Clueless about Class: A Study of how Four Film Adaptations of Jane Austen's *Emma* Adapt the Theme of Class

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Abstract

Romanen *Emma* av Jane Austen og synet på klasse som er presentert i forteljinga, har blitt tolka frå ulike vinklar med ulik tyding av forteljinga som ein heilskap. Føremålet med denne masteroppgåva er å vise korleis dei forskjellige klassetolkingane vert overført til filmatiserte versjonar av *Emma* og kva følgjer dette har for korleis temaet blir forstått. Ved hjelp av filmkategoriane til Linda V. Troost og adaptasjonsteori, undersøkjer eg korleis filmane presenterer klasse samanlikna med det klassesynet ein finn i romanen.

Oppgåva tek føre seg korleis klasse vert representert i Jane Austen sin roman og korleis temaet vert vidareført til filmatiserte versjonar, med eit fokus på kva og korleis det er endra for å passe inn i det nye formatet. Ved hjelp av to *Emma* adaptasjonar frå 1996, 1995 *Clueless* og den nyaste filmatiseringa frå 2020, illustrerer eg endringar i klassesynet ved dei forskjellige adaptasjonane med bruk av spesifikke klasseaspekt frå romanen overført på film for å argumentere korleis moderne filmskaparar tolkar konseptet og forklarar det til eit moderne publikum.

Analysen viser at klasseaspektet i filmane blir illustrert gjennom økonomisk skilnad og materielle eigendelar, noko som tek fokuset vekk frå nyansane i beskrivinga av sosial klasse som romanen etablerer gjennom handlinga. Dette resulterer i at klasseaspektet blir ein mindre synleg navigatør gjennom plottet, noko som skjer når klassesynet endra seg frå eit 1816 klassesyn til post-moderne klassekritikk. Analysen viser at dei fleste adaptasjonane manglar det fullstendige klassebiletet og omset berre delar av klassetemaet som er presentert i romanen, med forskjellige fokus og mål ved adaptasjonane sine.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Emma is Jane Austen's most class centred novel, a story in which the narrator and the inner dialogue of the main character guide the reader within the hierarchical system. Yet the four adaptations I examine in this thesis tell an altered story, one in which the novel's concept of class and its centrality to the story is changed. Drawing on adaptation theory, and in particular Linda V. Troost's categories of Austen adaptations, I will explore how each film translates Austen's nuanced and complex portrayal of class relations, how the adaptations interpret the concept of class and translate it into a different medium and a different cultural context, to what extent class remains central to the plot and to the depiction of characters and situations, and finally how generic and aesthetic categories as explained by Troost may serve to explain and analyse the choices made. My objective is to contribute to existing scholarship on representations of class in Jane Austen adaptations by means of a comparative reading that includes the most recent 2020 adaptation of *Emma* which so far has received little critical attention. Comparing the adaptations to the source text, I argue that although the theme of class is presented in the various translations on-screen, they lack a full understanding of how class is represented in the novel. While Emma's motivation throughout the novel remain fixed on class and the narrative is shaped by her understanding of it, in the adaptations her motivations change to fit the filmmaker's aim, thus changing the importance of the theme to the story.

The adaptations change the story's depiction of a social hierarchy to allow a larger focus on the more mainstream themes of matchmaking and marriage. What the adaptations essentially navigate is how to translate and present Regency class to a modern audience. When adapting *Emma*, filmmakers are met with the difficulty of deciphering what Austen means when bringing up class in her novel and how they are to transfer it to film. I discuss how class is represented in Austen's *Emma* and how it is translated on screen, essentially what is altered to fit the new format and how it is done. My textual choices are three adaptations and one loose adaptation of *Emma* to compare and contrast how class is communicated to the viewer. By limiting my scope to only films, I want to see how filmmakers treat class in the limited time of one and a half to two hours. In disregarding the mini-series of *Emma* which has a longer time span to inform its viewers of the important themes in the novel without having to sacrifice details, I favour the shorter works because of their necessity to make cuts, which results in some omissions of class aspects. The films I

have chosen include the two adaptations from 1996: the American production written and directed by Douglas McGrath, and the British telefilm written by Andrew Davies and directed by Diarmuid Lawrence; the 1995 loose adaptation *Clueless,* written and directed by Amy Heckerling; and finally, the most recent retelling from 2020, written by Eleanor Catton and directed by Autumn de Wilde. The selection includes a variety of screen interpretations of the novel's preoccupation with class, representing different production countries as well as different approaches when translating the novel into another medium.

Within the selected adaptations class is presented by the use of dialogue, body language, and voiceover monologues. Where the novel has a narrator, the films compensate with long passages of dialogue and extensive set design to inform the reader of the appropriate amount of plot progression in terms of class and its importance to the plot. It is no secret that the novel remains a more detailed product concerning social class than the films accomplish, but the chosen films manage to some degree to translate aspects of class into their narrative. The question is what this does to alter the final product. Class division is mainly illustrated through economic divisions and material possessions, as most adaptations fail, or do not choose to translate the nuances of social class which the novel expertly informs its readers about. The main element that sets the adaptations apart from each other is their aim or intention behind their adaptation. Some aim to tell the story as closely as possible to the novel, whereas others emphasize one or two themes of the novel and shape them according to their interpretation. In some cases, the production countries alter the class aspect in their respective interpretations of the theme. The British adaptations tend to lean on a more class centred retelling than American versions allow. In the instances where class is present in the American retellings, it is altered to fit into a modern equivalent, a present wealth-based structure, neglecting the social order of Regency class structure. The mood of the novel is also altered in the four adaptations in that the American one from 1996 focuses on the light-hearted aspects of the novel, whereas the British one focuses mainly on the more sombre themes and moods of Austen's story. The loose adaptation conveys the wit of Austen's novel without the seriousness attached to it, and lastly, the newest rendition manages to combine the two 1996 approaches whilst bringing a new appreciation for the novel.

I base my thesis on Linda Troost's categories of Jane Austen adaptations, which provide a critical framework and structure for my comparative analysis. Troost's three categories – 'heritage', 'Hollywood', and 'fusion' style – are useful as a way of describing differences in style, genre, and intended audience. My analysis of the different translations of the theme of class is also based on adaptation theory more broadly. Linda Hutcheon understands adaptation

as "an act of appropriating or salvaging, this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new."[1] Adaptation is, therefore, the translation from one medium into another with its own interpretations of the original work, keeping the source text in view while functioning as an entity in its own right. Further, my discussion draws on existing scholarly work on the topic of class as represented in Austen's novels and in different adaptations. Adding to this scholarship, I utilize the new material brought forth by the 2020 *Emma* adaptation to show how this work brings a new perspective on the novel's depiction of class. Thus, my thesis exhibits a new approach to an ongoing debate about Austen's *Emma,* class, and adaptation. My analysis of them points towards Troost's categories, assessing to what extent they succeed in the aims set by their chosen adaptation style, whereas previously they have been studied in relation to each other and their degree of fidelity to the novel. My perspective throughout is that the class structure in the novel *Emma* is the key navigator within the fictional society of Highbury, determining the success of the characters and their respective fates.

The first chapter examines how Jane Austen wrote about class, and how scholars have perceived it. This chapter will lay the foundation for the next two, which analyses key scenes in the novel to later assess their adapted form, and where I show by which means class and rank nuances are displayed in the novel. The second chapter concerns itself with the two polar opposite categories of adaptation, namely Hollywood and Heritage styles, in an analysis of the two 1996 adaptations from two different production countries. This chapter analyses the difficulties of adapting Austen's narrator on screen, resulting in a lack of class depiction. By using Troost's categories of adaptation I aim to critique the medium and the filmmaker's reading of the novel as the cause behind the adaptation's lack of accuracy in depicting class. I focus mainly on the British made adaptation because it entails a broader class description than the American one, at the same time showing that both adaptations include their interpretation of what class is and how to inform the viewers of its importance to the plot. Chapter Three examines two distinctive attempts at fusion style adaptations which essentially treat class as an important theme throughout their translation. The first part of the chapter concerns itself with the 1995 *Clueless* to discuss how a loose adaptation treats class within a modern setting. *Clueless* has become a critically acclaimed favourite for its creative translation of the class theme. I extend my analysis to include the newest adaptation of the novel which, I argue, adapts class into a format for modern viewers to grasp its significance to the plot. *Emma*. from

[1] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 20.

2020 illustrates that capturing the author's humour is just as important as the attention to detail, resulting in an effective retelling that attracts audiences familiar and unfamiliar with Austen's novel. Throughout my chapters, I demonstrate why class remains an important aspect when understanding the plot of the novel and how differently it can be perceived, especially when it is translated on screen.

1. Class Critiqued or Reaffirmed in the Novel

"One half of the world cannot understand
the pleasures of the other." (Austen, 60)

The focus of this chapter will be on Austen's representation of class in *Emma*. Establishing how Austen treats class in the novel will benefit my later film analysis, allowing me to show how the different adaptations translate the novel's treatment of social distinctions, examine where the class aspect is less noticeable, and where the adaptation alters the ending and thus the novel's reaffirmation of the social hierarchy. For that purpose, I will discuss the term 'class' as well as other class-related concepts. Next, I will place my own reading of the novel's treatment of class in relation to other critical views on this topic. Finally, I will move on to analyse the novel's depiction of class in more detail, focusing on scenes where class distinctions are especially visible and significant.

In most of Austen's novels, class is a vague theme in the background of the plot. With *Emma,* class is more integral to the plot itself, presented with a timeless approach that makes it still recognisable and perceived as relevant today. We recognise the characters and character types presented in her novels even though we have a different vocabulary, conceptions and theories about class today compared to what Austen had at her time. Despite differences in historical and theoretical context, certain social virtues are still admired: pretentiousness, self-importance and bragging of one's status and wealth are despised, while humility and authenticity are virtues to strive for. Austen uses class as a framework to show how Emma finds her place socially and in society. By having Emma realise the pitfalls of her obsession with determining other peoples' standing and judging their character accordingly, Austen critiques the snobbery of the social hierarchy without challenging the fundamental value of maintaining a hierarchical system because every character marries within their respective classes.

Coming from an upper-middle-class background, Jane Austen wrote for the most part about her own class. Having a title in Austen's novels is a disadvantage, as these characters' high regard for themselves and focus on their own superiority, leads to satire and mockery, and seldom reveal an appealing personality behind the title. Austen uses the characters who are obsessed with class to show the irony behind their façades as they seldom have proper morals if they are unwilling to change. Despite such satiric treatment, however, Austen's novels uphold the existing class system, placing every character in what is perceived as their

rightful place. As mentioned, the class system is especially clear in *Emma*, where Austen uses the main character and the narrator to carefully distinguish between the characters' social position in society. As Tom Keymer argues, "[i]t's in *Emma* that Austen unfolds the system in its finest and supplest calibrations, and she does so by refracting her narrative through the mind of a heroine firmly committed…to monitoring boundaries and keeping everyone in their place."[2] She does so whilst showing the full class spectrum by using the fictional village Highbury as a "microcosm of the nation".[3] By intertwining social class into the plot as an underlying factor for character behaviour, Austen communicates to the readers the significance of the English social framework and distinguishes characters from each other. She demonstrates class nuances and a system the early readers were well versed in. As modern readers, we are influenced by modern conceptions of class. Consequently, when examining Austen's treatment of class relations, an understanding of 19th-century terms and nuances of social distinctions is essential.

Throughout my analysis the issue of how Austen herself looks at class and the framework behind it will bring a greater context to understanding her novel. The term class is a difficult one to define. Many scholars turn to Marxist theory to understand what it is, thus reading the novel through a modern lens, but this is an anachronism. As the critic Graham Martin points out, modern ideas of class originating in Marxist critique do not correlate with Austen's time, nor her intentions in writing about her society and the hierarchy within it. In that sense, the term "class" is a misnomer as it was not used in the same way in Austen's time as it is now, only surfacing as a reaction to societal changes brought on by the industrial revolution.[4] Specifically, "[t]he term 'class' was already current in Austen's day…but as an organising concept it was yet to diverge significantly from traditional specifications of rank, station or degree."[5] While class was a common term to signal economic wealth, Austen uses different words to describe the social hierarchy of rank and its degrees, using especially 'Gentle' and 'Genteel' to distinguish a characters' placing within the ranked society. Martin suggests that when writing about Austen one should use the period's own "social concepts", like "rank, order and degree".[6] Along with "gentleman" and "connection", these terms refer to different aspects of respectability in society. The term class, according to Martin, is different from

[2] Tom Keymer, *Jane Austen: Writing, Society, Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 112-13.
[3] Keymer, *Jane Austen: Writing, Society, Politics*, 112.
[4] Graham Martin, "Austen and class," *Women's Writing* 5, no. 1 (1998/03/01): 136, https://doi.org/10.1080/09699089800200028.
[5] Thomas Keymer, "Rank," in *Jane Austen in Context* ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 387.
[6] Martin, "Austen and class," 133.

rank: “Where ‘class’ points to an economic structure of competing interests, ‘rank’ points to a social structure, a hierarchical order which, in ideological terms, is consensual, as is evident from the Austenian term connection, closely related to rank.”[7] Similarly, Robert D. Hume states that while “‘Class’ lumps people together; ‘rank’ distinguishes them.”[8] Rank focuses specifically on the proper lineage and connections required to gain a higher social standing and is consequently more individual than class as a larger socio-economic group. My understanding of how class is represented in the novel is linked to Hume’s statement, as two characters in the same class do not necessarily have the same rank in society. According to P. J. Corfield, the main distinction between class, rank and order is that rank and order were used in the most general terms, but they imply that social position was bestowed by birth, whereas class was a determiner of a person’s socio-economic position, into which an individual could increase or decrease, not depending on heritage.[9] Therefore, rank and order refer to inherited positions which distinguish an individual’s social influence, whilst class was determined by outer financial factors and in some cases a more fragile description of someone’s status. In the following discussion of Austen’s representation of social distinctions, I will use the terms ‘class’, ‘rank’, ‘order’ and ‘degree’ as relevant to the context. When I discuss the characters’ socio-economic position, I will use the term class, whilst when discussing characters’ differences within a social class I will use rank as a more appropriate term, signalling their differences in connection and social order. The term ‘class’ should be understood as the overarching concept, comprising both old and new conceptions of social and economic hierarchies.

Conflicting Class Critique

I interpret the novel as upholding the class hierarchy by showing harmony when everyone knows their place within it, as exemplified by the lack of change in the structure by the end of the story. Throughout, Emma is constantly making remarks about other people’s rank in society, in order to place them and put them in boxes which create order and harmony in society. The plot relies on how she is taught to behave in accordance with her social standing by Mr. Knightley, her knight in shining armour and the moral compass of the novel. The class boundaries are set in a way that almost everyone is left in the social rank they belong to by the

[7] Martin, "Austen and class," 133.
[8] Robert D. Hume, "Money and Rank," in *The Cambridge Companion to ‘Emma’*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 58.
[9] P. J. Corfield, "Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *History* 72, no. 234 (1987): 47, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24415601.

end of the novel. The only social climber is Emma's governess, Mrs. Weston, née Miss Taylor, but because of her occupation and connection to the Woodhouses one might argue that she is already in the social circle she marries into. Even Miss Fairfax weds within her original class, the one her deceased parents belonged to, and consequently the same as Mr. Churchill's. Though the novel at first glance seems to accept the individual over class, this is not the core message, as class and rank are established and set from the start. The editor of the 2012 Norton edition of *Emma* comments in similar terms: "Nowhere in the novel do we see the notion that the social structure should be thoroughly reshaped according to the egalitarian theories of the French revolution…[T]he power of the old world reasserts itself in the true worthiness of Mr. Knightley and his novel-ending union with Emma."[10] The ending of the novel affirms the given notion of class and inspires faith in the harmony of the system. Moreover, the class-fixated Emma is rewarded with a happy ending when she learns to act in accordance with her rank. Rather than speak ill of those below her, she learns that she should take care of those not as fortunate as herself. At the same time the class hierarchy is emphasised with all its inhabitants carefully organised into separate ranks, thus exemplifying how the class structure works and why it should stay in place.

It is significant that Austen's treatment and understanding of class is still disputed among scholars. The disagreement can be exemplified by two different representative readings of *Emma;* One reads the novel as upholding the class system throughout, and the other sees the novel as discrediting or critiquing aspects of class. In the two ways of reading, Austen's perceived objective in writing about class changes. Thus, the readings create two different stories, one of optimism and change, the other a realist approach with a stagnant class depiction. Juliet McMaster exemplifies the optimistic view in reading the class theme into a morality tale. She defends this view by placing the importance of class as "the source of much of her comedy and her irony, as of her social satire. In *Emma*…the snobbish heroine becomes both our guide as to where each character in the novel should be 'placed', and our negative example of one who assigns far too much importance to the matter of status."[11] McMaster understands the characters' class focus as negative, and that the characters who are fixated with class get their happy ending if they let go of their prejudices and obsession with class. In this reading, *Emma*'s plotline resembles a reverse Cinderella story, as it is not a story of a

[10] George Justice, "Introduction," in *Emma: an authoritative text, backgrounds, reviews and criticism*, ed. George Justice, A Norton Critical edition (New York W.W. Norton, 2012), xviii.
[11] Juliet McMaster, "Class," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 125.

morally good person going from rags to riches but a self-centred snob learning to be kind. By learning humility, Emma gets the prince in the end. With the help from Mr. Knightley, she understands that good morals triumph over class and that what is on the inside of a person matters more than their social standing.

Whereas I argue that Emma needs the order of the class system to know where she belongs and therefore defines others around her based on class and rank, McMaster's reading asserts that Austen's witty approach to class is primarily a tool used to create plot conflict, claiming that class becomes gradually less important to the story. She concludes her discussion in the following way: "As a sensitive and informed commentator on class, that huge topic of the nineteenth century, Austen shows us amply how such things matter. She also shows us how they should not matter too much."[12] McMaster essentially argues that Austen creates class-related obstacles for the characters in order to construct plot conflicts for them to overcome, and to forget the thing that separates them, because at the end of the day class is not what should matter most. McMaster emphasises that the moral of the story is not aimed at revealing the operations of the class system, but to show why it should not be given emphasis as it is a tool for separation rather than order. This reading resonates with the fact that Austen describes the intricate class system and puts those obsessed by it in a bad light. However, it does not explain the ending of the novel where no class boundaries are broken and the focus is on a continuation of the class narrative. Throughout this chapter I shall argue against McMaster's understanding of Austen's classlessness, as the hierarchy is not questioned or debated with a modern class critique but reaffirmed as a stable truth in society.

