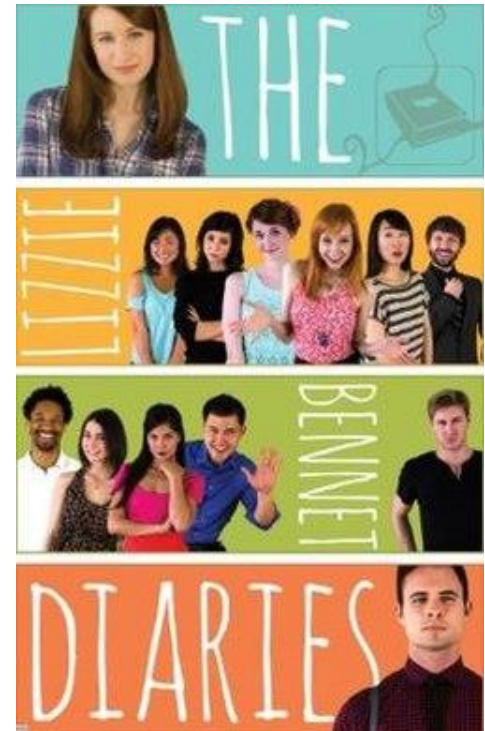
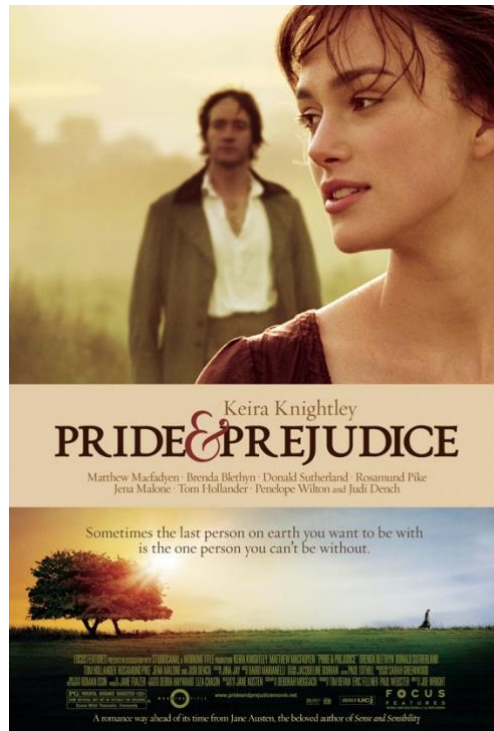


Utrecht University

English Language and culture

BA Thesis

The Development of the Feminist Movement in *Pride and Prejudice* Adaptations



Saherra Lichtenberg

6594077

6431 words

Supervisor: Dr. P.J.C.M. Franssen

Second Reader: Dr. J.E.M. Hoorenman

February 2021

Abstract

This thesis argues that *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen has feminist aspects that are not always seen in adaptations of the novel. It explores if Austen's novel has feminist aspects and looks if a development of the feminist movement can be shown in three visual adaptations. To determine this development the adaptations will be linked to the feminist wave of their respective times. In this way *Pride and Prejudice* (1940) by Robert Leonard is linked to the first feminist wave. Joe Wright's 2005 film associated with the third feminist wave. Whereas *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is tied to the fourth feminist wave.

This thesis results in understanding that the development of the feminist movement is not always shown in the adaptations. Although Austen's novel shows evidence of Enlightenment feminism, only *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* shows an intentional connection to the fourth wave feminism. The 1940 and 2005 films show less to no association to their feminist waves because the subject of feminism was not intended for their audiences.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1 Jane Austen and Enlightenment Feminism.....	8
Chapter 2 Second Wave Feminism and <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (1940)	13
Chapter 3 Third Wave Feminism and <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (2005).....	17
Chapter 4 Fourth Wave Feminism and <i>The Lizzie Bennet Diaries</i>	22
Conclusion	26
Works Cited.....	28

Introduction

Over two hundred years after her death, Jane Austen remains an important author of English literature. Her novels continue to intrigue audiences from various backgrounds and cultures. However, there has been an ongoing debate on whether or not Austen was a feminist writer and if this can be seen in her novels. The terms feminism or feminist have a modern meaning and they have not been found in use until late in the nineteenth century (Kirkham, 3).

Margaret Kirkham however argues that Austen's work is an example that first started to claim Enlightenment feminism. This means that: "women share the same moral nature as men, ought to share the same moral status, and exercise the same responsibility for their own conduct" (84). On the other side of the debate is Marilyn Butler, who insists that Austen was a conservative writer. By placing Austen in her political and historical context, she states that Austen does not express her political views in her work (Butler, 3). According to Butler, Austen writes in the style of the "conservative Christian moralist of the 1790s" (164).

Modern feminism can be described as the "advocacy of women's rights, or the movement for the advancement and emancipation of women" (*Chambers Dictionary* in Osborne, 8). Women's liberation can be traced back to the French Revolution of 1789 (Osborne, 9), which happened during Austen's lifetime. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* is an example of a female author who writes about social and moral equality between the sexes. Her work from 1792 is seen as "The foundation stone upon which modern feminism was built" (11). However, it was not up until the late nineteenth century that change could be seen. The first feminist wave focused mainly on suffrage and women in western countries became able to vote at the beginning of the twentieth century (19). The demands for equal rights followed up in the second feminist wave in the 1960s and 70s. The third wave began in the 1990s and its objective was to "Disrupt a white, heteronormative, middle-class view" (Shurgart in Rivers, 10). It continued the feminist

thoughts of the second wave, however the emphasis was more on individualism and diversity. From 2008 and onwards there has been a rise of the fourth wave of feminism which reinforces the advancement of the individual and centers the seductive notions of choice, empowerment and agency (Rivers, 24).

