Elizabeth does not heed her mother's warning that her guests may have a concern for her appearance. What is surprising here is Mr. Darcy's reaction to Elizabeth's appearance. At this stage in the novel, Mr. Darcy's characterisation as a proud, high-ranking man with exceptional manners would have readers believe that he would hold Elizabeth in the same contempt as Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley do for her appearance and would not find her independence of spirit an attractive or marriageable quality. However, his reaction is quite the opposite. Mr. Darcy is conflicted between 'admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given to her complexion, and doubt as to the occasion's justifying her coming so far alone'.[44] While the point of this scene is to further develop Elizabeth as a character, it also shows Mr. Darcy's struggle as he comes to terms with falling in love with a woman outside the norms of conventional feminine behaviour.

The reaction of Jane Bennet to reinforces that Elizabeth's choice to walk to Netherfield alone is an unconventional one. Jane is, at this point in the novel, being courted by Mr. Bingley, the eligible, rich bachelor who has recently moved to Meryton, and who Mrs. Bennet hopes will marry Jane to further the hopes of her other daughters marrying. It is Jane's letter informing her family of her illness that prompts Elizabeth to go to Netherfield; however, Jane 'had only been withheld by the fear of giving alarm or inconvenience, from expressing in her note how

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[42] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 33.
[43] Austen, Pride and Prejudice, p. 33.
[44] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 33.

much she longed for such a visit', and when Elizabeth goes to leave in the afternoon, 'Jane testified such concern in parting with her, that Miss Bingley was obliged to convert the offer of the chaise into an invitation to remain at Netherfield'.[45] Jane is the conventional nineteenth century woman: she does not want to cause concern, and when she does, it is done politely and without too much of a fuss. She knows her place and is respectful to her superiors, whether that be of class or sex. She is the type of woman that is essentially useless without a husband or a father, the type of woman that Wollstonecraft warns of: 'But, alas! she has never thought, much less acted for herself. She has only learned to please men, to depend gracefully on them'.[46]

Jane's characterisation is similar to Charlotte Lucas's, Elizabeth's neighbour, and dear friend. Charlotte also knows her place and worries about the burden her singledom places on her family. Her marriage to Mr. Collins benefits her family, as 'the younger girls formed hopes of *coming out* a year or two sooner than they might otherwise have done; and the boys were relieved from their apprehension of Charlotte's dying an old maid'.[47]As she explains to Elizabeth, 'I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is…fair'.[48] Lynda A. Hall argues that 'Charlotte Lucas's story illustrates the desperation of many women with few choices, demonstrating the social constructions that defined those choice's and illustrating the confinement of women within the social structure of the long eighteenth century'.[49] The characterisation of both Charlotte and Jane, while different from Elizabeth, is the expected behaviour of a single woman in the nineteenth century, and their outlook highlights Elizabeth's departure from the norms of the period.

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[45] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 33-34.
[46] Wollstonecraft, p. 89.
[47] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 120.
[48] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 123.
[49] Lynda A. Hall, *Women and "Value" in Jane Austen's Novels: Settling, Speculating and Superfluity*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50736-1>, [accessed 27 June 2023], p. 68.

Lydia Bennet, on the other hand, is an atypical nineteenth-century woman, like Elizabeth, but without her with and empathy. Unlike Elizabeth, Lydia is unconcerned about her sister's illness, and when Elizabeth decides to walk to Netherfield to see Jane, Lydia and Catherine (Kitty) Bennet decide to go with her 'as far as Meryton'.[50] Lydia, excited at the venture to Meryton, declares 'If we make haste…perhaps we may see something of Captain Carter before he goes.'[51] When Mrs. Bennet goes to check on Jane the day after Elizabeth's arrival, Lydia and Kitty also attend with her. Instead of being polite and showing concern and sympathy for Jane's current situation, Lydia and Kitty whisper to each other the whole time, and at the end of the visit, Lydia accosts Mr. Bingley and asks him when he will have his promised ball.[52] Mr. Bingley is all politeness, and agrees to have the ball when Jane has recovered, which Lydia agrees to: '"Oh! yes – it would be much better to wait till Jane was well, and by that time most likely Captain Carter would be at Meryton again."'[53]

Lydia and Jane both hold qualities in the extreme, but these are also characteristics that Elizabeth shares: Lydia is selfish, which Elizabeth has displayed characteristics of; and Jane is altruistic, which Elizabeth also can be, especially when it comes to her immediate family. Elizabeth is not only Austen's most loved heroine, but she is also Wollstonecraft's ideal pre-feminist woman:

> …a woman of tolerable understanding…whose constitution, strengthened by exercise, has allowed her body to acquire its full vigour; her mind, at the same time, gradually expanding itself to comprehend the moral duties of life, and in what human virtue and dignity consist. Formed thus by the relative duties of her station, she marries from

[50] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 33.
[51] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 33.
[52] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 45.
[53] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 45.

> affection, without losing sight of prudence, and looking beyond matrimonial felicity, she secures her husband's respect…[54]

While Austen does reward Jane with a happy marriage to Mr. Bingley and punishes Lydia in a sense with her marriage to Mr. Wickham, neither of them end up in the ideal circumstance of Elizabeth, happily married and incredibly wealthy.

In contrast to Elizabeth being the ideal pre-feminist woman, the characterisation of Lydia is of importance. Lydia is a very significant character in terms of gender performance, not only in her opposition to Elizabeth, but also as a woman holding the same societal rank as Elizabeth and Jane. Mr. Bennet claims that being '"silly and ignorant"' is a trait held by most young women except for Elizabeth, something Mrs. Bennet refutes as she scolds Mr. Bennet for abusing his children.[55] It is hard to know which parent to believe. Mr. Bennet is entirely biased when it comes to Elizabeth, as is Mrs. Bennet when it comes to Jane, Lydia, and Kitty. However, Lydia often disregards the opinions of others, especially that of her father. After Lydia and Kitty return from their aunt Mrs. Phillips' house and discuss the officers at length, Mr. Bennet says '"From all that I can collect by your manner of talking, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country. I have suspected it some time, but I am now convinced."'[56] Mrs. Bennet again scolds her husband for abusing their children, but the reaction of the sisters here is noteworthy: 'Catherine was disconcerted, and made no answer; but Lydia, with perfect indifference, continued to express her admiration of Captain Carter, and her hope of seeing him in the course of the day'.[57]

Lydia also disrespects Mr. Collins when he decides to read to the Bennet family from *Fordyce's Sermons* on the first evening of his stay at Longbourn. She interrupts his reading gossip about the militia, and while she 'was bid by her two eldest sisters to hold her tongue'

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[54] Wollstonecraft, p. 91.
[55] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 7.
[56] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 30.
[57] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 30.

Mr. Collins is offended and stops reading, commenting 'how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit'.[58] Lydia is similar to Kitty in her silliness, however, she is similar to Elizabeth in her disdain for social conventions. While Elizabeth chooses to ignore social conventions because she thinks them silly, Lydia chooses to ignore them out of ignorance and disrespect. Lydia is also not pre-feminist, because she is entirely focused on finding a husband and thereby supporting the patriarchy, where Elizabeth only wants marriage if it is a marriage of love.

Lydia's unwillingness to listen to people and take advice is punished thought her marriage to Mr. Wickham. Even Wollstonecraft, a radical pre-feminist in the eighteenth century, encouraged manners and respect to foster an equal society.[59] Austen encourages respect and change in *Pride and Prejudice,* something Kitty can achieve after Lydia has been married and her companion becomes the middle sister, Mary Bennet. Lydia is therefore not punished for being a woman with agency, she is punished for being a woman who disrespects all bounds of society.

Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*

Joe Wright's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was commercially and critically successful after its 2005 release, ten years after the BBC mini-series, directed by Andrew Davies and starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth in the title roles.[60] Firth's Mr. Darcy was so successful he spawned the Romanticised Regency trope of a dark-haired man in a wet white shirt

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[58] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 67.
[59] Wollstonecraft, p. 84.
[60] The film was nominated for four Academy Awards (Best Actress, Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design and Best Original Score: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 'Experience Over Nine Decades of the OSCARS from 1927 to 2023', *Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences* (2022), <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/2006>, [accessed 21 July 2023]) and made $121.6 million at the box office against a $28 million budget. (The Numbers, 'Pride & Prejudice (2005)', *Nash Information Servies, LLC* (2023), <https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Pride-and-Prejudice-(2005)#tab=summary>, [accessed 21 July 2023]).

gallivanting across the English countryside, and reprised the role in the modernised adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice, Bridget Jones's Diary.* While some 'critics complained that [Wright] popularized Austen's celebrated romance and brought her novel to the screen as an easy visual read for an undemanding mainstream audience', the film stood on its own merit. [61] Wright created an adaptation where all the major plot points of Jane Austen's novel were included, and he further developed the characterisation of the heroine Elizabeth Bennet to make her a feminist figure rather than a woman with pre-feminist behaviour. Wright's film *Pride and Prejudice* is both a form of transposition, as it takes Austen's novel and 'is directly given on the screen', and yet it is also a commentary, as the film has 'purposely or inadvertently altered [the novel] in some respect.'[62] Wright's alterations include enhancing the characterisation Elizabeth Bennet, and her change to a feminist figure in the film is an example of Patrick Cattrysse's ipsative adapation, as her characterisation has changed 'in order to better fit its new and changing environment', that being twenty-first century society.[63]

This section of the chapter will include an analysis of Elizabeth in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* and argue that the performance of gender in this film transitions the performance of Elizabeth from pre-feminist to Romantic feminist. Romantic feminist is a term coined for this thesis to highlight both the twenty-first century feminist sensibilities of the film, and the film's use of some of the key tropes of Romanticism to code Elizabeth's gender performance in both a period and contemporary way. In researching Romanticism, modern scholars like Hugh Honor claim that 'Definitions of Romanticism tend to be so general as to include a bewildering

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[61] Maureen Sabine, 'With My Body I Thee Worship: Joe Wright's Erotic Vision in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)', *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture,* 20 (2008), *Gale Academic OneFile*, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/A196832886/AONE?u=waikato&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=3aff5652> [accessed 21 March 2023].

[62] Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1975), pp. 222-223.

[63] Patrick Cattrysse, 'An Evolutionary View of Cultural Adaptation' in *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, edited by Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs and Eckart Voights (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 40-54 (p. 41), Taylor and Francis eBooks, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/edit/10.4324/9781315690254/routledge-companion-adaptation-cutchins-dennis-krebs-katja-voigts-eckart> [accessed 30 August 2021].

number of characteristics.'[64] To read Elizabeth as a Romantic feminist is to take three tropes of Romanticism and identify them in Knightley's performance and Wright's direction of the character. These are: the positioning of Elizabeth in nature, as Romantics often admired 'the wilder natural phenomena [of] mountains, waterfalls, [and] storms at sea';[65] the independence of Elizabeth, as most Romantics idealised 'personal and political liberty';[66] and the heightened emotion she often displays, as Romantics placed 'supreme value…on the artist's sensibility and emotional "authenticity"'.[67] Elizabeth's performance of these Romantic qualities are also feminist because she is promoting the value of women and herself above that of the male ruling class.

An important scene in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* is Elizabeth's walk from Longbourn to Netherfield. The scene itself is awkward, beautiful, and a pivotal moment for character development. Elizabeth immediately assigns herself to the position of independent woman as she abandons the family chores that her sisters and mother are engaging in to walk to Netherfield to visit her sick sister Jane. In Austen's novel, the conservation Elizabeth has with her parents about her journey to Netherfield is an important section because it shows Elizabeth's disregard for the expectations of female behaviour.[68] However, in the film, Elizabeth claims 'I must go to Netherfield at once', and makes her own way there, further establishing her independence.[69] Wright emphasises this independence with an extreme long shot of Elizabeth walking through the English countryside by herself. The camera is stable as Elizabeth moves across the screen, and there is a moody sky in the background, with some soft piano and bird noises, highlighting the solitude Elizabeth finds in her walk.[70] There is a division

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[64] Hugh Honour, *Romanticism*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), Taylor & Francis Group, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429497551>, [accessed 21 July 2023], p. 13.
[65] Honor, p. 12.
[66] Honor, p. 19.
[67] Honor, p. 20.
[68] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 32-33.
[69] *Pride and Prejudice,* dir. by Joe Wright (Universal Pictures and Focus Features, 2005) [on Netflix].
[70] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

between diegetic and non-diegetic sound throughout the film. Where a period piano is used, the sound in diegetic. In this scene, where an historic modern piano is heard playing over the top of the natural sounds of the countryside, a non-diegetic sound, the scene becomes Romanticised, as it highlights the solitary nature of Elizabeth's walk. This scene also places Elizabeth in a pastoral space, a space often occupied by male figures.[71]

A scene later in the film also situates Elizabeth in a pastoral setting, where Elizabeth's lone figure on a hilltop, her skirts and hair flowing in the wind, evokes Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*.[72] Freidrich's painting is an example of Romantic art, as the heroic figure is exploring 'the blissful enjoyment of a beautiful view' and having 'an encounter with the Spiritual self through the contemplation of nature'.[73] Friedrich's painting also evokes the sublime as defined by Immanuel Kant: 'The feeling of it is sometimes accompanied with some dread or even melancholy, in some cases merely with quiet admiration and in yet others with a beauty spread over a sublime prospect.'[74] Positioning Elizabeth in a posture similar to that of Friedrich's figure indicates that she can be coded as a Romantic heroine. Both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy have been presented by Wright as Romantic figures because he presents 'them in terms of the Romantic conception of the self' in which they are 'autonomous, all-consuming, and…isolated'.[75] Elizabeth occupying a space that has often been held by men in art identifies

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[71] Terry Gifford, *Pastoral,* 2nd ed. (Milton: Routledge, 2019).

[72] Caspar David Friedrich, *Wander above the Sea of Fog,* 1818, painting, 94.8 x 74.8 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-unraveling-mysteries-caspar-david-friedrichs-wanderer>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[73] Migeul Angel Gaete, "From Caspar David Friedrich's Wanderer above the Sea of Fog to the iCloud: A Comparative Analysis between the Romantic Concept of the Sublime and Cyberspace", *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, (43.2, 2020), pp. 59+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A643530332/AONE?u=waikato&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=7c79b5f1, accessed 28 June 2023.

[74] Immanuel Kant, "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime", in *Kant: Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings: Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, ed. by Patrick Frierson, and Paul Guyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?docID=647374>, [accessed 21 July 2023], p. 16.

[75] Sarah Ailwood, '"What are Men to Rocks and Mountains?" Romanticism in Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal on-Line*, 27.2 (2007) *ProQuest*,

her as a feminist character. As highlighted by Susan Fraiman, the scene on the hilltop 'is not the image of a woman whose wings have been clipped'.[76] These two scenes in Wright's film develop the characterisation of Elizabeth into a feminist, as she maintains her independence from others and experiences liberation on her walks. This is a feminism framed by both twenty-first-century understandings of the term and a Romantic privileging of qualities such as autonomy, emotional sincerity, and connection to nature.

Elizabeth has two verbal spars with Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and both are a display of feminism in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice.* However, the most pertinent scene with Lady Catherine and Elizabeth is the confrontation scene at Longbourn when Lady Catherine asks Elizabeth if she is engaged to Mr. Darcy. This scene plays out a little differently than it does in the novel. Firstly, it is much more dramatic. Lady Catherine, played by Judi Dench, arrives in the middle of the night, waking up the Bennet family and demanding to speak to Elizabeth. This not only veers away from Austen's original novel, but is also historically inaccurate, as Lady Catherine would not turn up in the middle of the night unless someone had died, and a supposed engagement is not that urgent. However, it does show for a modern audience the importance of the question for Lady Catherine.

The shift in medium from a novel to a film means that the dialogue is much shorter, therefore, Elizabeth's body language, as performed by Keira Knightley, is much more significant. Initially, she starts the scene with Lady Catherine small, with her shoulders slightly hunched and her hands laced in front of her body. She holds little tension and appears to be receptive to Lady Catherine's initial enquiries. However, as the scene goes on, and Lady

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http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-are-men-rocks-mountains-romanticism-joe/docview/2309798135/se-2 [accessed 21 March 2023].

[76] Susan Fraiman, 'The Liberation of Elizabeth Bennet in Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice', Persuasions : The Jane Austen Journal on-Line*, 31.1 (2010), *ProQuest*, http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/liberation-elizabeth-bennet-joe-wright-s-i-pride/docview/2309791304/se-2 [accessed 21 March 2023].

Catherine begins to insult Elizabeth and her family during her questioning, Elizabeth becomes more upright in her posture. Her shoulders draw back, her face becomes harder, and her tone is harsh. Her strength is shown more through her posturing and facial expression than in her words. It is only after Lady Catherine leaves that the audience realises how hard this conversation is for Elizabeth, as she rushes up the stairs, yelling at her family to leave her alone.[77] This is another example of how Wright has transitioned Elizabeth into a feminist figure. She stands up to Lady Catherine, and in so doing reasserts her position as someone with rights, who has been liberated from society's shackles. This scene is important in reinforcing Elizabeth's position as one of strength, even against the great rage of a woman trying to force her back down. This scene yet again reflects Wright's investment in nineteenth-century Romanticism, as it is heated with emotion from both Lady Catherine and Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's outburst at the end of the encounter evokes the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' as described by Wordsworth.[78] Through her encounter with Lady Catherine, Elizabeth is portrayed as a liberated woman who is Romantic.

In Wright's adaptation, Mr. Collins serves a different purpose than the novel, but nowhere is it more apparent than in the proposal scene. Mr. Collins is still absurd in his proposal to Elizabeth, but at no point does she find his proposal funny. The moment when Mr. Collins chooses to ask Elizabeth for her hand is directly after the Netherfield ball, when everyone is in some state of disrepair. Mr. Collins asks Mrs. Bennet for a private audience with Elizabeth, which sends the rest of the Bennet family into an uproar. When everyone has left, Mr. Collins presents Elizabeth with a small flower before awkwardly popping the question.[79] Not only is the proposal a source of comedic relief in the film, it also demonstrates Mr. Collins's weakness

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[77] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

[78] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads,* ed. by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Michael Mason, 2nd. edition (England: Pearson Longman, 2007), Taylor & Francis eBooks, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/edit/10.4324/9781315834511/lyrical-ballads-michael-mason-john-mullan>, [accessed 21 July 2023], p. 62.

[79] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

when faced with a feminist like Elizabeth. Elizabeth has a strong argument against getting married, says very few words, and is more physically domineering than Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins is bumbling, shy, and awkward. This scene further strengthens Knightley's performance of Elizabeth as a character displaying twenty-first century feminist traits, as she stands up to a man and refuses to give up her freedom to appease the wants of others, namely Mrs. Bennet. Afterwards, Elizabeth goes to find solace by the pond near Longbourn house, another natural setting, further placing her as a Romantic feminist finding comfort in the pastoral.

Mr. Darcy's first rejected proposal to Elizabeth is entirely different to the one she rejects from Mr. Collins. Where the proposal from Mr. Collins is a source of comedic relief, the proposal from Mr. Darcy is framed through the lens of Wright's brand of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Just before the proposal, Elizabeth can be seen running across a bridge in the rain, and the camera finally gets a close-up shot of her dirty hem. As she stops under a pagoda to get some shelter and catch her breath, with views of the English countryside and gardens behind her, Mr. Darcy approaches, also soaking wet, and asks for her hand in marriage. In the filmic medium, there is more concern with the visual aspect of the performance, rather than the spoken, and so Elizabeth does not acknowledge her need to behave in a particular way as she does in the novel. Instead, she is direct in her rejection, and advises Mr. Darcy that while she is not laughing at him, she is 'sure that the feelings which, as you've told me, have hindered your regard, will help you in overcoming it.'[80] In this scene, there is a moment where Mr. Darcy gets closer to Elizabeth as she asks him about Mr. Wickham, and while he is angry and intends to be intimidating, she does not take a step back, and instead stands her ground. In fact, in her passionate anger at Mr. Darcy's words, she moves forward slightly, trying to intimidate him to move, while she tells him that 'From the first moment I met you, your arrogance and conceit,

[80] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

your selfish disdain for the feelings of others, made me realise that you were the last man in the world I could ever be prevailed upon to marry'.[81] There is a moment of tension in the close-up shot of the pair as they almost touch, but instead of kissing her, Mr. Darcy apologises and walks away, while Elizabeth finally takes a step back. As previously discussed, the Romantic philosophy privileged heightened feelings of emotion, and encouraged emotional authenticity from its artists. In this scene, Elizabeth is emotional as she displays her anger at Mr. Darcy, her chest heaving and her eyes getting wider as the conversation continues. Her rejection of Mr. Darcy is feminist, as she is not worried about social norms or conventions in her interaction under the pagoda. This scene is an example of ipsative adaptation, as the rejection has been moved from the domestic space of a house, where Elizabeth shows some emotion, to a garden pagoda that shelters Elizabeth from the rain but not from her overly emotional reaction to Mr. Darcy's declaration of love.

Maureen Sabine has noted that the setting of the proposal scene, being a pastoral garden is an 'evocative landscape…for courtship, foreplay, and lovemaking…[and] Wright's rain-soaked couple plays out a wet dream that does not climax in passionate jouissance'.[82] After the rejected proposal, Elizabeth walks around the Collins's house sadly, constantly looking out the window in a state of undress. As the light in the room transitions to night, Mr. Darcy appears behind her with a letter.[83] This is very reminiscent of the Gothic, a theme that explores the 'interplay of light and dark'.[84] As the audience hears Mr. Darcy's voiceover read of the letter, Elizabeth turns around to confront him, with the candlelight shining on her face, but he is gone, riding away on horseback in the night as she looks out the window, still illuminated by the candle. All this positions Elizabeth as a Romantic feminist heroine juxtaposed against Mr.

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[81] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.
[82] Sabine.
[83] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.
[84] Fred Botting, *Gothic*, 2nd edition, (London: Routledge, 2014), Taylor & Francis Group, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203487716>, [accessed 21 July 2023], p. 3.

Darcy's hegemonic hero, which will be explored in Chapter Two. Setting the letter scene at night, another contrast to Austen's novel but further evoking Kant's sublime, showcases Elizabeth as liberated enough to make a choice and Romantic enough to regret it.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is a successful web series adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.*[85] The series was released on YouTube in 2012, and episodes were released on a regular basis, in a similar style to a television series. However, because this adaptation also used Twitter and Pinterest to engage their audience, as well as let people comment on the episodes themselves via the YouTube comments section, this adaptation is considered transmedial through its inclusion of multiple sources to tell the narrative. This adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is also an analogy adaptation, defined by Wagner as 'a fairly considerable departure [from the source text] for the sake of making *another* work of art'.[86] In this adaptation, there are only three Bennet sisters, not five, with Catherine (Kitty) Bennet becoming the family cat, and Mary becoming a cousin. Charlotte Lucas becomes Charlotte Lu, and the Bingley's become Bing and Caroline Lee. Lizzie Bennet tells her story through the use of the vlog, essentially a video diary that she shares with her online audience. She is doing this as an assignment for her Master's degree in communication, but shooting the adaptation in this way has flaws, as Lizzie is presenting herself in a particular way, with the assistance of

[85] *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* won four Streamy Awards in two years (Best Writing: Comedy; Best Interactive Program; Best Drama Series; and Best Female Performance: Drama: Streamy Awards, 3rd Annual Winners, *Streamy Awards* (2023), <https://www.streamys.org/nominees-winners/3rd-annual-nominees/>, [accessed 21 July 2023]; Streamy Awards, 4th Annual Winners, *Streamy Awards* (2023), <https://www.streamys.org/nominees-winners/4th-annual-nominees-winners/>, [accessed 21 July 2023]) and a Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Interactive Media – Original Interactive Program (Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, '65th Primetime Emmy Awards', *Academy of Television Arts & Sciences* (2013), <https://www.emmys.com/sites/default/files/2013CreativeArtsEmmysWinners.pdf>, [accessed 21 July 2023]).

[86] Wagner, p. 227.

Charlotte, who edits most of the videos. The title prompts the audience to think about a woman taking control of her narrative, as it is a diary vlog rather than a tale of romance as the novel is. Yet, while this transmedia adaptation has a more diverse cast than other *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, (something that will not be discussed in this chapter of the thesis as it has no impact on Lizzie's performance of gender), it has also developed Lizzie Bennet into a heroine without agency and liberation, which this section of the chapter will explore. [87]

The dirty dress that is a central symbol in both Austen's novel and Wright's film is not mentioned at all in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, nor is there any mention that Lizzie walking by herself to Netherfield is a problem. This is because *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is set in the twenty-first century, and in an urban setting, where walking alone is quite a normal practice. It is also shot in a vlog-style format, where there is a focus on the interior rather than the exterior, so a walking scene would not fit with the rest of the episodes. Instead, director Bernie Su has readdressed the tension in a way that still involves both Lizzie and Jane needing to stay with the Lees. Mrs. Bennet has decided to remodel their house, which means that the sisters must relocate temporarily. Lydia Bennet decides she will go and stay with Mary Bennet, their cousin that Lizzie has forgotten about. Once Lizzie remembers who Mary is, she raises some concern about going there because Mary lives with her mother in a small house, and she is worried that she will sleep in a room with Lydia for two weeks, or on the couch. She is unable to stay with Charlotte Lu, her best friend, as Charlotte lives in an apartment with her family, which Lizzie 'curses' them for.[88] However, Jane has been invited to stay at Bing's for the duration of the renovation and asks Lizzie to stay with her as well. Lizzie puts this all down to a convoluted

[87] Jennifer Camden and Kate Faber Oestreich, *Transmedia Storytelling: Pemberley Digital's Adaptations of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley,* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), p. 55.

[88] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Mom's Convoluted Plan – Ep: 26,* web series, YouTube, 6 July 2012, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xl1iL3vGyNI>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

plan by her mother, who just happened to get the house remodelled at the right time for Jane's social life.

While the different houses and locations showcase wealth in real estate,[89] what is most crucial to this thesis is Lizzie's need to be rescued. Lizzie relies on the rest of her family to organise a place for her during the renovation. Her motivations for staying with Jane have also changed from the original novel, as she is staying with the Lees out of selfish want, not out of care for Jane. As she indicates in both episodes twenty-six and twenty-seven, she and her family are 'homeless' for the period of the renovation.[90] Lizzie is a woman to be saved, in dire need of someone to rescue her from the nightmare of living with members of her family she dislikes. As Jane exclaims 'Oh my gosh! I should ask him to let you stay' and concludes with 'Bing said you are welcome to stay with us', she and Bing are offering Lizzie an escape from an unfortunate circumstance.[91] Lizzie, in this adaptation, is not leading the charge, nor has she been liberated from the shackles of the patriarchy. Instead, she is a postfeminist woman reliant on others to save her while she figures herself out. Similarly, postfeminist characters in other television shows, like HBO's *Girls,* also struggle with the reliance on others while finding themselves.[92] Just as the main protagonists in *Girls* 'stubbornly adhere to a narcissistic and self-important individualism that authorises entitlement and self-absorption and insists on their right to be heard and rewarded', Lizzie also adheres to this principle, as without a job she is reliant on others to support her.[93] Performing Lizzie in this way not only recategorizes Lizzie,

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[89] The different class dynamics are represented by the different options Lizzie has for housing. While this is a good updating of Austen's class dynamics into the twenty-first century, it is not overly important to the argument of this thesis, so will not be discussed here.