Unlike McMaster, Carol M. Dole and Mark Parker read Emma's compulsion to place others in a hierarchy as a commentary on the inherent need for class distinctions in English society, while simultaneously acknowledging Austen's own dislike of upper-class arrogance. This reading of *Emma* shifts the understanding from morality to a societal depiction, where everyone knows their place within the social structure. Dole sees past the surface of the narrative in order to argue a different overall meaning of the novel: "On its most obvious level, Austen's *Emma* is a witty satire whose chief target is snobbery…Accompanying the novel's attack on snobbery, however, is an underlying attitude that class distinctions are proper and even beneficial."[13] In other words, Austen's satire of snobbery is a tool to show what the author perceives as the proper functioning of class and the need to maintain a given

[12] McMaster, "Class," 125.
[13] Carol M. Dole, "Austen, Class, and the American Market," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 67.

and natural order. Dole is therefore among the scholars who see *Emma* as social commentary. My reading of the novel is in line with Dole's, as by the end of the novel, the prominent characters marry within their class, ultimately upholding the class structure. The ending of *Emma* shows the different characters at peace in their initial situation after Emma tries to blend or fuse two classes, as was the case for the upper-class Mr. Elton and the lower-middle class Miss Smith, causing trouble and distress throughout the plot. Though the novel can be read as a blend of classes and situations, in the end, it reverts back to normal, keeping the ideals and class system unchanged, with no class boundaries broken.

To a modern reader Austen's treatment of class can appear to criticise the hierarchy, when on the contrary the novel serves to affirm the existing boundaries. Mark Parker interprets *Emma* on a similar note to Dole, by arguing that while to a contemporary reader Austen's ideas and attitudes towards class may seem progressive for her time, "Austen operated in another political context, one in which she was able to lay bare, in a remarkably perceptive way, the relational structure of class while fully accepting it."[14] This argument is in line with Graham Martin's points above, concerning what Austen knew about class and current social thought at the time. Knowing Austen's own class gives context and an explanation as to why the novel favours the system and views it in a favourable light. In Parker's assessment, Austen presents a society close to that of her own, with her witty remarks and commentary serving to justify why class distinctions benefit the harmony of society. There is a shift in class acceptance in the last chapter when Emma finally sees Mr. Martin as a worthy match for Harriet and refrains from cutting contact with Harriet as she threatened earlier. However, as Parker points out, this only "serves to legitimate the interests of her [Austen's] own class."[15] To further support this observation, Emma maintains a civil friendship with Harriet resembling that between Mr. Knightley and Mr. Martin. Both Emma and Knightley act in accordance with the norms and standards of their class in showing kindness to those belonging to a lower one. Parker's critical reading of the novel understands Austen as favouring her own class, as the characters from the upper-middle class are presented in a better light than those below and sometimes those above. He also explains that the reason for describing the class structure is to uphold its social ideals so that everyone knows their place within its nuanced hierarchy. By way of favouring those in higher positions and creating harmony with those around them, the novel maintains the system. Parker also comments upon

[14] Mark Parker, "The End of Emma: Drawing the Boundaries of Class in Austen," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 91, no. 3 (1992): 346, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27710688.
[15] Parker, "The End of Emma: Drawing the Boundaries of Class in Austen," 358.

the diverse readings of *Emma,* emphasising that there is a progressive one "which emphasizes the insidious workings of class in Emma's disposal of Harriet" and a conservative, "reactionary one, which sees and accepts this working as part of the price of social stability."[16] Parker himself sees *Emma* as ultimately conservative, as McMaster observes: "Mark Parker believes that in *Emma* Austen argues 'subtly but firmly, for a maintenance of the system'…I read Austen as much more critical of the operation of class ideology than Parker allows, and more open to change."[17] There is some support for McMaster's view in that Emma is still on friendly terms with Harriet at the end of the novel, though on a more reserved level than before. The question is whether this indicates an actual change of outlook or whether Emma is simply learning how to behave towards lower classes in accordance with her high position in society. In my reading, Emma needs the order of the class system to know where she belongs, just as she has been placing others throughout the novel.

Characters and their Classification

The characters in *Emma* are placed in their respective classes and ranks throughout the novel by Emma and the narrator to make clear distinctions of where they belong in order to create harmony. *Emma* shows a broad spectrum of the English class hierarchy, by presenting characters from widely different classes who co-exist in the same society. In assessing the class of each character, the novel uses Emma as a guide into their society. According to George Justice:

> much of the novel registers Emma's wish to fit everyone in her town of Highbury strictly into a hierarchy of value, sometimes misunderstanding the person's 'real' status within the culture (for example, the case of Harriet Smith). By the end of the novel Emma understands better the actual structure of the social system in Highbury, which...is as much 'network' as 'hierarchy'. The narrator makes Emma recalibrate the relationship between birth and merit as well as better understand how others perceive reality.[18]

Emma uses a substantial amount of time to define and label those in her community and to distinguish their worth, but as Justice argues, she misinterprets many of those she labels. Through her mistakes, she learns how to value those in a lower social standing, and it is through this classification we learn where the characters fit into the class-related narrative.

[16] Parker, "The End of Emma: Drawing the Boundaries of Class in Austen," 358.
[17] McMaster, "Class," 126.
[18] Justice, "Introduction," xvii.

It is important to recognize the characters' class and rank because it is significant to see how they interact with each other within the narrative, for instance why some characters socialise together more than others, or why some are seen as outcasts though they remain in upper-class society. Within the novel the uppermost class Austen presents is the gentry, which consisted of titled or untitled landowners. Among the characters in the novel, we find Mr. George Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse as the landowning gentry, though Mr. Knightley (possibly alluding to the knight rank) owns more land and a bigger estate. Also belonging to this class is Mr. Frank Churchill when he eventually inherits all of Enscombe, a great estate that is highly admired throughout the novel.

Those who were not fortunate enough to inherit property had to gain money through a profession. The English upper-class had strict opinions and few options to choose from as suitable occupations for a gentleman. "The three professions open to gentlemen were the Church of England, the armed services and the law, in all of which Jane Austen places a number of her male characters."[19] The leading character in this rank of working gentlemen is Mr. Weston, a former captain in the navy. After his wife died, he acquired wealth by investments and is seen by Emma as an eligible match for her governess, because of his respectable past occupation and wealth but also because of his warm and caring personality. Mr. John Knightley, the younger brother of Mr. George Knightley, is also within this rank as he is a city lawyer and a successful one. We also learn of Mr. Dixon, a country lawyer, who in Emma's eyes is less successful because of his place of residence. However, both lawyers are described in a favourable light. Mr. Elton, the vicar of Highbury, is portrayed as a social climber because of his profession and connections to the higher society in Highbury. He is portrayed in a manner resembling other priests in Austen's novels, that is, less than flattering. Jane Austen was a vicar's daughter herself and the profession is often used as a tool for satire and social commentary in her novels, as is the case with Mr. Elton. Mrs. Bates was the wife of the late priest of Highbury, and after his death, she and her daughter have fallen in rank. The three aforementioned occupations did not include medicine. Mr. Perry is often referred to in the novel as an up and coming in society, as was the opinion regarding doctors at that time. It was a profession that knew no rank as they socialised with all classes. Emma especially comments upon Mr. Perry who is thinking about keeping horses, a sign of wealth and a shift in the image of doctors.

[19] Maggie Lane, "Daily Life in Jane Austen's England " in *Emma: an authoritative text, backgrounds, reviews and criticism*, ed. George Justice, A Norton critical edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 350.

The change in social classes as a consequence of the industrial revolution brought mixed feelings towards the emerging middle-class, with people acquiring their wealth from trade. This mercantile middle class is exemplified through the Coles, a rich family who in Emma's opinion is lacking the social distinction to accompany their wealth. There is also Augusta Elton née Hawkins, whose father made his fortune in trade, which resulted in Augusta gaining a large dowry and a pretentious attitude. Harriet Smith is an illegitimate daughter of unknown parentage. She belongs to the lower-middle class and as a parlour-boarder at Mrs. Goddard's school, she is also Emma's project throughout the narrative. However, when Harriet's father is later revealed to be a tradesman, Emma stops matchmaking Harriet into higher ranks and sees her compatibility with the lower-middle class. The reason why Emma takes an interest to Harriet in the first place is that she imagines Harriet a gentleman's daughter, even though her parentage remains unknown till the very end of the story, when it is made known that Harriet's real social class is lower than Emma first imagined. Mr. Martin, who is the tenant farmer of Mr. Knightley's estate, is considered differently by Emma and Mr. Knightley with regards to his manner and class, as will be discussed further in the next section. Mrs. Weston is originally a governess by occupation but her connections to the Woodhouse family enables her to marry into the upper-middle class, to a suitor who has the wealth she herself is lacking. This fate is also a possibility for Miss Jane Fairfax, an orphan and a financial strain on her remaining relatives. She is on the verge of turning into a governess but ends up marrying into her original class, becoming the wife of a landowning gentleman. In the novel, references are also made to the lower classes to create a full picture of the class network and its intricate social hierarchies. The novel provides the full picture of society and its inhabitants from shopkeepers to servants. Even gipsies are present within the narrative to show the class hierarchy and why it should stay in place.

Class aspects through Emma's eyes

In the following sections, I exemplify the class theme as represented in specific scenes and character relations to show the prominent part class plays in this novel. Prejudice towards the lower classes is especially exemplified through Emma's opinion of Mr. Martin, as she misjudges his character from the start. Upon Emma first hearing of Mr. Martin, she instantly defines him by his occupation and uses this as a justification of his character. She only considers appearances, claiming:

> The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do. A degree or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other. But a farmer can need none of my help, and is therefore in one sense as much above my notice as in every other he is below it.[20]

Here Emma is stating that she has nothing to do with Mr. Martin's social class and that she cannot take notice of him because he is plain and of little consequence to her. Mr. Martin belongs to a class which is both too low and too high for Emma to be acquainted with, as she is unable to gain something from their relation in terms of influence of rank, and he is not sufficiently poor to be in need of her help as a patron of the community. Therefore, Emma finds Mr. Martin's company unnecessary to elevate Harriet's position in society or gain anything from their connection. Emma judges Mr. Martin before seeing him in person because of the stereotypical view she has of those below her in class, seeing them as vulgar and bad mannered before getting a sense of who he is as a person. This scene also sees Emma dismiss his class and connection to higher society, forgetting that he is Mr. Knightley's tenant farmer, only focusing on his lack of rank and value to her.

Emma also misrepresents Mr. Martin's position in society to lower his status and to further show him unfit to be in the same company as herself and Harriet, claiming he is a yeoman rather than a tenant farmer. A yeoman was a farmer owning their farm and land, but tenant farmers rented their farm from landowners.[21] Though yeomanry were independent from a landlord, a tenant farmer did not own the land but got a share in the profit, thereby getting better grounds to farm on and a safer revenue stream. The social hierarchy amongst tenant farmers and the yeomanry became less straightforward in Austen's time, leading to the confusion in rank as demonstrated by Emma and Mr. Knightley's disagreement. Emma belittles Mr. Martin's position in society which hints at Emma's ignorance, something the current readers would pick up on, as Mr. Martin is clearly identified as a tenant farmer of Knightley's estate. This misunderstanding of his working title shows how little she is invested in finding good qualities and the right information about him from the very beginning, only looking for faults and shortcomings.

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[20] Jane Austen, *Emma: an authoritative text, backgrounds, reviews and criticism*, 4th ed., ed. George Justice, A Norton critical edition, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 22.
[21] Linda Slothouber, "'The Holders of Hay & the Masters of Meadows': Farmers in Jane Austen's World," *Persuasions*, no. 37 (
2015): 30, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/holders-hay-amp-masters-meadows-farmers-jane/docview/1826423731/se-2?accountid=8579.

Emma judges Mr. Martin before speaking to him because she wishes to elevate her friend's standing in society. When meeting Mr Martin, Emma holds back in order to observe, and to Harriet's dismay "observes" him to be of little merit, claiming that "He is very plain, undoubtedly – remarkably plain: - but that is nothing, compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much…but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility" (24-25).[22] In the footnotes, "clownish" is described as: "With rural, rustic appearance – not intended to cause merriment". Before being introduced to him she has made up a strong opinion of him as a person lacking gentility and refinement and being unworthy and inferior to Harriet. She is using persuasive language towards Harriet to make her see that Mr. Martin is far from a gentleman whom she should consider. By contrast, Mr. Knightley himself calls Mr. Martin a "gentleman-farmer", but Emma categorises him as plain and convinces Harriet to say that he is "not so genteel as real gentlemen" (25). They have a different core understanding of who this farmer is and argue throughout the novel about the correct rank he belongs to because they judge him on different grounds. Mr. Knightley views him a gentleman and a good worker because he knows his work ethic and what type of person he is, whereas Emma knows his class and rank and bases her judgement solely on those premises.

By meddling with her friend's proposal Emma shows her upper-class prejudice and a behavioural shortcoming as to how to treat the lower classes. When Martin proposes to Harriet through a letter, she is unsure what to reply, whilst Emma with her class-fixated attitude finds it amusing that Harriet would even consider saying yes to him. Emma repeatedly claims that she will not give her own opinion upon the matter till Harriet is sure herself, all the while hinting at the preferred answer. When Harriet hesitantly tries to make up her mind, declaring to have "almost" determined her answer, she looks to Emma as having all the answers, to which Emma replies:

> Perfectly, perfectly right, my dearest Harriet; you are doing just what you ought…Dear Harriet, I give myself joy of this. It would have grieved me to lose your acquaintance, which must have been the consequence of your marrying Mr. Martin. While you were in the smallest degree wavering, I said nothing about it, because I would not influence; but it would have been the loss of a friend to me. I could not have visited Mrs. Robert Martin, of Abbey-Mill Farm. Now I am secure of you for ever (39).

[22] From this point forward when citing passages from the novel it will be cited only by a page number.

Emma is influencing Harriet's answer as she fears loneliness without Harriet in her life but mentions only the loss of the higher society to sway her feelings and answer to Mr. Martin. She is using their friendship as a bargaining tool to affect Harriet's choice and referring to her as a Mrs. Martin of Abbey Mill farm instead of Harriet my friend to lessen her identity and rank if she were to be associated with the lower-class family. In this passage she treats Harriet as an object that she can control and lacks an understanding of her feelings for Mr. Martin, as in Emma's mind a match of this sort is clearly unbeneficial from her limited class perspective. As Harriet marrying Mr. Martin, at this point in the novel, is not ideal for Emma she prevents their match. However, when Harriet later stands in the way of Emma's happiness, Emma reconsiders, accepting and encouraging the connection. As an upper-class gentlewoman, Emma does not understand the severe trouble she is creating in her friend's life, as this match and offer of marriage is Harriet's only ticket out of poverty if and when Emma decides she is tired of her. Emma's privilege is revealed as she does not stop to think about the lack of options Harriet has but rather fears losing her close friend.

In an interesting turn of events, the class-conscious Emma contemplates later in the novel how easy it would have been if Martin were of a higher class so that Harriet could marry someone in a favourable position. She thinks that "It was a bad business. She would have given a great deal, or endured a great deal, to have had the Martins in a higher rank of life. They were so deserving, that a *little* higher should have been enough: but as it was, how could she have done otherwise? – Impossible! – She could not repent. They must be separated…" (130, original italics). Emma considers it a pity to uphold the class system, as it is creating difficulty in the lives of deserving people, but reasons with herself that this is the way of society. This comment contrasts her previous statement of Mr. Martin being "a degree or two nearer gentility". The speculation sees her wanting to improve the Martins' situation instead of dismissing them because of their unfavourable class connection. This indicates her growth into a more empathetic understanding of the class system, a shift in opinion that hints at Emma becoming less judgemental. Nevertheless, the class system remains an unchanging reality she will live by even though she sees its injustice for some of those below her. It is significant that while the character of Mr. Martin is important to the plotline of the novel, the character gets a smaller role in most film adaptations, where the main focus is on the upper-class society and their gatherings.

The Box Hill excursion is the climax of the story, where class is the central theme determining how they act and react within the lines of the social hierarchy. The scene starts with division among the characters. The Eltons keep to themselves, Mr. Knightley is taking

care of Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax, while in the narrator's words Emma and Harriet "belonged" to Mr. Churchill. The only person trying to split up the groups to "harmonize better" was Mr. Weston. "It seemed at first an accidental division, but it never materially varied…during the two whole hours that were spent on the hill, there seemed a principle of separation…" (253). They are all in other words set in their ways, not mixing or delighting in each other's company. There can be many reasons for Mr. Weston's openness towards all classes, but one reason could be his kind and approachable character. Having come up through society's ranks, Mr. Weston knows that class should not play a large role in close outings of this kind. However, this social separation increases the tension of the whole picnic and drives the insults further than intended, in an already tense environment.

In this chapter, the status of Emma in their little community is clearly shown through her control of the party as she is displaying bad manners and general rudeness. In her reading of the scene, the critic Mary-Elisabeth Fowkes Tobin suggests that throughout the picnic Emma "had been pushing against the boundaries of socially accepted behavior…trespassing normal social boundaries and threatening social order. By dropping the veil of chivalrous manners she reveals the true nature of social relations which are based on property and privilege, on wealth and rank."[23] The significance of her bad behaviour and missteps at this picnic shows how little regard she has for those of the lower class around her in the same community as herself. Because of her prejudices, Emma fails to see that they are kind people. She takes control over the picnic as the patron instead of Mrs. Elton and cares little about her behaviour towards the priest's wife. She goes further in her transgressions by neglecting Jane Fairfax and flirting shamelessly with Mr. Churchill. Jane does not have the rank or inheritance to choose whom to show affections towards like Emma does when flirting with Frank Churchill at Box Hill. Consequently, Jane must be silent and act passively as not to raise suspicion of her secret engagement. Mr. Churchill also behaves badly as he flirts with Emma whilst secretly being attached to Jane, though he does so to avoid raising suspicion of his engagement.

The worst display of unseemly behaviour for an upper-class lady is when Emma openly makes fun of Miss Bates. The situation escalates when Mr. Churchill is bored of his company and takes it into his own hands to create life at the party:

[23] Mary-Elisabeth Fowkes Tobin, "Aiding Impoverished Gentlewomen: Power and Class in "Emma"," *Criticism-a Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 30, no. 4 (1988): 421, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23112083.