The 'wave' in a feminist narrative can relate to the ocean, radio waves or waving in greeting (Chamberlain, 23). It should be approached as a form of energy that takes shape within a specific moment (28). It is important to note that a new wave in the feminist movement does not always signify a break between the old and the new. It simply adds its number to a series of precedents. A wave should be seen as a temporality as opposed to a specific generation or identity (22). The contrast between each period "is not intended as a marker of feminist progress" (Barret and Philips in Rivers, 15). This suggests a more fluid approach to the feminist waves which allowed the emergence of post feminism in the third wave. Post feminism describes a perception that many of the goals of feminism have already been achieved. It discredits the notion that feminism is still a valuable or relevant political movement (Rivers, 15). However, in categorizing the wave narrative, or understanding it through chronology, generations, concepts and activism, there is a loss of mutability and openness (Chamberlain, 32). Although there is a debate around the wave narrative, it is useful for this thesis in order to categorize the adaptations with the feminist movements of their times.

There have been many film adaptations of Austen's novels because her characters "strike a perfect balance between recognizable types and individuals with complex motivations and idiosyncratic personalities" (Troost, 3). However, Linda Troost also argues: "The late twentieth century still has not sorted out women's roles, and the on-screen depictions of Austen's characters echo the ambiguous position in the 1990s: feminist, traditional or sometimes both" (8). The screenwriter, director and the audience see the

characters reflecting their own ideas of womanhood. In this way both feminists and traditionalists can claim Austen as their own.

Austen's novels lend themselves for feminist filmmaking because the central characters are all women. Prior to 1995 there were few film adaptations of Austen's novels. Madeline Dobie states that the key factor in this resurgence has been gender: "there has been a rise in interest in filming from a feminist perspective" (Dobie in Pucci, 248). Screen writers see her novels as "valuable launching pads for filmic vehicles that track changing notions about women's roles in society" (MacDonald, 1). However, this terrain in films was already occupied by the romance genre, in which the narrative is organized around the learning process that the central couple has to go through before they can find love (Geraghty, 37). This is the genre in which a tomboyish girl grows into her own femininity to fall in love with a man who starts caring for her instead of acting cruel and indifferent to her.

Pride and Prejudice being a romance novel with feminist elements could serve as a good example of the cinematic romance genre. It makes use of the marriage-plot, which is a plot where marriage to the male protagonist is presented as the heroine's best reward (Shaffer, 51). The lover-mentor plot often coincides with the marriage-plot, this is when the woman matures because she learns life lessons of a man who she later marries. However, Austen's Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy deviate from the mentor-lover relationship since they both have to learn from each other's faults. In this way it can be argued that this is a feminist aspect in the novel since the female and male protagonists of the novel are both criticized. Also, Elizabeth is considered one of Austen's most feminist characters. Kirkham argues that this is because she looks like a real-life character instead of a creature in print. She destroys the role she is supposed to play by challenging the social conventions that are made for men and women (Kirkham, 92). Her fiery nature that eventually weakens for the man she loves makes her interesting for the cinematic romance genre. There are of course

multiple marriages that take place in the novel that can add romance in the films. For example the innocent love between Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley that contrasts the prejudiced love between Elizabeth and Darcy. As Elizabeth's foil Jane is described as what society deems perfect: she has a gentle nature and her mother believes that her beauty will secure a good and financially secure marriage. Jane's character is a good example of what society expects a young lady to be like. Thus by comparing Jane and Elizabeth we will be able to see if feminism develops through society in the adaptations.

By looking at Elizabeth Bennet and her foil Jane Bennet and their characterization, I will be able to determine in what way the novel and visual adaptations of *Pride and prejudice* reflect the changing attitudes to feminism in society. In the first chapter I will take a look at the way Austen characterizes Jane and Elizabeth in the novel and determine whether this can be seen as feminist. Then I will look at the film adaptations from 1940 and 2005 and the YouTube series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* from 2013 and for each of these adaptations I will place the portrayal of Elizabeth and Jane in the context of the feminist movement of each period. There will be a chapter on each visual adaptation with the feminist wave it belongs to. Eventually I will be able to show if the development of feminism has an influence on the adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Chapter 1 Jane Austen and Enlightenment Feminism

Many scholars see Austen as a conservative writer because she does not express her political views in her work (Butler, 3). In addition to this, she is seen as conservative because of the marriage-plot she uses in her novels. However, Margaret Kirkham argues that Austen uses conservative schemas to challenge the conventions of male and female roles in society (Kirkham, 82). She draws attention to the conventions and alters them, so it can be argued that “in fact, the conservatism of *Pride and Prejudice* is an imaginative experiment with conservative myths, and not a statement of faith in them as they had already stood in anti-Jacobin fiction” (Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* 75). Feminist critics argue that the marriage-plot novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries do not challenge the patriarchal ideology of the period (Shaffer, 51; Kirkham, 4; Johnson, 75). This is an ideology that can be best characterized as “teaching women to view themselves as subordinate to, dependent upon, and at the service of the men in their lives” (Shaffer, 51). This applies especially to the mentor-lover relationship, where the heroine’s growth to maturity depends upon learning from a male mentor whom she later marries (54). The conclusions of these novels with the heroines weddings, present marriage to the male protagonist as the heroines best reward (51).

