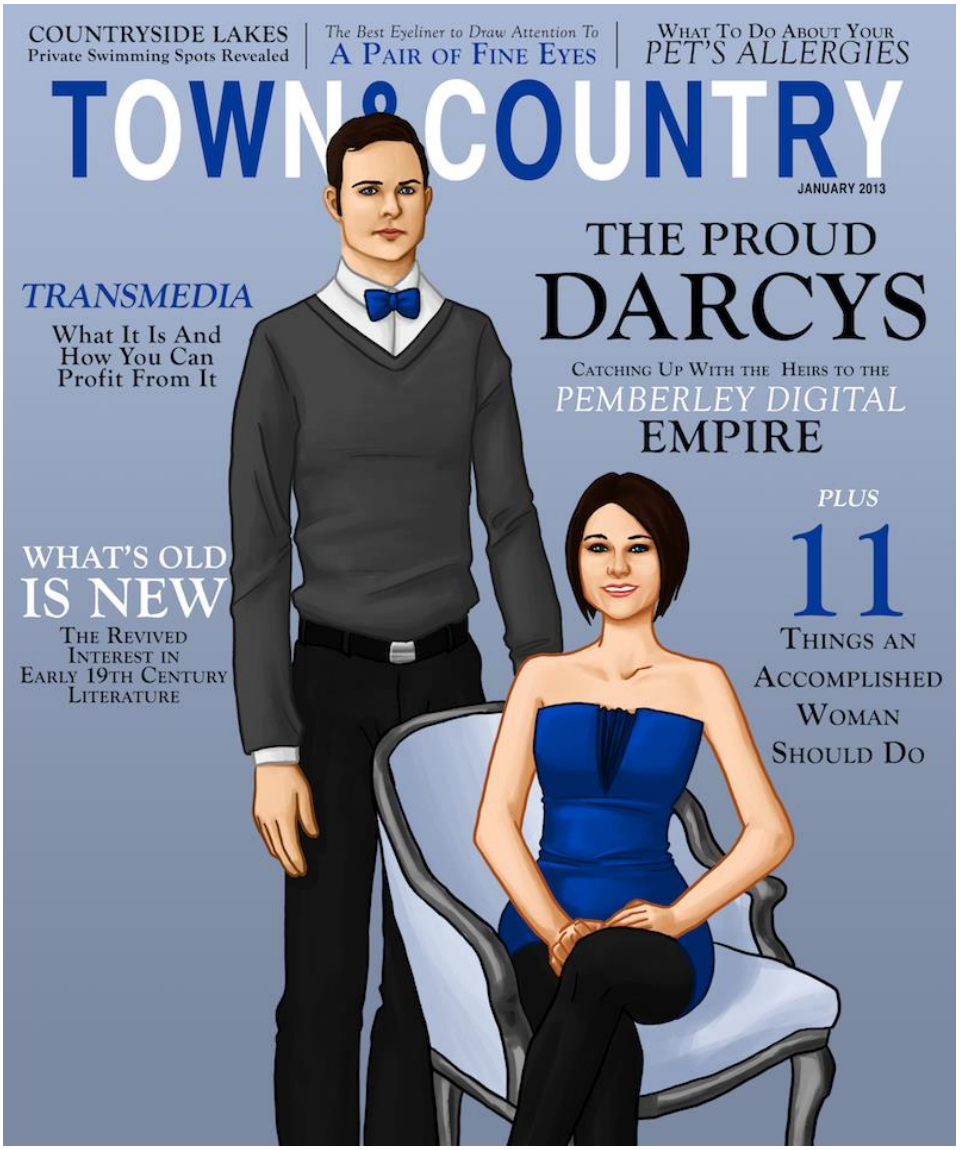
Being Charlotte

The Case of Charlotte Lu(cas) in *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*



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April 2021

Table of Contents

Abstract

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (2012-2013) is a web series adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) which recontextualizes the plot and characters of the novel in 21st century America, using new interactive media such as YouTube. A lot of research around this series has already been done, looking at the use of interactive media, as well as the character of Lydia Bennet, which has undergone some significant changes. In this thesis, my aim is to add to this body of research, by looking at the character of Charlotte Lu(cas). I have analysed both the novel, as well as the series, paying special attention to the transmedia aspect of the adaptation, as well as the historical contexts of both works from a feminist perspective. By placing Charlotte Lucas in a more historical context, the nuance of her character is revealed; she is neither decidedly feminist nor uncritical of the patriarchal structures of 19th century society. The same can be said for Charlotte Lu. The use of transmedia adaptation allows for the creation of a more vocal Charlotte, as well as a Charlotte who has more agency over her own representation. Moreover, because Lu is Chinese American, and because she does not have any love interest in the series, she also represents a more intersectional and diverse view of women, which is in line with third wave feminism. By looking at Charlotte Lu(cas) from a feminist perspective in both works, the nuance as well as the strength of these characters, namely their ability ti represent a dissenting voice, is revealed more clearly.