> ‘I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse to say, that she waves her right of knowing exactly what you may all be thinking of, and only requires something very entertaining from each of you…she only demands from each of you either one thing very clever...or two things moderately clever—or three things very dull indeed, and she engages to laugh heartily at them all.’ ‘Oh! very well,’ exclaimed Miss Bates, ‘then I need not be uneasy. ‘Three things very dull indeed.’ That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan’t I? – (looking around with the most good-humoured dependence on every body’s assent)—Do not you all think I shall?’ Emma could not resist. ‘Ah! ma’am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me—but you will be limited as to number—only three at once’ (255-56).

The essence of this scene is that Emma displays her wit at Miss Bates’ expense which shows cruelty and ignorance of the social structure. Miss Bates is not able to understand why Emma as a friend and superior could speak like this and immediately questions what she herself had done to make herself so ‘unagreeable’ as for Emma to show such rude manners. When blurting out the ill-willed comment to Miss Bates, Emma shows herself as not having the proper manners to suit her position in society, acting bluntly and not keeping her opinions to herself. Emma’s opinion of Miss Bates is shared by other guests at the picnic. However, when voicing that opinion, she humiliates the good-natured Miss Bates in a way that does not belong in polite society. The narrator even emphasises that Emma could not resist her direct comment, thinking about it as a fun quip rather than a hurtful statement. As Emma does not see its hurtful impact, she thinks nothing of it until she is reprimanded by Mr. Knightley and by consequence this scene is what finally ‘distresses’ and ‘vexes’ her, as hinted at in the first passage of the novel.

Mr. Knightley shows Emma how to behave when he privately brings up her transgression. He shows reluctance in correcting her but sees it as his duty to question her behaviour like no one else has done because of her high social status in their gathering. The class element of the situation is immediately brought to attention as he says: “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.” (258, original italics). Emphasising her situation is important in understanding why this scene has such a significance in relation to class, as he later comments that her actions would not have had such importance if Miss Bates were rich or in a higher position like Emma, as it would have merely been a comment. However, since she is of a lower class this comment was aimed to hurt her and humiliate her manners.

In his outburst he makes comments about class and proper behaviour as he argues:

> Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance, I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation – but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done indeed! – You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her – and before her niece, too – and before others, many of whom (certainly *some,*) would be entirely guided by *your* treatment of her (259, original italics).

Mr. Knightley teaches Emma how to act in accordance with her own rank and to treat everyone with kindness and care, especially those not as fortunate as herself by birth. Even though he acknowledges Miss Bates' chatty and sometimes annoying monologues, he states that it is not something that she should be reprimanded for. Emma is being scolded because of Miss Bates' low class, not because what she said was untrue. Emma learns that being of a high class does not give you free reign to treat people badly. Additionally, we learn through Mr. Knightley how Emma's opinion and treatment of others guide those around her. If she thinks poorly of someone, they are consequently treated badly by those who look up to Emma and her opinions. The people in her community value Emma's judgements higher than they should because of her rank. She has more social power than she is aware of, and by not knowing the consequences of her actions, she is causing a rift between the upper and middle class in their social group. Lastly, Mr. Knightley notes that he is not happy to comment upon this, but it should not go unnoticed because their responsibility is to uphold morals but also help and take care of those below them in class. As the Box Hill scene is so central to the novel's narrative of maturation, it ought to be an important scene to translate on screen to show the nuances of class and etiquette. This scene is one where the class and rank issues are highly visible in the novel and how it is interpreted on screen in multiple adaptations is essential to understanding the directors' vision for their retelling and their degree of emphasis on the theme of class. Therefore, the two following chapters will include how my selected adaptations execute this scene and how large the class attention is.

Societal Attitudes of the Middle-class

Social attitudes towards the emerging middle-classes are exemplified through Emma's judgement of the Coles, an upwardly mobile family with new money from trade. The Cole family are not essential to the overall plot as they are only in the foreground when they host a

dinner party. However, leading up to this party the narrator invites us to share some observations on their position in society from both a class and rank perspective:

> The Coles had been settled some years in Highbury, and were very good sort of people – friendly, liberal, and unpretending; but, on the other hand, they were of low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel…The regular and best families Emma could hardly suppose they would presume to invite – neither Donwell, nor Hartfield, nor Randalls. Nothing should tempt *her* to go, if they did; and she regretted that her father's known habits would be giving her refusal less meaning than she could wish. 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. This lesson, she very much feared, they would receive only from herself; she had little hope of Mr. Knightley, none of Mr. Weston (143-44, original italics).

Emma's opinion shows how she thinks herself above the Coles even though they are equal in wealth and have attained a similar social standing. In her view, their rank is below hers, and thus she is horrified to be invited by such a low standing family. Even though she considers them 'respectable in their own way' she wants to distinguish them from genteel company, drawing a firm line between herself and the semi-acceptable Coles. They have gained social and economic capital to attract the company of high society but are not from the right background and therefore not entirely accepted into gentility. Emma wishes to teach the Coles a lesson by refusing their invitation, at the same time thinking to herself that Mr. Knightley would indeed accept it and so would Mr. Weston. In the Box Hill scene and at the Crown ball Mr. Weston's hopes for a good social gathering are not stopped by class or snobbery. Eventually, however, Emma accepts the Coles as a good sort of people when she is able to distinguish their manners as more favourable than that of Mr. and Mrs. Elton.

The other conventional opinion of the middle-class social climbers is exemplified through the Elton family. Represented as pretentious upstarts who think too highly of themselves, they demonstrate the less appealing aspects of class pretentions. Before meeting Augusta Hawkins, later Mrs. Elton, Emma contemplates who this unknown new bride of Mr. Elton is, emphasising her class:

> *What* she was, must be uncertain; but *who* she was, might be found out; and setting aside the 10,000l. it did not appear that she was at all Harriet's superior. She brought no name, no blood, no alliance. Miss Hawkins was the youngest of the two daughters of a Bristol – merchant, of course, he must be called; but as the whole of the profits of his mercantile life appeared so very moderate, it was not unfair to guess the dignity of his line of trade had been very moderate also (127, original italics).

Mrs. Elton has wealth indeed, but no high class accompanying it. Emma distinguishes "who she is", her class, from "what she is", meaning her character. She is therefore waiting to make up her opinion of Mrs. Elton until they meet, unlike previous characters like Mr. Martin and the Coles. She is however determined to favour her friend above this unknown woman from a trading family with no great connections to high society. Consequently, when making this statement she has already assessed her worth but is making allowance for her opinion to shift after meeting her, which it does but only for the worse, as Mrs. Elton turns out to be a vulgar woman who herself looks down at people and judges them harshly.

Austen shows her wit through the conversation between Mr. Weston and Mrs. Elton, where the term "upstart" is brought forward with disdain by Mrs. Elton. An upstart is a person from low birth climbing into a higher status of social and financial wealth, a term that can be applied to Augusta Elton herself. Mrs. Elton mentions someone living close to her brother's house whom she dislikes on account of their status, exclaiming: "I have quite a horror of upstarts…People of the name of Tupman, very lately settled there, and encumbered with many low connections, but giving themselves immense airs, and expecting to be on a footing with the old established families." (214). What she is describing is her own behaviour as an upstart herself. She is someone moving in and considering themselves equal to old established money and rank. Augusta Elton has settled herself into the society of Highbury and expects to be treated like a royal. This is very fascinating, because she fancies herself not as a vulgar and intrusive person but rather as worthy of the title of "old established money" as opposed to an "upstart". She has little insight into her own situation, representing the arrogant emerging middle class dreaded by the upper-class, as they would change the system and upset the harmony.

Behind the judgemental front that Emma puts forth, lies a deeper anxiety about losing her status and influence in the community. Commenting on Emma's verdict of families from a trading background, Tom Keymer points out that:

> Beneath the serene surface of polite sociability, Austen frequently indicates powerful undercurrents of rivalry and conflict. The Woodhouses are as anxious to distinguish themselves from aspirational pseudo-gentry like the Eltons, or the wealthy, pretentious Sucklings at Maple Grove, as these families are to rise above the good-hearted but unpolished Coles — a parvenu family who, for all their wealth, have yet to acquire enough refinement to expunge the stigma of 'trade'.[24]

[24] Keymer, *Jane Austen: Writing, Society, Politics*, 116.

The Coles are lacking the status and connections to move beyond their background and lower ranking. Another aspect that this passage shows is Emma's anxiety to share rank with those whom she views as inappropriate and unrefined for her upper-class society. The Coles bring forth a social assessment for the emerging wealth, and the importance of connection to gain a higher value in society. This insecurity of rank is what gives her harsh judgement of Mr. Martin a greater context for us to understand why she thinks the way she does in the framework of class. It also adds to the reason for Emma to hate Mrs. Elton. Even though Augusta is hated because of her marriage to Mr. Elton and for her conceited attitude, her family's trading background adds to Emma's disdain of the woman. All these aspects are emphasized in the comment about the Coles and in the discussion of upstarts, which is somewhat lost when the story is adapted on screen. In almost all adaptations I will examine, the Coles are not given importance to the story, and as a result, we lose Emma's opinion of the trading wealth and the threat they pose to the hierarchy. In the adaptations where they are included, the context and critique do not appear as clear-cut as in the novel. Other than the community's lesser role, and lack of rank determining rank within the narrative, the end of *Emma* is also altered in the filmed versions. Where the novel focuses on upholding the class narrative, adaptations tend to break with it.

The Class-bound Ending of the Novel

The continuation of class roles is exemplified with the declining friendship between Emma and Harriet, as it concludes the novel with a sense of security within the class structure. Even before Harriet's father is revealed, their friendship is declining slowly. I argue that Harriet and Emma drifting apart is something they both see must happen because of the society they live in, whereas in chapter 2 and 3 I show how this separation is altered in the adaptations. It is when Emma discovers that Harriet is the daughter of a tradesman, that she sees their friendship as unsuitable. Emma contemplates this new information in the following way:

> She proved to be the daughter of a tradesman, rich enough to afford her the comfortable maintenance which had ever been her's, and decent enough to have always wished for concealment. – Such was the blood of gentility which Emma had formerly been so ready of vouch for! – It was likely to be as untainted, perhaps, as the blood of many a gentleman: but what a connexion had she been preparing for Mr. Knightley – or for the Churchills – or even for Mr. Elton! – The stain of illegitimacy, unbleached by nobility or wealth, would have been a stain indeed (331-332).

As Harriet's bloodline is far less superior than Emma first had believed, she comes to consider Harriet's background a problem to her imagined suitors. Emma has imagined the Coles to be an unsuitable family due to their trading background, and now she finds out her friend is from the same roots. An interesting observation is when Emma claims Harriet's father was decent enough to conceal his identity for Harriet's sake. She claims that it was better for Harriet to be the natural daughter of an anonymous man, rather than the daughter of a middle-class working man who has risen in wealth but not in rank. She had claimed that Harriet was clearly a gentleman's daughter connected to gentility, but as she is not, Emma is ashamed to vouch for her friend in securing her a comfortable life and marriage. She finally realises that the match with Mr. Martin is more favourable to Harriet and her actual status in society. Likewise, she gathers that a more prominent match would have been a "stain" on the good family's name.

Emma and Harriet's gradual detachment is emphasised by the narrator as their friendship is about to mature and grow into the kind of acquaintance between upper and lower classes that is considered proper.

> Harriet, necessarily drawn away by her engagements with the Martins, was less and less at Hartfield; which was not to be regretted. – The intimacy between her and Emma must sink; their friendship must change into a calmer sort of goodwill; and fortunately, what ought to be, and must be, seemed already beginning, and in the most gradual, natural manner. (332)

Their past connection is implied to be shifting, both because of their new family situations but also because of their respective classes, overriding their close previous connection. Since their roles have shifted, so must their friendship. The word "must" is significant, as this is the proper way of society, not to be regretted but preferred in future acquaintance with the wife of a farmer. Mr. and Mrs. Martin are however invited to Emma's wedding and described as "the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony" (333). Because Mr. Knightley is friendly with Mr. Martin, his tenant, Emma is still acquainted with Harriet, but in a different, more mature way that contributes to a harmonious class order. The process of their declining friendship is expected and one with no ill will, as they belong in two different social spheres. This is especially emphasised with the narrator's phrasing that their declining friendship was not to be mourned as a loss, but merely a formality within their society. Therefore, class structures are upheld and connections between classes and ranks remain unchanged by the end

of the novel. Emma now understands where the borders lie, her behaviour mirroring the system's expectations.

How Austen Communicates Class

Austen emphasises class by using satire communicated through the narrator, through character dialogue, and through Emma's inner thoughts. While Austen does not use much time to describe their outer appearance or their surroundings, what she does communicate is the characters' complex inner life and their opinions through long dialogues and thought processes. In connection to this Linda Bree notes that: "In *Emma* only a small proportion of the narrative can be pinned down as being told by a neutral third-person narrator; and with every rereading that proportion seems to reduce…seeing only, or mainly, what they see, almost always falsely or partially."[25] Austen's narrative technique adds layers to situations and characters. The narrative style creates an ironic voice that parodies the stereotypes of class, creating a light-hearted and entertaining narrative reinforced by a serious story about class.

Because this novel uses a third-person omniscient narrator, the reader is present for scenes and dialogues where Emma is not present which helps create tension and misunderstandings. At the same time, Austen uses free indirect discourse, meaning that "what the character is thinking and what the narrator is describing overlap".[26] This connection brings forth an interesting aspect of Emma being both the one using satire and the one being mocked. By using free indirect discourse, Austen is able to use the narrative style to create a satiric element. Justice comments that, "The satire in Austen's narrative method depends on the amplification of the understated satire of Emma's dialogue combined with the explicit satire of her thoughts laid bare in free indirect discourse."[27] The narrative technique creates a social commentary on the main character in different ways, using Emma both as the target of the joke and other times the one behind it. On the surface, the narrator is a vehicle for information in navigating the story, yet on a deeper level it brings forth an ironic voice that mocks the main character and situations. At the same time, as Linda Bree argues, Emma shapes our opinion of characters because of her persuasive manner: "[b]ecause Emma is so confident about her own judgement and is plainly so much more intelligent than many people around

[25] Linda Bree, "Style, Structure, Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Emma'*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 94.
[26] Justice, "Introduction," x.
[27] Justice, "Introduction," xxviii-xxix.

her, the reader is led into accepting her word for what is happening."[28] Emma is, therefore, able to determine a character's class and rank throughout the novel with the reader accepting her assessments. She does so especially through the use of class language and its negative or positive connotations.

Emma uses specific words to convince the reader and those around her to accept her opinions of rank by using the words "genteel" and "gentility" to describe characters and their classification in different contexts. "Genteel" is explained as "[h]aving the manners or lifestyle associated with people of high social position…Later often: exhibiting exaggerated or affected refinement or respectability…polished, well bred."[29] To be called genteel was therefore affirmative of a person's character and position in society. Austen uses the word "genteel" twice in her novel, both times to express a character's lack of a gentlemanly manner. The first time the word is used is when categorising Mr. Martin as plain and "not so genteel as real gentlemen" (25). The second time, the term is used to describe the Coles as a good sort of people but "only moderately genteel" (143). In both instances this word is used in a negative comparative way, to highlight Emma's upper-class opinions on the lower ones and to show her superiority. This shows how Emma lumps together all those who come from a more modest background.

The term "gentility" is used similarly to "genteel", to describe a person's character. "Gentility" is used six times in the novel with different connotations. The term is first introduced on page 12, with a positive meaning, when the narrator establishes that Mr. Weston's rise into gentility has happened in the last two or three generations. Even though he is a social climber, he is never understood as inferior or discriminated against, unlike other characters. This could be because of his previous occupation suited for a gentleman or his overall kindness and consideration for others. The second positive implication of the word occurs when Emma considers Mr. Knightley's estate and roots to be "of such true gentility" (247), viewing him as the ultimate gentleman with proper manners and upbringing. The term is further used two times when Emma is pointing out Mr. Martin's lack of it to convey faults in his character to Harriet. Mr. Knightley argues in contrast to Emma's negative opinion of Mr. Martin, that he has "more true gentility than Harriet Smith could understand" (48). This occurs when Harriet has refused Mr. Martin because of Emma's influence. The last negative implication of the word comes near the end of the novel when Harriet's real class is revealed

[28] Bree, "Style, Structure, Language," 95.
[29] Oxford English Dictionary, *"genteel, adj., n., and adv."* (Oxford University Press). https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77636?redirectedFrom=genteel.

through her parentage and Emma comments upon her fault in trying to connect Harriet to gentility. 'Genteel' and 'gentility', then, are used in the novel to assess people's character and status. In every case, it is an opinion expressed either by the narrator, Emma or once by Mr. Knightley, but the description is not a given fact of the person's real status. Emma's opinions change throughout the narrative, as seen especially in the case of Harriet and Mr. Martin, where her initial impression alters to favour their actual rank within society. The change in Emma's opinion can point to her letting go of class prejudices, but this is only the surface of how Emma learns how to act according to her rank.

Emma's moral growth goes from her doing what she thinks is expected, to her genuinely caring and acting in accordance with her rank and civic responsibility. Her behavioural pattern changes from that of a self-centred naïve girl to a caring wife through the span of multiple shaping experiences. She does charitable things in her community but her motivations for doing so change with time and maturity. When she and Harriet look after the poor sick family, her attentions are occupied with matchmaking as they pass the house of Mr. Elton. Likewise, when Emma pays a visit to Mrs. and Miss Bates, she does so reluctantly and only behave in accordance with what is expected of her. A small change is recognised when she gives the whole hind-quarter pig to the Bates' showing her kindness and generosity to those not as fortunate as herself. It is further exemplified through her sincere apology to Miss Bates after the Box Hill picnic. Emma's transgression is followed by reflection, shame and remorse. In her contemplation, the word "vexed" is used to signal her distress, but also to hint back to the introduction which stated that little in her life had distressed or vexed her, and when something eventually did, it resulted in growth. She learns by transgressing but also learns how a gentlewoman should act by Mr. Knightley's blunt corrections. In this, he differs from Emma's father as well as her former governess, who are both so eager to praise that they fail to see the consequences for Emma's development of character.

When Emma learns her place, she also comes to understand the moral code inherent in the class system. As the critic Mona Scheuermann comments:

> It is the moral vision that holds *Emma* together, and that vision, as we have seen, is specifically that of the upper classes in England at late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century…There is no question, there are no ambivalences, about moral behavior in *Emma*. People must be kind, and they must care for each other, and these requirements are rather easily satisfied because everyone is of the same background and therefore shares the same ideas of what is correct behavior.[30]

[30] Mona Scheuermann, *Reading Jane Austen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2009), 133. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bergen-ebooks/detail.action?docID=555576.