Austen’s novels deviate from the traditional mentor-lover relationship, since both male and female protagonists are criticized. Kirkham argues that “as a feminist moralist, Jane Austen criticises sexist pride and prejudice as embedded in the laws and customs of her age” (Kirkham, 82). In other words, the conventions of male and female roles in society are both challenged by Austen. Her work seems conservative, especially her earlier work, but it became more radical and more subtle and “demanding more in the way of intelligent, critical co-operation in the reader” (82). Since Elizabeth’s first impressions are corrected by experience through the novel, she takes on the character of Austen’s later heroines. This is

seen in the second volume and on where the events and characters are mainly described through her eyes and understanding.

By taking a closer look at *Pride and Prejudice*, some of the radicalness of Austen is shown. For example she criticizes the view of marriage of her time. For instance, the first sentence of the novel shows the importance of marriage in society: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” (Austen, 3). The second sentence however, shows the irony that Austen wants to convey: “However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the mind of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters” (3). So, marriage is important for single women since they want to become the future brides of these men with fortune, and for their families who want to make sure that happens (Harrison, 120). Through different marriages that take place in the novel Austen shows her critique on the view of marriage by society.

Early nineteenth-century women did not have the same rights as men. They were restricted in their ability to earn an income and they could not always rely on an inheritance because of primogeniture. The ability of a woman to maintain her status and continue to live in comfort after her father’s death depended on whom she married (Brosh, 25). So, the financial future of women who did not marry was not always bright. To avoid spinsterhood women would not always marry out of love, they would make a practical choice to marry because of financial security (Teachman, 8). An example of this is Charlotte Lucas who marries Mr. Collins after he has been rejected by Elizabeth. He proposes to Charlotte because he is in need of a wife to set a good example of marriage since he is a clergyman. She accepts him “solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment” (Austen, 123). As she is already twenty-seven, marriage was her the ultimate goal: “it was the only honourable

provision for well-educated young women of small fortune” (123). Charlotte thus made the choice to marry out of the convenience to secure her own future.

This secure future is further explored by the marriage between Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley, who because of their similar nature and behaviour are a perfect love match. Although their match seems entirely out of love, his fortune is an important condition to their union according to her mother. When Mr. Bingley first arrives Mrs. Bennet, their matchmaking mother, is elated because of the chance of marrying her daughters off well: “A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls” (Austen, 3). While Mr. Bennet favours his daughter Lizzy marrying Mr. Bingley, Mrs. Bennet tends to take more of a liking towards Jane and Lydia: “Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia” (3). Jane’s good heart, gentle nature and desire to see the best in people contrasts Elizabeth’s prejudiced opinions. Her position as Elizabeth’s confidante shows her intelligence and positive nature. Mr. Bingley and Jane show great interest in each other, which makes Mrs. Bennet sure that there is an upcoming wedding. However, her attitude and that of the rest of the Bennet family worries both Mr. Darcy and Miss Caroline Bingley. Mr. Darcy breaks them up, but he is made aware of his misjudgements by Elizabeth and he reunites them. The relationship between Jane and Mr Bingley is Austen’s example of marrying outside your social class and the reaction of society to it.

The refusal of Mr Collins’ proposal by Elizabeth is feminist since it shows that she wants to marry for her own happiness. Her rejection of Mr. Collins makes this clear: “You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so” (108). While this marriage could have guaranteed her family’s financial security when her father dies, Elizabeth refuses him because she does not love him. This can be seen as a progressive decision, since marriage was not only necessary for financial

reasons. It was also about a growing importance of compatibility between marriage partners. This is reinforced with Kirkham's Enlightenment feminism: "that women share the same moral nature as men, ought to share the same moral status, and exercise the same responsibility for their own conduct" (Kirkham, 84). It is also feminist because Elizabeth has the choice to refuse him. Even though her mother wants to force her to marry him, her father encourages her not to: "Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*" (Austen, 113).

The novel indeed has aspects of the lover-mentor plot, however it turns the conventions upside down. Elizabeth realises she is wrong when she receives the letter from Mr. Darcy after his first proposal. She then discovers her false judgements of both Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy: "Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (Austen, 210). However, Mr. Darcy also has things to learn from Elizabeth, for example his misjudgement of Jane's feelings for Mr. Bingley: "if I have been misled by such error, to inflict pain on her, your resentment has not been unreasonable" (199). They both correct each other's faults and end up marrying each other. In this way the novel suggests that "men and women need *each other* to become and continue to remain as moral and socially responsible as possible" (Shaffer, 65), which ties in with Claudia Johnson's take on feminism of Austen's time: "the moral equality of the sexes, and with that the duty to educate women rationally so that they could make responsible choices and be better able to execute their social and religious duties" (Johnson, *30 Great Myths* 143).