[90] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Mom's Convoluted Plan – Ep: 26*; The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Welcome to Netherfield – Ep: 27,* web series, YouTube, 10 July 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nabp4vu_kv0>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[91] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Mom's Convoluted Plan – Ep: 26*.

[92] *Girls,* (HBO, 2012-2017) [on DVD].

[93] Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism,* 2nd. edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 134.

but also the story, as this adaptation seems to have lost the thread of Austen's original premise of *Pride and Prejudice.*

This leads to the two proposal scenes, which, while they have been updated for a twenty-first century context, do not provide Lizzie with an opportunity to make her own confident decision. Rather, she relies on other commitments to get her out of the obligation. Both Darcy and Ricky offer Lizzie a job in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, which engages this transmedia adaptation in 'a complicitous critique by retaining the economic disparity between male and female characters'.[94] When Ricky, while holding her hand, asks her to become his new business partner at his company Collins and Collins, Lizzie looks befuddled, almost as if she was expecting a proposal of marriage. By the end of Ricky's explanation for why he wants Lizzie as his business partner, which the audience only hears as 'firstly… secondly …thirdly … and finally', Lizzie is holding her head in her hands as a sign of her disgruntlement.[95] When Ricky brings up Catherine de Bourgh, the venture capitalist of his company, Lizzie protests that 'she can't possibly approve of someone that is still in grad school'.[96] Lizzie does tell Ricky that she cannot be his business partner, and when he responds that she is unlikely to be made a similar offer, her response is to kick him out of her bedroom, slam the door in his face, and exclaim 'what the eff?'[97] This is one glimpse of feminism that Lizzie performs in a similar way to Elizabeth Bennet. She is strong in her exclamation and her removal of Ricky from her personal space. Yet she is rejecting a job offer, not a proposal, and while she has liberated her personal space from masculine dominance, she is not able to do that outside of her bedroom.

While Lizzie was able to tell Ricky no, the updating of this scene to a business proposal rather than a marriage proposal is significant. It is easy to assume that Lizzie's rejection of the

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[94] Camden and Oestreich, p. 55.
[95] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, The Insistent Proposal – Ep: 39,* web series, YouTube, 21 August 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmZzaAsPHNo>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[96] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, The Insistent Proposal – Ep: 39.*
[97] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, The Insistent Proposal – Ep: 39.*

proposal is feminist; however, she has often asked for assistance from men before, and has often complained about her lack of job opportunities as a graduate student. Ricky, though he is also ridiculous in this adaptation, seems to be rescuing her from the stress of graduate life. Charlotte accepts the position at Collins and Collins and can move out of the apartment that Lizzie complained about her living in in a previous episode. While Lizzie is upset because she was offered a job she did not want, Charlotte jumps at the opportunity, and uses it to establish her career in media and herself as a single woman. As pointed out by Camden and Oestreich, 'In modernizing Mr. Collins's marriage proposal as a job offer, the series rewards Charlotte's experience in producing and editing Lizzie's videos'.[98] This makes Charlotte more relatable and sympathetic to a modern audience engaging in the narrative online, supported by comments on this episode. @chadandsonny123 comments that Charlotte 'just finessed herself into a whole business partnership wow that's goals' and @Chibihugs reiterates that 'Regardless of the time period, Charlotte is out there securing her future. Well played.'[99] Lizzie remains living at home for the remainder of the series, and while she does get a job in the end, she is not yet entirely liberated, as she knows she will have the success of her partner, Darcy, to rely on if she needs to. While Ricky's proposal was for a job offer, Darcy's first proposal is not.

The proposal that Lizzie rejects from Darcy is entirely different to the one that she rejects from Ricky. Firstly, it doesn't take place in her bedroom; it instead takes place in an office at Collins and Collins, where she is currently filming her vlogs while she visits Charlotte. She is also wearing a dress with short sleeves, instead of a singlet with multiple straps, and her hair has been styled.[100] The actors chose clothing for their characters themselves, and Ashley Clements, the actress who portrays Lizzie, has stated that she wears dresses for scenes with

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[98] Camden and Oestreich, p. 55.

[99] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, *Your Pitch Needs Work – Ep: 41,* web series, YouTube, 28 August 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALaDHIpJvRM>, [accessed 21 July 2023], comments section.

[100] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, *Are You Kidding Me! – Ep: 60,* web series, YouTube, 2 November 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALaDHIpJvRM>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

Lizzie and Darcy on camera because she wants Lizzie to be more 'feminine' and to 'feel pretty'.[101] However, her reaction to his proposal is anything but feminine. She stares wide-mouthed at the camera when Darcy admits his feelings toward her, and she rejects him straight away. But this rejection, instead of being a debate of pride, prejudice, and morals, is instead an argument about social class and wealth. While the class difference between Mr. Darcy and Eizabeth is a factor in Austen's novel, it is hard to fathom why it should be a factor in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. In the twenty-first century, class systems still exist, but because of the commercialisation of the modern world, it is much easier to move between them. Even Prince William married a "commoner". For Darcy to bring up class, claiming that 'social class is a real thing', as part of the reason why he has tried not to like Lizzie is strange for a twenty-first century setting.[102] And yet, Lizzie never steers away from the discussion about class and wealth, and instead she agrees with it.

There is no declaration that Lizzie rejects Darcy because she has a right to say no, and instead she rejects him because of his behaviour toward her family and friends. This scene is almost exactly the proposal scene from Austen's novel, just condensed and updated to the twenty-first century. Lizzie tells Darcy that part of her rejection is because:

> …the nicest thing you have ever said about me was that I was "decent enough", you act like you would rather have a hernia repaired than be around me, you have a checklist for what makes an accomplished woman, and don't even get me started on what you did to Jane.[103]

There is not a change in Lizzie's reasoning for rejecting Darcy, and while her rejection of him in a nineteenth-century context makes her character pre-feminist, placing this rejection in a twenty-first century context, where women have rights and agency to say no, removes Lizzie's

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[101] Ashley Clements, 'Lizzies Clothes', *Tumblr*, 6 April 2013, <https://lizziesclothes.tumblr.com/>, [accessed 3 April 2023].
[102] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Are You Kidding Me! – Ep: 60.*
[103] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Are You Kidding Me! – Ep: 60.*

liberation from the patriarchy and makes her a postfeminist further entrenched in male dominated systems. Her rejection of Darcy is steeped in old reasons that do not make modern sense, and they do not make her the strong, independent woman an audience may have hoped to see. Instead, they make her a woman so ingrained in the commercial, patriarchal society of the twenty-first century that she cannot even speak for herself in rejecting a man.

Another thing of note in the *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is the lack of Catherine de Bourgh in the webseries. Ms. Catherine de Bourgh is an enigmatic figure that never appears on screen, and her presence is instead felt through mentions of her, and the driving force of her power behind the two production companies, Collins and Collins and Pemberley Digital. Because of this, the confrontation scene Elizabeth has with Lady Catherine instead becomes a bickering cat fight between Lizzie and Caroline Lee. Instead of getting this empowering scene where Elizabeth asserts her dominance and sticks up for her rights as a woman, the characters instead perform lines such as 'You're crazy!' and 'I'm just trying to figure out how to live my life'.[104] While this adaptation is trying to place *Pride and Prejudice* in a modern context, and removing Lady Catherine does that, it weakens this particular scene and Lizzie is performed as a postfeminist woman who cannot work out her life until she has found a man who is rich and can offer her a job, just like her mother always wanted. Likewise, Caroline is so afraid of "losing" Darcy that she informs Lizzie that she is ruining his life, and that Lizzie and Darcy as a couple would be 'disastrous'.[105] These women are not the women who can have it all, instead, they are both lost and bitter until they can find the man of their dreams. This reworking of the scene not only weakens these women but strengthens the patriarchal hold society has over them.

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[104] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, End of the Line – Ep: 95,* web series, YouTube, 12 March 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdT1DRAoBKc>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[105] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, End of the Line – Ep: 95.*

One of the most important characters that has been updated for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is Lydia. Her transition from a silly girl who rejects all societal conventions to one who is the victim of revenge porn is not only jarring, but also the best example in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* of updating a character's arc to best reflect twenty-first century feminist values. Lydia still shares similarities with the original character in Austen's novel, but her story is different. While she is initially attracted to George Wickham, and even flirts with him in Lizzie's bedroom, she does not end up in a romantic relationship with him at the end of the series. In fact, she is heartbroken by him, in a way that is very public but makes Lydia's precarious situation from Austen's novel real to a twenty-first century audience.

Lydia and George go to Las Vegas, and Lydia documents the trip on her spin-off series, *The Lydia Bennet!*[106] During this trip, George films himself and Lydia having sex with Lydia's consent, and through this act, Lydia identifies herself as a do-me feminist, a woman who 'employs her physical appearance and sexuality in order to achieve personal…objectives and gain control over her life'.[107] However, George betrays Lydia's trust and threatens to release the sex tape publicly without Lydia's consent. This video being released could have major implications on Lydia's future in the working world because of the permanency of digital technology. As Lizzie says, 'the internet is forever'.[108] Lydia initially receives judgement for the video from Lizzie, who asks her 'Have you lost your mind?'[109] This event 'recasts Lydia as the emotional martyr of the narrative' and demonstrates that 'even with greater sexual freedom and equality, women remain vulnerable to unscrupulous men'.[110] Through Lydia's

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[106] Pemberley Digital, *The Lydia Bennet,* online vlog, YouTube, 14 July 2012 to 13 January 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/@TheLydiaBennet/videos> [accessed 14 July 2023].

[107] Genz and Brabon, p. 140.

[108] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Consequences – Ep: 85,* web series, YouTube, 5 February 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97SJYdxQPcg>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[109] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Consequences – Ep: 85.*

[110] Lori Halvorsen Zerne, 'Ideology in The Lizzie Bennet Diaries', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal Online*, 34.1, (2013), <http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/ideology-i-lizzie-bennet-diaries/docview/2309791219/se-2>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

story, the web series engages in a postfeminist discourse, where the paradox of feminist and chauvinist is at play, asking the audience if Lydia can be both victim and perpetrator. As discussed by Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon, there are 'varying degrees of 'freedom' and 'boundedness', with critics vigorously debating as to where this precarious balance lies'.[111] Lydia is a feminist character, but her story suggests that there is a long way to go in this modern era, as women continue to navigate the lines between empowerment and subordination.

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This chapter has argued that the characterisation of Elizabeth Bennet has changed when she is adapted for different mediums. In Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice,* she is a pre-feminist figure echoing Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of The Rights of Women.* In Wright's 2005 film adaptation, she is a Romantic feminist who is positioned visually in a pastoral setting historically associated with men. However, in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* all this development is lost as Lizzie is placed in a commercial society where she is entrenched by the patriarchy, and her sister Lydia instead becomes the feminist figure who believes in herself and her rights over the power of men. When Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* is adapted as a transposition and a commentary, as in a direct novel-to-film adaptation, ipsative adaptive styles mean that Elizabeth can become a feminist icon in the twenty-first century, strengthening the characterisation of Austen's pre-feminist heroine. But when Austen's novel becomes an analogy adaptation and a transmedia work, it centres the central heroine as a postfeminist woman dominated by patriarchal structures she cannot escape. This has an impact on a younger, more modern twenty-first-century audience watching *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* as it reinforces the need for male domination to gain twenty-first century success.

[111] Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism,* 2nd. edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 153.

Chapter Two – Discourses of Masculinity in *Pride and Prejudice*

> 'You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. *My* affections and wishes are unchanged; but one word from you will silence me on this subject for ever.' Mr. Darcy, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen[1]
>
> 'You have bewitched me body and soul and I love, I love, I love you.' Mr. Darcy, *Pride and Prejudice* adapted by Joe Wright[2]
>
> 'I could use some further illumination on some points, however.' (starts kissing Lizzie) Mr. Darcy, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*[3]

Unlike the change in Elizabeth Bennet's performance of gender that has occurred throughout adaptations, the gender performance of Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy has remained mostly static.[4] As the above quotes show, Mr. Darcy shows his love and affection to Elizabeth in all three iterations of *Pride and Prejudice* that this thesis will discuss, although they get more passionate or more emotional depending on the form of the adaptation. The performance of Mr. Darcy, while tailored for the medium it is being performed in, stays constant throughout adaptations, a reflection that hegemonic gentry masculinity has not changed for over two hundred years. In the original novel, Mr. Darcy declares his affections in a subdued manner to a pre-feminist Elizabeth Bennet; in Joe Wright's film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* he is much more enchanted by the Romantic feminist character and more openly admits his love for Elizabeth; and in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* Mr. Darcy shows his emotions through a more physical

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[1] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* ed. by Vivien Jones (Penguin: London, 1996), p. 346.
[2] *Pride and Prejudice,* dir. by Joe Wright (Universal Pictures and Focus Features, 2005) [on Netflix].
[3] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Gratitude – Ep: 98,* web series, YouTube, 22 March 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ncnZjwF50k>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[4] Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy will be referred to as Mr. Darcy for the novel *Pride and Prejudice* and Joe Wright's film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* as he is an historic figure in these stories. He will be referred to as Darcy in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* as this a twenty-first adaptation.

display of feelings. While “hegemonic masculinity” was not a term coined in the nineteenth century when Jane Austen was writing and publishing, the expectations of a gentleman during that time have been well documented. These social guides detail the hegemonic gender expectations for men in that social group (the upper class) in that location (Britain) in that era (the nineteenth century).

This chapter will analyse Mr. Darcy’s performance of gender through *Pride and Prejudice* and its relevant adaptations, while juxtaposing his performance with those of three other significant male figures, Mr. Collins, Mr. Bingley, and Mr. Wickham. Mr. Collins, the cousin of the Bennet family, performs subordinate masculinity, while local soldier, Mr. Wickham, plays the toxic masculine role juxtaposed against Mr. Darcy’s heroism. Mr. Bingley, on the other hand, represents new money and a man trying to fit into the expected performance of hegemonic gentry masculinity, performing complicit masculinity in the process. This chapter will explore the behaviour of these male characters in three key themes from *Pride and Prejudice* that are transposed across all adaptive mediums. The first section, focusing on the economics of marriage, looks at the significance of proposing in *Pride and Prejudice* and its adaptations. The second section juxtaposes Mr. Darcy, Mr. Collins and Mr. Bingley in dancing and courtship, to contrast hegemonic and subordinate masculinity. Finally, attention turns to the characterisation of Mr. Wickham, a very different performance of masculinity in the form of toxicity.

The Economics of Marriage

Marriage was a financial contract in the nineteenth century, as it bound men and women together until one member of the partnership died. While divorce did occur, it was uncommon because it went against religious beliefs, and it would mean the dissolution of estates. Women were often married with dowries, and the larger the dowry, the more likely they were to make

a good match. Miss Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice,* for example, has a dowry of £30,000, making her a good match for any member of the gentry class, and a match above Mr. Wickham's station. Given the economic importance of marriage in nineteenth-century society, the act of proposing was also socially significant, as it promised a financial and social contract. Money is an important theme in *Pride and Prejudice.* In the first chapter, Mrs. Bennet explains her delight at 'A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year' arriving in Longbourn, and what that prospect means for her daughters.[5] As marriage and the economy were tied together in the nineteenth century, each female figure in Austen's novels is assessed by her marriage 'market value'.[6] The assessors of that market value were men, because only they could propose to women.[7] This section of the chapter will analyse the importance of the economy to masculine behaviour by examining three proposals in the novel: Mr. Collins to Elizabeth, performing subordinated masculinity; Mr. Darcy to Elizabeth (twice), performing hegemonic gentry masculinity in both proposals; and Mr. Bingley to Jane Bennet, trying to achieve hegemonic gentry masculinity with Mr. Darcy's guidance. This section will also examine how these proposals have been developed in adaptations of the novel to reflect twenty-first-century hegemonic masculinity and the importance of commerciality.

Elizabeth causes Mr. Darcy to change his behaviour as he falls more in love with her. As the two create a connection, Mr. Darcy becomes less proud, and is more honest with Elizabeth. However, at no point does he stop performing the hegemonic masculinity expected of the gentry class. Masculinity in the nineteenth century, while multi-faceted, was 'fundamentally to do with the assertion of men's power over women'.[8] Gentry masculinity, a term coined by R.

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[5] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 6.

[6] Lynda A. Hall, *Women and "Value" in Jane Austen's Novels: Settling, Speculating and Superfluity*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50736-1>, [accessed 27 June 2023], p. 43.

[7] Unlike the twenty-first century, where it is not uncommon for women to propose to men in heterosexual relationships. This analysis also excludes queer proposals.

[8] John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2016), Taylor & Francis EBooks, <https://www-

W. Connell, describes the hegemonic masculinity of the gentry class in the nineteenth century and is a type of masculinity that further enforces a patriarchal social structure. According to Connell, gentry masculinity was 'based in land ownership, …involved in capitalist economic relations…embedded in kinship…[and] was closely integrated with the state'.[9] Mr. Darcy is quickly identifiable as performing hegemonic gentry masculinity in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* by having most of these traits. He 'has a large estate in Derbyshire', his investments bring him an income of 'ten thousand a year', he gets Mr. Wickham an army commission on his marriage to Lydia Bennet, representing his ties to the state, and he is affectionate to his younger sister Georgiana and openly praises her to his peers.[10] However, for all of his wealth, he is not a desirable match to Elizabeth until he undergoes a change in character and becomes less proud.

At the start of the novel, Mr. Darcy is not liked despite his wealth: 'not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared to his friend'.[11] His wealth comes from land ownership, which puts him in the gentry class. As highlighted by Robert Markley, 'Inheritance law ensures the continuity of property and prestige for noble, or as in Darcy's case, near noble families…Pemberley secures Darcy's income.'[12] This is different from Mr. Bingley: while the two are parallel in their social standing, Mr. Bingley is renting Netherfield estate, and his money comes from trade, rather than land.[13] While Mr. Darcy is a gentleman, as Elizabeth acknowledges, his wealth identifies him as a member of the gentry, placing him outside of Elizabeth's rank.[14] He is therefore not looking for someone like her in the marriage market,

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taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mono/10.4324/9781315838533/manliness-masculinities-nineteenth-century-britain-john-tosh >, [accessed 2 March 2023], p. 67.

[9] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities,* 2nd. edition (Crows Nest, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 190.

[10] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* pp. 12, 37, 169.

[11] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 12.

[12] Robert Markley, 'The economic context', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice,* ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 76-96 (p. 86).

[13] More on how this affects Mr. Bingley's performance of masculinity later.

[14] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 337.

which he indicates in his first proposal to her.[15] Mr. Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth is cold and dispassionate; but as a man proposing marriage to someone who does not have similar wealth, this is an almost justified performance of hegemonic gentry masculinity. Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth although he is conflicted by it: '"In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you."'[16] He even asks to be 'rewarded by her acceptance of his hand' as his attachment to her 'in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer'.[17] Mr Darcy is very business-like as he grapples with the struggle between love, rejection, and expected gender performance. His closed-off manner is not because he does not love Elizabeth. It is because he is trying to protect himself, and he risks his wealth and position by marrying Elizabeth, who cannot equally contribute to the maintenance of the Pemberley estate, as her dowry is not a large sum. By masking his emotions, and admitting her social and economic flaws, he ensures that his masculine identity, obtained through wealth, is protected.

Mr. Darcy shows he is a man with the ability to change, and his second proposal to Elizabeth is much more passionate. However, at no point does Mr. Darcy stop performing hegemonic gentry masculinity. Connell notes that gentry masculinity is 'empathetic and violent'.[18] Mr. Darcy does show Elizabeth he is now capable of empathy, having removed his pride: '"It taught me to hope… I knew enough of your disposition to be certain"'.[19] And Mr. Darcy's violence is not a violence of passion for Elizabeth in the novel; instead, he is emotionally violent toward himself when he realises the effects of his pride: '"The recollection of what I then said…[is] inexpressibly painful to me. Your reproof, so well applied, I shall

[15] In fact, he shouldn't even be looking on the marriage market at all, as he has been promised to his cousin Anne de Bourgh, to join the wealth of Rosings and Pemberley; Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 335.
[16] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 185.
[17] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 185.
[18] Connell, p. 190.
[19] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 347.

never forget: "had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner." …you can scarcely conceive how they have tortured me."'[20] While Mr. Darcy does go through a significant character development in the revaluation of his pride, at no point does he stop performing hegemonic gentry masculinity.

The second proposal of Mr. Darcy to Elizabeth comes soon after the successful proposal of Mr. Bingley to Jane Bennet. Mr. Bingley, at the end of *Pride and Prejudice,* is now allowed to marry Jane with Mr. Darcy's blessing. It is worth considering why Mr. Bingley seeks Mr. Darcy's approval at all. As a man of free will who also has wealth, he does not need Mr. Darcy's permission. However, he invites it because he wants to have the same level of power and wealth that Mr. Darcy has. Mr. Bingley is significantly less wealthy than Mr. Darcy, not just in their yearly incomes, but also in how they obtained their wealth. Mr. Darcy's wealth, as previously discussed, comes from land ownership, and the responsibility and power that goes with it makes him an authority figure in the novel. Mr. Bingley, while still wealthy, has obtained his money from trade, and his wealth is still uncertain until he buys an estate. When he is first introduced in the novel, it is as the tenant of Netherfield. Mr. Bingley lacks the wealth that would give him the same status as Mr. Darcy, and therefore performs complicit masculinity throughout *Pride and Prejudice.* Complicit masculinity, as defined by Connell, is exhibited by a man who does 'not embody hegemonic masculinity' but 'benefits from the patriarchal dividend'.[21] Mr. Bingley, with his love of dance and easy-going nature, does not embody hegemonic gentry masculinity in the same way Mr. Darcy does. However, he has benefitted from such a social order, as he inherited his father's companies, whereas his sisters only inherited money. Mr. Bingley finally receiving Mr. Darcy's approval to marry Jane not only

[20] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 347.
[21] Connell, p. 79.

shows Mr. Darcy's power in the novel, it also demonstrates Mr. Bingley's complicit masculine behaviour, and he only performs with the approval of the man he wants to embody.

Mr. Collins, the character representing the church in *Pride and Prejudice*, also has a successful proposal in the middle of the novel, to Elizabeth's good friend Charlotte Lucas. As a clergyman, he is expected to marry, an ambition reinforced by his benefactor, Lady Catherine de Bourgh.[22] Mr. Collins is a cousin of the Bennet family, and, due to the laws of entail, will inherit Longbourn and its estate upon Mr. Bennet's death. As Mrs. Bennet often reminds her family, 'The Collinses will turn us out before… [Mr. Bennet] is cold in his grave'.[23] Inheriting the Bennet family estate will improve the wealth and rank of Mr. Collins, and a successful marriage will reinforce his position as a good clergyman. In the nineteenth century, the Church of England and its benefactors were one of the most important pillars holding nineteenth-century society aloft, and Mr. Collins benefits from this relationship, making him a gentleman though he was not born to that class.[24] To prepare for this, he has received a university education, and has rehearsed all his compliments and manners to present himself as an upright man of good social standing, and, by proxy, attractive to the opposite sex. Instead of being desirable and successfully performing hegemonic masculinity, however, all his rehearsed manners just make him 'absurd', and he is subordinated.[25]

While subordinated masculinity is often discussed in terms of homosexual verses heterosexual masculinity, Connell notes that 'Some heterosexual men…are expelled from the circle of legitimacy'.[26] Mr. Collins, with his absurd practiced behaviour, is expelled from the Longbourn circle of social acceptance, with Mr. Bennet refusing to see Elizabeth again if she accepts Mr. Collins's proposal.[27] Therefore, Mr. Collins is seen as lesser than men such as Mr.

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[22] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 65.
[23] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 273.
[24] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 65.
[25] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 67.
[26] Connell, p. 79.
[27] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 110.

Darcy, Mr, Bingley, and Mr. Wickham, not because of his wealth or status, but because of his masculine performance. Mr. Collins is subordinated, because when he performs as expected, and in the manner, he has been educated to perform, he is still not accepted by his peers. Nowhere is he more subordinated than in his unsuccessful proposal to Elizabeth Bennet.

The proposal from Mr. Collins to Elizabeth highlights Mr. Collins' rehearsed manners and subordinated masculinity as he tries to perform in an expected manner, rather than in way that reflects his character. While proposing, Mr. Collins informs Elizabeth that 'Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life.'[28] Readers know this to be false, as he had in fact indicated to Mrs. Bennet his desire to propose marriage to Jane Bennet.[29] This statement from Mr. Collins is similar to the notion of 'love at first sight',[30] an idea a man with a university education would have been familiar with, as it has been written about in literature since the classical period, with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from 8 AD being the first literary account of the now-common trope.[31] Mr. Collins, with all his rehearsed manners, has found this well-documented trope appealing to use in his own proposal to Elizabeth, and further describes to her that he is quite 'run away with by my feelings'; but because of the solemn way Mr. Collins delivers his speech, Elizabeth finds the idea of him being in love with her so ridiculous that she is 'near laughing'.[32]

Instead of graciously accepting Elizabeth's rejection, Mr. Collins dismisses her with a 'wave of the hand', and tells her:

> I am not now to learn, that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and thus

[28] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 103.
[29] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 69-70.
[30] Though in this case, it is much more like "suitable bride at first sight".
[31] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Rolfe Humphries and J.D. Reed (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018). In this epic, Ovid describes Echo falling in love with Narcissus at first sight.
[32] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 103.

sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even a third time. I am therefore by no means discouraged by what you have just said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long.[33]

Coquetry was quite common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and this is what Mr. Collins is alluding to as he holds the expectation that Elizabeth will accept him eventually.[34] However, by the nineteenth century, when *Pride and Prejudice* was published, it was becoming less common for women to engage in coquettish behaviour, as the literature warned of 'the *costs* of young women's transgressions of social codes'.[35] Mr. Collins is a figure firmly grounded in the patriarchal culture of the nineteenth century, and while he is subordinated in his performance of masculinity, he also subordinates women who do not outrank him. He is dismissive of Elizabeth's choice, and his belief that Elizabeth will eventually accept him is abnormal for men at the time. Therefore, Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* is subordinated on two accounts: in his performance of masculinity and his treatment of women he considers beneath him.

The proposal scene in Wright's film does not make Mr. Collins quite so subordinated towards women. Mr. Collins is not romantic or Romantic when he asks Elizabeth for her hand in marriage. He diffidently presents her with a small flower before proposing, and it is the most awkward scene of the whole film. Tom Hollander performs Mr. Collins not as a man who has the confidence of an acceptance, but as a man who is socially awkward and unsure of his place in the world. Not only is this proposal a source of comedic relief in the film, supported by the laughter of most of the Bennet sisters upon Elizabeth storming out of the room as she declines Mr. Collins, but it also demonstrates Mr. Collins weakness when faced with a feminist like Elizabeth.[36] Elizabeth has a strong argument, says very few words, and her body language is

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[33] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 104-105.