Scheuermann makes morality the vital element of the story, connecting it to the class perspective. In the community, they are all reliant upon each other to keep the moral codes that ensure order and harmony between classes. As Emma goes from acting out of selfish desires to behaving in accordance with the moral code and taking on the patron role, she is able to convey the moral of the story and show why class barriers are important. In essence, moral behaviour and class narrative go hand in hand when telling the story of Emma coming of age.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the complex theme of class is conveyed in Jane Austen's *Emma* and how it impacts the overall message of the novel. The ambiguous way in which Austen writes about class, has generated different interpretations and assessments of its importance as a theme in the novel. By examining two opposing views on class in the novel I have presented their respective understandings as a way of furthering the discussion of this unresolved debate. In my reading, the novel approaches class as a conservative and stable system meant to create harmony in society. There is little to no change in the characters' social class groupings at the end of the novel and the growth of Emma sees her fitting better into her role and rank as an upper-class gentlewoman. Through the examination of class aspects in the novel, I have discussed what Austen represents when talking about class and how she uses Emma as a social commentator on the British class system and its nuances. In her narrative, most of the comments on class happen through the narrator's comments, Emma's thoughts and the dialogues between characters. Although the class theme is subtle at times it is, however, the catalyst for many plotlines and behavioural patterns that make *Emma* a complex and enjoyable story. Filmmakers will encounter difficulties when adapting the narrator voice on-screen, as Austen gives class descriptions mainly through the narrator voice and Emma's vivid thoughts. When the narrator voice is eliminated the lack of a guide in ranks and class judgements are lost in the process. Since the novel concerns itself more with the inner life of Emma than the outer at certain plot points, the adaptations would have to compensate with dialogue or other techniques to inform the viewers. The challenge involved is not to have characters overshare to keep the viewers in the know, or under share and thus lose Emma's ranking of people in her community. Another aspect which can present a challenge when adapting class is that American conceptions of class are different from British, as historically they have a different understanding of what class is and how a modern viewer is to understand it. Along with differences in production country, the three categories

of adaptation aim for distinctive retellings of the novel, as they concern themselves with a product aimed at different audiences.

As discussed previously, critics have different readings of the novel which alter the overall story, on the one hand, a light-hearted approach which downplays the class element, on the other a presentation that is closer to Austen's hierarchy without challenging the fundamental value of maintaining a hierarchical system. The novel's ambiguous approach to class makes for significantly different interpretations of what the essence of the story is. In this chapter, I have presented scenes which concern themselves with class from various angles. Moving forward the selected scenes will be examined with a view to analysing how the four adaptations choose to present them. This will show how they differ in translation but also demonstrate that some of these nuanced scenes are hard to translate well into an audio-visual medium with limited time and scope. In the following chapters, I will examine what happens when the novel is translated into the medium of film. Is the link to class as apparent and prominent throughout the story as it is in the novel or is it simply put to the side to favour other themes in the novel? The objective moving forward, is to analyse what is gained and what is lost in translation.

2. Class Dismissed: Hollywood contrasted to Heritage style

"Of all Austen's novels, perhaps, *Emma*
is most open to strongly divergent
readings of class." (Dole, 68)

In 1996 two *Emma* adaptations were made and what this year of Emma showed was how different one story could be presented on screen, especially considering its class aim. The British 1996 adaptation of *Emma* was directed by Diarmuid Lawrence, and the script was written by Andrew Davies, who also wrote the screenplay for the well-received 1995 BBC miniseries of *Pride and Prejudice*. The British produced telefilm came out the same year as the popular US version of *Emma*, written and directed by Douglas McGrath. The American film received higher audience praise and was a bigger box-office success. Though the British film did not measure up to the American one in terms of popularity, it has gained greater respect from film critics in later years. The film's interpretation of class perspectives, along with its creative use of scenes, shows that it is worthy of praise for what was then an innovative retelling of the novel.

Because the two films share the same production year, they are often compared as examples of the different routes one can take in adapting this story. Scholarly discussions of the 1996 adaptations have tended to approach both with the same critical perspective, considering the American version a lesser work because of its difference in class representation compared to the novel. My analysis will treat them as what they are, namely two distinctive readings of a novel. When pointing out their inherent difference they will be considered as two contrasting artistic interpretations of the novel. The discussion will mostly focus on the British-made version, as it aligns closer to the class theme as seen in the novel, but I will also include some reflections on the treatment of class in the McGrath film, as discussed by the scholar Christine Colón in her 1999 article on "The Social Constructions of Douglas McGrath's *Emma*: Earning a Place on Miss Woodhouse's Globe". The chapter analyses how the novel's representation of class is brought to life on-screen in the two 1996 adaptations, understood as two different retellings of one novel. One as a heritage and one as a Hollywood style. Although critics argue that the Davies-Lawrence version presents a more comprehensive and historically correct depiction of class than the McGrath version, due to the nature of the heritage adaption style, I assert that it is unable to accurately depict the novel's approach to class because it lacks a narrator, which makes the class information incomplete.

Where the novel relies on its narrator to guide us within the intricacies of rank, the films require a knowing audience to capture the full meaning.

The 1996 adaptations are inherently different because of their objectives in adapting the plot. The films should not be judged on the same criteria or by their degree of fidelity to the source text. Rather, they must be assessed based on the criteria and objectives of the genre to which they belong. They need to be judged on how well they succeed in their aimed target and not the fidelity to the source text. Therefore, I set out in this chapter to critique the medium and not the film, as the adaptation style is what limits them. It is not necessarily an omission on the side of the filmmakers. But since Hollywood aims for mainstream and mainstream in this case is America, it's not a suitable adaptation style to discuss class/rank. Similarly, the heritage style stays true to the novel but omits the narrator and shifts the focus of class, which was established in the first chapter, as the main information-giver regarding class. So, the heritage movie is actually a less suitable medium for conveying the "real," unabridged novel because the category limits itself in what it's actually able to do, because of their motivation to tell the story line by line from the novel. The result they aim to achieve is not possible as what tends to happen is their lack of accuracy when depicting the themes because any inclusion or omission of theme and dialogue is an act of interpretation. By altering the story, it is less likely to attain the fidelity the filmmakers want, but this is what happens when adapting a story into another medium. In the case of *Emma,* full fidelity is not possible and this is somewhat due to the difficulty in adapting the complex inner life of the characters.

Linda Hutcheon states that when translating one medium into another, the question of "fidelity" and "proximity" should not be the only focus and judging criteria. An adaptation is a work in its own right: "Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication."[31] Fidelity is therefore not the main goal when adapting, but some filmmakers shape their retellings to stay close to the novel without straying away from its main themes. A successful adaptation according to Linda Costanzo Cahir must "translate the words into images by both *Interpreting* and *exploring* the source text,"[32] essentially recreating the main themes of the story whilst reimagining the plot and making creative alterations to the story. There are many ways of approaching adaptation, but in my discussion, the most important place to start is by

[31] Hutcheon, *A Theory Adaptation*, 7.
[32] Linda Costanzo Cahir, *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Incorporated Publishers, 2006), 97.(Original italics)

grasping the filmmaker's intentions and objectives before judging their success in translating the theme of class.

Heritage vs. Hollywood style

One should not judge the class theme the same in adaptations made to entertain, as those that focus on the story's fidelity and its period. They need to be distinguished and judged in terms of their own objective. This is where the critic Linda Troost's categories of adaptation come in, as she argues that Austen films can fit into three distinct categories: heritage-, Hollywood-, and fusion-style adaptation.[33] I would place the British telefilm in Linda Troost's category of a heritage-style adaptation, as it tries to convey the story in its entirety with the vital themes of class, matchmaking, and the community at its centre. Films in this category want to retell the story with as much fidelity as possible, and with as little re-interpretation of the source text. However, when adapting literature into a visual medium, the story needs to fit into its new mode. An important element that is added in the British version is Emma's daydreaming, as it is a great visual tool for telling the reader her thoughts without the use of a narrator. It highlights her matchmaking plans as a central topic without being too obvious, as other retellings do when they have Emma talk about her plans that in the novel are for the most part an inner monologue.

Another element within the film where the visual tool is used is when the painting of Mr. Churchill comes alive in Emma's imagination, as she envisions their first encounter. It creates anticipation and importance to the character before he is properly introduced on screen. The image is a creative and successful presentation of a character vital to the plot. It creates an interesting addition to the story to keep the viewers in the know without sharing her thoughts. By using this method, the audience is always aware of whom Emma wishes to match-make and it also keeps the theme of marriage and matchmaking ever-present throughout the storyline. The overall pacing of the film is slow, serving to underline the story's major plot points. Alongside the still, nonexperimental camera angles, this makes for a classic heritage style filming of the plot. Adding the visual elements of the daydreaming and Emma's imagination is a creative plot addition which keeps the theme of matchmaking at the forefront throughout the film. Keeping in mind Cahir's point about translation above, though the story strays from the novel's ending it does interpret and explore the original story and the theme of class, which is understood differently from the novel but is represented consistently

[33] The last category – Fusion style – will be the focus in chapter 3, where I discuss two adaptations belonging to that category.

throughout. Although the BBC mini-series tend to be categorized as heritage according to Troost because of their long running time not affecting the plot details, I maintain that the Davies-Lawrence edition fits within the framework of a heritage retelling. When considering the changes made, and the creative differences this adaptation proposes, it fits in the category of heritage, as it takes a conventional and, as some critics have argued, an even stricter view of class than in the novel.

The American Douglas McGrath film, on the other hand, can be classified in Troost's category as a Hollywood adaptation. Instead of a historical focus or approach to the story, the Hollywood style values human behaviour and popular themes when retelling the story. The film is made for the modern viewer by playing up the beauty of the regency era without its accuracy. The adaptation takes clear inspiration from the source text whilst creating the novel into a fairy-tale-like plot, making the romance plot the main selling element of the story. The adaptation takes liberties with the plot when showing Emma's world, with added scenes and a larger speaking role and attention given to Emma. The version shows overall a simplification of the plot and its themes. Though the McGrath version tries to show a broader and accurate depiction of the story presented in the novel, it ends up giving the least focus on social class and its historical context compared to the other selected adaptations. This is especially seen in this adaptation where the narrative is put into a context for an international audience to understand class as wealth-based snobbery. The adaptation show class as social capital as well as coming from the right family background to determine the difference in the character's social standing. By translating class into concepts familiar to an American audience, shifting the focus from nuances of rank to wealth, they are able to sell a more relatable product for a greater target group. The change in aim creates a subtle critique of the old system whilst bringing an understanding of the theme to modern viewers.

When shifting the film's focus on the romance and drama of the story, the film achieves a less visible and representative class narrative. The use of famous actors and beautiful scenery creates an altered story than that of the novel. The finished product goes from acting according to one's class to a classless harmony where the central focus is friendship and acceptance. The two latter themes are important to the story as well, but when class is omitted the story changes. As presented in the previous chapter, class in Austen's novel is ambiguous, some read it as a construct one must overcome whilst others like myself view it as an integral theme present throughout the story which shapes most of the plot's tension. By using the first reading of the plot we are left with a reversed Cinderella story that ridicules class and its importance to the fictional society of Highbury. The aim of the story becomes an excessively

optimistic tale where the class theme becomes an afterthought. The two films aim for different results and consequently a different class representation, making the assessment of the two dissimilar.

When asserting where class fits within the categories, it is important to establish that the two aforementioned categories seek out different goals. The Hollywood style would rather sell the story to a mainstream audience, so they omit the class aspect and simplify it for the broader American audience they cater for. Whereas the heritage category pride itself on being accurate to the novel. In a sense, this is fulfilled with the British version, but Davies-Lawrence focuses on rich vs. poor rather than rank nuances in their retelling, which produces mixed class messages. They show injustice brought forward by division without expanding upon it, especially within the last few scenes, as will be discussed in a later section.

Contrasting Class Representation

What sets the two 1996 adaptations further apart from each other is their overall appearance and how they chose to visualise the plot. In the Davies-Lawrence film, the music is regal, with trumpets and splendour. The pace of the film is slow, taking the time to spell out plot points in the long dialogues similar to the novel. An aspect of the film that sets the mood is the lighting, as it is quite dark in most scenes, made to look like natural candlelit rooms, which adds a darker atmosphere to the story. A distinct change this adaptation makes is in casting Kate Beckinsale as a brunette Emma, whereas in older and newer versions the character is always played by a blonde. The novel does not specify the colour of her hair nor much of her appearance, as Jane Austen focuses more on the inner life of her characters than their outer appearance. The casting here is an artistic choice made to stand out from other adaptations. The film also does not brush over the fact that Mr. Knightley is older than Emma, by casting an older, stern-looking Mark Strong, instead of other adaptation's use of a more handsome, younger version than the novel describes.

The overall appearance of the McGrath fits with the Hollywood style adaptation because it puts a large focus on showing picturesque scenes of English idyll rather than showing a realistic English countryside. The style of the film is lighter and warmer than the British, with most scenes happening in daylight and with an upbeat dialogue. Unlike the British counterpart, this version does not use the weather and the changing seasons as a plot point, it is for the most part summer in the flower-covered English gardens with the exception of the Christmas dinner scene. It is a pretty retelling which features a dialogue-heavy plot and a slow pace to inform the viewer of the major plot points. This version also has a large focus on

beautiful actors by casting the blonde Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma and the dashing Jeremy Northam to portray Mr. Knightley, who is closer in age to Emma than the novel suggests. Their connection and a larger focus on Emma take the spotlight in this version. It is a Hollywood style adaptation through and through as it glosses over important themes like class. The visual representations given throughout the film supports the fairy-tale-like structure of the plot with light themes and atmospheres.

There are fundamental differences between British and American adaptations of the same source text such as their focus on class as a central plot element. Carol M. Dole proposes that the difference between American and British made films lies in their focus on social class, arguing that: "The solidly British productions take the hardest look at class, while the American films tend on the surface to ridicule class snobbery but on a deeper level to ratify class divisions."[34] Moreover, the class system as seen by the British is usually closer to how the novel portrays it as they have the same historical background, understanding class as a cornerstone of the social order. Consequently, a British audience will understand the importance of the theme and why its presence is needed for the plot. For historical and cultural reasons, modern American society is often believed to be inherently classless, representing distinction by means of wealth and social status rather than by lineage, emphasising opportunities of social mobility. In other words, this is the main issue when depicting class on screen, as the creators from different backgrounds register the source material on various levels and aim at different audiences. By emphasising this essential contrast in the two 1996 adaptations, they are bound to be judged on their own reasoning of class depiction and not put against each other as critics tend to do, as they aim for two distinct results.

Adaptations aimed at an American market tend to touch the surface of what rank and order is but break with economic and social class by the end of the story. Dole asserts that the American society "fosters a myth of classlessness deeply ingrained in our culture. Jane Austen, with her sharp sense of class distinctions and scant tolerance of social climbers, would at first glance seem unlikely to appeal to the mainstream American movie audience."[35] To put it differently, the works of Austen appeal to an American audience as they alter aspects unfamiliar to the mainstream and focus on the nostalgia of the period. The American illusion of a classless society may account for a tendency to gloss over the aspects of the novel that concern class and to favour other parts of the novel which are easier to sell to an American

[34] Dole, "Austen, Class, and the American Market," 60.
[35] Dole, "Austen, Class, and the American Market," 59.

audience. The class aspects of the novel are essential to the courtship plot, but American films tend to lessen their importance, thus altering the final product.

The central difference between the two adaptations, then, can be attributed to their focus and how they chose to portray the focal point of the story. Linda V. Troost and Sayre N. Greenfield point out the great difference of the two 1996 adaptations and their respective retelling in that, "the two versions of *Emma* represent two different and legitimate versions of the novel: one more concerned with what happens in the society, the other more in tune with what happens to the individual."[36] In other words, they argue that when shifting the focus point of the story it reshapes the plot. Austen shows both versions in her novel, but a director must choose their respective angle and scope. When examining the class theme, it either undercuts the theme of class or limits it, as the whole story is limited by the scope. The essence of *Emma* is the community and what influence it has on Emma and how she, in turn, impacts it. The two directors have very different interpretations of the story and focus on different aspects of Emma. The 1996 adaptations shape the narrative with two different goals. One (the American) focuses on the character who shapes the narrative and gives her the centre of attention. They add Emma into the narrative in scenes where she is not present in the novel, for instance, the scene when Harriet is attacked by Gipsies. In general, Emma has the focus in a scene more than others, the camera and dialogue favour her above her co-stars. By comparison, the other (British version) is more concerned with the community and its traditions. The film creates a network rather than an individualist retelling and creates a friendly loving family bond with kind characters. However, their focus on community comes at a cost: in creating a sentimental harmony which is not present in the novel they interpret and change the ending.

A successful retelling is able to create differences in the plot while staying true to the core message, whereas the changing of a central theme shifts the whole story's focus. In any translation, some meanings are lost, and others are created as they are interpreted to fit in a new medium.[37] Adaptations use the strengths of the medium to find creative solutions to cover up the shortcomings, and in the following section, I discuss how the British adaptation indicates class. When translating a novel to film there must be cuts made within the narrative, what remains is what the director favours as the essence of the story and their interpretation of

[36] Linda V. Troost and Sayre N. Greenfield, "Filming Highbury: Reducing the Community in *Emma* to the Screen," *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line* Occasional Papers, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 6, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/filming-highbury-reducing-community-i-emma-screen/docview/2309794879/se-2?accountid=8579.
[37] Cahir, *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*, 14.

it. Linda Costanzo Cahir states that when making a literature-based film it is the screenwriter's job to "make decisions regarding what should be included and omitted from the source literature. Each inclusion and each deletion is an act of interpretation, as the writer, in small and large ways, is determining what he or she sees as the essential worth intrinsic to the literary text."[38] There ultimately has to be made cuts and changes when moving from one medium to another, as a 107-minute film cannot include all details presented in a long literary work. All these decisions create a new product envisioned by the creator(s). These changes shape and interpret the original story, and as a result, change its fundamental meaning. In the following section, I examine the forementioned class scenes in the novel compared to how they appear in the 1996 UK adaptation of *Emma.*

How the Andrew-Davies version Communicates Class

While the class theme is not as discretely expressed in this film as in other adaptations, it is sometimes portrayed more subtly than in the novel, not always taking centre stage as in Austen's text. Critics have argued that this version makes a larger case for the theme by contrasting high and low class throughout the narrative. What is important to note is that not all characters are present throughout the story in the way they appear in the novel. One instance of this would be the storyline involving Miss Fairfax or the Coles. They are not given similar importance to the story, especially since the filmmakers leans more on the love triangle than on the obstacles presented by the class attributes of the characters. The film utilises the showing mode to inform the viewer of the match-making plot development, which is as previously mentioned done by means of daydreams. The introduction of Harriet is done in a cinematic way that states the intention of the film. During a church service, Emma is shown wondering which girl she can match-make the priest with when the light flows into the church window lighting up the parlour boarder Harriet. Emma has found her new project and the viewer is informed without using any words. This is rather an obvious showing of what is to come, but it is an effective image introduced by the set design.