While Elizabeth's choice in marriage is feminist, Lydia's situation is an example of the traditional view of social ruin. Elizabeth warns their father not to send Lydia to Brighton with the officers: "Our importance, our respectability in the world, must be affected by the wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark Lydia's character"

(Austen, 233). However, her father does not listen and sends Lydia off. Her recklessness is shown through her elopement with Mr. Wickham who “intends to enjoy her favours without the benefit of marriage” (Teachman, 13). He only wants to marry for money which she does not have. Luckily they are found by Mr. Darcy who pays Wickham to marry Lydia otherwise she would have been socially ruined. Lydia’s marriage is doomed to fail since it is not based on love but on recklessness. It is Austen’s critique on parental neglect that turned Lydia into a flirt as opposed to Jane and Elizabeth who turned out as independent and responsible moral agents (Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* 77).

Thus, *Pride and Prejudice* can be characterized as one of Austen’s radical novels because of her critique of society’s view on marriage. The marriage of Charlotte Lucas to Mr. Collins shows that it is important for a woman of a certain age to marry to be financially secure. Families rely on women to secure a match to a man with a good fortune as is shown through the marriage of Jane and Bingley. Since marriage was one of the only things women could decide on, Elizabeth’s refusals of proposals show some progressive thoughts of early feminism. The learning processes of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, resulting in a moral equality of sense, are rewarded by a loving marriage between the two of them.

Chapter 2 Second Wave Feminism and *Pride and Prejudice* (1940)

Aldous Huxley's 1940 MGM screenplay is the first film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* directed by Robert Leonard. The film was made at the end of the Great Depression while America was considering whether they should or should not enter the war in Europe. The film represents England favorably in an attempt to encourage American support for Britain during the war, but the most significant aspects of the adaptation is the perilous relationship between women, money and marriage (Brosh, 19). The film was not marketed or received as a war time movie, since America did not yet participate in World War II; however, it became an emblem for a "lost and lovingly remembered world" (Belton in MacDonald, 178). Apart from the war raging in Europe, there was a domestic American development that arguably serves as the context for this film: the producer-capitalist culture was replaced by a culture that valued a rising standard of living and the consumption that enabled it (Brosh, 20).

The period in which this film was made can be classified as part of the first feminist wave when women fought for legal and civil equality in the early twentieth century (Osborne, 19). Both world wars made it difficult for women to emancipate themselves. During the war, when many men were fighting, women showed that they could contribute in an equal way to society as men. However, when the war was over and men returned to their original posts women had to fight against discrimination. Women were also the first to face unemployment during the economic recession in the 1920s (Walters, 72). Margaret Walters also states that even though women became more educated, they were still considered second-class citizens (72).

Yet, the fight against gender roles is less important in this film than abolishing overall class distinction. Since the film was purposed for American audiences it had to depict a film with associations and values that are understood as essentially American and democratic in character (Belton, 180). For example, Mr. Darcy in the novel does not want to dance with

Elizabeth because she is tolerable “but not handsome enough” (Austen, 12), Darcy from the film states that he is “in no humor tonight to give consequence to the middle classes” (Leonard, 00:25:50 – 00:25:53) This shows that social inequality is an important feature of the film. Troost argues that film versions of nineteenth-century novels show a time when things were different “not necessarily better, merely different” (Troost, 87). Hollywood was making multiple film adaptations of novels that show a change in English society when it comes to class to convince the Americans to help them in the war. Thus, the film presents an almost instant mutual attraction between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy that will overcome the class differences, which was unlike the novel. Naturally, this is achieved by the proposal of Mr. Darcy in the garden in the last scene of the movie.

Hollywood perceived women as the primary consumers of goods, therefore women were encouraged to buy clothes and cosmetics in films (Eckert in Brosh, 21). This is demonstrated in the beginning of the film where we see Mrs. Bennet, with her daughters Elizabeth and Jane shopping for material for dresses. Unlike the novel, Elizabeth and Jane have the same interest in clothes as their mother. While they are shopping, they notice Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy in their carriage outside. They conclude that they are rich and they discuss both men and their economic worth. The women are both objects and subjects in this first scene. They are buying clothes that make them objects for the male character and they are subjects that make choices and shop for materials as for men (Brosh, 22).

Jane’s comments in this first scene make her seem vain and materialistic since she only speaks about her looks at the ball and wonders whether the woman who is with Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy is a wife or a sister. This Jane, portrayed by Maureen O’Sullivan, seems smallminded and vain much like Lydia and Kitty’s mentality. She reflects the characteristics of Hollywood’s view on women from the 1940s that revolve around consumerism. Since marriage is the only thing to aspire for, Jane only worries about her

looks. This is different from Austen's Jane, who is rewarded with a good marriage because of her selflessness and caring nature. The film thus condones materialism in order to appeal to the consumerist culture in America, which is in conflict with Austen's novel.

There are feminist aspects in this film, too; however, they are contradicted by the heroine who undermines potentially feminist interest (Sørbø, 87). While Austen's Elizabeth is intelligent and witty, Greer Garson also portrays her as flirty, rude and materialistic. She calls herself a "rational creature" (Leonard, 00:58:05), however she does not act like one when Mr. Collins proposes. Elizabeth tries to refuse his proposal and when he is not discouraged by her refusal, she almost lets him fall on the ground and runs away to her father. The importance of her strength and weaknesses for the plot and theme of the novel is only seen in some traces in the heroine of the film (Sørbø, 87). Like Austen's character she possesses a strong will and wit. When she discovers that Lady Catherine is friendly at the end she says: "I wouldn't have been so rude" (Leonard, 01:49:57-01:49:59). This explains that she is rude to people she dislikes on purpose. Her beauty is more important, because it helps to attract a husband. Lizzy is not described as conventionally beautiful in the novel, however in the film she is pretty and worries about her appearance, for example when they are buying muslin she states "I know exactly how I want mine cut. I shall look very worldly" (Leonard, 00:03:04- 00:03:09). Her beauty becomes her defining feature instead of her intelligence.