Introduction

Since *Pride and Prejudice* (*P&P*) was published in 1813, it has been adapted many times and to various media and contexts. One of its most unique adaptations is *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (*LBD*), a webseries that aired between 2012-2013. It adapts the story to a modern medium, namely that of videos posted online, and a modern era, namely the present day. It gives new perspectives on various characters from the original novel, offering societal criticism but also criticism of the original. Though the story is told on YouTube, the creators have also used other social media to enrich the world and flesh out the characters more. In this thesis, I want to look at one character in particular, Charlotte Lu, and how she compares to Charlotte Lucas. My research question will be: how does *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012-2013) adapt the character Charlotte Lucas from *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) to a modern medium and context?

To answer this question, I will look at how Charlotte Lucas is characterized in *P&P* in my first chapter. I will look at her characterization in the book from a feminist perspective, using both *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* by Claudia Johnson. Gilbert's and Gubar's influential book attempts to set up a theoretical frame for "feminist poetics" (17). They show how much the language around literature and literary criticism, both when talking about authors and their works, is patriarchal in nature (1-2). They then analyse several female authors, among which Jane Austen, from a feminist perspective, and pay attention to the anxieties that are a part of being a female author in a patriarchal society. *The Madwoman* provides a good starting point when reading Austen from a feminist perspective, but as most of the book is dedicated to other authors, Claudia Johnson's book on Austen provides a far more in depth analysis of Austen herself. Her introduction provides a clear historical context, as well

as placing her works within a context of other literary works at the time (xxi). Johnson also fervently advocates Austen's authorial voice as being conscious and deliberate, showing in the subsequent chapters how each of her major novels (as well as her juvenilia) can be interpreted as actively engaging with the discussions about politics, economics and women relevant in Austen's time. Using these texts as my theoretical framework, I will answer the following sub question in this chapter: How does the characterisation of Charlotte Lucas oppose or confirm patriarchal ideologies in Austen's time?

In my second chapter, I will turn more specifically to *LBD*, and how the modern media and context have influenced Charlotte Lu's characterization. In their analysis of *LBD*, both Silke Jandl and Allegra Tepper have looked at the media used, focussing respectively on the adaptation to online media and how the inherent interactivity of online media is enhanced by the use of transmedia storytelling. Lori Halvorsen Zerne and Vitana Kostadinova have mainly looked at the new context in which the story is placed, analysing how the societal problems presented in *P&P* have been updated. This is mostly done from a feminist perspective, though Kostadinova uses more feminist theory than Zerne does. Marloes Hoogendoorn, in her thesis, has also done an analysis of *LBD*, looking both at the adaptation side of the work, as well as its use of transmedia storytelling, paying particular attention to the characterisation of Lydia, whose storyline has been significantly altered. Much like Hoogendoorn, I will focus both on the adaptation aspect as well as the transmedia storytelling aspect, though I will use it to analyse Charlotte further. In doing this, I will use both Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* and Henry Jenkins's *Convergence Culture*. Hutcheon's book provides a helpful theoretical framework when looking at *LBD* as an adaptation, both in terms of the anatomy of the work as well as audience reception. The latter is especially important, as *LBD* was posted on YouTube, which is an interactive

medium. I will use *Convergence Culture* to further explore the interactive and participatory aspects of *LBD*, as it explores new media extensively, paying special attention to the changed relationship between producer/author and consumer/reader. Jenkins's book also introduces the concept of transmedia storytelling, which is especially relevant when looking at *LBD*. In this chapter, I will answer the sub question: How does the adaptation to new media affect Charlotte Lu's characterisation?

In my third chapter, I will place *LBD* in its historical context, looking at the Great Recession, using both Robert Rich's article on the Recession itself, as well as Kimberly Christensens's article on women during the Great Recession era. I will then briefly explore neoliberalism, using Tejaswini Ganti's anthropological analysis of the term and Paul Treanor's more philosophical and theoretical article. I will also use Ronald Labonté's and David Stuckler's essay, which explores the relationship between neoliberalism and the Great Recession. Susan Archer Mann's and Douglas J. Huffman's historical outline of the development of third wave feminism will provide a helpful starting point for situating the work historically form a feminist perspective. I will also briefly look at fourth wave feminism, using Ealasaid Munro's essay on the subject. This historical framework will aid me in answering my final sub question: How do third wave and fourth wave feminist ideologies relate to Charlotte Lu's story?

