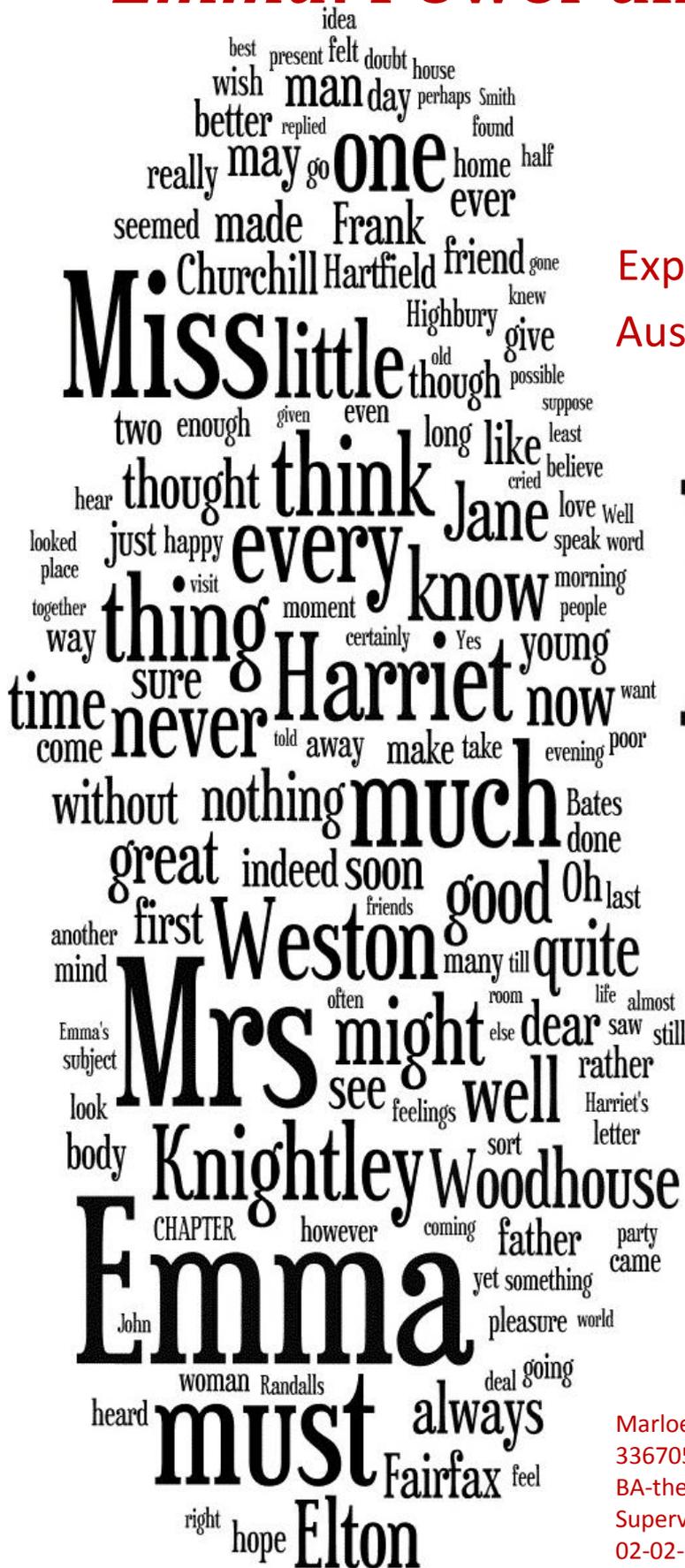


Emma: Power and Propriety



Exploring power in Jane Austen's novel *Emma*

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02-02-2012

Preface

Here I am; at the end of my thesis. Writing the preface is one of the last things on my checklist “completing a bachelor thesis”. For a long time I thought writing a bachelor thesis would be the hardest thing ever. Writing something between six and eight thousand words seemed impossible, what subject should I choose? The more I thought about it, the more I realized how important it was to choose a subject I like. Therefore I chose one of Jane Austen’s novels. Jane Austen was probably one of the first authors who wrote literature I really liked. Besides focussing on *Emma* I wanted to use some of Foucault’s theory on power. I am always intrigued by the way Foucault writes about power and how power seems to be everywhere. So, a combination of those two would be the subject of my thesis. The next step was to find a supervisor. After asking some people who knew a lot of Jane Austen, it became clear to me that I would be lucky if Dr. Bagchi would be my supervisor. Luckily enough she agreed, and I am very thankful that she helped me throughout the whole process. I really enjoyed the Friday afternoon meetings in which we talked about my thesis. Thank you Barnita for all the help you gave me.