In contrast, the archery scene from the film shows potential and is a good example of the idea of feminism. Mr. Darcy shoots an arrow that misses the target, whereas Elizabeth shoots three arrows that do hit the target. Darcy then apologizes to her and says: "The next time I talk to a young lady about archery, I won't be so patronizing" (Leonard, 00:45:28 – 00:45:31). Elizabeth humbles Darcy's masculine pretensions by proving she is more skilled (Brosh, 23). However, Elizabeth later cries when teased by Caroline Bingley. She is embarrassed at herself when she realizes that she appeared inappropriately masculine while

Darcy taught her archery. This contradicts the archery scene, which suggested women are superior. This goes against Austen's characterization of Elizabeth going against gender roles and makes it seem as if Elizabeth has given in to these roles.

On the whole, the film takes the potentially feminist presentation of an independent heroine and makes it into a traditional view of: "the thoughtless headstrongness of the irrational female" (Sørbø, 87). Elizabeth states that she is on Mr. Wickham's side when he informs her about the conflict between himself and Mr. Darcy. However, she does not know anything about it, she only reacts this way because Mr. Darcy was not interested in her introduction of Mr. Wickham. This makes her more irrational than in the novel. When Mr. Wickham starts telling her about his history with Mr. Darcy in the novel she is very interested to hear his dislike: "Elizabeth found the interest of the subject increase, and listened with all her heart" (Austen, 79).

The 1940 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is less progressive than the novel in a feminist regard. Even though women were fighting for equality after World War I, it became more important to show the dissolution of the English class society. Because the film was intended for an American audience, it was meant to show the similarities in values of British and American society to gain support in World War II. The female characters indulge in consumption, which is meant to appeal to the American audience who lived in a consumerist society. The eldest Bennet sisters are more materialistic and vain in the film than in the novel. Their beauty proves to be important for them to obtain a good marriage, both in terms of love and of fortune, which undermines Elizabeth's purpose of challenging gender roles. The importance of beauty is not as explicit in the 2005 film, however it still plays a role. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 Third Wave Feminism and *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

The 2005 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was directed by Joe Wright and written by Deborah Moggach and Emma Thompson. Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfayden portray Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy in what Troost characterizes as a fusion adaptation of Hollywood and British heritage style adaptations (Troost, 82). Like in the 1940 film, faithfulness to the novel was not the most important aspect of an adaptation. However, the ability to tell a good story, show compelling images and connect with a broad range of viewers mattered now (82). Wright's film exploits the mobility of the camera and uses camera work to suggest emotion and atmosphere (Caroll, 167). There is a period dress, however the film has some contemporary aspects such as the modern hair men have and the untidiness of Elizabeth's appearance.

The intended audience for this film was teenagers, a demographic that is unfamiliar with the novels and other adaptations (Troost, 87). This is also seen in the choices made in casting, for example Keira Knightley as Elizabeth, who was known for her role in *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise. She is a modern beauty and her figure conforms to the 2005 image of a female film star rather than the conventions of representing Austen's heroine (Geraghty, 41). Elizabeth's physical appearance is described by Mr Darcy as "tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me" (Austen, 12). Miss Bingley states about her beauty: "I must confess that I never could see any beauty in her. Her face is too thin; her complexion has no brilliance; and her features are not at all handsome" (272). So, Elizabeth is not considered as conventionally beautiful in the novel but she is represented by a modern beauty in the film.

Since the film is from the beginning of the twenty-first century, it can be linked to the Third Wave of Feminism. This wave is defined as "a new body of thought, distinct from second wave feminism, which is characterized by notions of identity, difference, contradictions and embodiment" (Arneil in Budgeon, 4). This was a new generation of

feminism that followed in the footsteps of the second wave from 1970s and 1980s. However, it differed because it was no longer about a white heteronormative view (Rivers, 10). These feminists who emerged in the 1990s wanted “to lay claim to their unique experiences, differing as they did from dominant feminist discourses of the time” (Budgeon, 8). So, the third wave can be characterized by embracing individualism and diversity and redefining feminism for different social groups, for example black or lesbian feminists.

Traces of individualism can be found in Wright’s adaptation, for example in the heroine of the film. At the start, Elizabeth is shown reading and walking towards Longbourn house, where her family excitedly talk about Netherfield Park that is let to Mr. Bingley. While her mother and younger sisters talk about how handsome he must be, Lizzie ironically states “With five thousand a year, would not matter if he had warts and a leer” (Wright, 00:04:23-00:04:26). Like Austen’s heroine, this Elizabeth is intelligent, witty and has pride and courage however; she is seen as a child of nature in contrast to the artificiality of upper-class salon life (Sørbo, 173). This is seen for example when she walks around the fields in her nightgown or when she sits on a swing watching the days go by. Even though these scenes were created for the film, the character reminds us of Austen’s Elizabeth (173). She enjoys being alone in nature to think for example after she receives Mr. Darcy’s letter she wanders along the lane thinking about all the events that have happened in her life since she met him (Austen, 211). Elizabeth is free of everything society expects from her when she is outside this is for example shown in the last scenes of the film. After Lady de Borough has left Longbourn Elizabeth is shown wandering the fields in her nightgown. When she is alone in nature she does not have to think about how she presents herself. In the way owners are portrayed in the state of their house, for instance Mr. Darcy’s poise is seen in the grandeur of Pemberley, the rural landscapes show Elizabeth’s emotions. For example the pouring rain

when Darcy first proposes shows that she is angry and hurt because of what he did to her sister.