[34] Theresa Braunschneider, *Our Coquettes: Capacious Desire in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), pp.1-2.

[35] Braunschneider, p. 156, emphasis original.

[36] Mary Bennet does not laugh, Wright's indication that perhaps Mary is the match for Mr. Collins.

much more dominant that Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins is bumbling, shy, and awkward, displaying all the common characteristics of someone subordinated in their masculine performance. Subordinate masculinity displays characteristics that would be considered more traditionally feminine, such as physical weakness and an overt expression of emotion.[37] Mr. Collins may not subordinate women in the film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* but he does still perform subordinate masculinity, particularly in this scene where he is subordinated by Elizabeth the feminist.

Mr. Collins appears even more subordinated in his masculine performance in Wright's film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* when he is juxtaposed against Mr. Darcy's first proposal. In Mr. Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy performs as the Byronic hero. Byronic heroes can be defined as 'self-assured, masterful, hot-tempered, capable of violence, passion, and tenderness…often mysteriously moody'.[38] Deborah Kaplan also argues that Mr. Darcy is a refined Byronic hero, particularly on screen, as opposed to Heathcliff from Emily Brönte's *Wuthering Heights*, who is the rougher version.[39] Nowhere is Mr. Darcy's Byronic heroism more apparent than in the first proposal to Elizabeth Bennet. As discussed in Chapter One, this scene takes place in the rain in the English countryside, and a sopping wet Mr. Darcy asks Elizabeth for her hand in marriage. As the reaction of Elizabeth has already been analysed, the focus here is Mr. Darcy's change in character as he processes Elizabeth's rejection. Throughout this scene, Mr. Darcy is self-assured that he is correct in his judgement of Elizabeth and the Bennet family. His anger starts to boil over as he yells at Elizabeth 'No!' in response to some of her enquiries, and then he masters his anger as he calmly tells her that she and her sister Jane are excluded from his judgement.[40] And when Elizabeth asks about Mr. Wickham,

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[37] Connell, p. 79.

[38] Deborah Kaplan, 'Mass Marketing Jane Austen: Men, Women and Courtship in Two Film Adaptations', in *Jane Austen in Hollywood,* ed. by Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (United States: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), pp. 177-187 (p. 177).

[39] Kaplan, p. 177.

[40] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

Mr. Darcy moves toward Elizabeth angrily, intending to be threatening; yet, as he moves closer, his face softens, and it appears that he is about to give into a moment of passion and kiss her. But he does not. Instead, he leaves rather abruptly, and leaves Elizabeth to think on his ever-changing moods.

This scene is the perfect exemplar in Wright's film of Mr. Darcy performing the Byronic hero, which parallels the Romanticised Elizabeth; it is also a performance of hegemonic gentry masculinity. Mr. Darcy can control his emotions, he indicates his belief in the importance of the economy as he discusses Elizabeth's social rank, and he even mentions going against his family in asking Elizabeth for her hand. In contrast to Elizabeth, who becomes more feminist in the film, Mr. Darcy's characterisation has not changed. Perceptions of hegemonic masculinity, particularly of the gentry class, have remain largely unchanged since *Pride and Prejudice* was written by Austen in the nineteenth century.

Mr. Darcy's second proposal in Wright's film further characterises him as the Byronic hero. He walks through the mist toward Elizabeth in just his shirt with a jacket on and no cravat, a very informal outfit for declaring 'I love, I love, I love you.'[41] Again, there is a moment of passion where the two nearly kiss, but they do not as the rising sun creates a halo of light around their faces. The scene is set against calming piano music and as Mr. Darcy walks through the fog toward Elizabeth, the visual connection between the two is finally made as he also evokes *The Wanderer in the Mist.* There is passion in Mr. Darcy's speech, and he is confident as he strides towards Elizabeth.[42] Mr. Darcy is Romanticised in his second declaration of love toward Elizabeth, as he is more passionate than his initial proposal, and his casual outfit shows his character transformation as he has fallen more in love with Elizabeth, while also evoking Colin Firth's famous white shirt from the 1195 BBC television series adaptation. However, at no

[41] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.
[42] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

point does he smile or break his stoic manner, as he continues to perform hegemonic gentry masculinity, a performance that is constant throughout Wright's film.

This proposal stands in contrast to Mr. Bingley's attempt to propose to Jane Bennet. He awkwardly enters Longbourn with Mr. Darcy, and abruptly leaves again, before practicing his proposal with his friend. His anxiety then leads him into Longbourn to get down on one knee in front of Jane, who giggles and accepts. At no point is Mr. Bingley confident in his proposal to Jane. Instead, he performs with Mr. Darcy's wishes, attempting and failing to achieve what Mr. Darcy eventually does: a confident and masculine proposal.[43] Mr. Bingley's proposal in Wright's film shows how strongly hegemonic Mr. Darcy is in his performance of masculinity, and how complicit Mr. Bingley is in his performance, as he continues to ask for Mr. Darcy's approval and guidance in the art of love.

In the transmedial adaptation *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* economics and proposals are still linked, but in a different way from Austen's original novel. As the text is set in the twenty-first century, one essential proposal has been changed into a business proposal rather than a romantic one, as discussed in Chapter One. This is a deliberate choice by creator Bernie Su, and while the Mr. Collins character in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* has been radically changed, his performance of masculinity remains the same. Mr. Collins has been transformed into Lizzie Bennet's childhood friend, Ricky Collins, who manages an online media company, Collins and Collins, with his patroness Ms. Catherine de Bourgh. Throughout the series, Ricky often mentions a fiancée who is never seen on screen, and Lizzie often questions her existence, but this real-or-not fiancée is not the cause of conflict within *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Instead, the pivotal proposal scene is a job offer. Ricky's valuing his job highly not only reflects the consumerist world of the twenty-first century, but it also demonstrates the subordinate

[43] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

masculine type the actor Maxwell Click is performing.[44] Ricky has no power, as he depends on his venture capitalist, Ms. Catherine de Bourgh, to guide his business decisions. Ms. de Bourgh 'strongly suggested [he] have a stalwart partner with a vivacious personality'; he is not wealthy; and he is not charismatic, as he tells Lizzie 'I garnered your mother's permission to visit with you' upon entering her bedroom.[45] However, he relies on being a white male to access patriarchal power, which gives him the confidence to ask Lizzie to be his business partner, with no indication from Lizzie that this is what she wants. Ricky is 'expelled from the circle of legitimacy',[46] as he is not taken seriously at any point in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. However, Ricky does show how men of little authority still have enough power over women in twenty-first century society to belittle their choices, specifically Lizzie's decision to say no to his business proposal, which he takes as her negotiating rather than declining, and offers her 'extended benefits' and 'a signing bonus'.[47] Despite being subordinate, Ricky still has enough patriarchal power to dismiss Lizzie's right to say no, and does not accept it until he is forcibly pushed from her bedroom.

Darcy's interest in Lizzie in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is still romantic, however, he does not really propose to her. Instead, he declares that he loves her against his own wishes, and that his heart has 'completely overwhelm[ed] my judgement'.[48] The reaction he is expecting from Lizzie is clearly not the one he receives. Initially, he takes her shock as merely that, and when she rejects him, he must confirm it with the question 'Are you rejecting me?', although he has not asked a question of Lizzie that she could reject.[49] He has not asked her on a date, or asked if she is at all interested in him romantically. His proposal is positioned as a declaration of love,

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[44] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, *The Insistent Proposal – Ep: 39,* web series, YouTube, 21 August 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmZzaAsPHNo>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[45] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, *The Insistent Proposal – Ep: 39.*
[46] Connell, p. 79.
[47] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, *The Insistent Proposal – Ep: 39.*
[48] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, *Are You Kidding Me! – Ep: 60,* web series, YouTube, 2 November 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALaDHIpJvRM>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[49] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, *Are You Kidding Me! – Ep: 60.*

but it is followed immediately by an argument with Lizzie. Darcy also still views Lizzie as lower than him due to their wealth disparity and class. While this might be factual, in the twenty-first century, gaining wealth and moving between classes is more fluid than the rigid social structure of the nineteenth century. Darcy even references her 'financial troubles' when he declares his love for her, claiming 'You're in a different world from me…But that's the world we live in'.[50] Mr. Darcy again performs as hegemonically masculine in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.* He assumes his power over women and is assured of a successful response to his declaration of love, although he insults Lizzie's status before asking her the question. Mapping Mr. Darcy directly into twenty-first-century society has not changed his performance of gender from the original novel, and instead makes him more patriarchal.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* there is a Mr. Bingley equivalent character. However, this adaptation is a commentary adaptation with aspects of analogy; therefore, despite its twenty-first-century, there are a few plot and character changes. Mr. Bingley becomes Bing Lee, the new neighbour of the Bennet family who is a wealthy medical student. Like her novelistic counterpart, Mrs. Bennet is keen to have one of her daughters marry Bing, and Lizzie mocks her behaviour in episode four of the webseries, putting on her Mrs. Bennet costume that includes a large hat, pearls, and a shawl.[51] Bing Lee himself does not appear on camera until episode twenty-eight of the webseries, and his performance of masculinity is almost identical to his performance in the novel and Wright's film. Bing is charismatic and kind, as he laughs with Jane on camera and makes a cheesy joke that he has already caught her disease, implying that he is already falling in love with her.[52] Bing has been set up as the romantic lead of the webseries, with viewers like @readbyzoe commenting 'My heart cannot handle the cuteness

[50] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Are You Kidding Me! – Ep: 60.*
[51] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Bing Lee and His 500 Teenage Prostitutes – Ep: 4,* web series, YouTube, 20 April 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KjOskZJEAc>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[52] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, Meeting *Bing Lee – Ep: 28,* web series, YouTube, 13 July 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KjOskZJEAc>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

that is Bing Lee and Jane. THE CHEMISTRY IS SO REAL.'[53] The story of Bing and Jane essentially follows that of Mr. Bingley and Miss Bennet from the novel: in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* Bing is convinced by Darcy and his sister Caroline Lee that he should not date Jane, yet by the end of the series Jane and Bing are happily together and planning their future. Bing's performance of masculinity is not different from the film or the novel, and remains stagnant. Bing's performance being consistent with his novelistic and filmic counterparts is one example of hegemonic gentry masculinity as defined by Connell not changing for two centuries.

Dancing and Courtship

Dancing has a significant place in narratives of Regency courtship and marriage. As discussed by Nancy M. Lee-Riffe, 'dance provided a natural marriage market where this particular type of gentry community could practise and preserve its manners, its values, and itself'.[54] In Austen's novels, the heroines normally dance with the heroes, and it becomes a pivotal moment in the story. Dancing was a socially sanctioned way of spending time together and being able to physically touch members of the opposite sex. As argued by Meaghan Malone, Austen 'uses dance as a means for sexualised social interaction, one that is governed by rules but that centers on the sensual body'.[55] Dancing in the nineteenth century was loaded with sexual tension, and Mr. Darcy's performance of it suggests his 'sexual attraction' for Elizabeth, and his 'willingness…to yield to [his] Byronic desires.'[56] This section of the chapter will explore the act of dancing, or the choice not to dance, and how this reflects the masculine performance of Mr. Darcy, Mr. Collins, and Mr. Bingley.

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[53] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*,* Meeting *Bing Lee – Ep: 28*, comments section.
[54] Nancy M. Lee-Riffe, 'The Role of Country Dance in the Fiction of Jane Austen', *Women's Writing,* 5.1 (2018), pp. 103-122, <doi: 10.1080/09699089800200032> (p. 103).
[55] Meaghan Malone, 'Jane Austen's Balls', in *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 70.4 (2016), pp. 427-447 (p. 428).
[56] Malone, p. 439.

Mr. Darcy's introduction in the novel is at a social gathering, the Meryton ball. He is described as 'a fine figure of a man…much handsomer than Mr. Bingley…; [but] he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased'.[57] He is initially resistant to Elizabeth and her non-conforming charms. At their first meeting, Mr. Darcy ascertains that perhaps Elizabeth, despite her prettiness, is not a desirable woman. She is left with no one to dance with during the first ball of the novel, and is sitting on the side watching the dancing, as all women without a partner had to do during dances in the nineteenth century. Critics have discussed the importance of the famous line 'She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*'.[58] However, there is something more important in this scathing speech of Mr. Darcy's: 'I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are *slighted by other men*.'[59] Elizabeth left partnerless is not necessarily her choice: if she is not asked to dance by a man, she cannot dance, being unable to ask a man herself. However, Mr. Darcy refusing to dance is a choice. He claims that 'every savage can dance', and throughout the novel, he is not often seen engaging in dance.[60]

Michael Greaney discusses how, for a man with wealth like Mr. Darcy, 'dance seems to entail a degree of reputation and/or emotional risk'.[61] At this stage in the novel, 'social dancing is a celebration of the status quo, [but] powerful men such as Darcy…seem to have more to lose than to gain on the dancefloor'.[62] Mr. Darcy's refusal to dance not only shows his lack of desire for any of the women present at this stage in the novel, it also cements his position as

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[57] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice, p.* 12.
[58] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 13; see Robert Markley, 'The economic context', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice,* ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 76-96 (p. 79) and Jeffrey Nigro and William Phillips, 'Jane Austen Madame de Staël, and the Seductiveness of Conversation', *Persuasion: The Jane Austen Journal On-line,* 33.1 (2012), <http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/jane-austen-madame-de-staël-seductiveness/docview/2309796021/se-2> [accessed 28 April 2023].
[59] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 13, emphasis my own.
[60] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 26.
[61] Michael Greaney, *An a-Z of Jane Austen*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2022), p. 23.
[62] Greaney, p. 23.

the most powerful man in the room as he displays a 'relentless exhibition of caste', refusing to dance with those he considers to be beneath him, and 'alienat[ing] an entire neighbourhood.'[63] Mr. Darcy is not only being proud, he is also performing hegemonic gentry masculinity as an aristocratic male in the nineteenth century.

Mr. Darcy does ask Elizabeth to dance at their next meeting, at the house of Sir William Lucas, Elizabeth's neighbour, though he is rejected by Elizabeth as she retaliates for her rejection at the Longbourn assembly.[64] When Mr. Darcy asks her to dance a second time, at the Netherfield estate where Elizabeth is staying while Jane recovers from her illness, he must ask twice, to which Elizabeth responds 'Oh! I heard you…I do not want to dance'.[65] Scholars have called these rejections the 'pre-dance manoeuvrings'[66] or the 'dance-before-the-dance'.[67] Mr. Darcy finally achieves success at the Netherfield ball, where Elizabeth is taken 'so much by surprise' she hardly knows she has accepted his offer.[68] When Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are dancing, she asks him questions, and instructs him on the proper protocol for a dance:

> 'It is *your* turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy.—*I* talked about the dance, and *you* ought to make some kind 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.[69]

Greaney has argued that because 'one-to-one conversation at close quarters between members of the opposite sex are extraordinarily rare, every word [during a dance]…counts'.[70] While Elizabeth 'satirizes the conventionally vapid flirtation in which they are expected to engage',

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[63] Daniela Garofalo, *Manly Leaders in Nineteenth-Cenutry British Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 121.
[64] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 27.
[65] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 50.
[66] Greaney, p. 24.
[67] Timothy Dow Adams 'To Know the Dancer from the Dance: Dance as a Metaphor of Marriage in Four Novels of Jane Austen', *Studies in the Novel,* 14: 1 (1982), pp. 55-65 (p. 61).
[68] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 50.
[69] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 90, emphasis original.
[70] Greaney, p. 24.

Mr. Darcy continues to perform as the staunch man of manners who always maintains decorum.[71]

On the other hand, Mr. Collins is talkative during his dance with Elizabeth Bennet; however, the conversation is mostly Mr. Collins apologizing as he was 'often moving wrong'.[72] In the nineteenth century, according to John Tosh, masculinity 'depends on material accomplishments which may not be attainable'.[73] Mr. Collins has little material accomplishments compared to Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, though he still attempts to perform the hegemonic gentry masculinity of the nineteenth century. Because he cannot, he is therefore subordinated. Mr. Collins's subordination is showcased in his dancing, as he has had no time to practice, being a man of education, not wealth. For Elizabeth, the two dances with Mr. Collins are shameful, miserable, and mortifying.[74] After these two dances, Elizabeth declines to dance with Mr. Collins again; however, as he 'continued most preservingly by her side' it was 'out of her power to dance with others'.[75]

Mr. Collins's lack of ability to dance shows a lack of desire for Elizabeth; as indicated by Greaney, if a man dances with a woman in Austen's world in particular, and dances with her well (as Mr. Darcy does), it is a fair indication of his desire for that woman.[76] While Mr. Collins does not desire Elizabeth in a sexual way as Mr. Darcy does, he does desire a wife because it is expected of him as a clergyman. As detailed by Connell, men who were hegemonically masculine during this period were expected to maintain a family, and to do this meant having a wife. However, Mr. Collins is seeking a wife because of society's expectation, rather than a particular want or need. His willingness to dance, but the awkward nature of his dancing,

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[71] Malone, p. 443.
[72] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 89.
[73] John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2016), Taylor & Francis EBooks, <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/books/mono/10.4324/9781315838533/manliness-masculinities-nineteenth-century-britain-john-tosh >, [accessed 2 March 2023], p. 44.
[74] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 89.
[75] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 100.
[76] Greaney, p. 22.

perfectly showcases how Mr. Collins is aware of how a man seeking a wife should perform, but in carrying out that performance, he subordinates himself in comparison to characters like Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley.

Mr. Bingley does dance in *Pride and Prejudice,* and with great enthusiasm. Mr. Bingley is described as 'fond of dancing', something the Highbury community believes is 'a certain step towards falling in love'.[77] Dancing is courting, as described above, so for an eligible bachelor to be so enthusiastic in dancing with young ladies could mean that he is looking for a wife. But he seems to enjoy dancing for more than just courting, as at the assembly ball Mr. Bingley 'was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, and was angry that the ball closed so early'.[78] Greaney has discussed how Mr. Bingley's over-enthusiasm for dancing counters Mr. Darcy's under-enthusiasm, but this eagerness may be because dancing is the only way he can make his mark amongst the young ladies of Highbury when juxtaposed with Mr. Darcy, who is his superior in looks and wealth.[79] Mr. Bingley's enthusiasm for dance in Austen's novel also conflicts with Mr. Darcy's performance of hegemonic gentry masculinity: as the man with more to risk, as previously mentioned, Mr. Darcy is selective in his choice of dance and his choice of partner. Mr. Bingley's enthusiasm for dance is often a role left for the 'outsiders…second sons…or poor' gentleman.[80] Mr. Bingley, while still performing hegemonic gentry masculinity for most of the novel, does slip back into the role of sidekick, or lesser man, with his overt love of dancing.

Mr. Bingley's love of dancing is also showcased in Wright's 2005 film adaptation, *Pride and Prejudice.* In the film, the actor portraying Mr. Bingley, Simon Woods, performs Mr. Bingley as a man who is an over-enthusiastic about all social events, in particular balls and dancing. Woods's Mr. Bingley stands in visual juxtaposition with Macfadyen's Mr. Darcy: Mr.

[77] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 11.
[78] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 12.
[79] Greaney, pp. 23-24.
[80] Greaney, p. 24.

Bingley is often in colours like blue compared to Mr. Darcy's black; Woods's Mr. Bingley is often smiling, whereas Mr. Darcy never smiles on camera; and they are both physically very different, with Mr. Darcy having dark hair and dark eyes, and Mr. Bingley having blue eyes and ginger hair.[81] Mr. Bingley's dancing on screen is always lively. He is seen clapping, smiling, and often cannot keep his eyes off Jane. The exuberance with which he performs his dances is even more obvious when compared with Mr. Darcy's dance with Elizabeth, which is cold and lacks spirit. While it is not being argued that a love of dancing changes the masculine performance, it does show that Mr. Bingley is more flexible in his masculine identity. Mr. Bingley does not perform hegemonic gentry masculinity to the letter, and is in fact happy to occupy another space, like perhaps that of the dandy, to engage in a pursuit he enjoys. Mr. Bingley's enjoyment of dance, as performed in Wright's film, shows not only a willingness to dance outside of his social class, but also outside of the norms of masculine behaviour, something Mr. Darcy is not initially willing to do.

In the 2005 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, there is a visual representation of Mr. Darcy dancing. Connell defines dancing, as it is performed in Wright's film, as a sex role, a 'gender interaction where roles are definitely played.'[82] Mr. Darcy is often showing his passion for Elizabeth, though in a somewhat subdued manner, which is particularly clear in the ballroom scenes. Mr. Darcy's initial entrance to the ballroom with Mr. Bingley and his sister Caroline is so disruptive the rest of the attendees stop dancing and split apart to make a pathway for the party to walk to the front of the hall.[83] This is very similar to the novel, typical for an adaptation like Wright's film that is both a transposition and a commentary. Throughout the scene, Mr. Darcy continually looks straight ahead, or at his surroundings, indicating that he is uninterested in present company, but must maintain the appearance of politeness. Though he

[81] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.
[82] Connell, p. 26.
[83] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

is often seen looking at Elizabeth, the words do not match his actions, as he speaks verbatim from Austen's novel and repeats the phrase 'she is not handsome enough to tempt me'.[84]

Mr. Darcy's speech rarely gives anything away in this scene. It is hard to determine whether he agrees with Caroline Bingley's passing comment 'We are a long way from Grosvenor Square, are we not, Mr. Darcy?' or whether he is nodding slightly to be polite.[85] There are also moments where Mr. Darcy is the wallflower, his dark clothes set against a dull wall with a few candles behind him, while Elizabeth is dancing happily with other men, her face flushed from the exercise as she is illuminated by a chandelier. Mr. Darcy asks Elizabeth what she would 'recommend to encourage affection'; her reply is simply 'dancing', a scathing comment after Mr. Darcy previously told her doesn't dance if he can help it.[86] Mr. Darcy's behaviour in this scene is a performance of hegemonic gentry masculinity. While they might be a long way from Grosvenor Square, this comment importantly shows that the Longbourn ball is far below Mr. Darcy's station, a possible reason for his lack of interest in dancing. He is also not dancing because there are no other member of the gentry class present, apart from Caroline, who he could reasonably dance with without causing a scene. Changing the medium has not changed Mr. Darcy's performance of masculinity from the novel to the film, as he initially still presents as the man of the gentry class performing his societal expectations.

At the Netherfield ball, Mr. Darcy does dance, with both Elizabeth and Caroline. While dancing with Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy is almost business-like in his interaction with her. He does not smile, does not display any passion, and the conversation is very dull. Joe Wright has used this ball scene to show how alone Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are during their dance, and how passionate the dance really is. After their slightly terse conversation about Mr. Wickham, where Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy momentarily stop dancing, the scene changes. All the other dancers

[84] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.
[85] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.
[86] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

disappear, and they perform the dance by themselves. While this can be attributed to the fact that they are both attracted to each other, and cannot see anyone else, there is another argument to be made as to why they are solitary in this moment. Both Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are alone in this society portrayed by Wright. Mr. Darcy is alone as the true performer of hegemonic gentry masculinity, and Elizabeth stands alone as the Romantic feminist figure. Dancing, while often performing the passion of love, is also a display of gender performance and how these performances interact with one another.

Mr. Collins's dancing talent, or lack of it, positions him in Wright's film as subordinately masculine, replicating his characterisation from the novel. This is visually coded by Wright in the discrepancy between Mr. Collins's and Elizabeth's heights. The Netherfield ball scene is a long scene in the film with many character developments, and because of this, a particular filmic technique is used, that of the continuous shot. No character is put in front of the camera more than Mr. Collins. The audience's first look at the ballroom scene is of Mr. Collins arriving by himself in a carriage. As he negotiates through the other attendees, his costume shows he appears to have missed the expectation of the dress code compared to the other gentlemen. His cravat is plain, his suit is the same as it always is, and his hair has not received any special treatment, nor is it covered by a hat or a wig. In his costuming, Mr. Collins is portrayed as lonely, isolated, and different at this social event. During the dance with Elizabeth, Mr. Collins pays all his attention to her and tries to compliment her. As Elizabeth ignores him, he stops dancing to grab her attention, and declares his intention to remain close to her 'throughout the evening', a statement made even more ridiculous by the rest of the party dancing around him as though he were a statue. [87]

Mr. Collins's intention to remain close to Elizabeth is thwarted by her constantly evading him. Shots of Mr. Collins wandering around the many different rooms looking for Elizabeth

[87] *Pride and Prejudice*, Wright.

are juxtaposed against Elizabeth hiding in darkened corners, enjoying herself with Charlotte Lucas, and the Bennet family embarrassing themselves. As the music changes into a song reminiscent of sadness and longing, Mr. Collins is picking the petals off a flower and smelling it, alluding to the way a child would play "they love me, they love me not". Wright is not only making the audience sympathetic to Mr. Collins's plight by displaying him as the lovelorn character chasing unrequited love, but Mr. Collins is also performing subordinated masculinity, as he does everything he can to perform according to the expectations of male behaviour and yet he is still thwarted. This also shows masculinity in crisis, as discussed by Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon.[88] This portrayal of Mr. Collins is one of a powerless man, a direct opposition to powerful Mr. Darcy.[89]

There is no visual dancing at all in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* though it is often discussed by characters on camera. Due to the vlog style of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* there is not any scope for filming in a setting where Lizzie does not have control of the narrative. Despite dancing being pivotal for interaction between the sexes in Austen's novels, and Wright's film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* it is instead something reflected on in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as a source of embarrassment. Darcy is discussed dancing with others, in a manner that dismisses it as anything other than a 'stupid binding tradition that should be banned for all time'.[90] Dancing in the twenty-first century can be perceived as flamboyant by Western men, and not a heteronormative activity, especially modern "club" dancing where there is not the space for a partner, yet alone conversation with one. Despite the popular image of men dancing for the female gaze in movies like *Step Up* and *Magic Mike,* dancing is not a display of Western hegemonic masculinity in the twenty-first century. Instead, as discussed by Mark Broomfield,

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[88] Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism,* 2nd. edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

[89] Powerless to be worthy of Elizabeth's love, powerless to choose a wife that suits him instead of suiting his circumstances, powerless to find Elizabeth in a crowded room.

[90] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, The Most Awkward Dance Ever – Ep: 7,* web series, YouTube, 1 May 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SPDX0rOuds>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

'The spectacle of the male dancing body…expresses…the fragility of American masculinity'.[91] The fragility of said masculinity is often displayed in reality television, where men often feel the pressure to perform as heteronormative on reality dance shows such as *So You Think You Dance?*, as the gender performance is regulated by judges.[92] For *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* a show that is set in the twenty-first century, these parallels cannot be ignored. In their first dance, Lizzie describes how she 'swayed' and Darcy 'snobbed', after they were forced to dance by her catching the bouquet and him catching the garter at a wedding.[93] Darcy's lack of enjoyment, or his snobbish behaviour, is a performance of hegemonic heteronormative masculinity, as he conforms to the tradition of dancing, but pretends not to enjoy it.