One of the hardest things for me was writing my thesis in English. Therefore I am very grateful towards Petra van Damme and Jacobine Los who helped me so much with their proof readings. Their comments improved the English in this thesis so much, but also improved my knowledge of English as a language. Thank you! Then there are some people I would like to thank because they kept me motivated. Tom: thank you for always believing in me. Mom and dad: thank you for always being there for me. Furthermore I would like to thank all my friends who helped me in this process by just being there for me. My last thanks are for God without whom nothing would be possible.

Now it is time for me to stop writing, and leave this thesis for the reader.

Marloes van den Berg

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'[...] every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies [...]'
[Henry Tilney in J. Austen 2010:335]

Introduction

What will become of a novel when the author says that no one besides her would like the protagonist? Jane Austen said this about *Emma*, which was written in 1816. Who was she? Jane Austen was born in 1775 as a second daughter to George and Cassandra Austen. George was a clergyman and the family had a small income. The family belonged to the lower circles of the English nobility which gave the Austen's the opportunity to interact with the nobility, and gave Jane the knowledge about the aristocracy which she could use in her novels. Her nephew J. E. Austen Leigh writes in *A Memoir of Jane Austen*:

It will be seen also that though her circle of society was small, yet she found in her neighbourhood persons of good taste and cultivated minds. Her acquaintance, in fact, constituted the very class from which she took her imaginary characters [...] [J. E. Austen Leigh 1979:17]

Jane got most of her education from her father even though she and her sister were sent to a boarding school. She started writing for amusement. Susan Allen Ford points out in *The Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature* that Austen's juvenilia consisted of 27 pieces transcribed and collected in notebooks. The first novel accepted for publication was *Northanger Abbey* in 1803; but it was not published until 1818. Jane Austen used to write under a pseudonym 'M/rs Ashton Dennis' which makes MAD for her signature. The fourth published novel was *Emma* and got published in 1816; this was also the last published novel before Jane Austen's death. One of the great characteristics of the novel is the language Jane Austen uses. In almost the whole novel the free indirect speech is used which makes the reader follow Emma's thoughts and feelings.

In this thesis I mainly want to focus on the power relations which occur in the novel. Many of Jane Austen's novels are situated in an early nineteenth century rural environment, like *Emma*. One characteristic of these rural communities is that they are quite small and everybody knows each other. A very close network therefore rises: a network in which everybody knows almost everything about each other. Another characteristic of these rural communities is that there are specific rules which prescribe the behaviour of the members of the society. People should live by these rules; otherwise society will not accept them. In *Emma* the society is set in Highbury: a small town in which everybody knows each other. Because of these acquaintances, there is a lot of social pressure upon the people. This causes a kind of power. All people of the Highbury society have to act according

some standards, and that is where the power lies. In the first part of the thesis, I want to take a closer look at the functioning of power within relations. Emma, the protagonist, has several closer relationships and in each of these relations a power relation occurs. I want to see how these relations work and who is in power. In the second part of this thesis, want to take a closer look at some public events and see how power works within them. A big part of Emma's life exists in the public sphere what means that she has to interact with other people; these social gatherings also show how power works within the society. The third and last part is about adaptations of the novel, and if power has a role in them. At the end there will be a concluding paragraph about the question: *How does power function within Emma?*

Relationships

When looking at *Emma*, it is often considered as just another romantic novel. This is not fair: the novel has much more in it than a romantic story. It contains, for example, a complex structure of power and relations. Foucault is very clear about the use of power in his book *Discipline and Punish*, especially when he talks about the panoptical and how power functions through the gaze. One is always caught in a system of power and it is impossible to escape; the power functions throughout people. Everybody is an object of the power but at the same time a performer of power; this constructs a system which cannot be escaped. In *Emma*, this occurs through the gaze of society, everybody has to participate in and follow the rules of society but at the same time they are performers of power by their way of looking at the other people. In *Emma* the focus mainly lies on the protagonist Emma who has a big deal of power: the novel introduces her:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. [J. Austen 2008: 5¹]

So, Emma, the protagonist, is a young woman who experiences all comforts life has to give. She has nothing to fear, but most of all; she is independent. As the narrator continues describing Emma it becomes more and more clear that Emma is an independent woman, she is in control of her own business. Claudia Johnson states that Emma's power is the largest problem she has to overcome. It is not common that a woman is in power in a patriarch society, but it is possible as Johnson states:

Though it may favor male rule, the social system sustained in *Emma* recognizes the propriety of female rules as well, and it is to this system that Emma, in the absence of any social superiors, owes her preeminence. [C. Johnson 1988: 127]

This state of independence is very clear when Emma is compared with Mrs. Elton. Johnson points out that the difference between the two is that Emma does not depend on a man but Mrs. Elton does. So why should Emma marry? She already has so much power; she does not need a man: 'Emma does not think of herself as an incomplete or contingent being whose destiny is to be determined by the generous or blackguardly actions a man will make towards her.' [C. Johnson 1988:

¹ Jane Austen wrote *Emma* in 1816; I used the 2008 Oxford edition and will therefore refer to that edition.