I will then conclude by showing how I have answered my research question and showing how I have contributed to the relevant academic discourses.

"Poor Charlotte!": Jane Austen's Feminism in *Pride and Prejudice*

Charlotte Lucas might be considered 'ahead of her time' – she is, after all, not interested in men, but is devoted to Elizabeth, which has led some to speculate on her sexuality (Me). But how she is to be interpreted within the text, and historical context, in which she lives? If we are to try and define what might be feminist or un-feminist about *P&P* and her specific role in the story, we must not only look at the historical context, but also the specific context of the author herself. To understand Austen's feminism in *P&P* and concerning Charlotte Lucas in particular, therefore, I will first concern myself with her feminism in general. Using the term 'feminism' here is not entirely unproblematic, since it would not emerge until after Austen's death (Cott 13). However, the times in which Austen lived saw the earliest beginnings of what now is retroactively being called 'first-wave feminism' (Henry 58), with writings such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Moreover, there is an argument to be made for interpreting a text from a modern context; after all, the wealth of interpretations possible contributes to making Austen's works so compelling to read and research, even from our times. I will therefore use this term to analyze in what ways Austen criticizes the patriarchal norms of the societal context in which she lived. In this chapter I will answer my first sub question: How does the characterisation of Charlotte Lucas oppose or confirm patriarchal ideologies in Austen's time?

As Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate in their book, to believe Austen to be completely 'conservative' is to misunderstand her very subtle and subversive writing style. Austen, they posit, is "an example of how to inhabit a small space with grace and intelligence" (112); Austen thus confines herself to the domestic sphere, but does so gracefully, and, more importantly, while criticizing the society she lives in. Her works dramatize "the necessity of female submission for female survival" (154). They go on to write that submission often

takes the form of “specifically […] a rebellious, imaginative girl who is amorously mastered by a sensible man” (154). This a cover story, however, to hide her own struggles in inhabiting that tight space she is allotted (155). Though Gilbert and Gubar are helpful in suggesting these struggles between female survival and female independence, Johnson goes further in depth into Austen’s works in her book. She historicizes Austen much more, and sketches Austen having “authorial confidence and self-consciousness” (28). As Johnson outlines effectively, Austen lived during a time where there was a considerable backlash against those supporting the progressive Jacobins, who, broadly speaking, were sympathetic to the French Revolution of 1789, and saw England being in need of sweeping social change (xxi). Being progressive, or being associated with being progressive, was not attempted by many authors. Many authors were considered ‘conservative’, yet had wide ranging opinions. Some wrote overtly conservative plots, “only to tuck away parallel plots which vindicate liberty” (xxi). The struggle between conservatism and progressivism in this era is necessarily a feminist concern, as the traditional family, in which a woman was modest and caring, was considered an important cornerstone of conservative values (Johnson 7). Therefore, feminist critiques were associated with Jacobin radicals, who supported the French Revolution, and critiqued the British socio-political order. All this supports the idea that Austen’s fiction cannot be taken at face value. Though her critiques are subtle, they are very present, especially when it comes to ‘the family’. Before we dive into the political subtleties of Jane Austen’s feminism, however, I would like to examine Charlotte Lucas’ characterisation in *P&P* a little more closely.

Charlotte, at age twenty-seven, has not yet found a husband. She is described in the narrator’s text (that is, not quoted from any character) as being "a sensible, intelligent young woman” who is “Elizabeth’s intimate friend” (13). Another important character trait, that

sets her apart from Elizabeth, is that she is decidedly unromantic. In this context, I use 'unromantic' not only meaning devoid of romantic feelings (that is, unable to fall in love, which would be closer to the 'aromantic' sexual identity, see "Aromantic"), but also a lack of belief in 'true love' and a thoroughly practical view of marriage. When discussing how reserved Jane is towards Mr. Bingley, Elizabeth sees this as a virtue, whereas Charlotte observes that "[Jane] may lose the opportunity of fixing him" (16). Though she wishes "Jane success with all [her] heart", she believes that "[h]appiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance" (17-18). In this way, Charlotte fits the definition of a foil character when compared to Elizabeth: "a character who is presented as a contrast to a second character so as to point to or show to advantage some aspect of the second character" (Luebering). She presents a counterweight to Elizabeth's pickiness and romantic views on marriage, but she is also a peacekeeper where Elizabeth provokes people with her wit. This is something we see more often in the book; many characters, especially the young women, contrast with each other in how they interact with other women, men, and how they view marriage and romance.