In the medium of film, adapters of Austen's novel have a difficulty in filling the gap left by the absent narrator, which gives essential plot information and, in *Emma*, providing important class remarks. Sarah Morrison comments on the difficulty filmmakers face with the lack of the narrator function and how this impacts the extent to which they educate modern viewers in

[38] Cahir, *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*, 85.

the "social customs and class values of Austen's time."[39] Within the British retelling, the class aspect is not a foreign concept but still they need to bring attention to Emma's opinion on it. The translation from one medium to another can prove difficult with Austen's novels, as they tend to be narrator driven. Different adaptations solve this problem in various ways, but the most common way to give information to the viewer is by dialogue. This results sometimes in a dialogue-heavy plot with little action and unnatural exclamations. However, other filmmakers are able to find the middle ground in showing vs. telling. The British telefilm voice the inner thoughts of characters out loud to compensate for a lack of a narrator. In Emma's case, she often voices her thoughts out loud after the person has left the room to convey her opinion to the viewer. For instance, when she voices her opinion on Mr. Churchill and deliberates her wish to marry him, when she is at the Christmas party, it is highly unnatural to say such intimate thoughts out loud to a room full of family and friends. The director and screenwriter have chosen to do such a thing to inform the viewer of the plot progression but in the novel, it is the narrator and Emma's speculation that inform the reader of such thoughts. When voiced in such a manner, the statement becomes more prominent and fixed than the thought was intended to be in the novel. In essence, the film uses dialogue to distinguish socio-economic class and social rank to the viewers among other important plot aspects within the fictional Highbury.

Emma's prejudice towards the lower classes is voiced in multiple ways within this adaptation but is especially seen in the presentation of Mr. Martin and how he is portrayed in the film. Since the viewers lack the point of view that Emma' thoughts and the narrator bring in the novel, we are left with the outer appearance and the desired camera angle to tell the story. What we do get is Emma's opinion which seems to contradict that of Harriet and the viewer. When Mr. Martin is first introduced he appears very gentleman-like, and to a modern viewer it might seem rude that Emma steps aside and waits till after Miss Smith and he has talked. However, this scene depicts the correct etiquette as they have not yet been acquainted. Emma observes them talking friendly and animatedly to each other. It is not until after he has left that Miss Smith asks Emma what she thinks of him that she responds: "he is very plain undoubtedly but that is nothing compared with his entire lack of gentility".[40] This scene is

[39] Sarah R. Morrison, "*Emma* Minus Its Narrator: Decorum and Class Consciousness in Film Versions of the Novel," *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line* Occasional Papers, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 1, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/i-emma-minus-narrator-decorum-class-consciousness/docview/2309799445/se-2?accountid=8579.
[40] Diarmuid Lawrence, "Emma," (United Kingdom: United Film and Television, A&E Television Network, Meridian Broadcasting, November 24 1996).

very similar to what occurs in the novel but shortened and to the point, with lines that are taken directly from the text and keeping with the theme of Emma influencing Harriet. Because of the story's time limit, it indeed has to be shortened but the line where Emma points out that she wishes he was a degree or two closer to gentility is cut.[41] That line is a great indicator of where Emma places him in society and her opinion of those below herself in class.

The prejudice against Mr. Martin is once more shown when he proposes to Harriet in the letter to Harriet. The scene is rather monotonous and focuses on the indecisive face of Harriet, whilst Emma encourages her to refuse him. The lines are similar to the novel but contain less drama and indecisiveness than what is read in Austen's own words. The scene is also rather short and ends with dramatic music. Emma and Harriet walk away arm in arm, Emma with a smile on her face and Harriet with a hesitant look on hers. As Emma wants to fix Harriet's social standing and refine her into upper-class society, she thinks of herself as doing Harriet a great favour without considering the consequences this might have for an illegitimate lower-class woman. The character of Mr. Martin is quiet and respectable like he is in the novel, and he makes an impression in the few scenes he is present. However, the character of Mr. Martin lacks overall importance to the film's plot, and the social commentary Emma makes when voicing her opinions on the Martins is somewhat glossed over in favour of Emma's matchmaking.

The Importance of Box Hill to the Plot

The Box Hill scene, where some of the finest rank nuances are demonstrated in the novel, is in the adaptation for the most part put into an economic class focus and by consequence, its importance is somewhat lost in the adapted work. This is a pivotal scene in the story of *Emma*, which is translated with elements interpreted by the filmmakers. In this adaptation, the Box Hill excursion is made to fit the splendour of the upper class as the scene starts with the party riding in, the men on horseback, the women and servants in carriages. It is an amusing scene where you see what work goes into making the lives of the upper class comfortable. The upper-class characters are seen strolling up the hill with sun umbrellas, followed by the servants hauling furniture up the hill. It makes the outing comical, as the point of an outing is

[41] I am referring to the comment Emma makes about Mr. Martin's lack of gentility. The original sentence is as previously discussed: "He is very plain, undoubtedly – remarkably plain: - but that is nothing, compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much; and I did not expect much; but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility" (24-25).

to enjoy nature, whereas they bring their comforts with them, having the servants set up a table feast and shaded tents. This is contrasted in the next clip where you see the servants at the bottom of the hill having a modest picnic themselves without the splendour afforded to the upper class. The adaptation highlights the differences in material possessions more than in actual dialogue, cutting back and forth to show division without commenting further on it. It is a social critique of society without spelling it out as in the filmmakers' approach to the daydreaming sequences of Emma.

The real significance of the picnic is translated through small social cues consisting of gestures and facial expressions to detect and understand the subtle social layers at this picnic. When Emma speaks ill of Miss Bates, the camera cuts to Mr. Knightley's stern look for so to move on to the amused look of Mr. Churchill as he hides a smile with his glass. This shot shows the integrity of both men without having to say a word, as one is disappointed and the other amused by her unkind behaviour. The scene is overall uncomfortable and heart-breaking, making the tone of the scene more serious than other retellings because the scene is filled with silence, long glances and the visual hurt on Miss Bates face, rather than cutting the scene short it is dragged out to show everyone's opinion of Emma's misbehaviour.

This adaptation cast Mr. Knightley as a more stern and jealous type, making the reprimanding speech after her transgression cruel and less sympathetic than it is in the novel. In the novel, Mr. Knightley is a gentleman who sees it as his responsibility to guide Emma to respectable behaviour within the class frames of society. The Davies-Lawrence version interprets him as more jealous and irrational. Because of his feelings for Emma, he comes across more like a dark, mysterious, and brooding man than as a caring mentor to Emma. The reprimanding by Mr. Knightley is stern and focuses, like the novel, on Miss Bates's class and lack thereof. It is only when Mr. Knightley points out the unfeeling behaviour that she understands her place and duty to those around her. This scene is translated well on screen but seems rushed as they walk when speaking, which undercuts some of the severe feelings Emma is left with. When the filmmakers chose to focus on the stark difference between the servants and the upper-class gentry it cuts away from the class nuances within the group, the silent quarrels and displays of power dynamics that occur throughout the picnic. However, the Box Hill scene is in general a good representation of the important themes in the novel which stands out to comment upon class and ends with Emma's growth and understanding of her actions having consequences.

Opinions on Upstarts

Most minor characters in the plotline are forgotten or placed in the background in the film, to some extent this is because of its short running time but also in part their interpreted focus and scope. In the novel, the Coles is an up-and-coming family, which brings significant implications to the plot as they emphasise how Emma judges those from a lesser background whilst wanting to fit in when they throw a party. This scene and its importance to Emma's growth in understanding the class system is not as noticeable as it is in the novel as they are not given speaking roles in the film and are not listed among the cast. They are omitted from the film and in consequence, we lose the vital scene of Emma reconsidering them as a good sort of people in the build-up to and after the dinner party they host. This scene is important as it adds the class aspect of Emma discussing upstarts and showing her prejudice towards trading families, which in turn explains her initial disdain for Mrs. Elton. If the Cole party is present in the film at all, it is not apparent nor dwelled upon, which supports the limited class view.

In this version, Mr. Elton is more polite and respectful than in other retellings, for instance the McGrath film, which depicts him as more cunning and impertinent. While he is taken with Emma, he is kind to Harriet in the first half of the film. Even the proposal scene shows a civil Mr. Elton after he is rejected. He walks out of the carriage at his home, turns back and wishes Emma a good night with a bow. He is not understood as a threat to the storyline and is depicted less like a fool and social climber than other version makes him out to be. The proposal Mr. Elton gives to Emma is centred around the fact that Emma sees him as a match for her friend and not the fact that she thinks him beneath herself. The detail that Emma finds it repulsive that he thinks he can climb to her level is not made as apparent as it is in the novel. Therefore, the class aspect of this scene has been overshadowed by the matchmaking and marriage theme.

By not making a clear class structure, the class obsessed characters come off as being rude, often without a cause. The character Augusta Elton is first presented on-screen riding in the carriage with Mr. Elton, and her high airs are made apparent from the moment when Emma and Harriet have tea with her. In this adaptation she appears insufferable, lacking in manners and sense. However, she is portrayed with a slight American accent and talks rather quickly, not unlike Miss Bates. She is the only character shown to be snobbish throughout the story and with the lack of knowledge about her family's background in trade and Emma's disdain for up-starts, she comes off as rude rather than trying too hard to fit into a new social class. Augusta Elton is shown remarking upon improper behaviour one minute whilst showing

herself improper the next. An example of this is when she remarks upon the servants being invited to the harvest feast and then rushes towards Mr. Knightley, exclaiming "Knightley", omitting his title as a gentleman. Showing the class obsessed transgression in such a manner without telling the reasons behind her behaviour shifts the focus from class to characterisation. The film uses the character of Augusta to ridicule her class obsession by showing stark differences in what she says and what she does.

Emma and the Ever-present Servants

As indicated in my discussion of the Box Hill scene above, an element of the film always present, is the servants and their important role in the life of gentility. The adaptation shows how the servants assist the upper-class throughout the film with big and small tasks, as when they loiter in the background, holding candlesticks to light up the portrait Emma has made of Harriet. Dole remarks on the way the Lawrence film "provides constant visual reminders of the number of workers needed to sustain the leisure of its principal characters."[42] The constant focus on the servants and lower classes who are crucial to the higher classes' lifestyle, serves to comment on an aspect of *Emma* which is left in the background in the novel. The scenes where servants are in focus help viewers understand the extent of tasks the upper-class are unable to do themselves, small tasks like pouring tea or lighting a candle are left for the servants to do. A great example of this is the scene where the villagers and servants hoist the big piano forte up to the second floor of the Bates residence. This is an amusing plot rendition and demonstrates the gift as a grand gesture and overall, an expensive gift granted attention in the conversations at later parties. This scene also shows that it is highly unusual for the lower classes to own such an instrument as it barely fits in their residence. It serves as a commentary both on class and connection because Miss Fairfax is an orphan who cannot afford an instrument let alone a larger residence, but because of her connection or rather secret engagement to Mr. Churchill, she is given wealth. The Bates too have come down in society and they cannot afford such luxuries but because of their connections to the upper-class, they are granted comforts like the pig by the Woodhouses and are in general shown kindness by the upper-class.

Another scene where the division of class is prominent is at the strawberry picking at the Donwell Abbey party. Mrs. Elton comments that they "should be just like gipsies" in that they pick strawberries and are at one with nature.[43] When picking the berries, the servants stay at

[42] Dole, "Austen, Class, and the American Market," 70.
[43] Lawrence, "Emma."

their side and pick up the cushions for the ladies' knees when they move further down the line. As this occurs Mrs. Elton says: "how delightful to gather for oneself, the only way of really enjoying them don't you think?".[44] The irony of the statement is of course that they indeed help when doing the smallest task. The upper-class people *do* go to Box Hill, but they get help getting there and back, and to get more comfortable. They *do* pick strawberries, but they get cushions to shield their dainty knees so that it is not as much of a nuisance, and they get other people's help doing this. They do the task itself but get help doing everything surrounding it. It is far from "simple" and "natural", as Mrs. Elton proclaims. They are entirely dependent upon their servants, which is made clear in this particular scene. This is interesting when assessing the film's goal which is showing upper- versus lower-class and their focus on spelling this aspect out, whereas other class aspects are glossed over or excluded.

The British film shows a larger focus on class division by showing the servants and keeping the separation clear from the very beginning of the film but shifts the meaning behind presenting class. Linda V. Troost and Sayre N. Greenfield argue that the British version has a larger focus on the community, asserting that: "It is the Davies film that has the fuller picture of the society that surrounds the heroine, a picture that emphasizes connections within classes as well as the disjunctions between them."[45] By showing servants working and the stark contrast between wealthy and poor, they constantly show the class divisions. The British telefilm does exemplify the difference in society and its divisions but uses it to comment upon class in a manner that shifts the focus from the class society Austen writes about, to a social commentary interpreted by modern filmmakers. On a similar note, Dole points out that the issue of representing different classes on screen is only giving "social context", and that "this *Emma* takes a more neutral approach, making us aware of the presence of the lower classes through full or long shots but never allowing them subjectivity."[46] They are given great focus by the camera lens but not in the script, which ends up being a lacklustre attempt at social commentary on the unjust class divide. The critics then point out that the interpreted class representation within the film show an altered one to the novel and when examined further brings problem without solutions. Lawrence-Davies presents a greater class focus, but it is not critiqued or further investigated, merely stated. The construction of class in this version shows it as a means of modern critique of poverty and privilege.

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[44] Lawrence, "Emma."
[45] Troost and Greenfield, "Filming Highbury: Reducing the Community in *Emma* to the Screen," 3.
[46] Dole, "Austen, Class, and the American Market," 71.

Where the class representation in the British film fall short is their inability to flesh out the broad spectrum of ranks within the classes and fail to use Emma as a guide to place everyone in their respective classes as the novel masterfully does. By adding in the servants David Monaghan "suggests that Davies and Lawrence intend to bring something of a post-Marxian perspective to their presentation of early nineteenth-century English society."[47] In other words, the adaptation views class from a modern perspective, with class critique matching a present critical perception. Therefore, the social commentary in the film shapes our understanding of class as it is interpreted in the present time with modern views on class and does not illustrate the class system as it was in Austen's time. When changing the perspective on class, the adaptation can be perceived as a retelling from a modern point of view. This was seen in the 1999 *Mansfield Park*, which altered the story to fit a post-colonial angle, one from which Austen did not write.[48] In that sense, I would add that the Lawrence-Davies adaptation chooses the same approach in some sense, with their critical assessment of poverty and class. Whilst they translate the story within the heritage intention, they tend to relay class aspects that modern viewers are familiar with, through an intention of bringing the story to life within Austen's framework and their interpretation of the novel.

The Classless Ending of Emma

The ending of the film proves especially problematic to the theme of class, as it lacks the novel's dismissal of Harriet and establishment of class boundaries, rather favouring harmony in an invented Harvest scene. After the proposal scene, the lovely music cuts away when Emma remembers "oh Lord, Harriet".[49] Nevertheless, the issue is resolved not a minute later when Harriet meets Emma and tells her the news of Mr. Martin and Harriet's engagement. Mr. Martin had come to the school on encouragement from Mr. Knightley, seeing how Robert Martin still had the same feelings towards Harriet. The film manages the issue in quite an unproblematic and swift manner by fixing the problem off-screen and sharing the solution right after it is presented. The engagement of Harriet is also made without the reader being present in the scene but done in a more natural way without rushing the story. Every problem in Emma's life seems to fall away once she is engaged, she does not have to consider Harriet's feelings for Mr. Knightley or deal with her father's constant dissatisfaction with

[47] David Monaghan, "*Emma* and the art of adaptation," in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 202.
[48] Patricia Rozema, "Mansfield Park," (United Kingdom: Buena Vista International, BBC Films, 1999).
[49] Lawrence, "Emma."

marriage. Emma does not have to display her changed demeanour nor prove to the viewer that she understands her duty within her societal class.

The most problematic change to the plot is an imagined harvest feast where Mr. Knightley gathers all his tenants to talk about the changes in their community because of his move to Hartfield. This gesture shows that higher and lower classes are dependent upon each other but undercuts the class aspect of the novel as a whole. It is only Mrs. Elton who proclaims it an issue when travelling to the party: "Well I declare Knightley invited his tenants, are we to sit down with hobbledehoys".[50] When proclaiming this she seems snobbish to the viewer because she fears class mixing with the farmers, labelling them bad-mannered boys, although this could be an opinion in fact shared by others in the Highbury community, including Emma. Mr. Knightley makes the promise of "stability" and a "continuation" of the community even after the shift in residence to come after the story ends. This speech makes the viewer focus on harmony and unity rather than the harsh reality of the classes and the actual plot of the novel which sees the community staying on their course where everybody knows their place within a class society. However, the film further promotes harmony in the community when Emma and Mr. Martin finally get acquainted. They have a civil conversation where Emma invites the Martins to dine at Hartfield, creating a continual friendship between Emma and Harriet and lacking the reality of their separate lives and futures. The harvest scene encourages the mixing of classes and their harmony as well as their interdependence, which alters the previous class framework the film advocated.

The invention of the Harvest scene alters the ending of the film, in addition to the class boundaries solidified by Austen throughout the novel. Dole reasons that through the final dance the film shows Emma's eagerness to transcend class boundaries and expectations, adding that this shifts the focus and intention from the original ending. Commenting on the Harvest feast, Dole argues that, "[a]lthough the segregated seating at the meal had been in accordance with the class habits of the time, the dance of the three newly engaged couples flouts historical accuracy in favour of an image of class harmony."[51] In other words, this favoured friendliness changes the aim of showing the theme of class, as it inevitably is a struggle they have to overcome to gain a happy ending. By contrast, the novel promotes harmony within the set classes and Emma learns to be kind regardless of class while not letting go of the system altogether. Therefore, one might argue that the class framework that

[50] Lawrence, "Emma."
[51] Dole, "Austen, Class, and the American Market," 72.

the film has tried to set up throughout the story is by the end only upheld by Mrs. Elton, who favours a stricter class separation that matches the class system of the novel's time.