124]. Mudrick even thought Emma plays God, but as Johnson points out, Mudrick actually meant that she plays the role of a man.

In the first few chapters of the novel some of the other characters of the novel are introduced. The other woman who is introduced at the start of the novel is Miss Taylor; she was the governess of Emma and her sister Isabella. The women have an intense and close relation. Miss Taylor became Emma's governess when Emma was five years old; but when she grew older a close friendship started between the two women. Because they are so close there is a difficult power relation between the two. At the one hand Miss Taylor was Emma's governess and this gives Miss Taylor the opportunity to overpower Emma on an intellectual level. On the other hand Emma is: '[...] doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own.' [Austen 2008: 5] This gives a little more insight in the relationship between the two women. At the one hand Miss Taylor is Emma's superior because of her knowledge and her role of governess. This gives her the opportunity to overpower Emma on an intellectual level, as said before. On the other hand Emma esteems Miss Taylor's judgment, but follows her own. She wants to be independent and is at the same time Emma's danger:

The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. [Austen 2008: 5]

Miss Taylor knows that this is Emma's difficulty, but she is not empowered to do something about it. She cannot see a lot of faults in Emma because they are friends and she loves Emma too much.

Mr. Knightley on the other hand is empowered to criticize Emma. He is one of the other close acquaintances and friends of the family. He is sixteen years older than Emma and makes her often very well aware of this. A very clear example is when Emma influenced Harriet Smith on making her decision of marrying Mr. Martin. When Harriet is gone there is a confrontation between Mr. Knightley and Emma; Mr. Knightley disagrees with Emma and thinks that Mr. Martin was a good match for Harriet. At the end of this argument Emma feels uncomfortable:

She did not repent what she had done; she still thought herself a better judge of such a point of female right and refinement than he could be; but yet she had a sort of habitual respect for his judgment in general, which made her dislike having it so loudly against her; and to

have him sitting just opposite to her in angry state, was very disagreeable. [J. Austen 2008: 52]

This discussion shows the tension between the two of them very well. There is a deep friendship between the two of them, but at the same time Mr. Knightley allows himself to criticize Emma. This critique was not appropriate for Miss Taylor because she was a governess but Mr. Knightley can say this because of the advantage of his age.

[Emma] 'To be sure – our discordancies must always arise from my being in the wrong.'

'Yes,' said he [Mr. Knightley], smiling – 'and reason good. I was sixteen years old when you were born.'

'A material difference then,' she replied – 'and no doubt you were much my superior in judgment at that period of our lives; but does not the lapse of one-and-twenty years bring our understandings a good deal nearer?'

'Yes – a good deal *nearer*.'

'But still, not near enough to give me a chance of being right, if we think differently.'

'I have still the advantage of you by sixteen years' experience, and by not being a pretty young woman and a spoiled child [...] [J. Austen 2008: 79]

When this conversation ends the relation between the two is recovered. But it also shows the difference of opinions Emma and Mr. Knightley have. Emma thinks she can be Mr. Knightley's equal but Mr. Knightley disagrees; he thinks he is advanced because of his age. This continues throughout the novel until the end; then they become equals and eventually partners. After their arguments about Harriet and later on in the story Miss Bates lays a different view on social status and how one should behave in society. Emma is very well aware of her position in society and thinks easily too well of herself, this is also pointed out in the beginning of the novel. Mr. Knightley on the other hand has a much more complicated view on society, he is also very well aware of his position, but does not have the cockiness Emma has. He, for example, has to point out to Emma that it was very wrong of her to make fun of Miss Bates when they all are at Box Hill. Another difference they have is the view on the tenants. Emma thinks them very much below her own situation, and she does not want any contact with them. This becomes very clear when Emma and Harriet talk about Mr. Martin, Emma says that she could never visit Mrs. Martin. Mr. Knightley does not avoid contact with the tenants; he

knows that in order to have a good landowner-tenant relation it is important to have contact with his tenants. Mr. Martin, for example, first talks to Mr. Knightley before he asks Harriet to marry him.

A third person who has a close relationship with Emma is Harriet. When Miss Taylor became Mrs. Weston Emma was in need of a new companion. So she chose Harriet. Harriet is one of Mrs. Goddard's older pupils and grew up at Mrs. Goddard's boarding school for girls. She has none or very little experience and expectations of life. Emma took charge of Harriet and introduced her into society. Emma is very clearly Harriet's superior and Harriet depends a lot on Emma. Emma is Harriet's superior not only on an intellectual level, but she also has a very different place in society. Because there is such a difference between the two women Mr. Knightley thinks there can come nothing good out of it.