Rosamund Pike's rendering of Jane is also more in line with Austen's characterisation of Jane Bennet compared to the 1940 version. While she is still beautiful and wishes to marry Mr. Bingley, the 2005 film shows that she is respected as the eldest by her other sisters and that she is equally intelligent as Elizabeth. This is first shown when they are at the ball where the sisters first meet the new residents of Netherfield. While Elizabeth shows her prejudice against men, Jane tells her: "One of these days, Lizzie, someone will catch your eye and then you'll have to watch your tongue" (Wright, 00:06:09-00:06:013). She is not afraid to correct her sisters when they are improper: "Lydia, you can't invite people to other people's ball" (00:31:30 – 00:31:32) shows how she scolds her sister after she tells Mr. Bingley to invite Mr. Wickham to his ball. During the first ball Lizzie asks Mr. Bingley about the library at Netherfield and he answers nervously: "Not a good reader, you see. I prefer being out of doors. I mean, I can read, of course and , and I'm not suggesting you can't read outdoors- of course" (00:08:39 – 00:08:50). Jane helps him out during this conversation by saying: "I wish I read more, but there always seem so many other things to do" (00:08:52-00:08:54). He is grateful for her help and this conversation shows off Jane's intelligence.

Whereas Austen can be considered a feminist because of her use of irony when marrying for money is mentioned, the film regards the subject in a lighter manner than the novel. After meeting Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy at the first ball, the elder Bennet sisters talk about their evening. While Jane is gushing about Mr. Bingley, Lizzie mentions that he is rich to which she replies: "You know perfectly well I do not believe marriage should be driven by thoughts of money" (00:13:43-00:13:46). Elizabeth agrees with her and says that only the deepest love will persuade her into matrimony. Although these sisters want to marry for love,

their mother believes her daughters must marry rich in order to save the family. When Jane receives an invitation to go to Netherfield Mrs. Bennet exclaims “Praise the lord, we are saved” (00:15:30-00:15:33) and her daughters laugh at her remark. Sørbø argues that the solution for girls with no money to marry rich is seen as unproblematic and satisfactory in the film while it is treated with irony in the novel (Sørbø, 190). In this way the novel is more feminist than the film since Austen’s irony shows her criticism on women’s roles in society.

The matter of gender inequality is raised by Mrs. Bennet who throughout the film and also in the novel emphasizes on the injustice of inheritance through the male line. However, where she is ridiculed for it by Austen’s irony in the novel, it can be argued that she is the only one in the film who truly worries for her daughters. She complains to Mr. Bennet that she and the girls would have no roof over their heads if he dies, to which Lizzie annoyingly replies that it is only ten in the morning. Her tone implies that her mother complains about this matter often. Elizabeth herself does not fight for equal recognition in terms of her social position or sexual relationships. Geraghty argues that she expects that recognition and is angered when it is withheld from her by arrogance or snobbery (Geraghty, 42). In this way Elizabeth can be described as a postfeminist because she does not engage herself in the battle for independence as others are or have been doing around her. The difficulties of this film’s romance have more to do with personality rather than gender. However, since the intended audience for this film was teenagers, it could also be argued that feminism was not supposed to be a subject for the movie. Therefore the entire purpose of Elizabeth as a feminist character and the novel criticizing the societal view on marriage is undermined in the film.

The characters of Elizabeth and Jane Bennet are portrayed in this film as they were in the novel, namely as intelligent women who do not want to marry for money. This fits the feminist idea, however it does not fit specifically into the characteristics of third wave feminism. The notion of individualism, in particular Elizabeth’s individualism, does. The

rural landscapes show her emotional development and affection for Darcy throughout the film. There is also no representation of women of colour and other minority communities in this film. This film is more intended to appeal to a modern audience rather than showing the importance of feminism that the novel has. The next chapter discusses *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a show that is also made for a modern audience. However, compared to the 1940 and 2005 films it shows more characteristics of the feminist wave of its respective timeframe.

Chapter 4 Fourth Wave Feminism and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

In 2013 a new kind of trans-media adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* emerged on the internet: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. This web series developed by Bernie Su and Hank Green that transforms Austen's novel into a present-day video blog on YouTube. In addition to these vlogs, the characters also post messages on other social media outlets such as Twitter or Facebook to fill the plot holes that are missing from the vlogs. The series still focusses on female characters, however it also recognizes that there have been significant changes for women since Austen's time. The main characters of the series are Lizzie, a twenty-four-year-old graduate student; Jane her older sister, who works in fashion; her younger sister Lydia who is in community college and obsesses over boys and parties and Lizzie's best friend Charlotte who also attends graduate school with her. Austen's characters are transported into a world where women are faced with school, student loans, low-paying jobs, beginning careers, and adulthood without leaving the nest rather than the novel where women only had the choice of a marriage partner (Luetkenhaus and Weinstein, 53).