The film creates the final fabricated scene from a minor comment from the last chapter of the novel, which shifts the focus once more from harmony to disruption. The comment refers to Mr. Woodhouse agreeing to the engagement of Emma and Mr. Knightley, on the account of the chicken thief's return to their neighbourhood and needing Mr. Knightley's protection of the chickens. By creating a circular narrative about poachers, it places the bigger class issue to lower class poverty versus high-class splendour, whereas the novel focuses on the nuances of rank and the dismissal of those below in rank or those from the wrong background, like trade. The ending of *Emma* sees everyone finding their way in the society, except for the impoverished who still, like at the start of the film, must steal for a living.

The chicken theft scene emphasises the injustice of class separation, when showing the poachers, the filmmakers exemplify that there is a downside to the immense wealth. Since the chicken thieves are only mentioned in a sentence at the end of the novel, it is given greater screen time than necessary. The inclusion of this scene is to create tension and disruption to the harmonic ending and to show the darker side of society. This scene shows how life goes on though Emma's story and her meddling in other people's life is finished. By starting and finishing with the same theme it shows life and people's struggles without giving an explanation or solution. Nevertheless, this scene becomes more of a time thief to the story than an actual commentary on the wealth and class system of England. When the chicken poachers steal at the end of the film, it signals a contrast from the dancing pairs in harmony to the loud spectacle which disrupts the peace. When bringing chaos back, the harmonic ending which has been set up this far is reverted to the upper versus lower class distinction. The film's ending goes from harmony to sharp class reality to shake the viewer in a way similar to the beginning of the film.

The visual tools of filmmaking have their limits but show great advantages when depicting wealth differences from the very start and end with the chicken thieves. Therefore, the overall summary of class and how its represented in this film is conflicting and ultimately produces a mixed message without stating its importance to the plot. In this adaptation, the class images that stand out are contradictory, as previously discussed: the picnic shows the high splendour of the rich versus the primitive dwellings of the servants, and the harvest scene emphasises harmony by showing the interdependence of the classes and how they should work together. This notion is especially emphasised in the dance at the end of the scene which demonstrates higher and lower classes in unity. This harmony is immediately contrasted by the chicken

poachers and a sense of unease. The British adaptation favours contrast when depicting class as seen through the major scenes where class is apparent, contrasting this is the way the American adaptation shifts the class focus to economic aspects rather than social status.

Class Commentary within the McGrath Adaptation

As previously discussed, an adaptation must resemble its original work whilst creating something new or innovative. The McGrath adaptation does so, but with a romance-plot focus above other themes. According to David Monaghan, the Douglas McGrath adaptation is "the closest to Austen in terms of incident, plot and character. However, it is also the furthest from engaging intelligently with its source text."[52] In short, the plot rendition of the film follows closely with small details in the novel translated on-screen, showing great surface-level fidelity to the source both in plot and style. This version includes small scenes and details other adapters have chosen to cut, for instance, the scene where Emma and Harriet visit the poor. Another inclusion to this adaptation plot is the Coles, a rich trading family who are presented in the film but with a different aim than in the novel. McGrath includes the scene where Emma debates attending the Coles' party. Emma comments that "of course we shall have to decline as they are beneath us" but this comment is swiftly undermined by a segment which shows Emma waiting for their invitation to be included amongst her friends in the party.[53] Therefore, the overall appearance of the scene and rank centred comment is reduced to Emma's need and obsession to fit in. Rather than a social commentary on the Coles as a family of trading background, Emma's critique of lower-ranked families becomes a quirky sequence of waiting for an invitation as the minor scene is presented but with a changed focus from the novel.

By deciding to relay the text as an alternative to reading the novel, the adaptation lacks the clever wit of Austen and the deeper meaning to the scenes they try to unpack. Monaghan asserts that the extensive plot inclusion by McGrath lacks the attention to detail as is "evident in his clumsy and sometimes inadvertently comic handling of the small details of etiquette so important in defining the social milieu of Austen's novel."[54] This is exemplified when the film hints at Mrs. Elton making the sandwiches for the Box Hill picnic, the upper-class ladies pouring tea or Mr. Knightley being too familiar in calling Miss Fairfax, Jane (something only Mrs. Elton does) to name a few. The result is an interpretation made for entertainment and not

[52] Monaghan, "*Emma* and the art of adaptation," 199.
[53] Douglas McGrath, "Emma," (United States: Mirmax Films, Buena Vista International, August 2 1996).
[54] Monaghan, "*Emma* and the art of adaptation," 220.

accuracy, as the serious tone in some scenes are undermined by the relocation to beautiful outdoor locations. Monaghan makes a case for the film's influence by *Clueless*, the loose adaptation from 1995 in that: "the upbeat and colorful style and the perpetual sunshine of the Miramax Emma bring to mind Heckerling's teenage Beverly Hills rather than the genteel English country village of Highbury."[55] The similar visual product and the related attitude of both leading ladies hint at an inspiration when McGrath adapted the period drama. Whether this is the case or not, they both share a lively and vivid interpretation of *Emma.* What the 1996 film skillfully does is tell the story to a wider audience, bringing relevance and attention to Austen's novel through a mainstream film with a star cast.

I maintain that the class theme in the American *Emma* is too vague for an average film audience to notice or distinguish from other prominent themes. The long-disputed topic is often met with negative responses, confirming the American view of "classlessness" in a period drama. However, critic Christine Colón has an opposing view of the film. She argues that the film "remains attentive to class issues despite the simplification of the plot. By using visual clues as well as subtle additions to the text to approximate the ironic voice of the narrator, the film provides similar ambivalences as the novel does, occasionally supporting and occasionally condemning the status quo."[56] Colón claims that though the plot is simplified, it does include a subtle class critique in accordance with Austen's own views. For instance, Colón proposes an interesting new take on the hand-made paper globe made by Emma as a wedding present to the Westons at the beginning of the film and the one presented at the end as a wedding present to Emma and Mr. Knightley. This image from the beginning and end of the film is interpreted by Colón as a parable to Emma's understanding of her community which ultimately maps out her class consciousnesses and her judgements.[57]

> Emma demonstrates her power over her universe as she neatly charts their world on the confines of the globe… it shows the limitations of Emma's vision. We may see these limitations first in the quick move that the globe takes from London to Highbury. As Emma crafts her world, she ignores this large metropolis, focusing instead on the tiny world of Highbury, which she can control. While this jump is logical since Emma could not possibly map out the larger city, it is still important, for it illustrates precisely how small her world is as well as how limited her powers are. Despite

[55] Monaghan, "*Emma* and the art of adaptation," 224.
[56] Christine Colón, "The Social Constructions of Douglas McGrath's *Emma*: Earning a Place on Miss Woodhouse's Globe," *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line* Occasional Papers, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 1, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/social-constructions-douglas-mcgrath-s-i-emma/docview/2309801148/se-2?accountid=8579.
[57] Colón, "The Social Constructions of Douglas McGrath's *Emma*: Earning a Place on Miss Woodhouse's Globe."

> Highbury's proximity to London, Emma's world is remarkably tiny, consisting of only eight people including herself.[58]

This circular composition consists of a handmade globe with pictures that Colón proposes as a symbol for how Emma arranges the importance of the people in her circle and community in general. In Colón's words, the globe shows that "everyone has a particular place in this society, and some individuals are worthy of being noticed by Emma while others are not."[59] By using this globe as a symbol of Highbury, Emma shows the viewer who is included in her inner circle and who is deemed unworthy.

By the end of the film, the viewer is reminded of the class representation with the use of the globe to put a focus once again on the class issue of the story. Nevertheless, this is different the second time around in that Emma has shared the central position of her universe with Mr. Knightley, "In addition, we can see that she is willing to add to her world…Emma's circle has widened, and she grants worth to some regardless of class."[60] What is also noteworthy is that the pictures on the globe are arranged according to class, starting with the Martins and ending with the Westons. Colón concludes the article by claiming that the film can confirm the upholding of class without the direct dismissal of Harriet, through the visual component that reinstates class structure in this new medium. In essence, the globe is a reestablishment of class without ending the friendship of Emma and Harriet, leaving the viewer with the society of Highbury and Emma's widened circle of close acquaintances. However, this image is too vague for an average film audience to notice. Rather, McGrath's *Emma* seems to confirm Dole's notion of how American produced films tend to set up class barriers as a hindrance, for so to break with them at the ending. As class is not presented as thoroughly as in the novel by the narrator and Emma's own comments, the class focus lacks attention and a clear understanding of what it is and how it affects society. It is presented as an afterthought and not given enough time to evolve into the plot unlike in the novel.

This reading ultimately proposes that the American version is class conscious and highlights the theme throughout the film, nevertheless, critic Monaghan suggests an alternative meaning behind the globe, as a tool for signifying the film's aim as a tale of entertainment. The globe's purpose is to "suggest that, for the next two hours, the audience

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[58] Colón, "The Social Constructions of Douglas McGrath's *Emma*: Earning a Place on Miss Woodhouse's Globe," 2.
[59] Colón, "The Social Constructions of Douglas McGrath's *Emma*: Earning a Place on Miss Woodhouse's Globe," 4.
[60] Colón, "The Social Constructions of Douglas McGrath's *Emma*: Earning a Place on Miss Woodhouse's Globe," 5.

should turn away from the problems of the real world and concern itself with what is happening in a tiny make-believe realm…[to] reinforce the message that what the viewer is being offered here is a fairytale rather than a filmed version of Austen's social realism."[61] Considering the aim of the adaptation is to create a colourful rendition of the characters and plot of the novel, it would fit into the reversed Cinderella category. By using the wedding present the film makes a circular narrative to signal its fictive story. Colón analyses the scene as a significant circular narrative that sets and ends the scene of Highbury and its class nuances. While this is an interesting reading of class in the American version, I maintain that the way class is represented and discussed throughout the film is too subtle for an average movie-goer to pick up on, especially one who is not familiar with the novel.

Two Contrasting Stories

As previously discussed, the Lawrence-Davies and McGrath adaptations interpret class differently on screen. They shape the story according to their individual understanding of Austen's novel and its central class representation. They are both retellings which place a different emphasis on class and its fundamental meaning to the story. The American one set up class barriers as an obstacle for Emma to conquer to gain her Mr. Knightley, which eliminates the purpose of the theme altogether. Whereas the British one exemplifies the wealth gap between the higher and lower classes and omits the rank nuances of the story which alters Austen's commentary on the emerging middle-class and the upper-classes unease of change. Both versions also take liberties with the ending of *Emma* and her friendship with Miss Smith which breaks with the hierarchy and its purpose in society. Where class prejudices are not represented as an issue in the British version, the American one makes a point in Emma parting with her class prejudices to gain sympathy.

The inherent difference of the actresses playing Emma also help shape the class narrative. The British version shows Emma as a kind-hearted young woman, only wanting to help those in her community throughout the adaptation. She has good intentions throughout the film, but she is not always acting in everyone's best interest which is something she learns when transgressing. Whereas McGrath's Emma is portrayed in a more whimsical manner, and snobbish, to show off her privileged lifestyle from the very beginning. Because the class aspect is played down in this version, she comes off as rude instead of class prejudiced thus creating a less likeable character. The viewer only favours her after she is educated by Mr.

[61] Monaghan, "*Emma* and the art of adaptation," 223.

Knightley on how to treat those around her, she is made a better person through him and not by her kindness and willingness to shape the lives around her for the better. In the Box Hill scene, Emma's comment to Miss Bates in the Hollywood film registers as a sly, rude comment delivered with a frosty expression, which is aimed to hurt Miss Bates' feelings. In the British version, her remark appears like a joke, delivered with a small laugh at the end which signals her comments as good-humoured without thinking about the hurtful outcome. The two actresses' approach to the character is inherently different and produces two separate class outcomes and character appearances. The British one shows an Emma who does not need to change substantially as she is kind but in need of small corrections to fit into society with set rules and etiquettes. The other adaptation presents an Emma whose situation has made her unlikable and by changing her morals, she is made a worthy leading lady. These two vastly different Emma interpretations are also partly a product of how the script interprets the shift in focus from society to self, which alters the class focus and the character.

Considering the changes made to the plot, both 1996 adaptations are at a loss when adapting class on-screen. Troost and Greenfield argue however that both versions have their merit and reasoning within the novel, taking the plot to two different extremes. The adaptations are both acceptable readings of the novel as they interpret and shape the novel according to their focus. Since the novel is open to such wide interpretations, they are both creating a product that deserves its own separate praise. However, as my analysis of the novel shows, they both lack the full spectrum of class and represent social class differently to the novel. When changing the focus (individual, community, harmony, marriage plot) and the objective of the story, they forget and misrepresent the meaning behind Austen's objective. While the American version lacks the class representation that the British one shows throughout the narrative, both versions have a problematic take on the ending of the novel. The novel makes it clear that "[t]he function of the Highbury community is to provide the setting for the resolution: that is, Emma accepts her position within the community and does not flee from it into marriage."[62] The original ending of the novel is changed when the focus is on the other themes presented in the novel. Emma finds her place in society when marrying Mr. Knightley and following the expected behavioural pattern. The lack of Harriet's dismissal creates a problematic ending and alters the class structure put into place at the beginning of the story. When limiting the scope of analysis to class, both adaptations are at a loss when creating the big picture of Highbury's social class. This is partly because of the lack of a

[62] Troost and Greenfield, "Filming Highbury: Reducing the Community in *Emma* to the Screen," 2.

narrator but also stems from their aim and what they intend to do with the story. With an absence of rank and degree nuances within the society, and an increased focus on the match-making plot they end up with a different tone to that of Austen. The adaptations essentially manage what they set out to do, but they do not convey the novel's nuances of rank. This aspect does not matter as much in the Hollywood style as it is not their aim when adapting the story, while in the heritage style production the lack of rank becomes problematic because the film claims to be true to the novel. What the British adaptations manages to do is accurately adapting the dialogue and some imagery, but the loss of a narrator means the loss of in-depth class discussion and understanding. The narrator allows the reader to follow Emma's education about rank and class, and that is the whole moral of the story.

Overall, the year 1996 saw how different a text could be translated on screen both by separate production countries but also in how to present the story in the film medium. In the following chapter, I demonstrate how *Emma.* and *Clueless* manages to convey class successfully within their category, as it leaves greater room for leeway to express creatively the story whilst informing the viewers of the theme of class as an indicator of the characters' moral growth.

3. Fusion Style Adaptations: where Creativity meets Fidelity

"No film has *yet* been made worthy of Austen."
(Mosier, 251; own italics)

The above statement by John Mosier, concluding his 2003 article "Clues for the clueless", has a different ring in 2022 than it did at the time it was written. In 2020, the *Emma* adaptation directed by Autumn de Wilde was released which brought the story innovatively on-screen in a manner unlike its period drama predecessors. Mosier's full statement is: "The film world still awaits a cinematic recreation of Austen that translates her satiric perceptions of society into cinematic terms a modern audience can respond to, yet without losing the heart of what has made her works endure. No film has yet been made worthy of Austen."[63] In this chapter, I will expand on Mosier's hopes for a recreation worthy of Austen and show why the 2020 adaptation of *Emma* is exactly what Mosier wants: a satiric work that captures the essence of Austen's story with respect to the class dimensions, whilst connecting to a modern audience and bringing about a new appreciation for the novel. For this purpose, I will compare de Wilde's film to the previous critics' favourite *Clueless,* which is widely praised for its translation of class into a context that modern viewers can understand, and for its creative translation of Austen's satire. By comparing and placing the new adaptation with the older critically acclaimed adaptation I show how two different fusion style adaptations translate the class theme of the novel. In addition, to what extent does the American *Clueless* alters Regency class to fit it into the modern story compared to the 2020 version, a joint US and UK period drama attempt.

When comparing how two popular retellings of the story approach the novel's representation of class, one must take into consideration the difference in production aims and styles. Where the 1995 loose adaptation focuses on wealth and status-based class, a modern equivalent of class that translates better for a modern audience, the 2020 version displays the traditional class structure of the novel. As in Austen's text, the class theme is vague and understated at times, at other times quite visible, especially as shown through the most class-conscious characters of the novel. In my view, a successful Austen adaptation is one where creativity meets fidelity to the core message. To date, the only period drama adaptation of *Emma* that succeeds in capturing Austen's tone and a similar class representation is the 2020

[63] John Mosier, "Clues for the clueless," in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 251.

de Wilde version. This creative translation shows the novel's wit whilst bringing out the class aspects that make up the essence of her plot, whereas the loose adaptation *Clueless* captures the class theme within a modern setting and in compliance with a popular cultural understanding of what class is today.

Fusion Style Adaptation

Both 1995 *Clueless* and 2020 *Emma.* remain within the fusion style adaptation category, a category that fuses Hollywood and heritage adaptations into a product that has high entertainment value combined with fidelity to the story. As a result, they retell the story with an understanding of Austen's humour whilst creatively adding to the story's plot and class perspective. The 1995 film *Clueless,* written and directed by Amy Heckerling is a loose adaptation of *Emma*, which takes the structural elements of the story and place them in a modern Beverly Hills setting. As Monaghan puts it, "Heckerling accords a privileged place to *Emma* amongst her many sources by describing Austen's novel as the 'structural tree' for her own attempt at 'comedy of manners'."[64] Though they appear at first glance to be two different stories, *Clueless* is at its core innovatively translated from Austen, exploring Austen's themes in a modern setting with a brilliant result. The film adheres to Troost's fusion style category because it looks at both fidelity to the story's structure whilst finding a creative way of translating the story to appeal to popular culture. Troost argues that infidelity to the novel creates a greater success and a larger interest in Austen than heritage style adaptations have. By not having to sacrifice the pace or the loyalty to Austen some fusion adaptations manage to capture the tone and some themes of her novels better than the Hollywood or Heritage styles can. At the same time, it may fall short in the complexity of the plot or the accuracy of Austen's novel since the main aim is not to recreate the novel scene by scene but to convey a reading that represents the essence of the story.

The 2020 *Emma.* was directed by Autumn de Wilde and the script written by Eleanor Catton. The film title has a period at the end of its title because de Wilde wanted to emphasise that the film is a period drama, a fun little detail that sets it apart from its predecessors.[65] This period drama provides a lively rendition of both the plot and humour of the novel. It is also a fusion style adaptation because it is a product that aims to capture Austen's story while creating new details to add to her plot class depiction. The fusion of heritage and Hollywood

[64] Monaghan, "*Emma* and the art of adaptation," 213-14.
[65] "Emma. director Autumn de Wilde explains the film's unusual punctuation," 2020, accessed 14th February, https://www.radiotimes.com/movies/emma-title-full-stop-period/.

style results in a creative and faithful retelling presented in picturesque surroundings with a period feel. The fusion style is often an integrated product as "adaptation is a work that inherits some features of two or more of its predecessors, not just the original work."[66] This is for instance seen in the 2020 adaptation as it resembles in part the wit of *Clueless.* Troost argues for this category's popularity among viewers because it satisfies both readers and non-readers of the novel. After all, this adaptation ultimately stands on its own as a successful story regardless of its relation to the source text. An aspect of the story which is well presented in the 2020 version is the novel's satiric elements and Austen's wit, which make the retelling class-centred and humorous considering its influence from the two previous categories.