The fourth person which is important in Emma's life is Frank Churchill. From the moment they meet a close friendship and relationship develops between the two. They have a lot of similarities; they are both spoiled when they were young, they are both rich, both of them think very well of themselves and they both like each other. At a certain point in the novel Emma even fancied herself to be in love with Frank and is almost certain that he is in love with her. Frank and Emma treat each other as equals.

A person who is not so important in Emma's life but plays an important role in the novel is Jane Fairfax. Emma wants to be her friend but she also seems to be Emma's opposite. Jane pays a lot of attention to her studies and Emma lacks in this, sometimes she tries to be like Jane but she does not succeed. At the same time Emma is not aware of the secret relation Jane and Frank have. Mr. Knightley also blames Emma for being unfriendly towards Jane even though Jane is very much in need of a friend.

Power in society

The structure of power can be found between the different relations which occur in *Emma*, but another also very valuable way to look at power is looking at the social interactions and social constructions in the novel. Foucault speaks in *Discipline and Punish* about the panopticon, which is invented by Bentham. The panopticon is described by John Scott and Gordon Marshall in *A Dictionary of Sociology* as an 'inspection house' which is used for surveillance purposes such as prisons. The panopticon works through visualization and is circular construction of open cells which are built around a central inspection tower. Foucault says that the power of the panopticon lies in the possibility to empower people through visibility:

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. [M. Foucault 1991: 201]

This form of power, which works through visibility does not only work in prison but also in the public sphere; it creates a network of voluntary spies. Therefore a network of people who look at each other is also created in *Emma*; all characters in *Emma* have a constant gaze at each other. This network of voluntary spies can be found in the way people look at each other and how they have to behave. If someone, for example, Mrs. Elton does not behave herself in a proper way there will be talked about this. The people discuss and judge the behavior of the others and also want to correct it. Emma talks about Mrs. Elton's behavior and Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston talk about Emma, so the behavior of everyone is examined and evaluated. Foucault states in an interview about *Body and Power* that in the nineteenth century the body and thereby the physical body of the king is replaced by the body of society and this body needs to be fit. About this new body of society Foucault says:

Now the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals. [M. Foucault 1980: 55]

What Foucault means with this social body is that society forms an imaginary body which needs to be kept healthy. This body of society consists of social constructions and the people of society should live by them. In *Emma* the body of society will take a massive place in exercising power because the people and therefore Emma too, should live by the rules of society. When Foucault writes about power he wants to show that it does not lie within one person.

One doesn't have here a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over the others. It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who

exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised. This seems to me to be the characteristic of the societies installed in the nineteenth century. Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns. [M. Foucault 1980: 156]

Therefore, the power exists in society and through society; it is exercised not by a single person but everybody is caught in the system of power. As Foucault writes elsewhere; power functions through a gaze from the people. So in the end no one can escape the power. This will also occur in *Emma*; the people of Highbury have to live by the rules of society and are at the same time using power over each other and are being empowered by others. Another important aspect of power Foucault points out in the quote above is that power in the nineteenth century no longer lies by an individual who possesses it by right of birth. In *Emma*, as will be shown further on, this shift is going on. On the countryside there is a lot of *nouveau riche* and the old families are not sure how to respond to them. At the one hand they want to hold on to the old system but at the other hand this is not possible anymore because the *nouveau riche* are there and asking for power and being let into society.

This society is also the place where the power relations become clear; with the social gatherings the structure of society is revealed for the reader and gives the opportunity to get a glimpse of the power relations and shows how society was constructed and how the hierarchy of the early nineteenth century higher society works. Quite early in the novel the society of Mr. Woodhouse is described. He has two circles of acquaintances. First there is the closest circle which had Mr. Weston, Mr. Knightley and Mr. Elton in it. Then there is a second circle which had Mrs. Goddard, Mrs. Bates and Miss Bates in it. Mr. Woodhouse is not comfortable going outside his own circle; he is not very fond of going out at all.

Dinner party at the Coles

Further along in the novel a big dinner is held at the Coles. At first Emma thinks it is very improper if the Coles would invite her for the dinner because they are not from her class.