Darcy and Lizzie do dance again at Bing's party; however, the audience is only given Lizzie's re-enactment of the dance rather than the dance itself. In this re-enactment, Lizzie holds hands with Lydia, mocking a traditional waltz pose, as they discuss Darcy's rudeness to George Wickham.[94] This is very similar to Austen's novel, as Lizzie blames Darcy for George's absence, and it does appear that Lizzie is not enjoying herself, which is strange for her character after she professed a love for the video game *Just Dance.*[95] However, no other man dances with Lizzie at any point in the webseries. Ricky annoys her at VidCon but there is no dancing, and while George is described as a gentleman after he lets her walk over his coat instead of walking in beer, at no point does he dance with her because he neglects to go to parties where this could be a possibility.[96] Dancing does not have as much social significance

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[91] Mark Broomfield, 'So You Think You Are Masculine? Dance Reality Television, Spectatorship, and Gender Nonconformity' in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, ed. by Jens Richard Giersdorf and Yutian Wong, 3rd. edition, (Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 2018), pp. 342-351 (p. 342).

[92] Broomfield, p, 343.

[93] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, The Most Awkward Dance Ever – Ep: 7.*

[94] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, It's About Communicating – Ep: 47,* web series, YouTube, 18 September 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf8vHNTEMLU>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[95] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, I Really Suck at Video Games – Ep: 14,* web series, YouTube, 25 May 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSYQAxDB0bM>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[96] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, 25 Douchebags and a Gentleman – Ep: 18,* web series, YouTube, 8 June 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7pGhgm2M60>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

in the twenty-first century, where young people have lots of opportunity to talk privately outside of wedlock. The lack of dancing reinforces this adaptation being an analogy, as it bases itself on Austen's novel, but is a new art form. Darcy engaging in dance as the man performing hegemonic masculinity in the webseries and as the man who Lizzie ends up with is significant because it indicates the importance of heteronormative behaviour in twenty-first-century society. As Darcy is the only man to dance with Lizzie in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* it reinforces his characterisation as a constant and unchanging figure in both the novel and its two adaptations.

Masculinity and Toxicity: Adapting the Rake

One man of interest that has not yet been discussed is Mr. Wickham, the rake figure in *Pride and Prejudice.* The definition of the rake, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is '[a] fashionable or stylish man of dissolute or promiscuous habits'.[97] The rake was first used in literature by Richard Ames in *The Rake: or, the Libertine's Religion,* first published in 1693.[98] While the term has been in used for centuries, it was made popular in Samuel Richardson's novels, particularly Mr. B in *Pamela*[99] and Robert Lovelace in *Clarissa.*[100] In the twenty-first century the term "rake" is no longer in use, and instead promiscuous men who sometimes engage in activity that is questionably legal can be referred to as "bad boys". The "bad boy" trope has become popular in the twenty-first century, with many television series and films taking on this character, such as Jackson "Jax" Teller in *Sons of Anarchy,* or Loki in the Marvel

[97] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/dictionary/rake_n7?tab=meaning_and_use#27000505> [accessed 21 July 2023], s.v. rake, n.7.

[98] Richard Ames, *The rake, or, The libertine's religion a poem*, (Oxford: Oxford Text Archive 1693), <https://ota.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repository/xmlui/handle/20.500.12024/A25273> [accessed 21 July 2023].

[99] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, (London: Dent, 1962).

[100] Samuel Richardson and Angus Ross, *Clarissa, or, The history of a young lady*. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985).

Cinematic Universe. While the term may have changed depending on the century, the definition has not altered in a noticeable way, and all these men perform some sort of toxic masculinity, just as Mr. Wickham does in *Pride and Prejudice*. This section of the chapter will argue that throughout the novel and its relevant adaptations, Mr. Wickham has remained the rake figure, and is always performing toxic masculinity under the guise of the gentleman. Mr. Wickham's toxic behaviour will be explored in the novel and film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice,* as well as his performance in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* the most toxic performance of masculinity in any adaptation analysed in this thesis.

Mr. Wickham is established in *Pride and Prejudice* as one of Elizabeth's suitors, and he is the first one in the novel that readers believe could be a match for her. Mr. Wickham is not only an attractive man, physically worthy of Elizabeth's admiration, but also an eligible bachelor, being 'the happy man whom almost every female eye was turned' at Mrs. Phillip's house.[101] He is a member of the militia, and during the early nineteenth century, this was a well-respected position to have in society. While some members of the militia were balloted, and those balloted men were often 'poor and illiterate',[102] other members, who came from the gentleman class and were officers in the militia, had to pay for the privilege of that rank.[103] Mr. Wickham, as an educated member of the militia, could move up the ranks, and as highlighted by John Breihan and Clive Caplan, this makes Mr. Wickham a good match for any of the Bennet sisters.[104] However, his lack of engagement in courtship activities, like dancing, indicates his ineligibility as a suitor for the Bennet sisters. Even Lydia Bennet when she writes a letter to Harriet Forster telling her she has run away with Mr. Wickham, does not mention dancing with him at Brighton. However, she does mention dancing with another man, and asks

[101] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p.75.
[102] John Breihan and Clive Caplan, 'Jane Austen and the Militia', *Persuasions*, 14 (1992), pp. 16-26 (p. 18), <https://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number14/breihan-caplan.pdf>, [accessed 4 April 2023].
[103] Breihan and Caplan, p. 18.
[104] Breihan and Caplan, p. 19.

Harriet to 'make my excuses to Pratt, for not keeping my engagement, and dancing with him to night…tell him I will dance with him at the next ball'.[105]

Lydia is a flirt and has a love of dancing because she can be close to men and have private conversations with them, an important part of the dance as described by Greaney.[106] Mr. Wickham's lack of dancing shows him not only as a mismatch for Lydia, but also as a man not performing masculinity as socially expected. Instead of dancing, he chooses to play whist. While playing at cards was an acceptable form of social behaviour, it was also known to be a form of gambling and contained many risks. At the start of Volume Three of the novel, Mr. Wickham is known to be a gambler, as Elizabeth and the Gardiners discover that 'he had left many debts behind him' when he left Pemberley.[107] While cards may not be risky for a man like Mr. Darcy, who has wealth, for a soldier like Mr. Wickham with a history of gambling, playing cards is engaging in risky behaviour. Janet Mullin contends that for a middle-class man, regarding 'money so lightly as to risk it at a casual game did not merit the reputation he craved, that of the responsible and cautious…man'.[108] Mr. Wickham is performing as the rake, as he chooses to engage in his gambling addiction instead of participating in the dancing. Mr. Wickham's lack of dancing not only showcases him as an ineligible bachelor, but as a man performing masculinity in a toxic manner.[109]

The defects of Mr. Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* are well detailed in the letter Mr. Darcy writes to Elizabeth after her rejection of his initial proposal of marriage. Mr. Wickham's goal is not to achieve a wife, but to gain money so that he can continue to fund his gambling addiction. Before Mr. Wickham knows of the financial situation of the Bennet family, he tries

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[105] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* pp. 276-277.
[106] Greaney, p. 24.
[107] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* pp. 252.
[108] Janet E Mullin, *A Sixpence at Whist: Gaming and the English Middle Classes, 1680-1830*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2015), p. 121.
[109] Mr. Wickham also does not dance in Joe Wright's 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* for similar reasons, and therefore his lack of dancing in this adaptation will not be discussed at length.

to be a match for Elizabeth Bennet. He engages Elizabeth in conversation frequently, and their flirtation is noticeable enough for Mr. Bennet to say to Elizabeth, 'Let Wickham be *your* man. He is a pleasant fellow, and would jilt you credibly.'[110] This quote also shows Mr. Bennet's knowledge that Mr. Wickham has the capacity to be unfaithful. However, upon finding out that the Bennet family has no money, Mr. Wickham changes his pursuit to Miss King, a local woman with £10,000. Elizabeth understands their flirtation has ended because she does not have the same fortune; however, as her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner points out, this does show that his affections are fleeting:

> 'If it were not allowable for him to gain *my* affections because I had no money, what occasion could there be for making love to a girl whom he did not care about, and who was equally poor?'
>
> 'But there seems indelicacy in directing his attentions towards her, so soon after this event.'[111]

Fleeting affections, or womanising, is a rakish quality. The rake figure as performed by Mr. Wickham, and in nineteenth-century literature is immoral, or, as Mrs. Gardiner puts it, indelicate.

At this point in the novel, where the reader believes Mr. Wickham has abandoned Elizabeth for the promise of more money, there is a mere nod toward his rakish tendencies. However, it is eventually discovered that Mr. Wickham is an absolute rake, who only cares about womanising, gambling, and drinking wine. Mr. Wickham only ends up married to Lydia at the end of the novel because he is enticed by Mr. Darcy's money and a position in the army; Mr. Bennet equates this sum to be at least ten thousand pounds. By the end of the novel, all of Mr. Wickham's lies come to light, and his manipulation of young women is exposed. His

[110] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 135.
[111] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 151

pattern of coercing woman into romantic fantasy is revealed in the middle of the novel, where Mr. Darcy writes to Elizabeth and tells her Wickham 'persuaded [Georgiana] to believe herself in love, and to consent to an elopement. …Mr. Wickham's chief object was unquestionably my sister's fortune, which is thirty thousand pounds'.[112] Mr. Wickham continues to perform as the rake, because he hides under the shroud of performing as the gentleman, while really trying to gain the fortunes of wealthy and vulnerable woman.

The meeting between Mr. Wickham and Elizabeth Bennet in Wright's film *Pride and Prejudice* shares similarities with Austen's novel but is also different. Mr. Wickham meets the Bennet sisters in Meryton while they are out shopping. Elizabeth drops her handkerchief, and Mr. Wickham picks it up for her. He then pays for Lydia's ribbons in the shop, and his tone of voice, posture, and sparkling blue eyes make him the most conventionally attractive man in this adaptation. What is intriguing about this film version of Mr. Wickham is the way he tells his story to Elizabeth. As he explains his version of events as to why he does not get on with Mr. Darcy, he is standing above Elizabeth, picking flowers off a tree. Elizabeth is below, in the grass, gazing at Mr. Wickham and listening to him with a look of reverence. This placement puts Mr. Wickham in a position of authority over Elizabeth. As he tells his story, he becomes more and more animated, and does not speak to her as an equal, but instead as a superior. However, Elizabeth is enraptured.

This is typical of the "bad boy" stereotype often found in twenty-first century pop culture. This "bad boy" character wears a uniform, as Mr. Wickham does, and is what could be called "cool"; maybe he rides a motorbike, or rebels against the existing situation in some way. A prime example of this is Jax Teller in *Sons of Anarchy,* the popular FX original series that ran from 2008 to 2014. Jax belongs to the Sons of Anarchy Motorcyle Club, Redwood Original Division (a.k.a. SAMCRO), and rides a motorbike, often wearing his 'kutte or "cut"…[a] cut-

[112] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 196.

off sleeved jacket worn by male bikers', which already 'features both the vice-president and "Men of Mayhem" patch, the second meaning he has killed for the club.'[113] However, these "bad boys" frequently have some sort of redemption arc. Despite Jax engaging in 'brawn, force, guns, and intimidation', all used to support the illegal activity of SAMCRO, he often rescues his romantic interest, Dr. Tara Knowles, and his mother, Gemma Teller, gaining their love and acceptance despite putting them in harm's way.[114] For Mr. Wickham, his redemption comes in the form of marrying Lydia, which is also a punishment for both characters' behaviour. In Wright's film, Mr. Wickham still performs as a rake, but he also performs toxic masculinity as he evokes the "bad boy" stereotype.

Mr. Wickham performs as the "bad boy" in Wright's film when he is reintroduced to the Bennet family as Lydia's husband. In the scene, while Lydia is effusive about her marriage to her 'dear Wickham', Mr. Wickham himself is all politeness.[115] He carries a box in for Lydia, bows to Mr. Bennet, and advises him of his enlistment in a regiment near Newcastle. However, he is slowly dismissed by the wiser members of the Bennet family, as Mr. Bennet forbids Kitty from going to stay with the Wickhams, and Elizabeth does not return Mr. Wickham's exiting bow with a curtsy. As Lydia and Mr. Wickham leave Longbourn in their carriage, Lydia stands up and is waving to her family, most of who are standing outside to return Lydia's departing waves. From Elizabeth's perspective, shot through the glass as she stands inside the house with Mrs. Bennet, the camera shows Mr. Wickham pull Lydia forcefully down into the carriage and she exclaims in surprise. Mr. Wickham is showing his true character in this scene and revealing his toxic masculine performance. While he initially appears as hegemonically masculine in the first half of the film, this short clip shows the toxicity underneath. Toxic masculinity can be defined as 'a range of behaviours and performances of masculinity that cause harm not only to

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[113] Ashley M. Donnelly, *Renegade Hero of Faux Rogue: The Secret Traditionalism of Television Bad Boys,* (Mcfarland and Company: North Carolina, 2014), p. 60.
[114] Donnelly, p. 59.
[115] Wright, *Pride and Prejudice.*

men themselves but also to those around them'.[116] Mr. Wickham's behaviour in the carriage is intended to cause Lydia harm, and to remind her of her place now she is his wife. This short segment in Wright's film shows that Mr. Wickham is performing aspects of toxic masculinity throughout the film, but particularly in this moment.

The power of wealth in twenty-first century society is showcased in the characterisation of George Wickham in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. George is the coach of the swimming team, which is how he meets Lizzie and her sisters, Jane and Lydia, at a local bar. Lizzie and George start dating, and he often takes his shirt off on her vlogs. George is holding the space of the conventionally attractive man, like his counterpart in Wright's 2005 film; however, his sexualisation, although visually gratifying for many viewers, is in opposition to Darcy, who instead holds the gentleman space. There is also an overt display of physical Western hegemonic masculinity that George portrays in the vlog. Not only is he showcasing his body in those scenes where he removes his shirt, he is trying to show that he is more masculine than Darcy, as he is comfortable showing off his muscular physique. He also does this in his conversation on camera with Lizzie: as the two decide to tell the George and Darcy story hypothetically, they call Darcy 'Darvid' and George calls himself 'Vin Diesel…No, The Rock!...No, Batman!'[117] The list of men given by George are all hypermasculine in their appearance and behaviour, and therefore, George is claiming the hypermasculine space over Darcy. However, this becomes representative of George's shallowness as *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* progresses.

Lizzie starts off by admiring George's body and encourages her viewers to do the same, highlighting the shift towards an empowered female gaze in the twenty-first century; however,

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[116] Mark McGlashan and John Mercer, 'Toxic Masculinity: An Introduction', in *Toxic Masculinity: Men, Meaning, and Digital Media*, ed. by John Mercer and Mark McGlashan, (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 1-7 (p. 1).

[117] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Wickham Story Time – Ep: 45,* web series, YouTube, 11 September 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZebtZPbzHA>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

she eventually asks him to stop showing off, though she does it with a laugh. In Episode 50, Lizzie details how she liked George, but that he was never going to be serious, and that his flirtation with Lydia and other girls was obvious to her. Lizzie's detailing of George's behaviour showcases a type of toxic masculinity that is often seen in twenty-first century dating culture. George flirts with as many women as possible, and in the process 'causes harm…to those around' him, the textbook definition of toxic masculinity.[118]

In his relations with Lydia, George does more than just cause harm: he breaks the law as he plans to release a sex tape of himself and Lydia without her consent. Mr. Wickham breaks the law in Austen's novel as well, but *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is the first adaptation where a modern audience can really empathise with the pain Elizabeth Bennet and her family went through. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, George and Lydia meet in Las Vegas, where Lydia has gone for her twenty-first birthday. They proceed to have a romantic relationship, which is detailed on Lydia's spin-off show, *The Lydia Bennet*.[119] In the fallout of their romantic relationship, there is a plot that can only be described as revenge porn and is led by George's need for money. George, trying to make money to pay off his debts, entices online audiences with an upcoming release of YouTube star Lydia Bennet's sex tape.[120] George filmed Lydia with her consent, and then threatens to release it to the public without her consent. While this is illegal, it is a common trope not only in pop fiction, but also in real life, with many celebrities having sex tapes or naked photos released to the world without their consent.[121] George is willing to risk Lydia's reputation for money, just as Austen's Mr. Wickham is willing to do the same, as by coercing Lydia into an elopement, he manages to gain at least 'ten thousand

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[118] McGlashan and Mercer, p. 1.

[119] Pemberley Digital, *The Lydia Bennet,* online vlog, YouTube, 14 July 2012 to 13 January 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/@TheLydiaBennet/videos> [accessed 14 July 2023].

[120] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Consequences – Ep: 85,* web series, YouTube, 5 February 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97SJYdxQPcg>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[121] Gareth Longstaff, 'Celebrity Sex Tapes' in *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality,* ed. by Clarissa Smith, Feona Attwood, and Brian McNair, (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), pp. 183-192 (p. 185).

pounds'.[122] No other adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* analysed in this thesis makes it more obvious to a twenty-first century audience that George is a diabolical character, and is probably one of Austen's worst villains. George perpetrates the type of toxic masculinity that is abundant in popular culture, but that is worshipped with figures like the "bad boy" that are typical in popular films and television series. Not only has *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* successfully updated this section of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* but it has also created a great landscape to plot how toxic masculinity impacts and influences twenty-first-century performances of masculinity.

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This chapter has examined how men in *Pride and Prejudice* and its relevant adaptations perform masculinity across multiple mediums. The performances of masculinities remain stagnant from Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice,* through to Wright's film adaptation, and then again in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Mr. Darcy's proposals in *Pride and Prejudice* and its adaptations display his performance of hegemonic gentry masculinity, as he cannot ignore his concern with Elizabeth's economic position in either the nineteenth or the twenty-first century. Mr. Darcy's performance of dancing strengthens this argument as he is aware of social convention but does not want to risk his position as the most powerful man in the room, a performance he continues in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* where he is forced to dance. Mr. Collins remains subordinate, as his lack of dancing skills and his stumbling proposals in all the adaptations discussed shows that he is performing masculinity as expected of him, not because it reflects his true character, subordinating him in comparison to the hegemonic Mr. Darcy. Mr. Bingley remains complicit, as he performs hegemonic gentry masculinity, but without the reservations of Mr. Darcy's character; and Mr. Wickham transitions from the rake to performing toxic masculnity, as he continually puts women in danger for his own gain. The

[122] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* p. 288.

performance of these masculinities in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* reinforces patriarchal ideals in a postfeminist society. Unlike the female figures, the gender performance of men in adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* has not drastically changed since Austen's original novel was published. This reflects how Western hegemonic masculinity, and the expectations of that masculine performance, have not significantly altered since the nineteenth century.

Chapter Three – Antifeminist Heroines in Misogynistic Worlds: Tracking the Landscape of *Emma*

> "'I lay it down as a general rule, Harriet, that if a woman *doubts* as to whether she should accept a man or not, she certainly ought to refuse him.'"—Emma Woodhouse, *Emma*[1]
>
> "'Harriet, what I think isn't important. You know Martin the best. This is your life. It's your choice. …If you think Martin has all of the requirements that you're looking for in a partner, and I mean ALL of the requirements, then you should say yes. …As long as you are absolutely, one-hundred percent completely confident in your decision.'"—Emma Woodhouse, *Emma Approved*[2]

As with Mr. Darcy, contemporary adaptations of Jane Austen's *Emma* make little change to the title character's gender performance. In contrast to the pre-feminist Elizabeth Bennet, Austen's Emma Woodhouse endorses the patriarchy, replicating her father's entitled behaviour. She is cruel to other women and ignorant of the gender struggles that those who lack her privilege encounter and attempt to overcome. There is a doubleness at work in Austen's novel, with the text sympathetic to the plight of other women (such as Miss Bates and Harriet Smith) and critical of Emma, who is re-educated under the guidance of the pre-feminist Mr. Knightley. This pattern is replicated in Autumn de Wilde's film, which even introduces new scenes centring around Harriet to showcase Emma's patriarchal attitudes in action. The filmic medium allows de Wilde to visually symbolise Emma's shift in attitudes through the bodily purging of patriarchal toxicity, allowing her to be forgiven in a way Austen's novel does

[1] Jane Austen, *Emma,* ed. by Fiona Stafford (England: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 51, emphasis original
[2] Pemberley Digital*, Ambition and Fruition – Emma Approved Ep: 15,* web series, YouTube, 26 November 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqccX8XLmMI&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=18> [accessed 14 July 2023].

not. Yet again, when it comes to female gender performance the Pemberley Digital web series is regressive in its depiction of Emma. In *Emma Approved*, Emma supports the values of patriarchal consumerist society as she runs her business with the guidance of her father and Mr. Knightley.

Emma was last novel published in Jane Austen's lifetime, and has been the subject of much critical debate since its release in 1815. Sir Walter Scott wrote the first critical review of Austen's novels on *Emma,* and it was published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1816.[3] Scott praises the novel as having 'such spirit and originality, that we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events…[i]n this class she stands almost alone'.[4] This review of Scott's has been termed 'the fountainhead of all Austen criticism' by Neil Wenborn, although '*Emma* tends not to be the principal focus of the nineteenth century's most significant contributions' to Austen criticism, with reviewers instead concentrating on works such as *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion.*[5] Yet, since its publication, *Emma* has been analysed for its satirical portrayal of life in small town rural England. Wenborn describes the characters in the novel as 'dramatic'[6] and making for compelling reading, while according to her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, Austen felt that in Emma she had created 'a heroine whom no one but myself will much like'.[7] In the twentieth century, *Emma* started to be adapted for the screen, though not to the same extent as *Pride and Prejudice. Emma* was first adapted in 1972 by the BBC as a television mini-series.[8] Since then, it has been adapted multiple times for film and

[3] Though it was unsigned by Scott.
[4] Sir Walter Scott, "An Unsigned Review of *Emma",* in *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Volume 1, 1811-1870,* ed. by B. C. Southam, (New York and London: Routledge, 1979), p. 68
[5] Neil Wenborn, *Jane Austen: Emma*, (Humanities E-Books LLP, 2021), ProQuest Ebook Central [accessed 31 May 2023], https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=3306119&ppg=89, p. 91.
[6] Wenborn, p. 91.
[7] James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen,* (Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 204.
[8] *Emma,* (BBC2, 1972) [on ETV].

television,[9] including the 1995 modern reimagining *Clueless,*[10] and Bollywood's adaptation 2010, *Aisha.*[11]

This chapter focuses on the characterisation of Emma Woodhouse across the three key texts mentioned: *Emma,* by Jane Austen; *Emma,* the 2020 film directed by Autumn de Wilde; and *Emma Approved,* the 2014 transmedia adaptation produced by Pemberley Digital and released on YouTube. Unlike Elizabeth Bennet's performance of gender (which in Austen's novel and Wright's film positions the heroine as a feminist figure) Emma Woodhouse is presented as an anti-feminist woman supportive of patriarchal structures in all three iterations. Even in *Emma Approved,* an updated adaptation of the novel, Emma establishes and maintains patriarchal values which are even more jarring in a twenty-first century setting. Emma's characterisation will be analysed in her interaction with other characters in the text: Harriet Smith, Miss Bates, Jane Fairfax, and Mr. Woodhouse. This chapter argues that the persistence of nineteenth-century gender norms in twenty-first-century adaptations of *Emma* make adaptations of the novel postfeminist, as they privilege patriarchal values over feminist ones.

Emma, by Jane Austen

Emma Woodhouse is introduced in the first sentence of Austen's novel as 'handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition…[who] had lived nearly twenty-one years with very little to distress or vex her.'[12] She is essentially a spoilt brat. In the cinematic masterpiece that is 1995's *Clueless*, a modernised adaptation of *Emma*, the character of Cher Horowitz brings this aspect of Emma to life. Cher is a girl who has all the latest fashion, drives (poorly) the fanciest car, and can afford constant trips to the mall.[13] Emma Woodhouse, being

[9] Other adaptations of *Emma* include: *Emma* (Miramax Films and Buena Vista International, 1996) [on DVD]; *Emma* (ITV, 1996) [on DVD]; and *Emma* (BBC Once, 2009) [on DVD].
[10] *Clueless,* dir. by Amy Heckerling (Paramount Pictures, 1995) [on Neon].
[11] *Aisha,* dir. by Rajshree Ojha (PVR Pictures, 2010) [on DVD].
[12] Austen, *Emma*, p.1.
[13] *Clueless.*

the inspiration behind the character of Cher Horowitz, does these things, but in a nineteenth-century context: she wears the best dresses; she has multiple carriages; and she often takes trips to the village of Highbury to see her friends and be seen donating to the poor. It can be easy on an initial read to assume that Emma is a pre-feminist figure, particularly because of her declaration that she has 'very little intention of every marrying at all'.[14] Her encouragement of Harriet could be regarded as an attempt to improve her new friend's social station and empower her: 'She was not struck by any thing remarkably clever in Miss Smith's conversation, but she found her altogether very engaging…she must deserve encouragement.'[15] She defends her governess, Miss Taylor, when her father criticises her choice to get married to Mr. Weston:

> 'Poor Miss Taylor!—I wish she were here again. What a pity it is that Mr. Weston ever thought of her!'
>
> 'I cannot agree with you, papa; you know I cannot.'[16]

Likewise, she regularly makes visits to other women in the Highbury community even though they are beneath her social station, like Mrs. and Miss Bates: 'There was always sufficient reason for such an attention; Mrs. and Miss Bates loved to be called on'.[17] But these visits are not a selfless act, and the show of support and encouragement of other women is not without an ulterior motive.

In all of these instances, Emma is promoting her own self-worth in a way that is cruel because it is shrouded in a veil of kindness. Because Emma is privileged, she has no idea of the struggles of other women. She has no concept that the patriarchy has placed Harriet as a parlour-boarder, and that her social situation, being 'the natural daughter of somebody',[18] is

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[14] Austen, *Emma*, p.82.
[15] Austen, *Emma*, p. 24.
[16] Austen, *Emma*, p. 10.
[17] Austen, *Emma*, p. 145.
[18] Austen, *Emma*, p. 23.

'precarious'.[19] Emma has no notion that traditional misogynistic values have forced Miss Bates into a place of poverty after the death of her father, something Austen herself was familiar with as she was single upon the death of her own father and, like Miss Bates, had to adopt 'the stratagems of an older woman of limited means…to survive.'[20] While Emma encourages Miss Taylor to marry and move out of her house to one of her own, she has no appreciation that, without marriage, Miss Taylor is forced to be the burden of some other family, like the Woodhouses, as she has 'no legal existence without her husband'.[21] Likewise, Emma shows little awareness that her own ability to contemplate not getting married is due to her privilege and wealth, a luxury not afforded the other young women in her social circle. Emma performs as a typical woman of the gentry class who is happy with current situation because it benefits her. However, because nineteenth-century English society was patriarchal, with women having limited rights, Emma's lack of understanding supports these values, and therefore her actions support this patriarchal social structure. Through the insight offered into the plight of women in the novel, Austen critiques both her heroine and the world view she endorses.