It is also important to look at Charlotte's (future) husband, Mr. Collins. He is described as a "tall, heavy-looking young man of five-and-twenty" (Austen 54), who in his manners is "a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility" (59). He is, moreover, "not a sensible man" (58). We, as readers, it is clear, are not to take this character seriously. While Wickham is the villain of the book, and clearly not a suitable husband, Mr. Collins is perhaps less attractive in his ridiculousness. However, "as to fortune" he can be considered "a most eligible match" (114), and he is, according to Jane, respectable (114). In other words, though he may provide no romance or solace for his future wife, he can provide a home, and is (unlike Wickham) willing to marry. More importantly, he can, as we see later in the book, be manipulated or managed by a woman of sense. Mr. Collins

might have none of the 'sexiness' that other men in the book (Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley, Mr. Wickham, to name a few) have, but he also is much more steady and safe than any of them.

Charlotte's engagement to and marriage with Mr. Collins is one of the most important events in the book when it comes to her characterization. This passage on her reflections about the engagement stands out especially:

> Mr Collins to be sure was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband. – Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. This preservative she had now obtained; and at the age of twenty-seven, without having ever been handsome, she felt all the good luck of it. The least agreeable circumstance in the business, was the surprize it must occasion to Elizabeth Bennet, whose friendship she valued beyond that of any other person. (104-105)

I have quoted this rather large passage because it is, in my view, crucial when trying to understand Charlotte's characterization. It presents the grim reality which Charlotte faces, which stands in rather sharp contrast with the rest of the otherwise quite cheerful novel. Here is a suggestion that perhaps Charlotte's view of matrimony, which is criticized by Elizabeth, is a product of the society that she lives in. Her value as a marriageable woman is dependent on her beauty and wealth, and as she is neither handsome nor rich, she has limited choices. As such, she marries Mr. Collins, irksome and foolish as he is. When Elizabeth visits Charlotte in Hunsford, it becomes clear that Charlotte is far more contented, being married to such a man, than Elizabeth thought she could have been. Such

contentment is made possible, Elizabeth presumes, by the fact that "[Mr Collins] must be often forgotten" (132). Charlotte's success in matrimony, however, is not so great as to be considered ideal. When Elizabeth leaves her, she thinks to herself: "Poor Charlotte! it was melancholy to leave her to such society! But she had chosen it with her eyes open; and […] she did not seem to ask for compassion" (181). Perhaps this is because, as Jane points out, Elizabeth does not "make allowance enough for difference of situation and temper" (114); after all, Charlotte does not seem to want the same things from marriage as Elizabeth.

Though Charlotte's ending might not be as fairy tale-like as Elizabeth's or Jane's, it is a tentatively happy one. This is especially significant, because the happiness she finds does not come from traditional values, that is, being a loving wife to a good husband, but rather from her being able to manage her husband, and her husband's benefactor, effectively. It also comes from her maintaining a strong bond with Elizabeth. Much like Austen herself, she manages to live in a confined space, and does so gracefully, but at the same time, the confines are criticised. Charlotte's character presents an alternative, or foil, to Elizabeth. Her ending is a sort of compromise; she ends up relatively happy, but she cannot entirely escape the very narrow confines of the society in which she lives.

"Listen to Charlotte!": The Power of Transmedia Storytelling

Charlotte Lu is a Chinese American young woman who, like her best friend Lizzie, is trying to finish graduate school in order to get a job (MacLeod). Lizzie has decided to start vlogging, and Charlotte agrees to edit the videos. Most of the videos revolve around Lizzie, her two sisters Jane and Lydia, and Charlotte, as they navigate the difficult task of growing up. One of the conflicts they face is between financial stability versus following your dreams, which culminates in a job offer from pompous and out-of-touch Ricky Collins to both Lizzie and Charlotte. Lizzie refuses the offer, preferring to pursue her dreams of "changing the culture" (Ep: 21 3:16), and making content she feels passionate about. Her best friend Charlotte, however, takes the offer, in order to pay off her student debts. They fall out, and Charlotte leaves the show entirely for a while, but the two eventually reconcile and learn to respect each other's choices. Charlotte Lu is a modern take on Charlotte Lucas, in more than one sense of the word. Not only is her character adapted to fit modern sensibilities and a modern historical context, but she has also been adapted to new, modern media. In this chapter, I will answer my second sub question: How does the adaptation to new media affect Charlotte Lu's characterisation?