The regular and best families Emma could hardly suppose they would presume to invite – neither Dowell, nor Hartfield, nor Randalls. [...] The Coles were very respectable in their way, but they ought to be taught that it was not for them to arrange the terms on which the superior families would visit them. [J. Austen 2008: 163]

The Coles are *nouveau riche* and Emma does not want to accept them in her circle. As Foucault already said a bit earlier; there was a switch going on in the nineteenth century. The old and rich families were confronted with the *nouveau riche* and were not always happy to invite them in their circle. Because Emma sees the Coles as inferior she wants to show them how the 'old society' was and partly still is constructed; she wants to put them in what she thinks is their proper place. Emma shows with this way of thinking also the working of power within society. The old and rich families had a lot of power and were therefore able to practice their power over the less rich or *nouveau riches*; they were seen as inferior. Because the Coles were seen as inferior it is questionable if they were allowed to invite the Woodhouses, the Westons and Mr. Knightley. The rules of society demand that the higher ranked families prescribe the rules of their acquaintance. But when Emma does not receive an invitation while the Westons and Mr. Knightley did, she is not happy with that either. She wants to have the power of refusing the invitation. But then an invitation arrives and it looks so appropriate and they bought a folding-screen so Mr. Woodhouse would not suffer from any draught. Emma decides to accept the invitation. At the beginning of the evening only the most important people of society are invited; after dinner the less important females arrive. Emma is one of the most important guests therefore she is treated with lots of respect by Mr. and Mrs. Coles and the other guests. This evening party gives a clear impression of the hierarchy within society but also shows the cultural construct which is used at such an event.

Meeting Mrs. Elton

When Mr. Elton, the clergymen, is married he returns with Mrs. Elton to Highbury. Because of the social rank and position of the clergymen and because they are newlyweds; it is expected that they are invited to visit the Woodhouses. Therefore Mr. Woodhouse and Emma are planning a dinner party for a selected group of guests and the Elton's are invited; Mrs. Elton is even going to be the guest of honor. But there is a problem: Mrs. Elton is not used to be in such a society and does not know how to behave herself in a proper way. Therefore Emma is very annoyed with her:

[...] and the quarter of an hour quite convinced her that Mrs. Elton was a vain woman, extremely well satisfied with herself, and thinking much of her own importance; that she meant to shine and be very superior, but with manners which had been formed in a bad school, pert and familiar [...] [J. Austen 2008: 212]

This quotation shows partly why Emma is so annoyed with Mrs. Elton; but it also gives an explanation for Mrs. Elton's behavior. She did not know better, she was not brought up in the same sort of

society Emma was brought up in and has therefore not had the education Emma had. Mrs. Elton was not aware of the Highbury society standards. This poor education and connections Mrs. Elton has influences all her behavior. This improper behavior becomes one of the characteristics of Mrs. Elton throughout the novel. Besides the impropriety of Mrs. Elton's behavior; Jane Austen often describes it in an ironic and funny way. An example can be found when Mrs. Elton talks about Mr. Elton and calls him Mr. E or her *caro sposo*; it is uncommon to call one's husband like that. Jane Austen uses irony and laughter in a subtle way; when Mrs. Elton says something it often looks funny but it is also ironic. Through Mrs. Elton's comments some kind of criticism is delivered towards society.

When a dinner party is organized at Hartfield for Mrs. Elton she does not behave herself properly for the company she is in, she thinks too well of herself. She asks for compliments and puts herself to the front when dinner is served.

Dinner was on table. – Mrs. Elton, before she could be spoken to, was ready; and before Mr. Woodhouse had reached her with his request to be allowed to hand her into the dining-parlour, was saying—

'Must I go first? I really am ashamed of always leading the way.' [J. Austen 2008: 233]

This is a very clear example of how improperly Mrs. Elton behaves herself. She ought to be asked, but before Mr. Woodhouse had the opportunity to ask her she already putted herself first. Society was not constructed that way. There were several rules for a dinner party and one of them was that the master of the house invited the most important woman of the evening to the table. Mrs. Elton was the most important woman because she was the bride and the dinner was given for her; but she had to wait until she was asked to lead the way. She chose not to wait and thereby shows that she thinks very well of herself; but also that she is not aware of the social conventions or does not want to behave as the conventions prescribe. So at the one hand she takes more power than she was allowed and is therefore more powerful. But on the other hand she loses power because she is not able to conform to the social conventions.

Dancing at the Crown

A big party is planned by Emma, Frank Churchill and Mr. and Mrs. Weston. They already planned the party when Frank visited Highbury for the first time, but he had to leave before the party. So the party is planned for his second visit. The party is at the Crown instead of the Randall's because of the size and Mrs. Weston is in charge of the redecoration of the rooms and the invitations. When the

guests arrive; Mrs. Elton behaves improperly. She, as the narrator tells us, seems to think that it was her duty to receive the guests. It is important that the narrator points out these faults in Mrs. Elton's character because it shows that Mrs. Elton really has these faults and that it is not just Emma's opinion. When the dancing is going to start Mrs. Weston realizes that Mrs. Elton has to open the ball.