This series can be linked to the most recent feminist movement, fourth wave feminism, that surfaced around 2008. As opposed to pitting the second and third waves against one another, this form allows for a revision of the Western history of feminism (Chamberlain, 21). Even though social media already existed during the third wave, it has become clear that current technology also has an important role in the fourth movement. The internet has made it possible for feminists to communicate with one another more rapidly and a greater range of voices, irrespective of background or lifestyle, can be heard (149). This wave focusses on the empowerment of women, use of internet tools and, continuing from the third wave, seeking greater representation for traditionally marginalized groups such as trans women and women of colour. Online activism is used to change society offline, however for this to work social media and mainstream-news media must collaborate (Guha in Rivers,

113). Otherwise online feminist activists only reach those that already are predisposed to feminist ideas. An example of a successful campaign that started online is the #MeToo against sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Online and mainstream-news media worked together during this campaign and reached a what Pallavi Guha calls: “transformative impact on social and political structures or cultural attitudes towards women” (113).

The characteristics of fourth wave feminism can be found in this adaptation because of its use of multiple social media outlets. Fans were brought into the narrative by the team at Pemberley Digital throughout the entire process (Luetkenhaus and Weinstein, 54). The main characters had Twitter accounts and some characters used other platforms to share additional character details, for example Jane Bennet’s fashion lookbook or a Linked In profile of Ricky Collins. Throughout the series characters addressed comments and questions asked by real viewers through Q&A videos.

As a woman of the twenty-first century, Lizzie Bennet, portrayed by Ashley Clements, uses her online videoblog to express her thoughts on her life. She is in her mid-twenties and still in graduate school. (“My Name is Lizzie Bennet”). She comments that she has a lot of student debt which implies that she is from an economic lower/middle class family. However, as she states it, her mom thinks that the only thing that matters is that she is single. The irony Austen uses for Mrs. Bennet in the novel is also realised in this series through Lizzie herself. She mocks her mother by calling her the president of the 2,5 WPF club which stands for “home with 2,5 kids and a white picket fence” (“My Name is Lizzie Bennet” 00:00:36-00:00:39). Her evidence for thinking so is a t-shirt her mother has gifted her with Austen’s iconic first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* printed on it. Lizzie then explains mockingly that there are enough rich young single men who are not looking for wives. She then imitates her parents conversation about Netherfield with the help of her best friend Charlotte Lu and illustrates that it is not men who want a wife but mothers who want

to marry off their daughters. This ties in with Austen's use of irony of the first sentence as explained in chapter one. Throughout the series Lizzie impersonating her mother can be seen as mocking, like Austen did in the novel.

In the same way, Laura Spencer's Jane is as sweet, considerate and thoughtful as Austen's Jane, but with a contemporary twist. She works as a merchandise coordinator in the fashion world. Like Lizzie has a student debt, however this does not mean that she is looking for a rich husband. After Darcy's intervention between her and Bing Lee and Lizzie worrying about her Jane states: "Yes Darcy interfered, but Bing didn't have to listen to him" ("New Jane" 00:01:31-00:01:38). This shows the importance of being able to choose your own path, just as Elizabeth did in the novel. She further states about her move to Los Angeles: "Yeah. I'm in a new city. I have a job that I love with people that are really cool and interested in things. I don't need one failed relationship to define me" ("New Jane" 00:02:09-00:02:20). This New Jane, which is also the episode's title, shows today's viewers that you do not need someone to make you happy, you can do that yourself. Her eventual move to New York and her allowing Bing to come with her show how important female empowerment is in this series. Jane emphasizes that she will be going for her career, "for my life" ("Goodbye Jane", 00:06:03) and Bing understands her and says that he will also go for his own life.

Mary Kate Wiles and Julia Cho characters Lydia and Charlotte also tie in with the fourth wave narrative. Lydia is slut shamed, even by her own prejudiced sister Lizzie: "Lydia, is a bit of a slut" ("My Parents: Opposingly Supportive" 00:02:20-00:02:21). She is a hopeless flirt who changes throughout the series, also by use of her own vlog, into the sympathetic victim of a manipulative Wickham (Luetkenhaus and Weinstein, 54). Charlotte, Lizzie's best friend and editor of her videos is played by an Asian actress so the series also represent a minority group.

While looking at the characteristics of the fourth feminist wave, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* can be seen as progressive for feminists. The use of multiple social media outlets shows that this is a modern day adaptation, allowing viewers to engage with the characters on different platforms. The series has also succeeded in making the problems the female characters go through in Austen's novel more contemporary. While the main focus is on Lizzie's perspective, the other supporting characters also show how women nowadays struggle in different ways. The series show empowerment of women in regard of their relationships, social life and careers.

Conclusion

This thesis was meant to determine in what way *Pride and Prejudice* and visual adaptations of the novel reflect the changing attitudes to feminism in society. Even though there is an ongoing debate on whether Austen was a conservative or feminist writer, traces of Enlightenment feminism can be found in the novel. Austen deviates from the traditional lover-mentor plot and shows that both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy need to learn something in order to get their happy ending. Austen also criticizes the view of marriage in the society of her time with the use of irony. By using conservative schemas Austen challenges the conventions of male and female roles in society. In this way *Pride and Prejudice* is progressive for the state of feminism of Austen's time.

Leonard's 1940 film does not show much of Austen's feminist ideas or traces of the first feminist wave. The film aimed to gain American support for the war raging in Europe. Therefore, it became more important for the film to show overall class distinction rather than the fight against gender roles. It shows that it is more important for women to worry about their beauty and consuming goods. This undermines Elizabeth's purpose from the novel of challenging gender roles.