To understand this, I must first shed some light on which media are used, and how. YouTube, where the bulk of this series is found (as there are also many social media posts), is a website for uploading and sharing videos, with some rudimentary social networking features, such as being able to comment on other people's videos (Burgess and Green 3). *LBD* belongs to the genre of vlogging, a form that was especially booming around the time it came out (Sanchez). The genre typically has someone documenting their own life and uploading it to YouTube. Particularly, *LBD* is a form of vlogging that is often styled 'storytime' vlogging, that is, the vlogger recounts certain events from their perspective while sitting in

front of the camera, rather than showing a 'day in the life'. In the case of *LBD*, this person is generally Lizzie, with frequent appearances of her sisters and Charlotte, as well as occasional appearances of other characters. More often than not, however, the conversations Lizzie witnesses or partakes in are re-enacted by Lizzie and her friends during 'costume theatre': a remarkable feature in this series. Apart from the videos, there are also countless blogposts, tweets, Facebook posts, Lookbooks and posts on other social media platforms, from various characters.

This kind of storytelling, that is, transmedia storytelling, is one of the subjects explored in *Convergence Culture*. In transmedia storytelling, "the art of worldmaking" (21) is vital. Jenkins writes that "[t]o fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers" (Jenkins 21). This theory can appositely be adapted to *LBD*, as the (online) lives of all the characters are well documented. Mr. Collins can be seen in a few (pompously worded) video tutorials on his YouTube channel ("Vaporizing Dihydrogen Monoxide"), and Jane Bennet has posted her looks on a social media platform for fashion, Lookbook (Bennet). An avid fan might hunt all of this content down. This is called 'additive comprehension': "the expansion of interpretive possibility that occurs when fictional franchises are extended across multiple texts and media" (319). Through discovering details in different media, we might first learn that Charlotte Lu is an aspiring filmmaker (Q&A 2 1:02-1:10), but also someone who loves classic movies (Thecharlottelu, "I love classic movies") and documentaries ("Finally catching up"). We also get to see the interaction of the main characters off-screen via Twitter; fans who follow Charlotte there might have seen the separation between the best friends coming when looking at all the tweets complaining about late night editing of *LBD* episodes (@TheCharlotteLu). This dispersed meaning allows for a different kind of interaction, or rather participation with the

work. YouTube and the other social media used have a lot of interactivity, that is, they "have been designed to be more responsive to consumer feedback" (Jenkins 137), but the work itself is what allows for participation of the audience. Jenkins writes that "[p]articipation is […] more under the control of media consumers" rather than the producers, and this is also true for *LBD*; the writers do not control how or to what degree the audience interacts, but they encourage it by responding actively, as well as rewarding the effort to do more reading or research. When it comes to transmedia storytelling, "value arises here from the process of looking for meaning" (126). In other words, because in *LBD*, there is additive comprehension, there is an invitation to the audience to participate, to create meaning and search for meaning, because the 'truth' is never entirely revealed.

There is also one particular aspect of these media that I will briefly analyse here, which is the fictionality of the work. The literary counterpart to fictional vlogs, and indeed a fictional online universe like *LBD*'s, might actually be much closer to an epistolary novel than a novel like *P&P*. Much like in an epistolary novel, content is being created by the characters themselves, with an intended audience. It bears mentioning here that some in fact believe *P&P* to have originally been an epistolary novel before Austen revised it ("The Letters In Pride And Prejudice"). However, all the content that we, the audience, get to see in *LBD*, is not just self-expression towards one individual, but self-expression made public. In other words, the content is not just written and edited by the author(s), but must also be understood as being written and edited by the characters themselves, and for the public at that. Though absences and silences are important in any artform, in the context of *LBD*, they take on a whole new meaning.

An important concept that is introduced in *A Theory of Adaptation*, is that of the palimpsest. The idea is that a 'knowing audience' (120), an audience that knows that the