It had just occurred to Mrs. Weston that Mrs. Elton must be asked to begin the ball; that she would expect it; which interfered with all their wishes of giving Emma that distinction. [J. Austen 2008: 255]

Here, once again the importance of doing the right thing or doing what is expected from you is pointed out. Mrs. Weston has to ask Mrs. Elton to begin the ball because she would expect it. There is no room for Mrs. Weston to make her own free choice, she is empowered by the society and by those rules she has to live. This time these 'rules' want her to ask Mrs. Elton to begin the ball even though she would rather asked Emma.

The ball starts and Mrs. Elton has the honour to lead the first dance. A lot of young women are dancing but Harriet is not, she did not have a partner to dance with. Emma knows that Mr. Elton wants to avoid Harriet and does not want to ask her to dance. Therefore she thinks he would go into the card-room, but he decides differently. First he asks Mrs. Weston to dance with him and when she turns him down he wants to ask Mrs. Gilbert. Mrs. Weston responds:

'Mrs. Gilbert does not mean to dance, but there is a young lady disengaged whom I should be very glad to see dancing – Miss Smith.' 'Miss Smith! –oh! I had not observed. – You are extremely obliging – and if I were not an old married man. – But my dancing days are over, Mrs. Weston. [J. Austen 2008: 257]

This is very impolite of Mr. Elton. This is also pointed out in Appendix B of the 2008 edition of *Emma*.

To neglect to ask someone in need of a partner to dance [...] was considered grossly impolite. [V. Jones in Jane Austen 2008: 387]

So Mr. Elton's behavior is very impolite according the rules of the balls. But he is not just ignoring Harriet, he is making it worse because he first asks Mrs. Weston to dance, when she refuses and Mrs. Gilbert too Mrs. Weston points has to point out that Harriet is sitting aside without a partner. This is the moment that Mr. Elton, when he was a polite man, had to step forward and ask Harriet to dance. But he refuses; he says he is an old married man and that his dancing days are over. Even though he just asked the Mrs. Weston and Gilbert to dance, this shows his disregard for Harriet. Emma sees this

and is very unhappy about it. Mr. Knightley also saw it and decided he would take Harriet's embarrassment away by asking her to dance.

Box Hill

The last public event I want to analyze is the party at Box Hill. Mrs. Weston and Emma wanted to go to Box Hill for a long time, so they are planning to go there. They only want two or three more people to join them. But at the same time Mrs. Elton is planning to go to Box Hill and therefore Mr. Weston proposes to combine the two parties. When the group arrives at Box Hill the whole party is a bit dull at least Frank and Emma think so. Both of them are a bit bored and that makes them reckless and leads to improper behavior. Their behavior could even be called flirtatious, as the narrator says. This improper behavior bothers the others a lot, because it was very improper to flirt so openly. Why this behavior is so improper can be explained with using Mary Poovey's book *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*; Poovey explains in the part about 'The True English Style' that there is a difference between the public and the private sphere:

But these private spheres are in fact qualitatively different from the public spheres. The public spheres activate expectations generated by the readers' actual experiences in class society; they are governed by psychological and social realism and the iron law of cause and effect. The private spheres are different indeed. They open out onto romance [...] [M. Poovey 1984:238]

On Box Hill there seems to be a kind of mix up of these different spheres. Frank and Emma are not aware of their flirtatious behavior because they do not want a romance between them. This is not clear for the rest of the group, they think there is a romance going on between Frank and Emma and this flirtatious behavior is an example of it. By this way of behaving themselves they seem to violate the different spheres. The flirtatious behavior does not belong to the public sphere they are in; romance as Poovey says belongs to the private sphere. Therefore Franks and Emma's behavior seems very improper for the rest of the group, but it is not for Frank and Emma. To them their behavior is not more than a game and a sign of friendship and can therefore take place in the public sphere.

When they are bored again, Frank pretends that Emma ordered him something:

I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse to say, that she waives her right of knowing exactly what you may all be thinking of, and only requires something very entertaining from each of you, in a general way. Here are seven of you, besides myself, (who, she is pleased to say, am very entertaining already,) and she only demands from each of you either one thing very clever,

be it prose or verse, original or repeated – or two things moderately clever – or three things very dull indeed, and she engages to laugh heartily at them all.’ [J. Austen 2008: 291]

This plan is in itself doubtful, but when Miss Bates says that it is not hard for her to say three things very dull indeed, Emma adds that she has to limit herself to only three things. This mockery is instantly recognized by Miss Bates and she is hurt by it. She does not know why Emma makes such a comment towards her and says:

I must make myself very disagreeable, or she would not have said such a thing to an old friend. [J. Austen 2008: 291]