The only characteristic of the third feminist wave that can be found in Wright's 2005 adaptation is the notion of individualism. The disruption of the white heteronormative view on feminism is not shown in the film. This is because the film was more intended to appeal to a modern audience. By making the film interesting for a teenage demographic that is unfamiliar with the novels and other adaptations the progressive ideas on feminism Austen had are disregarded.

By placing *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in the fourth wave feminist narrative, it can be argued that the series is progressive. *Pride and Prejudice* reaches new audiences with this series through transmedia storytelling. The story has been made contemporary and viewers

are able to engage with the characters on different platforms. The most important aspect of feminism in this series is that it shows empowerment of women in regard of their relationships, social life and careers.

Even though *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen has progressive feminist thoughts for her time, these thoughts are not always shared in the adaptations. The 1940 and 2005 adaptations only engage with the feminist movement of their time in a slight regard. It was more important for these films to appeal to the audiences of their respective times. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* does show characteristics of the feminist movement of its time. So, only Austen's novel and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* show the changing attitudes within feminism in society. These changing attitudes within feminism in society of the first and third wave are not seen in the 1940 and 2005 films, this is because they were not important for the intended demographic of these films.

Of course this thesis mostly looked at Elizabeth and Jane to determine the development of feminism in the novel and adaptations. For further research it would also be interesting to look deeper into other female characters and their connection to feminism such as Lydia or Mrs. Bennet. It would also be interesting to look at other novels by Austen, such as *Emma* or *Sense and Sensibility* and their adaptations and the development of feminism in them.

Works Cited

- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. London: Penguin English Library, 2012. Print.
- Brosh, Liora. "Consuming Women: The Representation of Women in the 1940 Adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*." *Quarterly Review of Film & Video*, 17.2 (2000): 147-158. *Taylor and Francis Online*. Web. 30 Nov. 2020.
- Brosh, Liora. *Screening Novel Women: From British Domestic Fiction to Film*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.
- Budgeon, Shelly. *Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Gender in Late Modernity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. *Springer Link*.
- Butler, Marilyn. *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. *Oxford Scholarship Online*.
- Caroll, Laura and John Wiltshire "Film and Television" In: J. Todd (Ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 162-173. Cambridge University Press.
- Chamberlain, Prudence. *The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporarily*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. *Springerlink*.
- Geraghty, Christine. *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.
- "Goodbye Jane." Dir. Bernie Su. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. YouTube. 28 Feb. 2013. Web. 11 Jan 2021.
- Harrison, Mary-Catherine. "Reading the Marriage Plot" *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 6.1 (2014) 112-131. *Wiley Online Library*. Web 26 Nov. 2020.
- Johnson, Claudia and Clara Tuite. *30 Great Myths about Jane Austen*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020. *Wiley Online Library*.

- Johnson, Claudia. *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988. Print.
- Kirkham, Margaret. *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction: Second Edition*. London: The Athlone Press, 1997. EBSCOhost.
- Loyd, Kirsten R. "An England Worth Saving: The Domestication of World War II Propaganda in *Pride and Prejudice*." *War, Literature & The Arts: an International Journal of the Humanities* 21.1/2 (2009), 352-359. EBSCOHost. Web. 30. Nov. 2020.
- Luetkenhaus, Holly and Zoe Weinstein. *Austentatious: The Evolving World of Jane Austen Fans*. University of Iowa Press, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- MacDonald, Gina, and Andrew Macdonald, eds. *Jane Austen on Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Cambridge University Press.
- "My Name is Lizzie Bennet." Dir. Bernie Su. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. YouTube. 9 Apr. 2021. Web. 11 Jan 2021.
- "My Parents: Opposingly Supportive." Dir. Bernie Su. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. YouTube. 12 Apr. 2012. Web. 11 Jan 2021.
- "New Jane." Dir. Bernie Su. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. YouTube. 6 Dec. 2012. 1. Web. 11 Jan 2021.
- Osborne, Susan. *Feminism*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2001. EBSCOhost.
- Pemberly Digital, prod. "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." *YouTube*. YouTube, 9 Apr. 2012. *Pemberly Digital*. Pemberly Digital, 2021. Web. 11 Jan. 2021
- Pride and Prejudice*. Screenplay by Aldous Huxley and Jane Murfin. Dir. Robert Leonard. MGM, 1940. Film.
- Pride and Prejudice*. Screenplay by Emma Thompson and Deborah Moggach. Dir. Joe Wright. Focus Features, 2005. Film.

- Pucci, Suzanne, and James Thompson, eds. *Jane Austen and Co: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Rivers, Nicola. *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Springerlink.
- Shaffer, Julie. "Not Subordinate: Empowering Women in the Marriage-Plot – The novels of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen" *Criticism* 34.1. (1992): 51-73. *JStor*. Web. 15 Nov. 2020.
- Sørnbø, Marie N. *Irony and Idyll: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park on Screen*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Teachman, Debra. *Understanding Pride and Prejudice: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources and Historical Documents*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997. EBSCOhost.
- Troost, L. "The Nineteenth-Century Novel on Film: Jane Austen" in: D. Cartmell, and I. Whelehan. (Eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 75-89. Cambridge University Press.
- Troost, Linda and Sayre Greenfield, eds. *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001. JSTOR.