work is an adaptation, experiences it as being “haunted at all times by their adapted texts” (6). This does not just mean the ‘source’ text, but also previous adaptations. This is perhaps even more true of *LBD*, which not only adapts a much adapted work, but also has an audience that interacts directly with the characters. The series itself does not shy away from this fact; it actively engages with comments that allude to the plot of the original. Examples include the frequent requests to see Mr. Darcy from the fans, who know Darcy to be the main love interest. However, as Lizzie points out, “In what universe would he be in my bedroom on my video blog?” (Q&A 4, 1:36). Some comments are too meta to engage with, such as this one from Undomiel753 on Ep: 16: “Love it. I hope Charlotte does not give up on her dreams and marries some weird dude to become his housewife.” However, the show actively invites its viewers to be ‘knowing’ audience members by having a rich intertextuality with other Austen novels (such as Lydia’s fake ID reading ‘Mary Crawford’, Q&A 1 2:40-2:47) and adaptations (such as Lizzie being a fan of Colin Firth, Ep: 2 0:33-0:37). As I mentioned before, additive comprehension invites participatory practices from an audience. In the case of *LBD*, this functions on two levels. Not only is there a whole fictional online universe for viewers to explore, ‘real’ Austenites will know all the references to different Austen characters, places, and adaptations. There is also an active engagement from the side of the writers with these semi-meta comments about the series, the book and the previous adaptations. The more ‘knowing’ the audience, in other words, the more enjoyable, or full, the experience becomes.

So what does this mean for the character of Charlotte Lu? For one, it means that Charlotte has a more prominent voice; through the use of video as a medium, but specifically videos created by the characters themselves, Charlotte has a prominent voice as an editor. The quote that titles this chapter is taken from Ep: 12, in which Charlotte literally

overrides Lizzie's judgement and opinion in post-production, with the use of a graphic that says "Listen to Charlotte!" (3:27). Lizzie is no longer the sole focalizer of the story; Charlotte hijacks the show (Ep: 15, Ep: 41) and adds her own commentary in the edit (for example, Ep: 38 0:13-0:15). Besides that, Charlotte also has her own Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook accounts, where she posts about *LBD*, but also about what movies she is watching. It is important to understand this content as being edited by the characters that post it, and this is especially the case with Charlotte, who is a very private person, and frequently edits out anecdotes that Lizzie tells about her (Ep: 5 0:47-0:57, and Q&A 2 1:26-1:40). Charlotte Lu is a complex character, but also, characteristically, a partially obscured character that is now in control over what is heard and what is silenced of her voice.

Charlotte: The Myth of "Having It All"

In order for Charlotte Lucas to be adapted to Charlotte Lu, a lot of changes were made. In this chapter, I want to situate *LBD* and Lu in their historical context, and show how changed ideologies influenced these changes. As *LBD* takes place in 2012, the Great Recession is very relevant to this historical context, as it started in December of 2007 and ended in June 2009 (Rich). The early 2010s are also years when fourth wave feminism began to gain traction, and there are traces of fourth wave feminism found in *LBD*, but perhaps even more of its predecessor, third wave feminism. In order to understand how these aspects of the historical context influence Charlotte Lu's characterisation, I will briefly look at the Great Recession, as well as third and fourth wave feminism, before analysing Lu more closely, in order to answer my third sub question: How do third wave and fourth wave feminist ideologies relate Charlotte Lu's story?

Though the causes of the Great Recession are far too complex to explore entirely here, it has been regarded as the "[consequence] of a nearly 40-year uncontrolled experiment in neoliberal economics" (Labonté and Stuckler 312). Politically, neoliberal policies were enforced that had to do with "the deregulation of the economy, the liberalization of trade and industry, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises" (Ganti 91). However, neoliberalism is also an ideology "where the operation of a market or market-like structure is seen as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide for all human action, and substituting for all previously existing ethical beliefs" (Treanor). This idea was proven faulty when the housing market collapsed in 2007, as a result of the subprime crisis, which had mainly been caused by the unregulated trade of mortgages (Labonté and Stuckler 313). This meant not only grave financial consequences for many households (some of which are displayed in *LBD*), but also a crisis of faith in neoliberalism.

Third wave feminist critique started to gain traction around the late 1980s and early 1990s (Mann and Huffman 57). In an increasingly globalized society, where women were facing far more diverse problems than before, "the essentialist "we" or "sisterhood" of the second wave […] proved to be a painful source of factionalization" (Mann and Huffman 59). Third wave feminism's intersectionality sees gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity and class as "multiple oppressions […] simultaneous, inseparable, and interlocking" (Mann and Huffman 59). Third wave feminism is very critical of the structural oppression from the patriarchy, heteronormativity as well as racism, but it is also quite individualist (Mann and Huffman 74). Fourth wave feminism has a heavy emphasis on online activism and 'call-out' culture, "in which sexism or misogyny can be 'called out' and challenged" (Munro 23). *LBD* aired around the time which saw the end of the third wave and the start of the fourth, and is influenced by both. I will now examine Charlotte Lu closely, in order to tease out how these ideologies are present in her characterization.