This points out how hurt Miss Bates is but that she also seeks the fault in herself, she thinks she made herself very disagreeable that is for her the only reason why Emma could make such a harsh comment. Emma and Frank continue in the same, gay but also unpleasant way. After a while even Emma gets tired of Frank’s flatteries. When they go back Mr. Knightley talks to her:

‘Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do: a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation? – Emma, I had not thought it possible.’ [J. Austen 2008:294]

Mr. Knightley’s disappointment in Emma becomes very clear to Emma, and it makes her sad. Mr. Knightley also points out to her that it was very wrong of her to act in such a mean way towards Miss Bates. It is even more wrong because of Miss Bates position, Mr. Knightley says. If the Bates were rich and wealthy it would not have been so bad but since they are poor Emma should have compassion for them instead of mocking them. This shows also something of the community they lived in and what was and was not allowed. It was not allowed that Emma made a once wealthy family who are now poor the subject of mockery. This is because they are not Emma’s equals anymore; she should feel compassion as Mr. Knightley points out. Emma does regret her actions and wants to make it up again and is therefore visiting the Bates the next morning.

Adaptations of *Emma*

Jane Austen wrote lots of novels and all of them are adapted in some way. When something gets adapted into another form it is called intermediality. Lydia Martin writes about intermediality of Jane Austen in *Literary intermediality: the transit of literature through the media circuit*:

Investing in Jane Austen is interesting for most directors and producers for financial reasons. Her novels provide good love stories. The films claim their close relation with Jane Austen's works and most English-speaking people have heard about her. Her novels are in the public domain, which implies that the film team does not need to pay for their use. [L. Martin 2007:66]

Hence, Jane Austen's novels are very good for adaptation; *Emma* also proved to be very adaptable. There are several adaptations; most of them are cinematic. Even within the cinematic adaptations there are big differences; there is for example a Bollywood film called *Aisha* but also a modern Hollywood adaptation called *Clueless*. Beside these adaptations there are also adaptations which are more true to the novel. The latest is made in 2009 and is often considered as most truthful; therefore I will mainly look at the 2009 adaptation. This 2009 adaptation is a miniseries made by the BBC and it contains four one hour episodes, which offers the opportunity to adapt the novel in an extensive way. Because the film is a BBC adaptation there is even more attention put into the period's character of the film which resulted in a very beautiful film.

This film can be seen as an addition to the novel; there is a difference between the two of them because they both exist in a different medium but also because of the time difference. When Jane Austen wrote the novel it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the adaptation is made around two hundred years later. Because of this time difference some differences in the adaptation occur. *Emma*, for example, is portrayed in a more feministic way in the film than in the novel. In the film *Emma* acts more free than she does in the novel. It is also impossible for the film to use the free indirect style which is used in the novel and presents most of the time *Emma*'s perspective. This free indirect style is also used by Jane Austen to bring some irony into the novel; this is mostly lost in the film. Because it is not possible to use the free indirect style the whole of the film is less focused on *Emma* and gives the other characters the opportunity to come forward. At the same time this makes that the film loses some of the depth the novel has. As said before the film loses some of the depth the novel has because of the loss of irony but also because of the time. The film has to tell the same story in a much shorter time which means some things, have to be left out. Some depth is also lost

because the film has to show everything to the viewer whereas the novel can dwell on the imagination of the reader. The film does not have the subtlety Jane Austen put in the novel.

Because of these differences between the novel and the film it is important to look at the purpose of the adaptation, which seems to be in the case of the 2009 adaptation of a romantic nature. The main focus lies on the relationships Emma has; more specifically on the relationships with Frank and Mr. Knightley. One focus lies on the secret looks Jane and Frank share and Emma being unaware of these. Even though the main focus lies on the relationships; this does not mean that the film does not pay any attention to the power structures that occur in the novel. Because the film is very true to the novel some power structures can also be found even though they might not be as precise and detailed as Jane Austen put them in the novel.

An aspect of power that is portrayed in the film occurs in the relationship between Mr. Knightley and Emma. The film focuses often on the relationship between the two old friends; this might be because of the romantic aspect of their relation, but at the same time gives some sense of their different views on power. Mr. Knightley, as said earlier, acknowledges the importance of a good relationship with his tenants, but Emma sees them only as inferior human beings. This is also one of the reasons for the discussion between Emma and Mr. Knightley about the marriage proposal of Mr. Martin to Harriet. The discussion between the two becomes very intense because they both think that they are right and that the other one is wrong. Besides portraying the discussion, the film also shows the faces of Emma and Mr. Knightley and that is an addition to the novel. Where the novel only has the power to describe the argument, the film can also show feelings, looks and attitudes they have which makes it an addition to the novel.