Emma's relationship with Miss Bates in the novel is one required by Emma as the daughter of wealthy landowner Mr. Woodhouse who has a duty of care to the people of the parish. She takes no pleasure in the relationship, which is one of obligation. Miss Bates is described as being in

> the worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her into outward respect. She had never boasted beauty or cleverness…and her middle of life

[19] Barbara K. Seeber, *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), p. 38.

[20] Diane Reynolds, '"I Am Not Helpless": Miss Bates as the Hidden Queen of Highbury.' *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal*, 43 (2021), pp. 234-243 (p.235), *Gale Academic OneFile*, <link.gale.com/apps/doc/A708625712/AONE?u=waikato&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=ac66730e>, [accessed 6 June 2023].

[21] Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England,* (Chicago: Lyceum Books, 1989), p. 115.

> was devoted to the care of a failing mother, and the endeavour to make a small income go as far as possible. And yet she was a happy woman, and a woman whom no one named without good-will.[22]

Miss Bates is the complete opposite to Emma Woodhouse, especially in her current financial situation, but it is the circumstance which makes her particularly annoying to Emma. As she discusses with Harriet:

> 'If I thought I should ever be like Miss Bates! so silly—so satisfied—so smiling—so proposing—so undistinguishing and unfastidious—and so apt to tell every thing relative to every body about me, I would marry tomorrow…I shall not be a poor old maid…! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid![23]

While unmarried women without independent wealth, like Harriet Smith, Miss Bates, and Jane Fairfax, have a need to be concerned about money and marriage, Emma, as an heiress, has no need to be worried about such matters. She has a large dowry from her father's estate, and when she marries Mr. Knightley at the end of the novel their inheritances are combined, and they become even wealthier. Yet Emma displays no empathy in her interactions with her fellow women.

There is also a doubleness at work throughout *Emma.* The novel has many pre-feminist moments, where the text is sympathetic towards the poorer characters like Mrs. and Miss Bates, as well as other marginalized women like Jane Fairfax. While pre-feminism will be discussed in Chapter Four in relation to the characterisation of Mr. Knightley, it is important to note here because while the text and author may be aware of it, the heroine is not. Emma is unaware and unsympathetic toward the poorer female members of her community, and for this, she is ultimately punished by Austen at the Box Hill picnic event, which will be analysed in this

[22] Austen, *Emma*, p. 22.
[23] Austen, *Emma,* p. 83.

chapter. The apparent disjunct between Austen's writing and Emma's point of view, made apparent in Emma's interaction with other women, suggests that while Emma has power in her society, she is not willing to use it if it is not for her immediate benefit.

Emma should not be so concerned with Miss Bates's lack of wealth, and should instead reciprocate with the same kindness she receives from Miss Bates. Yet she does not. She often teases Miss Bates behind her back, especially to her friends Harriet and Mrs. Weston. Harriet is too admiring of Emma to correct her, but after Emma mocks the possibility of Miss Bates possibly becoming the cousin of Mr. Knightley through his potential marriage to Jane Fairfax, Mrs. Weston scolds her: 'For shame, Emma! Do not mimic her.'[24] Emma takes an anti-feminist position toward Miss Bates, whereas all the genteel men in the novel, including her father and Mr. Knightley, are kind and caring to Miss Bates and do not take the traditional patriarchal position. Anti-feminism has been described as 'an ideological framework positing that women would be harmed by laws mandating equality'.[25] Emma's treatment of Miss Bates is not only unkind, it also reinforces the differences between the two women, and makes their dynamic more unequal.

Emma's relationship with Jane Fairfax, the niece of Miss Bates, is always based on rivalry. Jane's first introduction in the novel comes through Emma complaining about how sick she is of hearing the name Jane Fairfax spoken by Miss Bates: 'I wish Jane Fairfax very well; but she tires me to death'.[26] Emma and Jane have met each other throughout their childhood, but they have not seen each other for two years prior to Jane's first physical arrival to Highbury in *Emma.*[27] Jane is described as 'remarkably elegant…[h]er height was pretty…her figure particularly graceful…her size a most becoming medium…her face…[had] a very pleasing

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[24] Austen, *Emma,* p. 210.
[25] Laurel Elder, Steven Greene, and Mary-Kate Lizotte, 'Feminist and Anti-Feminist Identification in the 21st Century United States', *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy,* 42.3 (2021), pp. 243-259 (p. 244), <https://doi.org/10/1080/1554477X.2021.1929607>, [accessed 7 June 2023].
[26] Austen, *Emma,* p. 84.
[27] Austen, *Emma,* p. 156.

beauty…[there] was distinction, and merit.'[28] In fact, Emma is so impressed with her physical appearance that she nearly decides to bury the hatchet and become friends with Jane. However, after an evening at Hartfield, Emma's home, where Jane is 'disgustingly' and 'suspiciously reserved', and plays a 'superior performance' on the piano compared to Emma, Emma decides to give up any attempt at friendship.[29] The next day, she even disparages Jane to her father and Mr. Knightley, calling her 'reserved', and disputing Mr. Knightley's claim that she is 'diffident'.[30] Both Mr. Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse agree that Jane is a 'well-behaved young lady', disagreeing with Emma's perception of her.[31]

It is Emma's dislike of Jane that causes her not to support her in the same way she does Harriet. While she expresses 'pity' for Jane and Miss Bates, that is to appease her father's anxiety, 'with a sincerity that no one could question', indicating that it was insincere.[32] Emma has the means to assist Jane and Harriet, and could support them both to make agreeable marriages that would not leave them in a precarious position, like the one Miss Bates holds. When Jane discusses becoming a governess to alleviate the burden on her family and peers, she compares it to slavery, with the governess-trade being 'the sale—not quite of human flesh—but of human intellect.'[33] This is a moment where Austen shows an acute awareness of female precarity, but her heroine is not afforded a similar insight or concern. While Emma could reassure Jane, and alleviate her fears, it is instead Mrs. Elton who comforts Jane: '…it will not satisfy your friends to have you taking up with any thing that may offer, any inferior, commonplace situation'.[34] Because Emma's dislike of Jane overrules any potential altruistic

[28] Austen, *Emma,* p. 156.
[29] Austen, *Emma,* pp. 158-159.
[30] Austen, *Emma,* p. 161.
[31] Austen, *Emma,* p. 161.
[32] Austen, *Emma,* p. 161.
[33] Austen, *Emma,* p. 279.
[34] Austen, *Emma,* p. 280.

behaviour, Emma performs as an anti-feminist figure, as she speaks and acts to impress others and elevate her own status, rather than the status of her fellow women.

It is the picnic scene at Box Hill that is the pinnacle of Emma's anti-feminist behaviour. Box Hill is a real location and a significant place for Emma to have her moment of awakening. According to Douglas Murray, 'By Austen's era, Box Hill has developed a character of its own, attracting legends, and…considered a place outside the ordinary, where old rules no longer applied—especially sexual rules'.[35] The picnic is arranged by Mrs. Elton, and attended by Emma and most of her acquaintances, including Mr. Weston and Harriet Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Elton, Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax, and Mr. Knightley and Frank Churchill. Emma and Frank become talkative, and start flirting with each other before engaging the group in a game. Frank demands each member of the group say 'one thing very clever…or two things moderately clever…or three things very dull indeed'.[36] Miss Bates initially responds positively, and makes a joke that she can easily say three dull things. However, Emma points out that 'there may be a difficulty…you will be limited as to number—only three at once.'[37]

Emma's behaviour towards Miss Bates is anti-feminist because as the highest-ranking woman at the picnic, she could have easily corrected Frank, and asked him to stop teasing the others, or could have not responded to Miss Bates's joke. Instead, she chose to be, as Mr. Knightley comments 'insolent in [her] wit to a woman of [Miss Bates's] character, age, and situation'.[38] Miss Bates and Emma are not class equals, as Emma is wealthy and has influence, while Miss Bates is poor and will likely remain unmarried. Susan Rogers is inclined to believe that '[i]n this moment Emma fears she will become the Miss Bates of the next generation,

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[35] Douglas Murray, 'Donwell Abbey and Box Hill: Purity and Danger in Jane Austen's "Emma."' *The Review of English Studies*, *66*.277 (2015), pp. 954–970 (p. 963), <https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgv046>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[36] Austen, *Emma,* p. 347.
[37] Austen, *Emma,* p. 347.
[38] Austen, *Emma,* p. 351.

herself the object of derision and dismissal'.[39] Daniela Garofalo supports Rogers and takes her argument further, commenting that what occurs at Box Hill is a 'trauma'.[40] While what Emma experiences is traumatic, it is also driven by her anti-feminist behaviour, positioning her as an anti-feminist heroine because she chooses to engage in flirtatious and derogatory behaviour at the expense of her fellow woman.

However, Emma's treatment of Harriet Smith is almost kind, as she offers to school Harriet in the ways of a lady, assuming that Harriet must be the natural daughter of a gentleman. Yet, because Harriet is 'imprisoned by the patriarchal definition of and value for legitimate birth', Emma's explotation of her is for Emma's own benefit rather than Harriet's.[41] Emma believes that Harriet has 'good sense' because she is 'very engaging' and seems 'pleasantly grateful for being admitted to Hartfield', and for these reasons, Emma believes that '[e]ncouragement should be given', and that she will 'improve her;…detach her from bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society'.[42] As highlighted by Barbara Seeber, 'Harriet becomes Emma's subject, to be painted and sculpted'.[43]

Emma believes that the acquaintance Harriet has made with the Martin family is 'unworthy of her', and influences Harriet into declining Robert Martin's proposal of marriage.[44] Emma speaks to Harriet at length about how she needs to decide for herself, but also declared that Emma 'could not have visited Mrs. Robert Martin', which shocks Harriet, as she responds with

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[39] Susan Rogers, 'Emma at Box Hill: A very Questionable Day of Pleasure', *Persuasions : The Jane Austen Journal On-Line*, 25.1 (2004), ProQuest, <http://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/emma-at-box-hill-very-questionable-day-pleasure/docview/2309794930/se-2>, [accessed 4 July 2023].

[40] Daniela Garofalo, 'Doating on Faults in Jane Austen's Emma', *European Romantic Review*, 28.2 (2017), pp. 227–240 (p. 235), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509585.2017.1289929>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[41] Susan Allen Ford, '"Not what you would think anything of": Robert Martin and Harriet Smith', *Persuasions : the Jane Austen Journal (Print Version)*, 38.38 (2016), pp. 137–154 (p. 151).

[42] Austen, *Emma,* p. 24.

[43] Barbara K. Seeber, *General Consent in Jane Austen: A Study of Dialogism,* (Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), p. 40.

[44] Austen, *Emma,* p. 24.

'I would not give up the pleasure and honour of being intimate with you for any thing in the world'.[45] This is manipulative of Emma, as she convinces Harriet not to make an appropriate match so she can be entertained with further match-making pursuits, all of which fail. As noted by Ivor Morris, it is possible that 'Emma's appraisal of Harriet has been unconsciously affected by the idea of her own status and capabilities: that she has viewed her protégé through her the distorting glass of her estimate of herself'.[46] Regardless of her reasons, Emma is still manoeuvring Harriet into doing what she wants, a decidedly anti-feminist trait.

It is not the match-making that is anti-feminist, but it is instead Emma's control of women around her. She does not endeavour to help women for their own benefit, but rather so that she can be entertained. Her direction of Harriet to reject Robert Martin's offer is dangerous in the nineteenth century, as without an offer of marriage, Harriet risks being destitute and forced to work as a governess if she is lucky, or in a workhouse if she is not. This is further emphasized by Seeber, who argues that:

> No one acknowledges that Harriet's indecision is a function of her lack of resources; she cannot decide whether to send the ribbon to Mrs. Goddard's or Hartfield because she does not have a permanent home. Instead, Harriet's class disadvantage is erased and naturalised as her weak character.[47]

Emma does not have the same risks in remaining unmarried, so she is unable to be empathetic to the plight of her fellow women, all of whom, in the Highbury community, are not as fortunate as her. For these reasons, Emma's offer of help to Harriet is not an offer of female support, but instead an action of anti-feminist behaviour. Anti-feminism, as discussed above, is essentially

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[45] Austen, *Emma,* p. 52.

[46] Ivor Morris, 'The Enigma of Harriet Smith', *Persuasions: the Jane Austen Journal On-Line*, 26.1 (2005), ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2309795849?parentSessionId=l3i1NYdUnP0A4TGGwUI4ELRl%2FtERidClptlWAUczC4A%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=17287>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[47] Seeber, p. 41.

the opposition of feminism. In the nineteenth century, revolutionary female authors like Mary Wollstonecraft were writing that they did not 'wish [women] to have power over men; but over themselves'.[48] Emma, while a woman with power, does not allow women to have their own mastery, in particular Harriet, whom she controls in many ways. However, Emma's anti-feminist performance is indirect, as she does not proclaim that women should have no rights, or lesser rights than men. However, her actions of manipulation and social cruelty to other women in Highbury identify her as an anti-feminist, as she does not use her position of power to support women of lesser means.

An important familial relationship that Emma does not have entire control over is that between her and her father, Mr. Woodhouse. Mr. Woodhouse is a hypochondriac, and often complains of a symptom of illness, frequently calling for Perry, the local physician, to tend to himself or others in his immediate vicinity. Like Emma, he is prone to 'manipulative tendencies'.[49] He is also authoritarian, as he 'uses guilt rather than fear to control Emma', a trait she has learned to use to control others, like Harriet Smith.[50] Although Mr. Knightley's proposal to Emma at the end of the novel comes with the suggestion that he will move to Hartfield so they can be with Mr. Woodhouse, rather than have Emma move to Donwell Abbey, it still is not good enough for Mr. Woodhouse, who tries to convince Emma that marrying Mr. Knightley is not a good idea. In fact, when she tells him for the second time that she will marry Mr. Knightley, 'he was not happy' and 'his daughter's courage failed…she could not proceed'.[51]

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[48] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 113.

[49] Kit Kincade, 'Failures of the Patriarchy: Fathers as Role Models in Jane Austen' in *Jane Austen and Masculinity,* ed. by Michael Kramp (Blue Summit Ridge: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2017), pp. 41-59 (p. 54).

[50] Kincade, p. 54.

[51] Austen, *Emma,* p. 452.

Yet it is Mr. Woodhouse's fear of his own safety after a series of poultry robbing's in Highbury that convinces him to change his mind, as he is assured that he will feel safer with one of the Knightley brothers at Hartfield. As John is called back to London to practice law, he has no choice but to let Emma marry George. But Mr. Woodhouse does not give in because he believes he is doing right by Emma; he instead gives in because of his own fears and anxiety. While Mr. Woodhouse is not representative of men of the gentry class in the nineteenth century, he is still a patriarch, and his actions have influence over Emma. She has spent most of her life with him as her only parental figure, as her older sister was absent, and her governess was more concerned with being her friend. Emma has looked to Mr. Woodhouse for the correct way to do things, and models some of her behaviour on his, hence her manipulation of others. While Mr. Woodhouse's control is a representation of nineteenth century patriarchal values, Emma's use of it is an example of misplaced patriarchy that has led to a performance of anti-feminism. This emphasis on Emma performing gender in a way that reinforces patriarchal structures is also a feature of her characterisation in Autumn de Wilde's 2020 film adaptation of the novel.

Emma, directed by Autumn de Wilde

de Wilde's 2020 adaptation of *Emma* is a visual spectacle that adapts the Regency period in a very stylised way. The film employs a Rococo colour palette and places the characters in a. series of tableaux against the backdrop of set-piece locations such as drawing rooms, gardens, and milliner's shops. The most innovative aspect of the film is its profiling of the duties of the servants, who are rescued from invisibility to be given a presence as hardworking enablers of the upper class. Other than this, the characterisation of the hero and heroine has not drastically changed, and the overall plot follows the arc of Austen's original novel. This forms a contrast with Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice,* where Wright characterises Elizabeth Bennet as a feminist figure, an enhancement of the original character from Austen's novel. de Wilde has

not done a similar thing for Emma. Instead, Emma's performance of gender has been adapted directly from the novel and is not updated for a twenty-first century audience. This makes Emma's performance of gender in the film anti-feminist, and in some cases chauvinistic, as there is a visual portrayal of her characterisation that reinforces these traits. This section of the chapter will discuss Emma's female chauvinism on screen in her interactions with other characters, primarily Harriet Smith, Miss Bates, Jane Fairfax, and Mr. Elton.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes chauvinism as the 'belief in the superiority of one's own kind of cause, and prejudice against others'.[52] Anya Taylor-Joy, the actress playing Emma Woodhouse in de Wilde's film, performs her character chauvinistically. While the character of Emma written by Austen may be anti-feminist, Taylor-Joy enhances this quality through her performance. This is quite clear in Emma's interactions with Harriet Smith, played by Mia Goth. When Harriet is first introduced in the film, she is viewed as a character of lower status than Emma, seen in her outfit and body language. Harriet's first arrival at Hartfield shows her wearing a bonnet and red cape, looking like an out of place Little Red Riding Hood as she gazes at the house surrounding her. In the next scene, Harriet has removed the cape and bonnet to reveal a rough red cardigan and a pink dress, a direct opposition to Emma's white dress that is made of a much finder material. When the pair have tea for the first time, Harriet constantly looks to Emma for how to behave and tries to copy her. Try as she might, Harriet is much coarser than Emma, as she reaches for a macaron without an appropriate plate, does not extend her pinkie finger when drinking her tea, which she also slurps, and shovels her pastry into her mouth. Emma instructs Harriet to 'come' with her to Mrs. Weston's, giving Harriet no option but to smile in response.[53]

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[52] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/31017?redirectedFrom=chauvinism#eid [accessed 14 June 2023], s.v. chauvinism, n.

[53] *Emma,* dir. by Autumn de Wilde (Focus Features and Universal Pictures, 2020) [on Neon].

In this scene, Emma displays her chauvinism, as she instructs Harriet on who to socialise with, judges her for the way she engages in the afternoon tea, and displays her own prejudice towards others who she considers lesser than herself. From the outset, de Wilde positions Harriet as Emma's pupil more than Emma's friend. Emma is often framed in a position of power over Harriet when they share the screen together, as Harriet is often looking up to Emma and is always positioned to the side.[54] Emma is always figured as the person with authority, and it is not until the end of the film that the two can find equal ground and become friends.

There are a few scenes created by de Wilde that are not in Austen's novel that further show Emma's chauvinistic behaviour toward Harriet. Harriet remains a parlour boarder in de Wilde's film, and in a few of these scenes, Emma comes to collect her from her boarding school. In the first scene, there is a direct contrast between Emma and the boarders as she walks towards the school: they giggle and run in their red coats on the grass, while Emma struts past confidently in her blue outfit on the pavement.[55] This is reminiscent of the television adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale,* where women of a lower status who are fit to bear children wear red, and wealthy wives wear blue.[56] Emma finds Harriet still in bed in a dishevelled state, and agrees to transcribe Mr. Elton's sermon for Harriet while she is unwell. Because Emma is scheming to match the Mr. Elton and Harriet together her willingness to transcribe the sermon shows her domineering guidance of Harriet.

After Christmas, Emma returns to Mrs. Goddard's school to see Harriet, whom she interrupts playing a game of bullet pudding, where the objective is to not knock the coin off the flour, which Harriet inevitably does, and then has to try and pick up the coin with her teeth.[57]

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[54] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[55] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[56] *The Handmaid's Tale,* (MGM Television, 2017-) [streamed on Neon].
[57] While this game is not detailed in Austen's novel, it is from the Regency period, according to Violet Kim in *Slate* (Violet Kim, 'What's With the Game in *Emma* Where They Destroy a Sandcastle Made of Flour?' *Slate* (2021), <https://slate.com/culture/2020/02/emma-flour-game-bullet-pudding-anya-taylor-joy-explained.html>, [accessed 21 July 2023]).

Emma stands behind her while she does this (initially hidden from the camera by Harriet); Emma's eyes widen with surprise, and the giggling of the parlour boarders abruptly stops, and Harriet curtsies to Emma with flour covering her face.[58] Emma is manipulating Harriet and her behaviour, enforcing a genteel disposition onto her as she implies bullet pudding is not a game for ladies. In the springtime, not long after the bullet pudding scene, Emma instructs Harriet to stop talking about Mr. Elton. Harriet's response to this is to throw her book of transcribed sermons out the window, which the camera captures falling into a body of water with a "plop" sound effect.[59] Though Emma did no instruct Harriet to do this, her implication was clear. As in the novel, de Wilde's film critique's Emma's position, creating a doubleness by developing a very sympathetic Harriet who creates a bond with the viewer. Yet de Wilde's additional scenes give Harriet an outward and inner life not present in Austen's text, making her a more fully rounded character. Throughout her interactions with Harriet, Emma constantly reinforces her own viewpoint and morals onto her, not only being controlling in her friendship, but also being chauvinistic in her expectations of how Harriet will perform as a young lady.

Jane Fairfax takes a minor role in de Wilde's film in comparison to Austen's novel, potentially because of Harriet Smith's larger role. While this does lessen the rivalry between Emma and Jane to one about competing for husbands rather than one about Emma abusing power, the rivalry between Jane and Emma is still clear. Emma goes to meet Jane at her residence with Mrs. and Miss Bates in Highbury, and Jane looks depressed, as she often gazes out the window forlornly rather than listening to the conversation. At the dinner at Hartfield that shortly follows, Jane's disposition has improved, but she answers Emma's probing questions about Frank Churchill in a general fashion and openly goes against Mr. Woodhouse's advice to leave the custard, eating it, and claiming it to be 'well-prepared'.[60] Jane openly goes

[58] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[59] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[60] *Emma,* de Wilde.

against the advice of the Highbury patriarch, positioning her the film's feminist figure, because she rebels against the rule of men.

The rivalry between Emma and Jane becomes ever more apparent in the piano scene which shortly follows dinner. While Austen details that Jane is proficient at playing the piano, de Wilde provides an auditory and visual comparison between Emma and Jane. Emma plays an English folk tune, giving her own interpretation of the piece, and receives pleasant smiles from the audience. Emma tries to gain the upper hand over Jane, by commenting 'what a pity that you forgot your music', with Jane replying, 'I hope I can remember the tune'.[61] Emma feels she has won until she sits down, and Jane starts playing Mozart's Sonata in F from heart, much to the amazement of the audience who are too shocked to smile. As Emma waves her fan to try and combat her astonishment, Mr. Knightley reminds Emma that 'perhaps she is the accomplished young woman you wish to be thought of yourself?'[62] This scene is a showcase of Emma's anti-feminist behaviour. While Emma tries to belittle Jane by questioning her skills. Jane does not bring Emma down, and she openly challenges Mr. Woodhouse's authority in his own home. The interaction between Emma and Jane, while whittled down for de Wilde's film, is not only an interaction between two female rivals, but an interaction of anti-feminist thought and pre-feminist leanings reminiscent of nineteenth century ideology.

It is after the scene at Box Hill, where Emma readily insults Miss Bates, that her anti-feminist and chauvinistic behaviour starts to change. de Wilde showcases this departure of toxicity using normal bodily functions. After Emma insults Miss Bates, unknowingly until she sees her reaction, she starts to show emotion. Miss Bates starts to cry after Emma's insult and believes she has done something to offend Emma previously. She removes herself from the group with the assistance of Jane Fairfax, and Emma looks sheepish. She even presses the

[61] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[62] *Emma,* de Wilde.

inside of her nose at one point, as if to stop a tear from falling. It is not until the carriage ride home that Emma really shows emotion. She complains to Mr. Knightley of being too hot and tired as she stands up her carriage while he confronts her; after he has finished telling her off for her poor behaviour, she bursts into tears and falls back down, yelling at the carriage driver to 'go'.[63] Even when she arrives home to Hartfield, she cries on the windowsill, seeking the comfort of her patriarchal father, who can only sit beside her in companionable sadness. After all these tears have been shed, Emma has her first anti-chauvinistic moment, as she goes to the dwelling of Miss Bates and apologises with a gift basket, something she clearly does not want to do as she slumps against the wall outside their apartment. She apologies to Miss Bates in a roundabout way and sends Jane her good wishes after learning she has a headache (possibly a lie, as Jane has just been playing the piano). The shedding of tears is a shedding of Emma's prejudice, and admission of her being in the wrong, and gives her the ability to be as kind toward fellow women as Miss Bates claims.

This shift is reinforced when the feminist Mr. Knightley proposes to her. Emma's nose starts bleeding, and this can be read symbolically as a visual cue that her anti-feminist characteristics are slowly being purged. In this very stylised adaptation of Emma, with its Rococo colour palette and emphasis on placing Emma into a series of tableau which draw attention to the artifice of the world, this is a significant moment of departure into naturalism. Gone is the very finished, controlled Emma whose perfect costumes act as a visual reinforcement of her self-confident manipulation of others like chess pieces on a board. This is a woman in love, conscious of her own failures and her human fallibility. Her actions demonstrate her new-found outlook as she resolves that she will need to tell Harriet that Mr. Knightley is not interested in her romantically. Emma solves her own problems, admits her guilt, and supports her fellow women, as she invites Harriet to Hartfield once Harriet's father,

[63] *Emma,* de Wilde.

a tradesman, arrives to visit her. This is a shift from Austen's novel, as Emma and Harriet become actual friends rather than just neighbours after their respective happy endings, showing their greater closeness, and reinforcing de Wilde's choice to bring Harriet to the forefront of the film over Jane Fairfax. Emma's distressed emotions that take place in the last thirty minutes of the film show a woman who is in the wrong, as in Austen's novel, and who can be guided properly through marriage to Mr. Knightley and an admission of her own faults, as in the novel. de Wilde has used visual techniques to symbolize this transition, but Emma's characterisation, while perhaps further developed in some aspects of the film, remains the same as in Austen's original text.