Emma becomes Clueless

Amy Heckerling uses teenage culture and an American equivalent of class to translate Emma from Regency England to fit into 1990s pop culture. The 1995 film is set in modern Beverly Hills and follows the spoiled teenager Cher (this version's Emma) played by Alicia Silverstone, on her journey from being "clueless" about the realities of socio-economic and cultural distinctions to becoming more socially aware and less self-obsessed. Her age is changed from 20 to 16 in this adaptation to better illustrate her cluelessness and make her behaviour fit into the modern narrative, as her life is changing as she matures from teen to young adult. Josh, who is Cher's Mr. Knightley played by Paul Rudd, is changed from an old, wise tutor of Emma's morals to a college undergraduate who is unattainable as a match because of his higher intellectual status. He is also changed from being her brother-in-law to her former stepbrother. As Mel (Cher's father and a ruthless litigator) says: "you divorce wives, not children".[67] The dynamic between Cher and Josh resembles more sibling bickering than the mentor-mentee relation of the novel. Nevertheless, their chemistry and the easy banter between them bring their relationship into a natural progression. The community of Highbury is also represented in the film but as a high school network, to translate the social status of the characters better for a young modern audience.

By changing the film's class hierarchy into the socio-cultural hierarchy of American youth culture, it reflects a more general American, or Western, class understanding, which, as

[66] EG Lapina-Kratasyuk and AF Gromovetskaia, "Digital Adaptation of a Regency Novel in Emma. (2020, Dir. Autumn de Wilde): History, Irony and Palimpset in Contemporary Period Drama," (2021): 123-24, https://publications.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/556737591.pdf.
[67] Amy Heckerling, "Clueless," (United States: Paramount, July 19 1995).

mentioned in Chapter Two, promotes the illusion of a classless society, while beneath is a social hierarchy based on capital. The film shows this element of American society through Cher's opinion of a "normal" life, one filled with her father's large capital and social status. Stark contrasts in wealth and social interests are shown between the different High School student's cliques. *Clueless* has gotten praise for its inclusion of class within the narrative in a creative transformation of how class functions in the story, but at the same time there are consequences for the overall appearance of the theme. Dole argues for the downside of changing the class narrative into a modern understanding, claiming that: "Even though it maintains a class system, *Clueless* asserts an American faith in class mobility nowhere suggested in Jane Austen's book."[68] What she is alluding to is the social mobility exemplified in Cher's ability to make Tai popular and the fact that Cher herself is in danger of losing her popularity by helping her friend raise in the social ranks. This mobility would not happen in the novel, as Emma's position in society is set and the class system is a constant part of the society so much so that she is never threatened by Harriet in the same way that Cher is by Tai. The American class idea is less firm and serves the plot for a purpose, and when that purpose is filled, i.e. the plot climax that shifts Cher's objective and moral compass, the social class barriers are dropped to show that with the right connections, all can be upwardly mobile. Looking past the change in the idea of social mobility, the adaptation does show the wealth gap and social nuances in the novel better than other retellings by bringing the community of Highbury to a high school milieu resembling the social ranks of the novel. What makes this retelling successful, is how class is translated from hierarchy to cliques, a modern equivalent which the American audience can recognise and comprehend.

The loose adaptation of *Emma* has the firm structure and essence of Austen, due to Heckerling's expert translation of both the narrator's voice and the humour in the novel. Marc DiPaolo points out that most scholars view Heckerling's translation of the novel as a success and that it is well received by most.[69] I agree but would add that the film is popular amongst critics because of its creative use of the source text, making it a successful adaptation according to the definition provided by Cahir, as it retells the story with innovative new angles. The film provides a persuasive reading of the novel which is easy to follow as well as a new appreciation of the text, showing how well Austen's story can be transferred to a modern-day setting with modern themes. The film uses the basic plot structure of the novel and shows the story and its themes to be still applicable in modern American society. As

[68] Dole, "Austen, Class, and the American Market," 75.
[69] Marc DiPaolo, *Emma Adapted: Jane Austen's Heroine from Book to Film* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 127.

DiPaolo points out, when placing too much emphasis on the period instead of on vital themes one loses the Austenian feel of *Emma* as the story "was not a 'period piece' when it was written."[70] Consequently, DiPaolo suggests, most period adaptations lose Austen's voice in all the splendour of the Regency period. Heckerling's creative retelling is able to show the themes of matchmaking, social class and female friendship without relying on the period details. In changing the setting, *Clueless* is able to translate the maturity process and awareness of others' positions in society from the novel to the film. Although they operate in different time periods, there is something inherently recognisable in both stories. This shift in time period, in other words, shows the relevance of Austen and her ability to write about human behaviour we still recognise today. The way the main character must meet adversity and grow from experience makes the story a timeless tale.

Heckerling demonstrates her adapting skills in her ability to understand and translate Austen's humour, unlike more serious adaptations where Austen's wit is overlooked or neglected. John Mosier states that: "Jokes are an important index of understanding…This fact suggests that one of the basic measures used to evaluate an adaptation, is, quite simply, the extent to which the filmmaker seems to understand the author."[71] Mosier's view is that a successful adaptation is one where the adapter understands the humour of the author and is able to translate it accurately in a new medium. This, he argues, is the case in *Clueless*: "[t]he humor in both film and novel is exactly the same, as it depends on an ironic and aware audience who see the situation much more clearly than does the heroine."[72] The ironic voice is emphasized by the narrator who shares the inner thoughts of Cher but contradicts her at times to create the satirical element of Emma as a character.

The narrator in *Clueless* is an innovative and creative use of cinematic elements to elevate the story from a teenage comedy to a class-conscious representation of Austen's story. Some argue that the voice-over narrator is a cliché that shifts the focus from seeing to hearing, which then moves the focus away from the story told on-screen. However, the technique of voice-over brings a broader understanding of the inner life of the characters which the novel can convey more easily than the visual medium can. This technique tells the story with sufficient information with regard to the plot while still making the dialogue appear natural. Critics disagree over Heckerling's use of Cher's voice-over narration: some view it as a tool for plot development whereas others consider it a problematic element of the story. Moser

[70] DiPaolo, *Emma Adapted: Jane Austen's Heroine from Book to Film*, 127-28.
[71] Mosier, "Clues for the clueless," 229.
[72] Mosier, "Clues for the clueless," 243.

argues that "voice-over narration is the equivalent of a self-conscious first-person narrator in a story...It is hardly appropriate to *Emma*, where the whole point is that the heroine's mind is completely impervious to this sort of self-consciousness."[73] By focusing on why the narration is present Mosier neglects to see what this narrative device provides to the story, as the narrator demonstrates a lack of self-consciousness which further emphasizes Cher's growth at the end when she claims herself clueless about her feelings and opinions. I think Mosier fails to see the effect the narrator has on her inner voice getting to grips with reality. The narrator conveys her thoughts which becomes a satire on her cluelessness, not a source of fixed information on the story. In the film the narration functions similarly to the novel by making class distinctions, giving information to the viewer at the right moment about Cher's actions along with crucial plot information. Though I concede that the novel's narrator is different to the one presented on screen, the narrator gains overall a similar result.

Unlike Moser, the Austen scholar Nora Nachumi takes a positive view of the voice-over addition, arguing that it recreates Austen's narrator to fill the silence that occurs when translating the narrative on screen. She emphasises that "the loss of the ironic third-person narrator requires some form of compensation," and that the way *Clueless* shapes its plot brings a satisfactory resolution to the problem.[74] In Nachumi's view, "the solution achieved by *Clueless* – a solution which foregrounds the incongruity between the film's visual and verbal elements – is the solution that comes closest to replicating Austen's ironic narrator."[75] In her opinion the narrator is a suitable addition to the story which shows Cher's wit as well as her cluelessness. According to Nachumi the importance of the narrator is to show Emma's kind-hearted nature, which would be lost without the narrator's perspective, which is both making fun of her and informing the reader of her good intentions. This is how *Clueless* manages the narration and tone of Austen, showing both wit and remorse through showing and telling. Through analysing the narrator's voice, the adaptations aim to translate Austen's wit unto film as it is the narrator who identifies most of the novel's irony and class distinctions which are scattered throughout the narrative. Among the critics who view the narrator in the 1995 edition as essential when adapting is Deidre Shauna Lynch, who argues that *Clueless* translates the narrative style of Austen in their creative use of voice-over, which

[73] Mosier, "Clues for the clueless," 249.
[74] Nora Nachumi, "'As If!': Translating Austen's Ironic Narrator to Film," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 2001), 130.
[75] Ibid.

can distinguish social positions as well as inform the viewer of Cher's growth throughout the narrative:

> In Heckerling's film, Cher's voice-over narration is a constant; it provides the audience with its entrée into the little world of Bronson Alcott High School and returns throughout the film to continue the running commentary on this world's social rules and social divisions. A considerable portion of the wit of *Clueless* derives, however, from the discrepancy between Cher's verbal representations and the camera's visual representations.[76]

In other words, the use of a narrator brings the narrative closer to both the style and wit of Austen, while strengthening the class perspective, because her story is dependent on a commentary voice to guide its readers/viewers. The discrepancy between monologue and what is shown on screen is present from the very beginning of the story, as Cher claims to have "a way normal life for a teenage girl", cut to Cher going to her enormous closet to pick out her clothes with the help of a digital screen.[77] This instance shows Cher's impression of what is normal in her upper-class lifestyle which we gain through the narrator by commenting with irony about her ignorance. The narrator says one thing and the screen shows another story, which helps to strengthen the film's wit and sarcasm. The narrator does however not distinguish the class ranks of the characters throughout the narrative as the novel does, but because of its adaptation aim of fusing the story with modern elements, what class scenes and elements they end up including show the importance of social class to the story.

Clueless and Class

With *Clueless* Amy Heckerling shows how the themes in Austen's novel are timeless by taking the class divisions Austen presents and placing them in a modern setting with class aspects American viewers can understand. Social class is translated from the historical class hierarchy of Regency England to a modern wealth and status-based notion of class which implies a possibility of social mobility. The film shows popularity and wealth, two concepts that Americans are familiar with that distinguish people from each other, instead of a class hierarchy based on birth and inheritance. This is exemplified in the scene when Cher and Dion show Tai the ropes or the social network of the school; a microcosm of a community and its separate social spheres. The social groupings are subtly illustrated by their interests

[76] Deidre Shauna Lynch, "Screen Versions," in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Emma'*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 200.
[77] Heckerling, "Clueless."

and appearance as they dress and act similarly in the cliques. It is a visual cue to represent the classes of modern American society. The groups include Alana's group who work at the tv-station, the Persian mafia where owning a BMW is essential to fit into the group and the popular boys of the school who are considered the social elite. The popular boys are the only acceptable boys to date since they belong to Cher's social clique which alludes to the social rank that Tai is meant to rise to. The loadies, or drug users, are introduced after Tai befriends Travis and the viewer sees their compatibility. Cher underlines how hanging out with them lowers her social status in the school and convinces her to not start at the wrong end of the social hierarchy and to change her opinion of Travis. The film invites the audience to look at class through the modern lens of popularity, which is a fleeting concept much like some aspects of class. The film brings importance to the topic but shifts the focus away from rank to rather focus on why class is important to keep a structure whilst also keeping in mind the morality of the novel which ultimately shows why meddling in other people's life have consequences, much like what Cher learns when befriending Tai.

Cher and Tai's friendship is based on Cher wanting a project and ends up with Tai mirroring Cher's look and behaviour. Josh, like Mr. Knightley, finds Cher's new project to be unfavourable. Josh expresses his objections to Cher finding a more clueless girl to use as her "Barbie doll" and considers that nothing good can come from their friendship.[78] The mirrored behaviour is arguably an indicator of Cher understanding her bad behaviour, as she is insulted by her friend in an insensitive way which mirrors her own. Likewise, Cher does not approve of Tai's bonding with Travis and wants her to elevate her social standing with an acceptable match, though Tai and Travis are a clear match from the start. Tai unmistakably fits in with the stoner group, with her attitude, interests, and clothing but she is raised in social status by Cher who sees her potential.

Cher's disconnection to what a normal teenage life looks like is ridiculed from the beginning of the film, showing her picture-perfect expensive lifestyle. This is also satirised when Josh asks if she would like to practise parking when they are out driving together, and her response is: "Everywhere you go has valet".[79] The comment shows her ignorance stemming from wealth. She is ignorant of other people's problems as her own take centre stage, and before the climax of the film, she can talk herself out of most problems, making it difficult for her to change as she is used to getting things her way. DiPaolo suggests that Cher's cluelessness is a product of her privileged lifestyle as it can translate to "an

[78] Heckerling, "Clueless."
[79] Heckerling, "Clueless."

insensitivity to white Americans from a lower class than herself, such as Travis Birkenstock (a.k.a. Robert Martin), and to immigrant domestic workers such as Lucy, the Horowitz-family maid (who is ever-so-loosely inspired by Miss Bates)."[80] On multiple occasions Emma judges Travis for his behaviour and lack of status, with the same intention as in the novel. She makes up her opinion of him without getting to know him first. Cher wants to elevate her friend's status and therefore forbids her to be seen with him. A scene that is comparable to the Cole party in the novel, is when Travis invites to a party at his house in the Valley, a rougher part of LA. While Cher is first reluctant to go, she changes her mind when she realises that all her friends are going. Her behaviour at the party even resembles that of the stoners when she is seen doing recreational drugs, but because of her wealth and status in the community, she is never believed to be one of them.

The most class-conscious and status-obsessed character in the film is Elton whose behaviour is matched with the social-climbing vicar of the novel. The character of Elton delivers a similar line to the novel's Mr. Elton when he proposes to Emma. In the novel, he is offended when he realises Emma's intention to matchmake him with Miss Smith, exclaiming: "Every body has their level".[81] In a comparable scene, Elton drives Cher home from a party and tries to kiss her. When she indicates that her motivation is to matchmake her friend and not herself, Elton gets upset and exclaims: "don't you even know who my father is".[82] This statement establishes a parallel to the source text and establishes Elton as a character motivated by status and modern views on class connections. For this comment, he is called a snob by Cher who nonetheless behaves in a similar way when choosing her matches. Lisa Hopkins argues that "Elton's snobbishness draws attention to the film's awareness of the extent to which class position is crucial to the whole conception of *Emma.*"[83] The comment in this scene gives the viewers familiar with Austen's *Emma* a recognisable modernised scene with the same significance to the plot and the theme of class. The notion of being better and above other people is shared by Cher from the very beginning of the film when she exclaims "as if" to someone from her high school who is trying to flirt with her. It is a similar opinion to that of Elton, which shows their similar mindsets from the start of the film, but the plot shows how Cher changes where Elton remains the same. Elton's character is also more

[80] DiPaolo, *Emma Adapted: Jane Austen's Heroine from Book to Film*, 133.
[81] Austen, *Emma: an authoritative text, backgrounds, reviews and criticism*, 94.
[82] Heckerling, "Clueless."
[83] Lisa Hopkins, "*Emma* and the Servants," *Persuasions : The Jane Austen Journal On-Line* Occasional Papers, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 3, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/i-emma-servants/docview/2309794807/se-2?accountid=8579.

elevated than Amber's, and she remains a less class-conscious character than him, which in turn makes the narrative miss important class remarks and an opportunity to elaborate the theme further. After Elton's misunderstanding both he and Amber recede into the background of the story.

As for the pivotal scene on Box Hill, the *Clueless* equivalent is less prominent to the plot and the growth of Cher compared to how it is shown in the novel. DiPaolo creates an interesting link from the original story of Emma to the modernised version, by finding the equivalent of the climax scene of Box Hill in the loose adaptation:

> Cher insults Lucy, the family maid from El Salvador, by mistakenly calling her a Mexican in front of Josh. Cher's *faux pas* demonstrates that Cher's 'cluelessness' might not only constitute a lack of sympathy for members of 'the lower classes,'…but a lack of proper understanding of other countries and cultures, and of the political dynamic between the First and the Third World.[84]

Cher's ignorance makes her insensitive to those around her, not understanding the extent to which her words and actions affect those around her. In her two debate presentations at school, she shows her limited view of the third world and political matters surrounding her. After Miss Bates or rather Lucy, is offended by the comment it takes Josh to point out her wrongdoing for Cher to understand her error and start her growth and understanding. Though this scene has a similar connotation to that of the novel, it is not emphasised as it should have been for the audience to capture the full meaning. Furthermore, there is no scene showing Cher's reconciliation with Lucy. However, this scene leads to Cher failing her driver's test which is this films Box Hill climax, this is where she is faced with a problem she is unable to talk herself out of, which is the starting point to her "soul makeover". Cher involves herself in Miss Geist's disaster relief program and alters her ignorant understanding of those below her in social and economic standing to act as a patron for the society and those in less favourable positions than herself.

The ending of *Clueless* transcends social class boundaries but still upholds the difference in wealth. Similar to the 1996 adaptations of *Emma*, Cher and Tai remain friends and there is harmony within the community. This harmony is first established with the reconciliation of Travis and Cher at the disaster relief donation, where they reach an understanding of each other. Cher sees his motivation and change, as Travis started rehab and gained direction and ambition in skating, which impresses Cher enough to see him as a worthy match for her

[84] DiPaolo, *Emma Adapted: Jane Austen's Heroine from Book to Film*, 134.

friend. Tai and Cher also reconcile and remain friends, though Tai has started wearing her own style of clothes again to signal which social standing she belongs to. Cher has widened her circle of friends as demonstrated in the wedding of Miss Geist and Mr. Hall, where all of Cher's friends are gathered. In *Clueless* the American concept of putting up class barriers, for so to break with them creates a product that alters the meaning behind the theme. This is shown in the end of this adaptation, where different classes are united but still displaying – by means of wardrobe and style – a wealth gap comparable to that between the Martins and the Knightleys. What this film does is show how characters grow in a way that enables them all to align together. This applies not only to the main character but also to Travis and Tai who meet them in the middle.