Much like Lucas, Lu's storyline centres mostly around Collins's proposal, though in this case it concerns a job. In *LBD*, this conversation, in which Charlotte tells Lizzie that she is taking the job at Collins and Collins, is an outright, quite dramatic, fight:

> Charlotte: I *want* to take the offer. I *need* to take the offer.
>
> Lizzie: You don't *need* to do anything!
>
> Charlotte: Yes I do, Lizzie! Like you, my family's in debt. Like you, *I'm* in debt. Just more debilitating than yours.
>
> Lizzie: No you're not.
>
> Charlotte: We live in an apartment. We *used* to live in a house. I have a younger sister about to start college. There is no *house* to sell. (Ep: 42, 1:12-1:37)

The episode ends with Charlotte walking out, and a tearful Lizzie turning off the camera. Though the two make up around episode 50, it is clear that they break contact between these episodes. In other words, their conflict is much more outspoken than in *P&P*. This is in line with the Charlotte that *LDB* represents: a more vocal, but also a more confrontational woman.

However, it is also important to point out that she is still a peacekeeper. This is especially clear in her dealings with both Mr. Collins. As we find out when Lizzie visits Charlotte, her influence with her new business partner is significant:

> Lizzie: Sorry, is that okay? Should I not be making fun of your programming while I'm shooting in your offices?
>
> Charlotte: Collins and Collins has a very progressive policy on employee speech on the internet. […] We just have one rule: no spoilers!
>
> Lizzie: Wow. I would not have expected that from Ricky.
>
> Charlotte: He signed off on it himself.
>
> Lizzie: And who wrote that policy, bestie of mine? (Ep: 51, 1:52-2:17)

It is heavily implied that Charlotte wrote the policy, but ever the professional, Charlotte does not give way to Lizzie's prodding, saying: "We're all a team here and Collins and Collins!" (2:23-2:26), albeit in a slightly sarcastic tone. Though there is a progressive policy, Charlotte never once complains about Ricky Collins, nor does she tell Lizzie to be less critical when she talks about them in her blogs. Lu's power over Ricky, her ability to 'manage' him, is not just about her ability to keep the peace, but also about her acumen as a businesswoman.

Lu is also very loyal. For example, when Lizzie and Charlotte are discussing Mr. Darcy's asking Lizzie out (on camera of course) in the last episode, and Darcy comes in, she tells him: "Regardless of your position of authority over me, I don't like what you did to

Jane" (Ep: 61 2:06-2:12). This is especially significant because Collins and Collins (Mr. Collins's company) is currently being investigated by Mr. Darcy, and a bad report could cost her her job (Ep: 55, 2:56-3:18). Not only does her loyalty lie with Lizzie, but also with her sisters.

Thus, Charlotte Lu does have more freedom to express herself than Lucas. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that Lu or *LBD* presents a world in which women are liberated and entirely free from patriarchal constraints. She is a Chinese American, and as shown in the quote from Ep: 42 above, her family is in even greater debt than Lizzie's. Not only that, but before she takes Collins's offer, she "live[s] in a small apartment with [her] family" (Ep: 26 1:56-2:00), which, as we know, is a replacement for the house they sold. Charlotte in *LBD* has very limited options, much like in *P&P*, but these options are not just limited by the fact that she is a woman. As the existence of many non-profits for Asian homeowners around this era points out, immigrants who owned homes during the Recession were vulnerable, especially those with a limited understanding of English (Lee et al. 1209). Though it is unclear to what extent Charlotte's position is influenced by her ethnicity, her Asian heritage provides a telling contrast to Lizzie. Lizzie's initial reaction to Charlotte accepting Collins's job is evident of her own privileged position and therefore limited perspective.

Charlotte's characterisation could also be considered queer, in that she does not fit into heteronormative discourse. By 'heteronormativity' I mean a discourse that "effectively divides people into two distinct categories – homo and hetero – and clearly privileges hetero sexuality and what has come to be called the "nuclear family"" (Wallace and Alexander 794). Because Lu has no love interest in the story, and, in fact, seems to have no time for romantic love whatsoever (Q&A 4, 1:42-1:50), she provides a contrast to Lizzie's story in this respect

too. To be clear: there is no explicit mention of what Charlotte's sexual orientation is in *LBD*, but she does defy heteronormativity in her refusal to prioritize romantic love above her career or her relationships with other women.