In de Wilde's film, legendary actor Bill Nighy was cast as Emma's father, Mr. Woodhouse. While he is often used to provide comic relief, he is still a figure representing the patriarchy in the film. He yells 'poor Miss Taylor' so loudly, it is implied that the whole county can hear him, as his scream is a voiceover on top of an outside shot of Hartfield.[64] When Mr. Knightley arrives to Hartfield for the first time, Mr. Woodhouse goes to sit down, and then stands back up, a routine he continues twice which Mr. Knightley politely follows. Mr. Woodhouse also dictates how other characters around him feel. He tells his servants to bring the screen closer as Mr. Knightley feels a chill. He scolds Emma for not feeling the 'chill and sickly draft' by reminding her that 'Miss Taylor would have felt it'.[65] Mr. Woodhouse also coerces Emma into feeling guilty for leaving him, instructing her that she 'must not leave' him as Isabella has done.[66] When Emma's sister Isabella arrives at Hartfield, Emma holds her infant niece, who begins crying after making a normal infant noise. Isabella goes into a panic, and Mr. Woodhouse turns to the servants and says, 'Send for Perry!'[67] Isabella's husband, Mr. John Knightley, tries to reassure the servants there is no need to send for the doctor, but Isabella

[64] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[65] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[66] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[67] *Emma,* de Wilde.

screams ‘Send for Perry!’, going against her husband and siding with the dominant patriarch, Mr. Woodhouse.[68] While Nighy’s portrayal of Mr. Woodhouse is humorous, he is the only person Emma lives with at Hartfield, and she is entirely instructed by him, and has manipulative tendencies that she uses on other women to get her own way, just as in Austen’s novel. However, de Wilde’s use of servants also shows the control both the Woodhouse’s have over those of a lower class. Mr. Woodhouse is still the patriarch in de Wilde’s film, and while he is more comedic than in the novel, he still manoeuvres those around him, which influences Emma’s anti-feminist and chauvinistic behaviour. A similar pattern is evident in the web series, *Emma Approved.*

Misogyny in *Emma Approved*

Emma Approved is the transmedia adaptation of Austen’s novel *Emma.* Produced by Pemberley Digital, the series is one of five transmedia stories produced by the company, which includes *Welcome to Sanditon,* an adaptation of Jane Austen’s unfinished novel *Sanditon,* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* the transmedia adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* previously discussed in Chapters One and Two. *Emma Approved* is the story of *Emma* set in a twenty-first century office, where Emma Woodhouse is the owner of a matchmaking and event planning business who receives financial backing from her business mogul father Mr. Woodhouse. Emma is in partnership with Alex Knightley, the George Knightley equivalent character, who helps her with the logistics of running the company. Similar shenanigans ensue as they do in *Emma,* but the characters are set up slightly differently than the novel: Harriet Smith becomes Emma’s personal assistant; Miss Bates becomes Maddie Bates, a woman who makes artisanal jams, and who Emma finds clients for; and Jane Fairfax remains Emma’s family friend but joins Emma’s company as an employee. An important casting point is that Maddie Bates and Jane Fairfax are

[68] de Wilde, *Emma,* 2020.

played by black women. They are the only people of colour in this transmedia adaptation, and Kimberlié Crenshaw's intersectional theory comes into play, where the audience can see 'how Black women are theoretically erased…in feminist theory.'[69] While this thesis is not commenting on the casting process, the choice to have black women play two marginalised characters in *Emma Approved* implies 'a familiar Eurocentrism and phallocentrism that belies anything new for black women in new millennial speculative film and television'.[70] This is important as this section of the thesis will discuss how both Maddy Bates and Jane Fairfax are dismissed by Emma, as she follows the conventions of patriarchal rule, and, in this case, the white male gaze.

The characters in *Emma Approved* have been updated for a twenty-first century context, yet their behaviour has not. Emma is filming herself for what she hopes will be future greatness, as she dreams of one day becoming like Oprah, which shows her egotistical nature. Regardless of the medium of the vlog being a narrative she can control, as she is able to dictate how she is edited and portrayed on camera, Emma still behaves in a similar fashion to the novel and belittles all the women of her society. Because she does this from a business perspective rather than a friendly one, she becomes misogynistic. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'misogyny' is defined as 'hatred or dislike of, or prejudice against women'.[71] In *Emma Approved,* Emma is very clear in her dislike of all the women in the series except for Harriet, but her relationship with Harriet is also prejudiced as she treats her as a business commodity rather than a person. This section of the chapter will argue that Emma's treatment of other

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[69] Kimberlié Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', in *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender,* ed. by Katharine T. Bartlett and Roseanne Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 57-80 (p. 57).

[70] Diana Adesola Mafe, *Where No Black Woman Has Gone Before: Subversive Portrayals in Speculative Film and TV*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.7560/315224, p. 8.

[71] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), < https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/dictionary/misogyny_n?tab=meaning_and_use#36725941>, [accessed 21 July 2023], s.v. misogyny, n.

women in *Emma Approved* is not positive or feminist behaviour, as the processes of consumerist society lead her to perform misogynistically. This commentary adaptation of Auten's novel *Emma* enhances the patriarchal motifs from the novel, and the characterisation of Emma Woodhouse reflects topical postfeminist values in popular culture.

Emma Woodhouse is introduced in *Emma Approved* slightly differently than in the novel. Emma starts by reading a review of her company, and after describing herself as 'beautiful, clever, and brilliant', gives a wink to the camera, which is accompanied by a playful bell sound effect.[72] From the outset, the directors have set up the expectation that Emma has self-knowledge and can be relied upon to see both herself and the world clearly, yet this is something that the series subverts. This first look at Emma gives the impression that she knows that she is good at her job, a feminist characteristic; however, the comment about her beauty is entirely patriarchal. Her own beauty should not matter when her business is matchmaking other couples; however, beauty is still valued in a male-dominated world where women are highly valued for appearance rather than attributes. In this first episode of *Emma Approved,* Emma is also characterised as a woman who is self-important, as she proclaims that she is filming the documentary as a record of her greatness for when she receives her 'future Lifetime Achievement Award in Lifestyle Excellence'.[73] Emma even goes so far as to proclaim that she will 'be like Oprah, only better!'[74] Emma's phrasing is notable here, because she does not say that she "hopes to be as good as Oprah". Instead, she claims that she will be better, belittling that example of female achievement to place more importance on her own. At the end of this episode, she also talks over Annie Taylor, the Miss Taylor equivalent character, and suggests that she knows what she is thinking; however the actual reason for Miss Taylor's call, to call

[72] Pemberley Digital*, I am Emma Woodhouse – Emma Approved Ep: 1,* web series, YouTube, 8 October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeeXkf8LZ_8> [accessed 21 July 2023].
[73] Pemberley Digital*, I am Emma Woodhouse – Emma Approved Ep: 1.*
[74] Pemberley Digital*, I am Emma Woodhouse – Emma Approved Ep: 1.*

off her wedding, is not in Emma's thoughts.[75] This initial episode sets up Emma as misogynistic in her belittling of other women, and in projecting her own ideas and thoughts on the women around her.

Harriet Smith plays a role more like Austen's novel than de Wilde's film in *Emma Approved.* She is first introduced to the series as Emma's personal assistant. Because the initial relationship between Emma and Harriet is a business one, rather than a personal one, it makes sense that Emma would want to mentor her in how to conduct business for Emma Approved. In the novel, Emma decides to be friends with Harriet after her arrival at Hartfield, which is initiated by Mrs. Goddard, the governess of the boarding house in Highbury.[76] In *Emma Approved,* it is Alex Knightley who selects Harriet's curriculum vitae as the best one for the role of Emma's assistant. This is a male character making decisions for a female one, a chauvinistic decision that Emma goes along with, even though she tries to protest that she 'doesn't need an assistant' and that she is 'completely self-sufficient'.[77] Although Alex reminds Emma that her father funded the company, and employs him to do 'all the actual business work', Emma still declines the offer of an assistant until Alex tells her to 'hire her', and Emma asks if he is 'forcing her on me'.[78]

While this interaction between the pair is playful, Emma does end up hiring Harriet on a trial basis, and her first task is to spill some latte onto Alex's khaki pants, which Emma hates. When Harriet tries to debate this, Emma responds with 'less thinking, more doing!'[79] While Emma is anti-feminist here, as she instructs Harriet to listen blindly, Emma is also being led by established patriarchal practices, listening to her chief male advisor, even though she owns

[75] Though Miss Taylor does get married in the end.
[76] Austen, *Emma,* p. 23.
[77] Pemberley Digital, *Self Sufficient – Emma Approved Ep: 3,* web series, YouTube, 15 October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPpfLsfP-54&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=3 >, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[78] Pemberley Digital, *Self Sufficient – Emma Approved Ep: 3*.
[79] Pemberley Digital, *Self Sufficient – Emma Approved Ep: 3*.

the company and does want an assistant in the first place. In *Emma,* the heroine acts on her own, but uses her father's patriarchal values as a guide for her behaviour; in *Emma Approved,* Emma is guided to make decisions by the patriarchy, in this case Alex. Emma does not hire Harriet to empower her, but instead to follow the instructions laid out by Alex. Emma therefore has not been updated to be a model of feminine success; instead, she is under the control of the patriarchy.

The relationship between Emma and Jane Fairfax is also different in *Emma Approved,* as, like Harriet, Jane is also an employee of Emma's. She is initially brought into the company to help with charitable events, and is another hire demanded by Alex despite Emma's resistance. When Jane arrives, Emma struggles to be nice to her, and often looks sour whenever Jane is awkward in front of the cameras that Emma has set up all over the office.[80] While Jane has a much stronger personality than Harriet, she is also bound by Emma's will, not because she has a higher social rank, but because she is her boss. While this is a fine use of updating social conventions by Pemberley Digital, it does change the dynamics of the relationship between Jane and Emma. Jane cannot afford to get too sassy to Emma in case she gets fired; and Emma cannot be completely rude to one of her own employees. Because this is a transmedia adaptation released on YouTube, viewers of the series can comment on the episode, like Shorty2Die4 proclaiming 'YAY kudos on making Jane super awkward i love her already!!!' and emmelineysun echoing 'This is a great adaptation of the strained relationship between Emma and Jane'.[81]

Pemberley Digital have successfully recreated the tension between Emma and Jane in the transmedia adaptation of *Emma*, yet the tension between them is heightened because of the men involved on the outskirts of their relationship. Jane still has a secret engagement to Frank

[80] Pemberley Digital, *The New Girl – Emma Approved Ep: 49,* web series, YouTube, 3 June 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oGyfhVwPo4&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=60>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[81] Pemberley Digital, *The New Girl – Emma Approved Ep: 49*, comments section.

Churchill, and she was appointed into the role by Alex. While their relationship is troubled, it is because of the impact of the patriarchy on both women. The relationship between Emma and Jane is not close in Austen's novel; however, it is not a connection forced on them by men, but rather by the social conventions of the time. Updating *Emma* to a twenty-first century workplace in this case shows the ongoing impact of patriarchal dominance.

Alex Knightley also influences Emma's relationship with the Miss Bates equivalent in *Emma Approved,* Maddie Bates*,* who is an entrepreneur like Emma but not as successful. Maddie has known Mr. Woodhouse for a long time and used to be his office manager before she needed to quit to look after her elderly mother who could not live alone. After Maddie left, the Highbury Group backed her business in the same way it did Emma's; however, Maddie's company is just 'fledgling' as she struggles to balance taking care of her mother and being a boss.[82] Alex tells Emma that Maddie needs her help, and that she cannot throw a cocktail party until she helps her, so Emma decides to help her by 'figuring out all her problems'.[83] Before the meeting, Emma takes two shots of wheatgrass to make sure she can retain her focus and kill her tastebuds so that she doesn't have to fully taste Maddie's jams. She also instructs Harriet to interrupt their meeting with an important call, which Harriet does by saying the Queen of England has called, forcing Maddie to leave, though she is excited for Emma.[84]

Throughout the conversation with Emma, Maddie is nothing but nice. While she talks excitably and often, there is no reason why Emma should not be able to maintain at least professionalism in her discourse with Maddie. This is even pointed out by comments on the video, with unfabgirl claiming 'I officially adore Miss Bates', a statement further enhanced by MsShylyPompous who asked, 'can I please have Maddie Bates yelling "MAMA!" as my

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[82] Pemberley Digital*, Attitude and Gratitude – Emma Approved Ep: 34,* web series, YouTube, 7 March 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4YlX-CjgQA&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=40>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[83] Pemberley Digital*, Attitude and Gratitude – Emma Approved Ep: 34.*
[84] Pemberley Digital*, Attitude and Gratitude – Emma Approved Ep: 34.*

ringtone?'[85] Emma is performing as anti-feminist here, similarly to Austen's novel, as she dismisses Maddie instead of supporting her. Alex has again forced Emma into this interaction, but this is one that is coming from a place of kindness rather than a business perspective, and still Emma is disgruntled by it. Maddie is presented sympathetically in *Emma Approved* to critique Emma's treatment of her. While Pemberley Digital have updated the setting of *Emma,* and placed it in a twenty-first context, it still functions as a postfeminist performance of characters, as Emma continually dismisses other women, as well as dominating black women, and is only given authority by men.

The Box Hill event, a significant event in the novel *Emma* as the main heroine starts to change, has been altered in *Emma Approved.* Instead of a picnic, it is the launch of a new restaurant, Boxx, that Emma's company is promoting. The audience learns through Emma's interaction with Alex that Emma was rude to Maddie Bates in front of a lot of influential people, in a way that was embarrassing to Maddie and for Emma's business. Following the event, Jane Fairfax resigns, telling Emma 'My energy is better spent elsewhere'.[86] Alex reminds Emma that 'everyone else was horrified' at her behaviour, and that only she and Frank were laughing at Emma's rude comments, before Alex himself also leaves, indicating his resignation.[87] Emma's behaviour at the Boxx event, while the audience does not see it on screen, is particularly anti-feminist, as she humiliates Maddie Bates for her own benefit. Emma has instructed Maddie to fail, and this is something not even the patriarchy can tolerate. Through their use of the Boxx event, Pemberley Digital shows that there is no place for feminism in the twenty-first century workplace, as the primary feminist character, Jane Fairfax, quits the company after this event, having been dismissed by the anti-feminist Emma one too many

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[85] Pemberley Digital, *Attitude and Gratitude – Emma Approved Ep: 34,* comments section.
[86] Pemberley Digital, *Boxx Hill – Emma Approved Ep: 64,* web series, YouTube, 25 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNF1w3-kT6c&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=77>, [accessed 21 July 2023].
[87] Pemberley Digital, *Boxx Hill – Emma Approved Ep: 64*'.

times. The Boxx event is the pinnacle of Emma's misogynistic behaviour, and the backlash Emma receives reflects how twenty-first-century society tries to 'convince women of their need to scale back their professional and rekindle their interest in romance and marriage'.[88] While there is no change in behaviour from Emma following this event, she does focus on repairing her relationship with Alex, and starts a romantic relationship with him. Throughout *Emma Approved,* Emma performs misogynistically, as she is prejudiced against other women and considers them less superior. The lack of Emma's change in character after the Boxx event shows not only a reinforcing of twenty-first-century consumerist society, but also a dismissal of feminism.

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This chapter has shown that the heroine of *Emma* performs anti-feminism throughout her interactions with other females in Austen's novel. Emma Woodhouse's performance has been influenced by her father, the patriarch of Hartfield and the Highbury community, and it has negative effects for the women of Highbury. Jane Fairfax nearly becomes a governess instead of following through with her secret proposal to Frank Churchill; Harriet Smith nearly becomes destitute after rejecting the first marriage proposal from Robert Martin; and Miss Bates is embarrassed publicly, potentially ruining her current social standing. Emma's actions are not that of a feminist figure but are instead a reflection of nineteenth-century patriarchal values. de Wilde's film adaptation of *Emma* has not drastically differed from Austen's novel, and it has made Emma's negative traits and anti-feminist qualities more visual. de Wilde has also used the film to create visual motifs that symbolise Emma's changing character, namely crying and bleeding. This chapter has also argued that while the film is humorous, particularly in its characterisation of Mr. Woodhouse, it also reflects patriarchal figures using manipulative

[88] Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism,* 2nd. edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. p. 94.

techniques by wealthy and dominant characters, like Emma, Mr. Woodhouse and Isabella. While de Wilde's film is a visual spectacle that has impacted how the Regency period is adapted for the screen, it is a transposition adaptation and therefore does not change drastically from Austen's novel. Pemberley Digital, while they may have translated Austen's novel *Emma* into a modern setting, have further reinforced patriarchal values in their transmedia adaptation. Emma is powerless without the support of Alex Knightley, and entrenches other women to maintain authority, disadvantaging Miss Bates, Jane Fairfax, and Harriet Smith in the process. While Pemberley Digital have updated *Emma* to the twenty-first century, it has not been made into a feminist text, and instead *Emma Approved* contains postfeminist values as Emma tries to navigate a patriarchal business. Emma Woodhouse as a character is not a feminist or pre-feminist figure, yet Pemberley Digital have missed an opportunity for her redemption, and to champion feminism against twenty-first-century patriarchal ideas. As discussed by Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon, 'career women are pathologized and defined as abject and deficient, selfish and emotionally stunted'.[89] By continuing to characterise Emma as anti-feminist throughout adaptations of Austen's novel, Emma represents 'a rejection of feminist goals and an attempt to turn back the clock to pre-feminist times'.[90] The lack of change in Emma's performance of gender, while remaining true to Austen's novel, showcases the regression of feminism in the twenty-first century.

[89] Genz and Brabon, p. 92.
[90] Genz and Brabon P. 87.

Chapter Four – Postfeminism Versus the Patriarchy in *Emma*

> '"It was badly done indeed!"' —George Knightley, Emma by Jane Austen[1]
>
> '"Yeah, badly done, Emma. Look, if this the way that you make the world better, I don't want to be any part of it."'—Alex Knightley, Emma Approved[2]

If Emma Woodhouse is the most anti-feminist of Jane Austen's heroines, her counterpart, Mr. George Knightley, provides a pre-feminist corrective in both the novel and many of the adaptations. The depiction of masculinities in Austen's *Emma* and de Wilde's film adaptation forms a contrast to *Pride and Prejudice* in which Mr. Darcy maintains a constant performance of hegemonic gentry masculinity that stands as a model to which the other male characters either aspire to or are judged against. In *Emma*, Mr. Knightley can be regarded as pre-feminist, particularly in his care for the wellbeing of the women of his society, a care conspicuously lacking in Emma herself as Chapter Three has highlighted. This pattern is maintained in de Wilde's film where he is positioned under the female gaze. Once again, the web series provides a point of departure with Alex Knightley performing a postfeminist version of masculinity suited to the consumer environment in which *Emma Approved* is set.

As with *Pride and Prejudice*, the central love interest is contrasted with men who perform masculinity differently to the hero. In Austen's novel, Frank Churchill is perhaps best categorised as a dandy whose musical talent and love of dancing make him appealing to women but potentially threatening to the masculine standards of the day. While Frank has a reduced role in de Wilde's film, the elements of his masculine performance are retained. In contrast, the web series once again departs from this depiction of Frank as a dandy, rejecting the queer possibilities of the character exploited by Amy Heckerling's 1995 *Clueless*, to reshape Frank

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[1] Jane Austen, *Emma,* ed. by Fiona Stafford (England: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 351.

[2] Pemberley Digital*, Boxx Hill – Emma Approved Ep: 64,* web series, YouTube, 25 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNF1w3-kT6c&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=77>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

as the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity.[3] A similar pattern is evident with the character of Mr. Elton, who attempts to perform a gallant version of masculinity in both the novel and film, becoming fragile when these attempts fail. In *Emma Approved*, a parallel can be drawn between Senator Elton and Frank, who both perform hegemonic masculinity. Senator Elton's performance of masculinity is more complex, however, in that he deliberately and self-consciously performs this role to project a politically appealing version of himself.

This chapter begins by focusing on Frank, and then shifts to an exploration of Mr. Elton. The final section of the chapter concentrates on Mr. Knightley's performance of masculinity. This chapter argues that while Frank Churchill and Mr. Knightley have changed in their relevant adaptations, unlike some of the men of *Pride and Prejudice,* this is not a reflection of hegemonic masculine ideals shifting in popular culture, but more of a representation of what insecurity looks like in the performance of male gender roles.

Frank Churchill: A Dandy?

Frank Churchill is an entirely different rival to Mr. Wickham. Of course, they both present initially as gentlemen, and both seem to be eligible matches for the relevant heroines, Emma and Elizabeth Bennet. However, while Mr. Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* is a rake, *Emma's* Frank is somewhat more complex. He does not actively lie as Mr. Wickham does, yet he does choose to keep secrets. He is also different to Mr. Wickham because he is wealthy, independent, and able to maintain familial relationships. All of Frank's admirable qualities reinforce Frank's status not only as a rival for Emma's affections, but also as an eligible bachelor. However,

[3] *Clueless,* dir. by Amy Heckerling (Paramount Pictures, 1995) [on Neon].

Frank is also characterised as a dandy. 'Dandy' can be defined as 'a person who dresses fashionably' and/or 'one who studies above everything to dress elegantly and fashionably'.[4]

Frank is twenty-three compared to Knightley's thirty-seven or thirty-eight, making him much closer in age to Emma's twenty.[5] Emma and Frank also bond quickly and easily. Despite being coded as a dandy, Frank is positioned as the likely match for the heroine, although Emma has expressed her desire to never marry:

> Now, it so happened that in spite of Emma's resolution of never marrying, there was something in the name, in the idea of Mr. Frank Churchill, which always interested her. She had frequently thought—especially since his father's marriage with Miss Taylor—that if she *were* to marry, he was the very person to suit her in age, character, and condition.[6]

Here Emma comes close to endorsing the patriarchal ideal for her life. However, it is through Frank's display of dandyism that Austen undercuts the idea that he is a match for Emma.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first written record of 'dandy' was approximately 1780, from issue eighty-one of the English journal *Notes and Queries*.[7] All of Austen's works were written and published post-1780, so it can be reasonably justified that the word was in her repertoire. Charles Baudelaire, renowned French poet of the nineteenth century and known for his scholarship on dandyism, defined a dandy as 'The man who is rich and idle, and who…has no other occupation than the perpetual pursuit of happiness; the man who has been brought up amid luxury and has been accustomed from his earliest days to the obedience of others'.[8] Frank falls into this category, especially when he leaves Highbury to return to

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[4] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/47155?rskey=2K0e5p&result=1#eid.>, [accessed 21 July 2023], s.v. dandy, n.1, adj. and adv.

[5] Austen, *Emma,* pp. 92, 11, 1.

[6] Austen, *Emma,* p. 112.

[7] OED, s.v. dandy, n.1, adj. and adv.

[8] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays,* trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 2016), p. 26.

London ‘merely to have his hair cut’, which confirms to Mr. Knightley that Frank is ‘just the trifling, silly fellow I took him for’.[9] While the haircut is also a cover for Frank buying a piano for Jane, he is more comfortable performing the dandy than he is admitting an attachment to a woman below his station. Frank’s dandyism ‘challenges conventional conceptions of masculinity’.[10] Zachary Snider suggests that his performance of dandyism is unlikeable because it is ‘a threat to masculinity, to tradition, and…[to] English male stereotypes’.[11] Frank’s dandyism not only makes him an unsuitable match for Emma, it also threatens to displace the patriarchal values maintained by the Woodhouse’s in the Highbury community.

Another example of Frank performing as the dandy is his participation in musical pursuits, an activity that is not indulged in by Austen heroes. Heroes in Austen’s novels, like Mr. Darcy and Mr. Knightley, do not play or sing, as these are coded as feminine accomplishments in Austen’s fiction. According to Gillian Dooley, ‘in Austen’s world, amateur musicianship is mainly the preserve of the female sex’.[12] However, when Emma is encouraged to play the pianoforte, Frank accompanies her, and ‘was accused of having a delightful voice, and a perfect knowledge of music; which was properly denied; and that he knew nothing of the matter, and had no voice at all, roundly asserted’.[13] Frank’s denial of musical ability could initially be read as a show of modesty; however, as he sings again shortly after with Jane Fairfax, this would be a false modesty.[14] It is more likely that Frank tries to deny his talent so as not to seem so much like a dandy, but his love of music cannot be disguised. He even goes so far as to purchase a

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[9] Austen, *Emma,* p. 193.
[10] Michael Kramp, ‘Introduction: Austen and Masculinity’ in *Jane Austen and Masculinity,* ed. by. Michael Kramp (Blue Ridge Summit: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2017), pp. 1-20 (p. 15).
[11] Zachary Snider, ‘Austen’s Dandies: Frank Churchill and Henry Crawford Play Dress Up’, in *Jane Austen and Masculinity,* ed. by. Michael Kramp (Blue Ridge Summit: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2017), pp. 151-169 (p. 161).
[12] Gillian Dooley, ‘A Most Luxurious State: Men and Music in Jane Austen’s Novels.’ *English Studies*, 98.6 (2017), pp. 598–607 (p. 600), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2017.1322386>.
[13] Austen, *Emma*, p. 212.
[14] Austen, *Emma,* p. 212.

pianoforte for Jane as proof of his affections.[15] Austen uses music symbolically, as a warning signal that a male character is not behaving in a particularly moral or socially acceptable way. Performing music was not atypical in the nineteenth century, but men who perform music are more feminized in Austen's novels, and often have a secret to hide, making them morally untrustworthy. John Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* is perhaps the preeminent example of this.[16] There is a level of comfort in Frank's performance of music, and while Austen reflects that dandyism is an accepted type of masculinity, through her characterisation of Frank, she diminishes 'the authority of male sentimentality'.[17]

Frank's dandyism is not so apparent in Autumn de Wilde's 2020 film version of *Emma*, perhaps because Frank as a character is not as prominent in the film. A possible reason for this could be that dandyism is complicated to portray on screen, especially in the twenty-first century, when a man interested in fashion who places a lot of importance on appearance, might be identified as a metrosexual man,[18] or as a man who is an active and open member of the LGBTQIA+ community.[19] de Wilde's *Emma* has been described as 'an anti-historical

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[15] Austen, *Emma*, p. 410.

[16] Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, (New York: Open Road Media, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/detail.action?pqorigsite=primo&docID=4353536>, [accessed 12 August 2021].

[17] Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen.* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/lib/waikato/reader.action?docID=485971> [accessed 16 July 2023], p. 191.

[18] The metrosexual man, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is 'a man whose lifestyle, spending habits and concern for personal appearance are likened to those considered typical of a fashionable, urban, homosexual man.' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/dictionary/metrosexual_n?tab=meaning_and_use#10501136>, [accessed 21 July 2023], s.v. metrosexual, n. and adj.) Most scholars agree that there is a popular and academic definition that are similar, though popularly the definition is short (as above), whereas scholarly the terms have many meanings that cannot be condensed into one simple term (Erynn Masi de Casanova, *Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity*, (Unites States of America: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 94). For the purposes of this section, the popular definition is being referenced here.