The film's episode on Box Hill is another valuable addition to the novel. In both the novel and the film a lot of things happen. In both of them this passage is a striking one, because of the improper behavior of Emma, she crosses a line. She says things she should not have said and Mr. Knightley addresses her on that subject. In the film the viewer really sees and feels Emma and Frank's boredom and how it leads to their improper and flirtatious behavior; a viewer gets sucked into the film. Because the viewer sees the faces of the people the meaning of the passage intensifies. One sees the weariness on the faces of Frank and Emma and how Emma's joke on Miss Bates hurts her, one sees the tears in her eyes. This leads to even more involvement on the viewer's part, especially when Mr. Knightley is angry with Emma because of her behavior the viewer sees the tears growing in Emma's eyes and is really invited to believe her sadness and guilt because of what she has done. At the same time, this is one of the few passages where the importance of society and power becomes clear; the

film focuses on Emma's improper behavior towards Miss Bates and explains why it was badly done. The next day Emma wants to make it up to Miss Bates and then the film shows the network of voluntary spies in a very striking way. When Emma walks towards the Bates' house all the other people of the village look very unhappily at her. This shows how the whole society disapproved of what Emma has done. So, it is not only romance in the film.

Conclusion

What is power and how does it work within *Emma*? The main focus of this thesis was on the subject of power. In the first part of this thesis the focus lay on power in relationships. How does the protagonist, Emma, relate to the people around her? In the Highbury society Emma has a lot of acquaintances and she is almost always at the top of the social ladder, because of her family name and wealth. So, when it comes to power relations Emma is most of the time in power. As Johnson said; Emma's power is the thing she has to overcome. Because of Emma's place in society she is able to gain power in a lot of her relationships. This can be dangerous; for example for Harriet. Harriet is a girl with little connections and follows Emma's guidance completely, which makes her not marry Mr. Martin even though he was a really good match for her and she loved him. There is one person able to overpower Emma: Mr. Knightley, he thinks of himself as older and wiser than Emma and sees it therefore as his obligation to guide her. The consequences of this guidance for Emma is that she is put back in her place and has to rethink some of her action. So, there is a lot of power hidden in the relations.

The second point of focus lies on the power in society. Through Michel Foucault's notion of power, society was analyzed. The first important thing is the system of power; there is a system of power which no one can escape. Therefore everybody is caught in the system and is using power over others and being overpowered in the same time. This also creates a network of voluntary spies; people who observe and judge each other on behalf of their behavior. For the Hartfield society this means that everybody has to act according the rules of the society. This is important for everyone, and if someone does not act according the rules of society this person will be punished for this. For example the Coles, it was not up to them to invite the Woodhouses to their party therefore Emma wants to put them in their place. The same happens when Mrs. Elton behaves herself improperly. This shows that Emma, who is part of the old nobility, has troubles dealing with the *nouveau riche* to which the Coles and Mrs. Elton belong. Even though Emma is on top of the social ladder this does not mean that she cannot do anything wrong; she is also caught in this system of power and has to act by the rules of society, she is also judged on acting improperly on Box Hill. So it is not possible for Emma to escape the power. Another important thing is that Emma lives in a patriarch society, therefore her power as a woman is limited. Emma's faith as an unmarried woman is that she will become a spinster, just like Miss Bates. This is at the same time her biggest worry. The only difference between the two women is that Emma is wealthy and the Bates are not. Therefore the marriage with Mr. Knightley saves her from a lonely life in which she would not have so much power because she would become a lonely old woman.

In the third part the focus moves towards the 2009 BBC adaptation of *Emma*. This film is an addition to the novel; the film has, for example, the opportunity to show what the viewer needs to see whereas the novel only can tell and describe what the reader has to know. On the other hand the film is much more limited than the novel, it cannot dwell too long on something and other things have to be left out because of the available time frame. The biggest advantage of the film in comparison to the novel is the possibility to see what in the novel is described, which can lead to more involvement on the viewer's side. Yet on the level of power relations the film lacks attention in comparison to the novel. In the novel, Jane Austen makes sure that the reader gets a grasp of the power structures throughout the whole novel, while in the film this only happens in some incidents. The strongest sense of power the viewer grasps is at the passage on Box Hill. Here the power relations between the people become clear and the viewer sees that Emma also has to act by the rules of society. The main focus of the film lies on the (romantic) relationships between the characters and this means that the film loses some of the subtlety and structures Jane Austen put in the novel.

To conclude and answer the question: How does power function within *Emma*? I would like to argue that power functions through the gaze of others in the society. In *Emma* power and propriety are entwined in the society. The whole society is caught in a system of power and this can be seen in the way people interact and relate to each other; and how they behave according to the rules of society. Therefore the Highfield society is made of a network of voluntary spies, as Henry Tilney pointed out in *Northanger Abbey*. This network of voluntary spies cannot be escaped; everybody is caught in the system of power. A machine that never stops working.

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