The fact that Charlotte's different perspective, with different limitations and oppressions, is presented as equally valid is in line with third wave feminism. Lu represents the unique perspective of a Chinese American woman, who is well educated but whose family is in very debilitating debt. This makes her limitations in society very different from the other women in the show, but she is still very loyal, and actively speaks out against injustices against those women. Against the background of the Great Recession, as well as the fall of neolibertarianism, Lu's loyalty is even more significant. As I've shown, she is a very capable business woman. In fact, at the end of the show she takes over Collins's company (Ep: 100 1:27-1:45). Neolibertarian ideals suggest that the working of the market are an ethical framework, and thus that something having market value suggests something being good. Lu also represents a critique against this, in that her loyalty to her female friends is more important to her than her job. Her speaking up against Darcy in Ep: 61 is also somewhat reminiscent of fourth wave feminism and call-out culture, especially since Charlotte's comment is posted online with her consent.

Charlotte Lu as a character embodies much of what is important and revolutionary about third wave feminism. She represents a non-white and queer perspective, decidedly different from Lizzie and her sisters. Her story makes clear that there are still very real societal limitations for women, especially since most women are not just oppressed or limited because of their gender. Where Lizzie's happy ending represents the modern ideal of women being able to 'have it all', Charlotte's represents the fact that this ideal might not be possible for all women, because not all women are oppressed in the same way, as well as

the fact that happy endings for women can be far more diverse than getting the ‘dream job’ and the ‘dream guy’.

Conclusion

As I have pointed out in chapter 1, Charlotte Lucas as a character forms a subtle critique towards the issues young, well-educated women face in the 19th century. However, she is also able to be happy within these limited circumstances, through the use of her own good sense and her abilities as a peacekeeper, as well as her close relationship to an intelligent young woman, Elizabeth. Charlotte Lu, her 21st century counterpart, has a different, and yet similar role. As I have analyzed in chapter 2, *LBD* allows Charlotte more of a voice through the use of transmedia storytelling. Also, through the use of social media, what is told and what is not told is entirely under Charlotte's control, lending her more agency. In chapter 3, I placed *LBD* in the historical context of the Great Recession, as well as third wave and fourth wave feminism. I have shown that Charlotte's characterization represents a different queer and non-white perspective, and is critical of neoliberal ideology. Not only that, but her active speaking out against injustices to other women is in line with both third wave's ideals of intersectionality and solidarity, as well as fourth wave's online activism.

Charlotte Lucas, when looked at from a historical feminist point of view, forms a subtle criticism to the patriarchal limitations of 19th century English society. However, Lucas herself is not represented as being critical of those limitations herself. Her thoughts are voiced by an authorial voice, and thus cannot be read as self-expression. This is very different from Lu, as all of her expressions have been edited and posted online either by her or with her consent. The views she expresses are expressed publicly and deliberately. Lu also presents a foil to Lizzie's character, much like Lucas to Elizabeth. However, when Lu disagrees with Lizzie, this is also expressed publicly. This increased agency makes her more capable of addressing the limitations of young women in the 21st century context that she lives in. After all, many of the problems faced by Lucas are no longer relevant for Lu. Not

only that, but as the fourth wave of feminism was on the rise, feminism and feminist activism was more socially acceptable than it was when *P&P* was written. Thus, Charlotte represents in both works an attempt at understanding the choices of young women, and the wider societal debates surrounding those choices.

In this thesis, I have done a comparative reading of Charlotte Lucas and Charlotte Lu, especially focusing on the aspect of feminism, as well as adaptation and transmedia storytelling. Previously, there had been no in-depth comparative analysis of these two characters. By doing a comparative reading, I have shown not only how adaptation theory can be used to include new, interactive and transmedia storytelling, but also how these kinds of adaptations can add to our understanding of the source text. Charlotte is, neither in *P&P* nor in *LBD*, a complete affirmation nor an outright attack on the patriarchal norms that are present in either historical context, but a subtle interrogation and critique. By doing a comparative reading of these characters, I have shown that though these limitations are there, women like Charlotte Lu(cas) do not accept them at face value. Stories like *P&P* and *LBD* can give us a more nuanced and subtle understanding of feminism, because Charlotte is neither entirely a victim of patriarchal norms, nor does she entirely conquer or reject them. By reading these characters from a feminist theoretical framework, my analysis gives us a better understanding of how the debates around female dependance versus emancipation have developed over time, as well as how they function when looked at from a more personal and specific point of view. In other words, Charlotte Lucas shows us the lived reality of a well-educated woman in 19th century England who does not want to marry for love, and therefore settles for a husband with reasonable means who can be manipulated, whereas Lu represents how this same disinterest in romantic love functions differently in a 21st century context, but also how her perspective is different because of her ethnicity. My analysis has

shown that Charlotte, Lu or Lucas, cannot be accepted at face value as either oppressed or liberated, but rather part of a wider cultural debate around the choices of young women, and the limitations they face.

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