[19] As discussed by R. W. Connell in *Masculinities (*R. W. Connell, *Masculinities,* 2nd. edition (Crows Nest, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 2005)), the challenge to 'hegemonic heterosexuality from lesbian and gay movements is…as profound as the challenge to men's power from feminism' (p. 202).

romance…set in a time that never existed'.[20] The film's stylized depiction of nineteenth century England directly contrasts with Joe Wright's film, which framed *Pride and Prejudice* through the lens of realism. Instead, de Wilde presents a film that is

> lavish, engaging, and cute…set in a time and place that never existed, a squeaky-clean English countryside where the saturated colours are startling, all the characters caricature themselves, and ebullient invisible orchestras burst into eclectic music to comment, presumably ironically, on the action.[21]

Adaptations of the Regency period are becoming more comfortable with displaying queer relationships, such as the Bridgerton spinoff *Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story.*[22] Previous modernised adaptations of *Emma,* like Amy Heckerling's 1995 *Clueless,* have adapted Frank's secret to be his homosexuality, a secret more believable in modern society, where queer rights are still being fought for.[23] de Wilde's adaptation of *Emma* is faithful to the original heterosexual romance between Frank and Jane Fairfax, keeping the dancing motif that marks Frank as a dandy in the novel, but downplaying his musical skills in order to present Mr. Knightley as even more pre-feminist, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The initial attraction to Callum Turner's Frank is immediate for Anya Taylor Joy's Emma. She watches him gallop off into the countryside, something very hegemonically masculine as it evokes other Austen heroes on screen, such as Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley's ride in Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice.* There are continual references to Frank's dandyism throughout de Wilde's film. For example, on a walk with Frank through Highbury, Frank dodges Emma's question about Jane by saying to Emma: '"Pray, let's go in here; that I may prove myself to be a true citizen of Highbury I must buy something at Ford's"'.[24] This hints at his dandyism as he

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[20] Rachel M. Brownstein, 'Jane Again', in *Jane Austen, Sex, and Romance*, (Rochester: Universisty of Rochester Press, 2022, Online), p. 155.
[21] Brownstein, pp. 154-155.
[22] *Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story* (Netflix, 2023) [on Netflix].
[23] *Clueless.*
[24] *Emma,* dir. by Autumn de Wilde (Focus Features and Universal Pictures, 2020) [on Neon].

prioritises shopping and luxury over other pursuits, unlike Mr. Knightley who is never seen at Ford's and is instead often seen caring for his farms as he walks across the countryside, evoking the pastoral.[25] Frank's haircut venture is also referenced by Mr. Knightley, who suggests that the trip to London for just a haircut makes him a 'trifling, silly fop'.[26] Mr. Knightley's jealousy is more transparent in this sequence, because an audience can hear Johnny Flynn's tone of voice, as well as Anya Taylor-Joy's tut at the quip.[27] While Frank's haircut venture is masking his true intention to buy Jane Fairfax a piano, his excuse presents him as a dandy, as he could have used a multitude of other reasons for going to London. Frank's performance of dandyism in de Wilde's film remains a threat to Emma's happy ending, as his pursuit of luxury and want of enjoyment often stop Emma from viewing Mr. Knightley as a potential match.

de Wilde also references Frank's love of music and dance that is so apparent in Austen's novel. Frank sees the Crown Inn, and implies to Emma that any space big enough to have a ballroom must have a ball scheduled there, as 'we cannot do without dancing'.[28] Frank and Emma then dance lightly through the chairs outside the Crown Inn, delighting themselves in their play, which the Weston's join shortly after.[29] Frank freely dancing with Emma in the populated township of Highbury unaccompanied by music visually reinforces his dandyism, although he is also performing as the gentleman as he asks Emma for her hand. While dandyism is not a term used in the twenty-first century, the film's retention of some of Frank's dandy qualities identify him as a man different to Mr. Knightley and as the man who is not the match for Emma. The transference of musical knowledge and skill from Frank to Mr. Knightley in the film reflects shifting ideals of attractive male qualities as male musicians became more pleasing to the heteronormative female gaze in twenty-first-century popular culture. As

[25] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[26] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[27] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[28] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[29] *Emma,* de Wilde.

claimed by Michelle Ann Abate, 'all-male pop singing groups have dominated both the record charts and the hearts of the nation's teenagers'.[30] To reflect this heteronormative female gaze and be established as the hero of the film, Johnny Flynn as Mr. Knightley engages in musical pursuits instead of Frank. While Frank is not a musician in de Wilde's film, he is still a dandy and therefore remains coded differently in his masculinity when juxtaposed with Mr. Knightley. Instead of using music as a warning against Frank's character as Austen does, de Wilde instead uses other filmic techniques to portray Frank's deviousness, like casting a shadow on Frank when he is gossiping with Emma as Jane and Mr. Knightley perform, symbolizing his unstable and secretive nature.[31]

Other adaptations of the novel handle Frank's secret differently. *Emma Approved* is a commentary adaptation of *Emma* that makes few changes to Austen's original other than relocating the narrative action in a contemporary workplace. One change is the characterisation of Frank. Instead of being a dandy character, Frank performs hegemonic masculinity in *Emma Approved.* Transmedia adaptations have an opportunity to do something different with their characters, and Pemberley Digital chose to do that with their characterisation of George Wickham in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, who engages in revenge porn in the Lydia Bennet plot line.[32] *Emma Approved* also takes liberties with the original source text. For example, the Mrs. Elton character is instead Caroline Lee, the Caroline Bingley character from *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.[33] The cross-over here is not just a clever marketing scheme from Pemberley Digital; it firmly entrenches *Emma Approved* in the same universe as *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. This section of the chapter asks why Frank has been performed as hegemonically masculine in this

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[30] Michelle Ann Abate, "'Soda attracted girls like honey draws flies": *The Outsiders,* the Boy Band formula, and Adolescent Sexuality', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly,* 42.1 (2017), pp. 43-64 (p. 47), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2017.0003>.

[31] *Emma,* de Wilde.

[32] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Consequences – Ep: 85,* web series, YouTube, 5 February 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97SJYdxQPcg>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[33] The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, End of the Line – Ep: 95,* web series, YouTube, 12 March 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdT1DRAoBKc>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

adaptation of *Emma* when previous adaptations, like *Clueless*, have created an opportunity for him to be coded as queer.

In the twenty-first century, a secret engagement is not particularly scandalous, especially for people not in the public eye. Yet Frank and Jane continue to hide their relationship from Emma because of the potential conflict it could have for her business. To disguise this relationship, Frank actively flirts with Emma, almost ruining his secret relationship in the process. The secret does more damage in the webseries than in the novel as this Emma is immediately attracted to Frank, as seen by her leaning on the bookshelf in an effort to be seductive when her first enters her office, and believes the lie that he has feelings for her.[34] Emma's attraction to Frank makes her do things she otherwise would not, such as attempting to falsify Frank's company's earnings report so they will have to have an emergency board meeting and Frank will return, despite the negative consequences this could have for Frank (which Alex Knightley reminds her of).[35] Frank actively encourages Emma's behaviour, which reinforces a toxic masculine workplace culture that displaces women to achieve male goals. This characterisation of Frank not only further entrenches his power over Emma, but also codes him as hegemonically masculine, as he asserts his power as a business owning man.

Pemberley Digital make no attempt to find a contemporary equivalent of the secret engagement between two economically disparate people, such as introducing a queer narrative. While the webseries follows Austen's original novel more closely, 1995's *Clueless* pioneered the way for the Frank Churchill character to be queer, rather than hiding a secret relationship.[36] While this thesis is not commenting on the creative choices of the producers, it is important to

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[34] Pemberley Digital, *The Bachelor – Emma Approved Ep: 50,* web series, YouTube, 6 June 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOaFCl6OKOs&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=61>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[35] Pemberley Digital, *What Really Matters – Emma Approved Ep: 7,* web series, YouTube, 29 October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0DrmA1gdCM&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=8>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[36] *Clueless.*

note the lack of male queer narratives in the discussion of gender in this commentary adaptation. The exclusion of queer narrative possibilities does follow the trend of popular television sitcom shows, like *The Big Bang Theory,* where a main character, Dr. Rajesh Koothrappali 'is not gay, despite his exceedingly close relationship with Howard, his extensive knowledge of women's fashion and "chick flicks," and his penchant…for making offhand remarks that throw his sexuality into question'.[37] The absence of a possible queer storyline in *Emma Approved*, particularly in conjunction with a removal of Frank's dandy qualities to reshape him as a hegemonic male, shows a reinforcement of normalising heterosexual narratives and hegemonic masculinity in twenty-first-century popular culture.

In *Emma Approved*, Frank is not seen playing an instrument at all, and instead it is Harriet who is musical, as she plays the ukelele.[38] As he is a businessman, not a musician, Frank gives Jane the gift of technology, and buys her a new laptop to replace her old one.[39] In the twenty-first century, this is probably the equivalent of a pianoforte, as laptops are expensive, and good ones have a high social status. In this adaptation, however, rather than the gift enabling Jane to pursue a much loved passion, it symbolises Frank's disdainful and egotistical assumption that his choices are right for others. Jane is a pacifist and an environmentalist, buying 'recycled paper and Fairtrade tea for the office', much to Emma's chagrin.[40] But Frank is not. He is instead a consumer in the material world, and has the wealth to sustain it. Jane's older laptop, as seen in the spin-off series *Frank and Jane,* is covered in stickers to attempt to hide its scuffs, including a Hare Krishna SMILE, a peace symbol, and pride stickers. As discussed by Jennifer

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[37] Clare L. Boulanger, 'Little Boys Writ Big: Gender, Economy and The Big Bang Theory,' in *Reflecting on America: Anthropological Views of U.S. Culture,* ed. by Clare L. Boulanger, 2nd. edition, (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 225-235 (p. 229), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315089041-18>.

[38] Emma Woodhouse, *Harriet's First Song – Emma Approved,* web series, YouTube, 28 February 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaiczpqBpWE&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=38>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[39] Pemberley Digital, *True Detective – Emma Approved Ep: 52,* web series, YouTube, 13 June 2014, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KEYShtGbJQ&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=63>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[40] Pemberley Digital, *The Bachelor – Emma Approved Ep: 50.*

Camden and Kate Faber Oestreich, this shows that Jane 'privileges pacifism, unorthodox pursuits of spiritual fitness, and non-heteronormativity'.[41] When Frank gives her a new laptop and a new iPhone to go with it, 'the scuff- and sticker-free computer underscores how the old Jane must be erased in favour of the blank slate she must become for their budding romantic relationship'.[42] Instead of supporting the beliefs of his future partner, Frank puts them to the side in favour of his own, a patriarchal action that undermines the value of Jane. Rather than performing the dandy in *Emma Approved,* Frank's display of over consumerism and patriarchal behaviour towards woman, particularly Jane and Emma, make him more hegemonically masculine than any other adaptation of the Frank Churchill character.

Mr. Elton: Gallantry Exposed

Mr. Elton is a different type of clergyman to *Pride and Prejudice*'s Mr. Collins. While Mr. Collins is set up as an ironic character meant to stall Elizabeth's journey to Mr. Darcy, Mr. Elton instead performs gallantry to disguise his fragile masculinity. Yet there are similarities between the two men. Like Mr. Collins, Mr. Elton proposes to the heroine, and when he is rejected, marries a woman Emma does not consider as a competitor on the marriage market. Unlike Mr. Collins, Mr. Elton is not a figure of ridicule in the novel. Yet, Mr. Elton's performance of gallantry disguises his fragility, and when his fragility is exposed, he abuses his position of power, and takes advantage of women, particularly Emma. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* 'gallantry' can be defined as 'courtliness or devotion to the female sex, polite or courteous bearing or attention to ladies'.[43] Tiffany Schubert argues that the

[41] Jennifer Camden and Kate Faber Oestreich, *Transmedia Storytelling: Pemberley Digital's Adaptations of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley*, (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), p. 92.
[42] Camden and Oestreich, p. 92.
[43] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/76249?redirectedFrom=gallantry#eid> [accessed 26 July 2023], s.v. gallantry, n.

'lexicon of *Emma* is medieval: gallantry, service, fair, lady, knight-errantry, and, of course, Mr. *Knight*ley'.[44] This section of the chapter will explore how Mr. Elton abuses his position of power whilst performing gallant masculinity throughout Jane Austen's novel, and its adaptations.

Emma's matchmaking schemes at the start of the novel showcase Mr. Elton's gallant behaviour. Emma enjoys painting, and when both Mr. Elton and Harriet are present at Hartfield, suggests that she should paint Harriet's likeness to encourage the romance between Mr. Elton and Harriet. Emma is a very good painter according to her own judgement, and Mr. Elton wants to encourage this talent: 'I know what your drawings are. How could you suppose me ignorant?'[45] As Mr. Elton watches Emma paint Harriet, he is constantly jumping up to watch the progress and 'be charmed' by it, to the point where Emma 'could not respect his eye, but his love and his complaisance were unexceptionable.'[46] Antonio Losano has discussed how this scene displaces the traditional aesthetics of the artist and the model:

> In the traditional aesthetic scenario, we expect to find a male artist painting a female model and subsequently falling in love with her…the scene dramatizes what happens when aesthetic interest is refocused upon the artist—and the disruptive effects when this artist is female.[47]

While Losano argues that making Emma the painter reflects Austen's feelings about 'the position of the woman artist within her community', it also shows Mr. Elton's performance of gallantry as he displays his affection for Emma with an 'aggressive admiration'.[48]

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[44] Tiffany Schubert, '"She Heard All Mrs. Elton's Knight-Errantry on the Subject": Emma as Chivalric Romance', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal (Print Version),* 39.39 (2017), pp. 226-34 (p. 226), emphasis original.
[45] Austen, *Emma*, pp. 43, 42.
[46] Austen, *Emma*, p. 45.
[47] Antonio Losano, '"A Great Passion for Taking Likenesses": The Woman Painter in *Emma,*' *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal (Print Version),* 27 (2005), pp.185-194 (p. 191).
[48] Losano, pp. 192, 190.

Upon the portrait's completion, which needed two sittings (in which Mr. Elton attended both), Mr. Elton decides to take the portrait to London to be framed, not to show his affection toward Harriet, as Emma believes, but instead to support Emma in her endeavours: 'His gallantry was always on the alert. …"It was impossible to say how much he should be gratified by being employed on such an errand".[49] He is obedient to Emma, wants to serve her, and is often flattering her. However, as discussed by Schubert, Mr. Elton's performance of gallantry 'endangers' Emma: 'Courtly love…may tempt the lady to pride and a lack of self-knowledge.'[50] Mr. Elton performs as a gallant courtly lover reminiscent of medieval romance because he thinks this is how he can win a woman; however, this type of lover no longer existed in the nineteenth century, so instead of making himself more attractive to Emma, he is instead showing Emma how good of a match he is for Harriet Smith. Gallantry, as initially performed by Mr. Elton, is a display of courtly love and old values, but one that demeans both men and women as it encourages vanity through flattery. Mr. Elton performs a masculinity typical of romance novels in the medieval period, and it is displaced by Emma in her rejection of his hand.

A prime example of Mr. Elton's gallantry being displaced is the carriage ride with Emma at Christmas. Due to an incoming snowstorm, the visitors decide that they must leave the Weston's at once so as not to get trapped in the storm, and Emma is forced to share a carriage with Mr. Elton.[51] Mr. Elton has had quite a lot of wine by this time, and Emma is worried that this will mean he is talking 'nonsense'.[52] The nonsense that he speaks is a proposal to Emma. While this could be a victory in the nineteenth century for any young woman, Emma has already established that she does not want to get married. Mr. Elton is also not proposing to Emma like a gallant knight. In fact, Emma finds that 'her hand (is) seized—her attention

[49] Austen, *Emma*, p. 47.
[50] Schubert, p. 231.
[51] Austen, *Emma*, p. 122.
[52] Austen, *Emma*, p. 112.

demanded, and Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her'.[53] Celia Easton has described this passage as Austen's *zeugma*, following a trope popularized by Alexander Pope in the *The Rape of Lock,* as it 'juxtaposes the abstractions…its rhetorical conciseness…contributes to the sense-echoing-sound of sexual excitement'.[54] Emma proceeds to tell Mr. Elton that she has no feelings for him. Like Mr. Collins, Mr. Elton rejects this notion and tries to take her hand again, while believing that her silences at his speeches is an admission of understanding, which she rejects.[55] Mr. Elton takes great affront at this, and they spend the rest of the carriage ride in angry silence. While this scene showcases how ignorant Emma is of the relationships and situations around her, it also shows Mr. Elton's true fragility under his performance of gallantry. While Mr. Elton performs as a gallant gentleman, his shock at Emma's resistance to his proposal is the result of his fragile masculinity being exposed. As explored by Sarah H DiMuccio and Eric D Knowles, fragile masculinity is 'the fear that one will be punished for failing to conform to gendered prescriptions and proscriptions'.[56] In this scene, Mr. Elton also verges on toxic masculinity, as he engages in 'acts of…aggression' against Emma in the carriage.[57] Mr. Elton's masculinity remains fragile, able to be destroyed by any woman who rejects him, hence his toxicity in the carriage after his rejected proposal once his gallantry has been displaced.

The masculinity performed by Mr. Elton from this point onward in the novel is fragile. After his rejection by Emma at Christmastime, Mr. Elton leaves Highbury to go to Bath for a

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[53] Austen, *Emma*, p. 123.

[54] Celia A. Easton, "'The Encouragement I Received': *Emma* and the Language of Sexual Assault,' *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal Online,* 37.1 (2016), ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2309791335?parentSessionId=pPOGqf39CNbReBHqwdl9NKaXiC0Rh8CNy4vX53YhIlY%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=17287>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[55] Austen, *Emma*, pp. 123-124.

[56] Sarah H. DiMuccio and Eric D. Knowles, 'The Political Significance of Fragile Masculinity', *Current Opinion in Behavioural Sciences,* 34 (2020), pp. 25-28 (p. 25), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2019.11.010>.

[57] Mark McGlashan and John Mercer, 'Toxic Masculinity: An Introduction', in *Toxic Masculinity: Men, Meaning, and Digital Media*, ed. by John Mercer and Mark McGlashan, (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 1-7 (p. 1).

few weeks and returns three weeks later an engaged man. The community of Highbury is shocked at the quickness of it. Mr Knightley states that he 'should imagine it just settled', and Mr. Woodhouse says 'He is very young to settle…He had better not be in a hurry. He seemed to me very well of as he was.'[58] Emma exclaims that 'He will have every body's wishes for his happiness', and Miss Bates is excited at the prospect of a new neighbour, as well as a mistress for the vicarage.[59] From the letter received, it is ascertained that Mr. Elton will be married to a Miss Augusta Hawkins, a 'charming' woman 'of perfect beauty and merit...in possession of an independent fortune'.[60] As highlighted by Irene Collins, a 'clergyman…might be less demanding as to dowry and social standing [than a landowning gentleman]' and 'would have a mind above money' and may 'take a woman who was not in the first bloom of youth'.[61] Augusta Hawkins is not any of these things, as she has a dowry, social standing, and youth. Mr. Elton has married for money and status rather than love, displacing his gallant quest, and the quickness of the engagement after his rejection by Emma confirms this. Therefore, though Mr. Elton performs gallantry, this is to mask his fragile masculinity, and it can only be performed again once he is married, another mask for his masculine performance.

In de Wilde's 2020 adaptation of *Emma,* the carriage ride is also an important scene. Mr. Elton, played by Josh O'Connor, starts the ride in a seductive manner, as he undoes the ties of his coat while looking directly at Emma, and she tries to avoid his gaze. The scene is also comedic: as the carriage jerks, Mr. Elton falls into Emma's lap, with Emma giving a cry of shock. Just as in the novel, Mr. Elton tries to propose to Emma, and tells her 'I am ready to die if you refuse me'.[62] While this is dramatic, it is also typical of gallantry, as knights would often risk their lives for the woman they loved, whether she returned it or not. In this scene, Mr. Elton

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[58] Austen, *Emma*, p. 164.
[59] Austen, *Emma*, p. 164.
[60] Austen, *Emma*, p. 170.
[61] Irene Collins, *Jane Austen and the Clergy,* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2003), pp. 123-124.
[62] *Emma,* de Wilde.

also claims that Emma has given him 'encouragement'; however, in de Wilde's film this is less obvious than in Austen's novel, as the audience is also treated to Emma's sideways glances when Mr. Elton speaks.[63] Mr. Elton's mask of gallantry also slips in the carriage, as he yells at the driver and bangs on the roof to 'stop the carriage'.[64] Once the carriage is stopped, Mr. Elton walks home in the snow.[65] Mr. Elton's gallant dream of marrying Emma has been dismissed in de Wilde's film; therefore, his fragile masculinity cannot occupy the same space as the anti-feminist Emma, and he must exit the carriage. This is different from Austen's novel, and de Wilde's film shows that Mr. Elton's fragile masculinity is no match for Emma's anti-feminism.

de Wilde's 2020 *Emma* is a commentary adaptation of Austen's novel, and Mr. Elton is a source of comedic relief in the film, similarly to Mr. Collins in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*. Some of the best comedic moments of de Wilde's film occur in the church, where Mr. Elton is the dominant male figure. While preaching, Mr. Elton mispronounces "innocence" in his sermon, emphasising the second vowel sound so it sounds like 'in-NO-cence'.[66] This is corrected by Mr. Woodhouse, who says to Emma, 'Innocence, no?' and then dismisses it with a scoff.[67] While this little scene has been used to comedic effect, it also shows how fragile Mr. Elton's masculinity is, as he is corrected by the Highbury patriarch.

However, Mr. Elton becomes more confident when his new wife is introduced to the community during a church sermon. Mrs. Elton, as the vicar's wife, takes the front pew that was normally reserved for the Woodhouse's as one of the wealthiest members of the community. The Woodhouse's look directly at her, and she smiles in response as they are forced to take the pew behind. The playful music in the background signals to the audience that this is a comedic moment, as the Woodhouse's have been displaced from their position of

[63] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[64] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[65] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[66] *Emma,* de Wilde.
[67] *Emma,* de Wilde.

power by the Eltons. Mr. Elton also performs gallantry in this scene, as he takes his wife's hand, and she dutifully follows him out of the church, a chivalric gesture on Mr. Elton's part. All these church scenes have been added by de Wilde, as Austen did not write a scene located in a church in *Emma.* The church, a place where Mr. Elton's fragility was brought into relief by Mr. Woodhouse, is also the place where his position of power is regained with the support of his wife. Mr. Elton in de Wilde's film, as in Austen's novel, can only mask his fragile masculinity with the assistance of a woman.

While Mr. Elton may gain power from having a wife, in de Wilde's film it is even more apparent to the audience that he is beholden to his wife's wants and needs. When the Elton's take tea at Emma's house, Mr. Elton is not the gallant hero at all, and is instead the downtrodden man who is under the thumb of his domineering wife. As Mr. Elton shoves cake in his face, and agrees with his wife that Hartfield is 'very like' her brother's seat at Maple Grove, and that Maple Grove is 'a most impressive residence', he also closes his eyes, sighs deeply, and has his hand pushed away from the cakes by Mrs. Elton as he goes to take another.[68] de Wilde punishes Mr. Elton for his behaviour toward Emma in a way that Austen does not. Mr. Elton seems genuinely unhappy with his lot. Unlike Austen's novel, which features marriage as the expected pathway for both men and women, de Wilde uses Mr. Elton's marriage to showcase how it can be used to entrap not only women, but also men. Mr. Elton here has become the downtrodden man, worn down by the feminist rampage of his wife and the patriarchal expectations of the Highbury community.

In the transmedia adaptation of *Emma, Emma Approved,* the Mr. Elton character also performs fragile masculinity, but this time located in the culture of twenty-first-century commercialism. Mr. Elton becomes Senator James Elton, and contacts Emma's company to help his image for his campaign. He is first introduced to the audience in episode seventeen of

[68] *Emma,* de Wilde.

the series, where he is open that he will not be entirely honest on camera, as 'there is a reason Nixon stopped recording things'.[69] James reveals that he has recently been through a break-up and has no interest in being matched with someone, but Emma convinces him otherwise. Harriet is brought into Emma's office, and when she admits to James that she lived in an apartment building as a child, James touches her arm and apologises, admitting that he 'didn't have a lawn growing up either'. He then tells Emma that 'your assistant is quite lovely'.[70] As in the novel, Emma takes this to mean that James has feelings for Harriet. However, unlike the novel, James has admitted he will be performing for the camera, as per the legal documents his team sent Emma. James's performance of hegemonic masculinity is thus in aid of his career, rather than to attract a woman. This is a more believable performance in the twenty-first century, where a career and money are regarded as more important than marriage in a consumerist society, especially to men who have dreams of political success like James. However, his fragile masculinity is later revealed on camera when he asks Emma on a date.

In episode twenty-four of *Emma Approved,* Emma calls James to ask if he can come to her office, with the intention of reigniting his apparent romance with Harriet. When he arrives, Emma asks if he had any concerns for Harriet's health, as she had recently contacted the flu; he denies concern for Harriet as due to her youth she is not at risk of serious illness according to health statistics. When Emma reprimands him for citing health statistics because he is meant to be in love with Harriet, he says he is not, and claims that he is in love with Emma instead: 'I thought I made my intentions very clear'.[71] He admits that he 'is in politics' and is 'professionally nice to people'.[72] He reminds Emma that he brought her flowers, 'the more

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[69] Pemberley Digital, *First Impressions – Emma Approved Ep: 17,* web series, YouTube, 3 December 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rZGQTyn_3w&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=20>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[70] Pemberley Digital, *First Impressions – Emma Approved Ep: 17.*

[71] Pemberley Digital, *Vingt-et-un – Emma Approved Ep: 24,* web series, YouTube, 27 December 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW-147_c0h4&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=29>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[72] Pemberley Digital, *Vingt-et-un – Emma Approved Ep: 24.*

traditionally romantic gift,' but Emma reminds him that as they share a business relationship, they cannot also share a romantic one as that would be a breach of trust.[73] By the end of the conversation, James tells Emma that she 'clearly knows nothing about matchmaking' and goes to leave. Emma comments, 'you didn't strike me as a quitter, Senator,' to which he responds, 'I am not quitting. You're fired'.[74] In this episode of *Emma Approved,* James shows his power by dismissing women around him when they no longer meet his needs, because if he kept them around, it would reveal how much he is really performing his masculinity. While Pemberley Digital has not altered the characterisation of Mr. Elton at all, placing his need for a wife in a twenty-first-century consumerist context reflects how hegemonic masculinity can become fragile when the illusion of wealth and success is lost.

Mr. Knightley: The Feminist Advocate

Mr. Knightley is an altogether different figure from his heroic counterpart in *Pride and Prejudice,* Mr. Darcy. Whilst Mr. Darcy performs hegemonic gentry masculinity in Austen's novels, and throughout adaptations of those novels, as discussed in Chapter Two, Mr. Knightley performs gender in a different manner. While he does perform hegemonic masculinity in some regards, he instead supports rather than entrenches women in *Emma.* As this section of the chapter will argue, Mr. Knightley is Jane Austen's most feminist male character. Mr. Knightley is pre-feminist in her written text, *Emma* and he then transitions to a soft feminist in de Wilde's film adaptation. However, in the transmedial adaptation *Emma Approved*, he is a man focused on maintaining a male economy rather than encouraging female independence, a major change from Austen's novel. This section will explore Mr. Knightley's

[73] Pemberley Digital*, Vingt-et-un – Emma Approved Ep: 24*
[74] Pemberley Digital*, Vingt-et-un – Emma Approved Ep: 24*

feminism through the novel and its traditional adaptation, and how this has been updated for the twenty-first century into a support of patriarchal values.

Mr. Knightley is a very honest character with a good moral conduct. He often spars with Emma, especially when she is in the wrong, or when she is misjudging someone's character. And while it could be presumed that Mr. Knightley is too modest, he is always kind and is looking out for the good of his society, and by extension, women. From his first interaction with Emma, the reader gets glimpses that perhaps Mr. Knightley is a character with a good moral standing and pre-feminist leanings. In the first chapter of *Emma*, Mr. Woodhouse is mourning the loss of Miss Taylor to marriage with Mr. Weston. While Emma tries to reassure Mr. Woodhouse that of course Miss Taylor will be happy being a married woman, Mr. Knightley goes one step further: '…I cannot possibly say "poor Miss Taylor." I have a great regard for you and Emma; but when it comes to the question of dependence or independence!'[75] This is almost a pre-feminist declaration that female independence is desirable, with Miss Taylor gaining more independence upon marrying. While of course being married was always a contract of sorts in the nineteenth century, Miss Taylor's marriage allows her to be more free and secure than as a governess. Mrs. Weston is free from being beholden to Mr. Woodhouse and Emma, and she no longer feels a burden on their household. Being married to Mr. Weston will not entrap her into unhappiness, nor is she married to someone below her station. Mr. Knightley endorses marriage because he believes women can find freedom in marriage as it can give them independence and, via their husbands, a form of power.

Mr. Knightley's conversation with Mrs. Weston in the novel *Emma* is also telling of his pre-feminist leanings. Mr. Knightley expresses his concern to Mrs. Weston that the friendship between Harriet Smith and Emma Woodhouse is a 'bad thing'.[76] This is not because he does

[75] Austen, *Emma*, pp. 11-12.
[76] Austen, *Emma*, p. 35.

not believe in the friendship of women, or the strength of women in numbers, but rather because he knows that Emma does not have Harriet's best intentions at heart, and he worries that Harriet will not be happy if she listens entirely to Emma. Mr. Knightley knows that Emma is clever: 'Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family. …She was always quick and assured'.[77] Mr. Knightley also knows that Harriet is not as clever as Emma:'I think her the very worst sort of companion that Emma could possibly have. She knows nothing herself, and looks upon Emma as knowing every thing.'[78] Mr. Knightley worries not of the class difference between the two young women, but rather the difference in minds, and that this difference will mean Emma stops learning, and Harriet learns the wrong things: 'How can Emma imagine she has anything to learn from herself, while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority?'[79]

What also signals Mr. Knightley as different from the rest of his society is that Mrs. Weston does not agree with his ideas on Harriet and Emma's friendship. Mrs. Weston tells Mr. Knightley that if Mr. Weston was present he would 'undoubtedly support me…for he thinks exactly as I do on the subject'.[80] She even goes so far as to instruct Mr. Knightley that 'no man can be a good judge of the comfort a woman feels in the society of one of her own sex'.[81] However, Mrs. Weston negates herself when she attacks Mr. Knightley's concern about the lack of intellectual friendship between Harriet and Emma by claiming that because Emma is 'nearer perfect beauty…—face and figure' and 'a bloom of full health, and such a pretty height and size', as well as being 'an excellent creature', the friendship between Harriet and Emma will also be beautiful.[82] However, Mr. Knightley is correct in his initial read of the relationship between Emma and Harriet, as he places more value on intellect rather than physical attributes.

[77] Austen, *Emma*, p. 36.
[78] Austen, *Emma*, p. 37.
[79] Austen, *Emma*, p. 37.
[80] Austen, *Emma*, p. 35.
[81] Austen, *Emma*, p. 35.
[82] Austen, *Emma*, p. 38.

At the end of the novel, readers are given to understand that the marriage of Harriet to Mr. Martin has meant that she and Emma are no longer the bosom friends they were at the start of the novel:

> The intimacy between her and Emma must sink; their friendship must change into a calmer sort of good-will; and, fortunately, what ought to be, and must be, seemed already beginning, and in the most gradual, natural manner.[83]

This is by no means an issue of class; it is instead an understanding that Harriet and Emma did not have a supportive and loving friendship, and to leave that behind so that they can both become better women, is in fact a form of pre-feminism. Mr. Knightley from the start has always supported both Emma and Harriet to be the women they are meant to be, and by proxy, be the best women they can be, regardless of their class or their pretty features. This is an example of his pre-feminism in *Emma.*

Mr. Knightley's biggest endorsement of pre-feminism is his willingness to move to Highbury after he is engaged to Emma. Emma tells Mr. Knightley that while Mr. Woodhouse is still alive, '"any change of condition must be impossible for her. She could never quit him."'[84] Emma believes that Mr. Woodhouse cannot be taken from Highbury, and that she cannot leave him by himself, which Mr. Knightley agrees to, as he fears it would be 'a risk of her father's comfort'.[85] Mr. Knightley decides that it would be better for him to move to Hartfield upon their marriage, 'as her father's happiness—in other words his life—required Hartfield to continue her home, it should be his likewise'.[86] Emma acknowledges that Mr. Knightley is 'sacrificing a great deal of independence of hours and habits' in moving to Hartfield.[87] Mr. Knightley is willing to leave his estate, which is not only a symbol of his

[83] Austen, *Emma*, p. 451.
[84] Austen, *Emma*, p. 419.
[85] Austen, *Emma*, p. 419.
[86] Austen, *Emma*, p. 419.
[87] Austen, *Emma*, p. 419.

wealth, but also his masculinity, as estates like his showcase him as 'a gentleman of 'untainted' blood'.[88] By willingly leaving Donwell to support his wife and her ailing father, he shows pre-feminism as he makes sacrifices to support women.

Current popular culture has coined a term known as "the female gaze". The female gaze, according to Oxford Reference, is:

> a term coined by feminists in response to claims made by Mulvey that the conventions established in classical Hollywood films required all spectators, regardless of their sex, to identify with the male protagonist and to adopt the controlling male gaze around which such films were held to be structured. 'The female gaze' thus marked out neglected territory. For many, the terms alludes to the right of women to adopt the active and objectifying gaze that has traditionally and steterotypically been associated with males, undermining the dominant cultural alignment of masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity. Despite the label, this need not involve replacing one form of gender essentialism with another: the objects of the gaze need not be confined to males.[89]

de Wilde's 2020 film *Emma* is a film viewed through the female gaze, and nowhere is this more apparent than the performance of gender by Johnny Flynn in his portrayal of Mr. Knightley. When the audience first sees Mr. Knightley, he is coming back from riding, and starts to undress. This is not for the heterosexual male gaze: there is no posturing, nor an overt display of male strength. Instead, the audience get a soft glance at Mr. Knightley, and one shot of his bare backside. As the actor himself pointed out, it was 'a male body intimately seen from the female gaze.'[90] This adaptation of *Emma* is for women and has been targeted to a female

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[88] Claudia L. Johnson, '"Not at all what a man should be!": Remaking English Manhood in *Emma'*, in Jane Austen, *Emma,* ed. by Alistair M. Duckworth, Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism (Boston and New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2002), pp. 441-455 (p. 452).

[89] *Oxford Reference,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095814800>, female gaze, [accessed 19 July 2023]

[90] Maureen Lee Lenker, 'Clothes call: Johnny Flynn breaks down his *Emma* costumes and that changing scene' *Entertainment Weekly* (2020) <https://ew.com/movies/2020/02/19/emma-johnny-flynn-costumes-changing-scene/>, [accessed 19 July 2023]

and possibly queer audience, or an audience intimately familiar with Austen's work or Austenian adaptations. However, in viewing Mr. Knightley through the female gaze, the audience not only gets to appreciate the masculine form, but they also get an understanding that perhaps Mr. Knightley is not a male chauvinist, or a typically masculine character.

There are other examples of the female gaze at work in de Wilde's 2020 adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma*. One such example is Mr. Knightley's love of music. Home performance of music, as previously discussed, was regarded as a female accomplishment in the nineteenth century; however, though it 'was not acceptable for women to appear in the public domain as musicians' though 'they grudgingly gained acceptance in the late eighteenth and (increasingly so) nineteenth centuries'.[91] As Linda Zionkowski and Mimi Hart emphasize, it was important for nineteenth-century women to remain modest, and 'in order to retain their class status and reputations…it was imperative for women to remain amateurs and to avoid self-display, competition with other women, and the quest for admiration of their playing'.[92] However, in Austen's novels, there is a different social role for the female musician: 'their task is the maintenance of a rich domestic life lived among friends and family, in which music allows for communication, pleasure, the growth of affection and sympathy, and the comfort of being alone with one's own thoughts and feelings'.[93]

While music is significant for women in Austen's novels it does not have the same status for men. However, Mr. Knightley's performance with Jane in de Wilde's film instead of her performing with Frank is different from Austen's novel. This is another moment in which Mr. Knightley is feminized in de Wilde's adaptation. Johnny Flynn is also a singer and musician,

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[91] Derek Hyde, *New Found Voices: Women in Nineteenth-Century English Music,* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 1; Hyde also observes that 'as composers in competition with men they [women] were operating outside their allotted sphere: theirs the private or domestic world, the 'Angel in the House' of Coventry Patmore's poem.

[92] Linda Zionkowski and Mimi Hart, '"Aunt Jane Began Her Day with Music": Austen and the Female Amateur', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal,* 37 (2015), pp.165-185 (p. 166), *Gale Academic OneFile,* <link.gale.com/apps/doc/A453723469/AONE?u=waikato&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=e0154924>, [accessed 19 July 2023].

[93] Zionkowski and Hart, p. 166.

so it follows that de Wilde would package the character to match the actor's skill set. Also, as previously discussed, Mr. Knightley performing musically reflects twenty-first-century heteronormative pop culture's sexual desire for male musicians. Mr Knightley's support of Jane Fairfax and other Highbury women showcases him as a feminist man supported by de Wilde's position of him in the film, which also replicates and reinforces Mr. Knightley's characterisation in Austen's novel.

Mr. Knightley is the hero in the film, and in no other case is this clearer than when he dances with Emma. Dancing is associated with courtship throughout Austen's novels and contemporary Regency romance films and television shows, like *Bridgerton*, replicate this. In the case of de Wilde's *Emma*, the ball establishes a romantic connection between Mr. Knightley and Emma, and shows how different Mr. Knightley is, not just to the men, but to all the other characters in Highbury. Mr. Knightley also actively dances with Harriet, not to court her, but to ensure that she does not sit out and become a wallflower, as Mr. Elton actively dismisses Harriet and refuses to dance with her. Mr. Knightley asking Harriet to dance infers his support of Harriet in ensuring that she does not feel left out. In de Wilde's film, this reinforces Mr. Knightley's placement under the female gaze, as he saves a woman from social scorn. Under de Wilde, Mr. Knightley is shaped for the female audience, and while he is not an overt feminist like Keira Knightly in *Pride and Prejudice*, his willingness to dance only makes him more appealing to the female gaze.

Alex Knightley in *Emma Approved* is not positioned for the female gaze. Unlike both the novel and the film adaptation of *Emma,* where Mr. Knightley is pre-feminist or performed for the female gaze, Alex is a man who seeks power. While he does have power as a business partner in Emma's company, he is also being led by the unseen Mr. Woodhouse, the financial backer of Emma's business endeavour. Alex is first introduced to the audience questioning Emma. Emma has just started filming for her documentary about her life and business, and

Alex asks her what she is doing. She then tries to push him out of the video, and he forcefully sits down next to her. She introduces him as the man in charge of 'boring stuff' which he responds is 'important stuff'. He reminds her that he does have 'important boring stuff' to talk to her about, and she pushes him off the seat and dismisses him as she continues filming. He then video calls her from his computer to remind her that he is doing 'important boring stuff' and that she needs to hire an assistant.[94] Throughout the four-minute episode, Alex is ever present, whether physically or digitally. As Camdem and Oestreich have discussed, 'Knightley's physical omnipresence is invasive'.[95]

This iteration of Mr. Knightley is not introduced as a feminist figure, nor does he prove to be throughout the web series. Instead, he is so focused on his "important boring stuff" that he takes some of Emma's power and agency in the company, probably with the approval of Mr. Woodhouse. Just as Pemberley Digital focused on the importance of wealth in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* this remains the case in *Emma Approved,* with Alex being so concerned for the financial well-being of the company, he shuts down any ideas he would deem unfit. This performance of masculinity reinforces what R. W. Connell has termed 'business masculinity' which has created 'new patterns of hegemony in gender relations'.[96] Alex Knightley, the businessman, is showing that he belongs to the 'hegemonic group' of entrepreneurial men as the women in his office become 'more marginal, more transient, in the lives of managers'.[97] While Alex's intention is not to belittle Emma, he does so by constantly reminding her of the importance of the "boring stuff", and reinforcing his position as hegemonic businessman.

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[94] Pemberley Digital*, I am Emma Woodhouse – Emma Approved Ep: 1,* web series, YouTube, 8 October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeeXkf8LZ_8> [accessed 21 July 2023].

[95] Jennifer Camden and Kate Faber Oestreich, *Transmedia Storytelling: Pemberley Digital's Adaptations of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), p. 95.

[96] *Masculinities,* p. 256.

[97] Connell, p. 257.

A scene of significance in any adaptation of *Emma* is the Box Hill Picnic. In *Emma Approved,* this is updated to be the opening of Boxx in the Hills, an exclusive restaurant that Emma's company has been employed to promote. Because of its celebrity status, Emma throws away all care and thought for her friends, and puts her business first, as supported by Frank Churchill. She has Maddy Bates's jams in the gift bags at the Boxx opening but suggests that they be put at the bottom because they taste so bad.[98] However, Alex reminds Emma that she should have put the thoughts and feelings of her colleagues above her business, as this is a positive trait of a leader: 'No, Emma, you are a leader, and you led these people to laugh at that poor woman.'[99] Emma's treatment of Maddy causes Alex to leave the company. Here, Alex protects Maddy, but he also performs hegemonic masculinity. By insulting Maddy at a public event, Emma is also insulting the company, as the jams are in gift bags that her company arranged. While they are "joint" partners, for all intents and purposes, Emma is the face of the company while Alex runs it. Therefore, Emma openly insulting Maddy's jams is not only an insult to Maddy, but also to Alex. At this moment, *Emma Approved* displays masculinity in crisis through this confrontation. As Alex's decision is publicly undermined by Emma, so too is his masculine authority. While he is chastising Emma for her poor behaviour, he is also leaving because he feels he cannot be undermined. His intentions throughout *Emma Approved* are not entirely unselfish, and for this reason, he cannot be framed as a feminist figure in this adaptation of *Emma*.

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This chapter has argued that the changing performance of gender in male characters in adaptations of Jane Austen's *Emma* reflects insecurity located within that hegemonic

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[98] Pemberley Digital, *Mood Swings – Emma Approved Ep: 63,* web series, YouTube, 22 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REP-0BdMH64&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=76>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

[99] Pemberley Digital, *Boxx Hill – Emma Approved Ep: 64,* web series, YouTube, 25 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNF1w3-kT6c&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcKOsj8aU2Tnztt6N9mEmur&index=77>, [accessed 21 July 2023].

masculinity. Adaptations of Frank have created a character that differs in masculine performance from Austen's original novel. However, the lack of diverse narratives in modern adaptations is concerning. The idea that Frank is concealing a secret is obvious in adaptations of the novel, but the secret he is keeping is not as compelling when looked at from a modern perspective. *Clueless* pioneered an opportunity for Frank to be a character who is different and can represent more than just an atypical man, or a dandy figure. In contrast, Mr. Elton's performance of masculinity transforms from gallant to a performance of hegemony, yet is also fragile and displaced. Mr. Elton's performance of gender in the novel *Emma* and in de Wilde's film adaptation are consistent, though in de Wilde's film he is less gallant and more fragile, as his status hinges on him preaching from the precipice successfully on a Sunday. Mr. Elton's performance in *Emma Approved* is hegemonic, but placed in a twenty-first century context where he cares more for his career than for his personal life.

Mr. Knightley's performance of masculinity is different again, as he is the pre-feminist figure in Austen's novel, and performed through the lens of the female gaze in de Wilde's film. Mr. Knightley also becomes a musician in the film adaptation of *Emma* instead of Frank. However, this reflects the twenty-first century desire for male musicians and a recognition of the talents of the actor performing Mr. Knightley, Johnny Flynn. The musicianship performed by Mr. Knightley in de Wilde's *Emma* is also an identification of a slightly softer hegemonic masculinity accepted in the twenty-first century in comparison to the nineteenth century. Yet, in *Emma Approved,* Alex Knightley performs hegemonic masculinity and is not altruistic in his support of woman as he is driven by patriarchal consumerism. This chapter has shown that the shift in characterisation of the male characters in the transmedia adaptation of *Emma, Emma Approved,* reflects the importance of heteronormativity and consumerist hegemony in twenty-first century performances of masculinity.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the performance of gender in Jane Austen's novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* and has interrogated whether this performance has changed in twenty-first-century adaptations to reflect societal shifts in gender norms. By analysing not only Austen's novels, but also films directed by Joe Wright (2005) and Autumn de Wilde (2020), as well as the YouTube transmedia adaptations produced by Pemberley Digital, this thesis has shown that while the performance of some key characters remains the same from Austen's original novels, others have changed, some drastically. These changes, or lack thereof, show that twenty-first-century society still supports patriarchal values, demonstrated by the lack of change in the performance of hegemonic masculinity, a type of masculinity that has remained stagnant in characterisations of Austen's heroes since her initial publications in the early nineteenth century. The changes in gender performance also show that while some of Austen's heroes and heroines can be categorised as pre-feminist, there is no place for feminism in the transmedia adaptations of her work, which has changed the characterisation of key figures, like *Pride and Prejudice*'s heroine Elizabeth Bennet.

Elizabeth Bennet, the pre-feminist heroine of *Pride and Prejudice,* has been characterised differently in adaptations of Jane Austen's novel. As gender ideals, particularly feminist ideals, have changed in the two hundred years since Austen first published her influential novel, so too has Elizabeth's performance of gender. In the nineteenth century, women were expected to be beholden to men and patriarchal rule. This meant following the advice and wishes of an older male relative until marriage and a husband after marriage. It also meant that most women were economically dependent on male relatives. Austen's Elizabeth rebels against the gender expectations placed upon her as the unmarried daughter of a gentleman, as Chapter One has shown. In the twenty-first century, when Joe Wright's film adaptation, *Pride and Prejudice,* was produced, and when the transmedia adaptation *The Lizzie*

Bennet Diaries is set, feminism is no longer the dominant argument in gender studies. This is because the suffragette movement and second wave feminism took place in the twentieth century, and instead, the twenty-first century has been focused on postfeminism, reflecting on whether the goals of twentieth century feminism have been achieved. In the context of post-feminism, Wright's Elizabeth Bennet becomes a nineteenth-century woman with agency and power. As discussed in Chapter One, her ability to stand up to those of higher rank, like Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, showcases her as a feminist, evoking the ideals of the second-wave feminist movement as she marries for love not obligation, and paying tribute to Mary Wollstonecraft as she retains her agency to choose. Yet in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* Elizabeth becomes Lizzie and transitions to a postfeminist woman under the rule of patriarchal power. She rejects a job that would enable her to be an independent woman; she has no agency, and so her rejections are more reactive and shallower than empowering; and she eventually finds a job with the assistance of her new romantic partner, Darcy. This thesis has shown that presenting Elizabeth Bennet in a modern, postfeminist society has reduced her from pre-feminist to a woman with no agency, dismissing Austen's pioneering work.

A similar shift happens to Mr. Knightley. In Austen's novel, *Emma,* Mr. George Knightley holds the position of pre-feminist, as discussed in Chapter Four. He is Austen's only hero to be more sympathetic to the female cause than the heroine. Mr. Knightley's support of and care for women who are beneath him is pre-feminist, because he holds a position of power and could just as easily dismiss these women. In de Wilde's film adaptation, *Emma,* Mr. Knightley is also a soft feminist figure, as he scolds the anti-feminist Emma Woodhouse, sings with Jane Fairfax, and encourages the care of Mrs. and Miss Bates. Mr. Knightley is supporting women and their rights in a way that does not involve marrying them, and his eventual marriage to Emma Woodhouse further protects the Highbury women as he influences her actions as his wife. However, as shown in Chapter Four, Mr. Knightley has also been transitioned to a

hegemonic masculine hero in the transmedia adaptation *Emma Approved.* Mr. Knightley becomes Alex Knightley, and while he still corrects Emma, he is more concerned with the financial success of her company, and often dismisses Emma's ideas if they are not financially viable. When Alex is adapted for a modern audience, he is transformed to be a more traditional, hegemonically masculine hero, as he controls the heroine, and never veers from his expected performance of gender. Pemberley Digital's modernised web series of Austen's novels, while unique and commercially successful, have shown that there is no place for radical feminist thought and action in patriarchal, consumerist twenty-first-century society, despite Austen foregrounding the revolution.

The lack of queer narratives in twenty-first-century adaptations of Austen's work shows a conservative approach, and a possible dismissal of twenty-first-century societal changes. The seeds of such a reimagining of Austen's works is found in *Emma* and Frank Churchill's characterisation as a dandy with an interest in music, fashion, and personal appearance. Rather than developing these possibilities, Frank is packaged as a straight, hegemonic man in both de Wilde's 2020 film adaptation, and the transmedia web series *Emma Approved.* These characterisations are regressive as they portray a heteronormative Frank, a different characterisation from the pioneering *Clueless* (1995) that established a queer narrative arc for his character. de Wilde's film and Pemberley Digital's web series provide an interpretation that flattens Austen's character and fails to find a twenty-first-century correlative for the dandy. This thesis contends that a lack of queer representation in adaptations of Austen's novel, while remaining true to the source text, dismisses the importance of queer rights in the twenty-first century, and the impact such rights have on gender performance. Remaining faithful to Austen's novels when it comes to the issues of queer storytelling reinforces the restriction of fidelity discourse in adaptation studies and represents the twenty-first century ideal of heteronormativity and patriarchal power.

Significantly, traditional male characters who perform hegemonic gentry masculinity have not gone through significant character changes since Austen's original novels. The performances of Mr. Darcy, Mr. Philip Elton, and Mr. Charles Bingley remain static from the novel to the film adaptations, through to the transmedia adaptations. As highlighted in the Introduction, Mr. Darcy is a traditional hero who has a place in twenty-first-century popular culture. The character is beloved for the change he undergoes in Austen's novel, moving from disdainful pride to unconditional love, a change the two twenty-first-century adaptations discussed here follow. Despite this change in character, Mr. Darcy consistently performs hegemonic gentry masculinity throughout all the iterations of *Pride and Prejudice*, just without the prejudice after he has developed his character with the assistance of Elizabeth. The lack of change in Mr. Darcy's performance across different types of adaptation shows how masculine ideals have not changed for over two hundred years. While, as discussed in Chapter Two, trade has meant classes like the gentry have become more flexible, the ideal heteronormative man remains the same. This thesis has shown that masculine ideals and their capacity to remain stagnant influences characterisations of feminism, as both cannot be held in a patriarchal consumerist society.

The depictions of the other male suitors in Austen's novels likewise remain largely unchanged in twenty-first-century adaptations. Mr. Collins remains stagnant in his characterisation from *Pride and Prejudice* the novel through to its twenty-first century adaptations. As discussed in Chapter Two, Mr. Collins performs subordinated masculinity and remains a man who does not fit in with his society and struggles to find power in his world. While the character of the "bad boy" no longer has a redemption arc in twenty-first century media, Mr. Wickham's performance of gender remains stagnant. As discussed in Chapter Two, while the rake is punished and yet saved in *Pride and Prejudice,* he is no longer rescued in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* and instead he performs toxic masculinity. Mr. Wickham's lack of

redemption in the transmedia web series enables Lydia Bennet, Lizzie's younger sister, to engage in a feminist story arc, in a way that no other media adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* has. Like Mr. Wickham, Mr. Elton's performance of masculinity remains consistent, as he operates as the gallant man in Austen's novel *Emma*, and this gallantry is displaced and uncovers his fragile masculinity. While Mr. Elton becomes a comedic character in de Wilde's film, and transitions to a senator aware of his constant performance in *Emma Approved,* in these two adaptations he is still fragile underneath his gallant exterior. The performances of all these men remain static throughout adaptations of Austen's novels and have not changed from her original work. This reflects how male standards of performing masculinity have remained constant since the nineteenth century, and men who do not live up to these performances are continually subordinated, punished, or revealed to be fragile under the performance of hegemonic masculinity.

Similarly, Emma Woodhouse has remained stagnant in her performance of gender, as this thesis has demonstrated. In Austen's original novel, *Emma,* Emma endorses the patriarchy as she is guided by the behaviour of her father, the dominant patriarchal figure, and demonstrates a lack of empathy and care towards other women. In Austen's novel, Emma is critiqued for her lack of empathy in understanding the problems of women who are not as fortunate as herself. This remains the same in de Wilde's 2020 film adaptation, and Emma's support of the patriarchy is visually juxtaposed against the joy of Harriet Smith. Yet, in de Wilde's film, Emma is redeemed in a way, as her bodily functions symbolize a removal of her patriarchal ideals. While Emma is not critiqued as heavily in de Wilde's film as she is in Austen's novel, she is still compared to other women, and it is revealed that her confidence in her opinion is wrong by the performance of woman around her, like Jane Fairfax, Harriet Smith, and Miss Bates. In *Emma Approved,* Emma is also a patriarchal female, this time guided by Alex Knightley and her father, who are advising her based on commercial business decisions,

rather than for the good of her female employees. Emma the businesswoman is given a false position of power and is punished when she tries to abuse this power, like after the Boxx opening event where nearly everyone quits her company because of her rude behaviour toward others. Emma still abuses her position of power in *Emma Approved,* but the transmedia adaptation critiques her business decisions as well as her personal ones, as he has been removed from the domestic sphere. The stagnant performance of Emma across adaptations of Austen's novel demonstrates that postfeminism is the dominant form of feminist thought in twenty-first century media.

Further research is needed to understand the relationship between gender ideals and performances of Austen's characters in adaptations. As this thesis has only examined two of Austen's key works, further explorations could interrogate whether this relationship exists in other Austen novels and adaptations of those novels. Future study could also investigate whether the performance of gender in modern Regency-period adaptations perform gender in a way that conforms to twenty-first-century or nineteenth-century societal norms. For example, it could be investigated whether the Netflix adaptation of *Bridgerton,* a book series that became a successful streaming television show, conforms to nineteenth-century or twenty-first-century gender norms, an intriguing proposition when the popular production is not known for being historically accurate.

Much has been written on questions of gender in Austen's fiction, and this thesis contributes to this dynamic and constantly evolving field of study. In focusing on contemporary adaptations, the thesis combines gender studies and adaptations studies in order to illuminate the way in which gender has been adapted in recent film and transmedial works. The discussion builds on existing scholarship on Wright's film and the two Pemberley Digital series and provides one of the first scholarly analyses of Autumn de Wilde's *Emma,* where there is a current gap in the literature. This thesis concludes that changing gender performances in

adaptations of Austen's work, while reflective of twenty-first-century gender norms, also demonstrates the lack of progress in normalising other kinds of gender performativity on screen and makes evident the lack of change in gender norms since the nineteenth century.

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