The film is a product of its time, whilst creating a timeless story with modern references. There are mixed opinions of whether the film is a creation worthy of Austen or whether it simply is a teenage film made for entertainment, but for the most part, the critics agree that the film successfully translates themes into a new format with the use of creative storytelling techniques. For DiPaolo "the film finds fascinating contemporary parallels for Austen's ironic narrative tone…with its wide array of 'high culture' and 'popular culture' references, which seem to date *Clueless* as a product of the 1990s".[85] DiPaolo points out that the way the adaptation includes the distinct difference of what constitutes highbrow culture in a modern setting is an interesting commentary on how society has changed whilst Austen's novel is still a relevant piece of fiction in the changing times. The plot changes made to the characters still make up the story's structure and the essential themes that follow. Heckerling's understanding of Austen's wit, translated into teenage slang, comments on the essence of Austen with a modern twist. To an audience familiar with the story, its crucial themes are presented in an imaginative way which inspires a re-reading and a newfound appreciation of the story. The adaptation shows how modern class depiction can be fused with the historical one which creates a cultural blended product that highlights the theme of class in terms understandable to the present-day audience.

***Emma*. 2020**

The 2020 adaptation, too, despite being packaged as a period drama, makes a case for why a text from 1816 is still relevant today. This adaptation shows the themes of the novel in a way that is accessible to a present-day audience, whether one is familiar with the novel or not.

[85] DiPaolo, *Emma Adapted: Jane Austen's Heroine from Book to Film*, 139.

What makes the film stand out is expertly pointed out by DiPaolo in his concluding chapter of *Emma Adapted* from 2007:

> Therefore, should studio executives ever wish to produce another adaptation of *Emma*, they might easily distinguish their new film from those made before in two obvious ways. First, they might consider basing their film on more radical scholarly interpretations of the text than have been seen in the past. Secondly, they can hire women with extensive knowledge of both Jane Austen and filmmaking techniques to make the movie rather than, once again, assigning a male screenwriter and a male director to the project.[86]

The critics' predictions and wishes for a new *Emma* adaptation are in my opinion fulfilled with the new 2020 version. Made by a female director with a background in photography, this version has distinct visuals and a pace that distinguish it from other attempts at translating the novel to film. Autumn de Wilde's vision for the film is unique in that the grand set designs help tell the story and place the class narrative into focus. de Wilde brings a new perspective on gender, as in scenes which show the male characters dependent on their valets to dress, as well as focusing on male clothing and how it was structured. Fans of period dramas are well versed in corsets but unfamiliar with male dressing rituals. Bringing this element on screen creates a new angle to an old story. The film gives a peek into the layers of clothing from the period and how complicated they were. Not only is the gaze shifted, but also the pace and humour of the story are elevated to new heights in this tangled story of misconceptions and misunderstandings.

The screenwriter Eleanor Catton also does a great job capturing Austen without previous knowledge about her work. In an interview with CLIP, Catton admitted to not having read the novel before being approached to write the script, she was only familiar with the loose adaptation *Clueless.* For this reason, the adaptation's success in capturing Austen's voice can be partly attributed to Heckerling's achievement in previously managing the same. Not only did Catton read and immerse herself in the novel, but she said: "I also read some Jane Austen criticism and Regency History…The wider reading really helped to focus in my mind on what the achievements of the novel were. *Emma* bends perception in the way it shows us things through the central character's flawed point of view."[87] Reading scholarly work helped shape her retelling to match the tone of Austen better than the previous attempt of the story, whilst

[86] DiPaolo, *Emma Adapted: Jane Austen's Heroine from Book to Film*, 146.
[87] Natalie Jones, "Exclusive interview with EMMA screenwriter Eleanor Catton," *CLIP: The livrary and information association* (2020). https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/488578/Exclusive-interview-with-EMMA-screenwriter-Eleanor-Catton.htm.

being aware of the period and criticism of Austen's work. The extensive research by the scriptwriter is distinctly noticeable in the narrative as it brings forth nuances of Austen's work not seen or emphasised before. As exemplified for instance in the Box Hill scene which captures the class nuances and mode of the picnic within the script to be discussed in a later section. Another example of Catton's writing with scholarly influence is how she portrays relationships within the community of Highbury and as a result, the script mirrors for instance Emma and Harriet's friendship and its importance to the plot in a clearer way than previously done whilst framing the community and its class situation and its nuances.

A pitfall in adaptations of Austen is that the focus is too much centred on the fidelity to the period details and as a result, they lack the full picture, this is however not the case with the 2020 version. When period dramas stray away from the text they are adapting, they end up paying too much attention to minor details, and end up "missing the broader picture, the ideas, the ironies, the human essence of the novels."[88] This also recalls John Mosier's opinion that understanding the humour of the author creates a greater understanding and translation of the novel. The 2020 adaptation translates Austen's wit with ease, unlike its predecessors and this is because of the interpretation by the screenwriter and director, as they capture the story in a new way. They find the essence of the story and revive it for a contemporary audience whilst staying true to the meaning of the story. This adaptation interprets Austen's humour differently, it shifts the story closer to a slap-stick comedy by use of visual over-the-top physical comedy. The comic elements are timed in a way that make them flow effortlessly into the story, like Mr. Woodhouse and the draft, a detail used in the novel and emphasised in the film. The film uses this element of Mr. Woodhouse's character to shift the tension in the argument scene between Emma and Mr. Knightley, as they walk from room to room and bicker about Harriet and her future, the tension and heat of the argument are cut when they walk past the living room where Mr. Woodhouse is surrounded by four wind screens as he sits by the fire to avoid the draft. It is this type of comedy that captures the character traits and elevates them to new heights, as is the case of Mr. Woodhouse's hypochondria and Mr. Elton's social-climbing motives. It further helps ridicule Austen's absurd characters and creates a balance between the light-hearted and the more serious themes of the novel.

This version's main focus is on comedic timing – and relationships in different shapes and sizes. de Wilde's interpretation of the novel focuses mostly on the society and wit of Austen, more than the previous period pieces. It overplays elements of ridiculousness from the novel,

[88] Mosier, "Clues for the clueless," 230.

and at times the theme of class as well, with visual jokes and a light-hearted tone throughout, but manages to balance the light-hearted tone whilst retaining a focus on social class. With quick cuts and innovative camera angles to tell the story the balance of light-hearted humour and heartfelt relations is easily fleshed out. The overall stylistic look of the film also helps elevate the mode of the scenes, as the set consists of bright colours that blend nicely with the pastel ones which ultimately match the costumes of the actors and their characters' personalities.

The actress Anya Taylor-Joy who plays Emma explained her take on the character and her relation to the community as her own dollhouse. Emma is a big fish in a small pond who is afraid to leave her small fishpond, Highbury, where she is safe and in control of her surroundings.[89] This interpretation of the main character elevates the retelling from previous attempts as it shows how she is spoiled and insecure, which leads to her crass behaviour and insensitive comments, rather than just being rude because of her situation. Taylor-Joy brings layers to the character previously unexplored in earlier retellings with her interpretation of who Emma is.

Additional to the reigning focus on relationships is the central portrayal of feelings, as they translate the emotions and aftermath of central scenes without the use of a narrator. The actors are shown in different emotional states throughout the narrative. This aspect of the film gives layers to all the characters presented in Highbury society and serves to humanise them and their reactions while playing up the comedic effect of their character types. The hypochondriac Mr. Woodhouse is made fun of but under his hysteric façade is an insecure man afraid of change and loneliness. This adaptation shows that sometimes words are not enough, and through body language, visual cues and emotional reactions de Wilde is able to create a relatable narrative where characters process their humane existence framed in grand Regency surroundings. The film then, works on two levels. For those unfamiliar with the novel, it is a renewed take on how and what a Regency period drama is, with a story which centres around human themes. While for those familiar with the novel it is an in-depth translation and interpretation of the source text, where knowing what the novel says about a situation brings depth and understanding, as seen in the expertly translated Box Hill scene to be further analysed in the next section. To further establish the new *Emma* adaptation as skillfully capturing Austen's wit and class essence, I elaborate on the scenes where social and economic class is represented in the narrative and how ranks are visualised rather than stated.

[89] "Emma - On-set Interview with the Cast & Filmmakers," 2020, accessed 14th March https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwbrG89Uwkk.

Class Scenes in *Emma.* 2020

The attention to detail goes in favour of the film translating the theme of class and the voice of Austen by way of wardrobe, music, scenery, and character building. The film opens with a modified version of the novel's first passage: "Emma Woodhouse, Handsome, Clever and Rich, had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her."[90] This serves to explain and determine who Emma is from the very beginning. The description sets the tone for the rest of the film but is especially underlined in the first few scenes of the film where her privilege is shown as she picks out flowers in the hothouse with the help of a maid and the lighting provided by a footman. By starting the film with the picking of flowers under Emma's distinct direction, the film creates and establishes her character efficiently. If this scene were excluded, the next one where she is seen holding the bouquet to give to Miss Taylor (soon to be Mrs. Weston), would represent her as less entitled and spoiled than she is. When giving the flowers to her former governess, Emma's fear of being lonely is revealed. The director uses three scenes to depict Emma's character as not simply a spoiled young woman, and to show the consequences her social class has for her daily life.

An aspect of the adaptation that is changed drastically from the novel is the narration, as it is translated from telling to showing, thus losing some aspects of class in the translation. With reference to such changes in general, Linda Hutcheon argues that "[i]n the move from telling to showing, a performance adaptation must dramatize: description, narration, and represented thoughts must be transcoded into speech, action, sounds, and visual images. Conflicts and ideological differences between characters must be made visible and audible."[91] In other words, the film must compensate for the easily accessed information and translate it creatively on-screen to reach the same objective as the novel. The film can do so by making minor changes to the way the plot is presented and translating it to fit the new medium without bringing too much information into the dialogue. With the lack of a narrator, this version must compensate for the information by way of actions and soundtrack to signal the character types and class comments made by the narrator in the novel. The adaptation transfers the humour from an ironic narrative voice to visual wit with perfect timing. Hutcheon also makes the point that "[s]oundtracks in movies…enhance and direct audience response to characters and

[90] Autumn de Wilde, "Emma.," (United Kingdom, United States: Focus Features, Universal Pictures, February 14 2020).
[91] Hutcheon, *A Theory Adaptation*, 40.

action…both to underscore and to create emotional reactions."[92] In the film, a major supporting element to understand the characters and sway viewers' understanding of events is the soundtrack. The 2020 soundtrack is very important in developing the different characters and plot points. Audible cues alter the audience's opinions and emotions of a character and situation. "What is most notable for us about Autumn de Wilde's approach is her desire to give each character a distinct music theme. She asked the composers to attribute each character with a specific tone and sound…This underlines not only the aesthetic elaboration of various areas of this film, but also the general desire to balance the story."[93] The music theme for all characters drives our perception of them which connects the characters to the story on a greater level and brings forth a greater understanding of who they are and how the viewer should perceive them. For instance, Emma's soundtrack is light-hearted, soft, and harmonic whereas Augusta's is mysterious, intrusive, and ridiculous. The film uses the music to guide the viewers' understanding of who they are as characters and thereby our opinions of them.

The 2020 adaptation also translates the society of Highbury and elevates minor characters within it to demonstrate their degrees of ranks. As demonstrated in one of the opening scenes at the Weston wedding where the Woodhouses enter the church and precedes to ignore Mr. Coles greeting. It is also illustrated in the church scene when Augusta Elton is introduced, as she is sat in the Woodhouse's church pew. The Coles scoot over to fit Mr. Woodhouse and Emma in their row, but they end up sitting a row behind Augusta thereby getting a worse view of the church service. This scene demonstrates that they cannot sit with certain people below them in rank, as is shown in the deliberate glances from the community and fitting music to accompany the awkward situation. As in the novel, the Coles and the Woodhouses are not within the same rank and this separation is made clear within this scene, for people who are familiar with the novel. Unknowing audiences might interpret the scene differently as the subtleties of their relationship are given layers within Austen's text. With the exception of the comment Mr. Knightley gives Emma whilst entering the Cole party Emma's opinion of people of trading background is not given as clearly as Austen herself writes it. Mr. Knightley remarks "So Emma Woodhouse deigned to accept an invitation from the merchant Mr. Cole", whereupon Emma explains that her reason for coming is Mr. Churchill's short stay in

[92] Hutcheon, *A Theory Adaptation*, 41.
[93] Lapina-Kratasyuk and Gromovetskaia, "Digital Adaptation of a Regency Novel in Emma. (2020, Dir. Autumn de Wilde): History, Irony and Palimpset in Contemporary Period Drama," 130.

Highbury.[94] Other than looks of distain this comment remains the only one in which she speaks ill of the Coles. On the other hand, her opinion of upstarts is made plain through the character of Augusta Elton and her insolent behaviour which evidently does not fit in with the gentry of Highbury.

The class centred character of Mr. Elton is skillfully translated from the novel into film. He is first presented at the wedding ceremony of Mr. and Mrs. Weston, where he pronounces the word innocence – "in-o-sense" – in a way he imagines is upper class, but this is questioned by Mr. Woodhouse, who corrects him silently to Emma. This small comment shows how Mr. Elton does not fit in with the higher class and tries too hard to belong. A scene that particularly shows the excellence of the actor and screenplay is when Mr. Elton proposes to Emma. This scene has a larger class focus than other adaptations of Emma. Emma first misunderstands his sentiments and links them to her friend, but Mr. Elton makes it clear that it is beneath him to marry Harriet when he proclaims, "everybody has their level".[95] The full meaning of this statement is understood as Mr. Elton's plan to climb the social ranks by using Emma as a pawn. Emma refuses him directly and, in his embarrassment, he storms out of the carriage without another word. The statement is further explained by Emma when she breaks the news to Harriet and she asks if he loves Emma, whereas Emma answers: "He sought to aggrandize and enrich himself", a judgement which she delivers in a harsh tone to signal her disdain for the social climber.[96] Other adaptations gloss over Emma's disregard for social climbers and only focus on the emotions of Harriet. *Emma*. 2020 puts emphasis on this important fact before shifting the focus from the class aspect and Emma's outrage at Mr. Elton's behaviour to Harriet's feelings and their friendship. With this detail, we discover Emma's disdain for those below her in rank and how the hierarchy remains more important to her than her matchmaking schemes. The adaptation essentially leaves clues about Emma's class obsession throughout the narrative to guide the viewer through Emma's world.

The Social Cues at Box Hill

The Box Hill scene is quick-witted and done with precision to understand everyone's thoughts by means of sly comments and facial expressions. The scene is realistically done in their way of portraying servants ready to assist, and the participants are grouped according to class. In Austen's words, there was a "principle of separation", with the only one trying to

[94] de Wilde, "Emma.."
[95] de Wilde, "Emma.."
[96] de Wilde, "Emma.."

harmonise the group being Mr. Weston. This depiction of the scene is what we get in the 2020 version, with all its social nuances and attitudes in place. After Emma insults Miss Bates, this is especially clear, as it cuts to Mr. Weston trying to lighten the mood, and others not wanting to stay in the awkward and unpleasant atmosphere. With the help of a script that resembles the novel, de Wilde is able to tell the story expertly through a camera lens with a focus on body language. The music also provides tension in the scene as it builds and stops at the beginning of Emma's misbehaviour. Where the British 1996 version dragged out the reactions of the party, this version naturally shifts the focus and makes Emma understand the consequence of her comment when Mr. Knightley points it out, rather than sensing everyone's dismay at her comment. The reactions and feelings surrounding Emma's comment are not only felt and understood by Miss Bates but also by the viewer who is present through the aftermath of the scene and every picnic participant's reaction. The picnic starts and ends with the separation of the sets and shows how the scriptwriter and director interpret the layered turn of events. Mr. Knightley's reprimand is done with feeling, with a disappointment in her actions. It is when Emma understands his dissatisfaction with her actions that she registers her unjust behaviour. The look she delivers is worth more than a thousand words which brings a natural ending to her crude behaviour of Miss Bates. The scene as a whole contains the nuances in rank as well as the humour in Austen's text, contrasting previous retellings by its accuracy and overall Austenian feel.

The End or Non-end of Emma and Harriet's Friendship

According to Catton and de Wilde, the friendship between Emma and Harriet is an important theme that is lacking in the previous adaptations, as it shapes the narrative and Emma's growth. This adaptation emphasises Emma's loneliness as a consequence of her class, as she is isolated. The parlour girls are her age, but they are beneath her. Emma's idea for her new friend is to elevate her so that she can become a real friend and not one hired to raise her. Emma's loneliness is emphasised especially when Emma and Mr. Knightley fight over Harriet's refusal of Mr. Martin, as Emma proclaims at the end of their argument that she wants Harriet for herself, not to match-make her and lose her as a friend. Her loneliness is later shown in the scene when Emma plays the piano at the dinner at Hartfield, as she sings a song about solitude. Emma sings: "oh who would inhabit (*sigh*) this bleak world alone".[97] The emotion invested in the piano performance offers the viewer an insight into Emma's

[97] de Wilde, "Emma.."

inner struggles brought on by class and her isolation within the higher ranks. This aspect of Emma's character further emphasises her desire or rather need for a companion. In a way, this justifies the happy ending of the film, as she has had struggles throughout her life and is able to find true happiness when she lets people in and lets go of her prejudices against them. Though this reading undermines the class hierarchy at the end of the novel, it does, however, justify the change made to the story with a well-established theme that Austen writes about between the lines in her novel.

Emma's influence on Harriet is visualised in the film by way of wardrobe, or rather the evolution of Harriet's clothing. In one scene, a dress Emma wears is later seen on Harriet to demonstrate Harriet's mirroring of Emma. The mirroring is established within their first meeting, Harriet looks to Emma as the picture of elegance and mirrors her posture and manner according to Emma's social cues. Harriet's wardrobe changes from parlour border to social climber and back to a modest farmer's wife. The film expertly signals Harriet's aim and position in society through the visual indicator of costume. Each character is done similarly, with elaborate costumes that frame their character and bring the plot to life. Essentially the costumes and characters go hand in hand in telling the story and creating the personality of the characters, as well as their social standing. For instance, Miss Fairfax is clothed plainly but elegantly, Mr. Elton's pretentious behaviour matches his broad-shouldered pompous clothing, and Mrs. Elton's elaborate hairstyles and jewellery show her overcompensating for a lack of rank. The attention to these details frames the narrative from beginning to end with a distinct focus on the hierarchy and character types within Highbury.

The ending of *Emma* focuses on harmony whilst it shows the characters staying within their own rank. This film sees Emma herself go and apologise to Mr. Martin, yet the liberty taken with the plot is in favour of the class aspect as it shows Emma being a patron for her community and showing kindness to those who are not as fortunate as herself. That Emma is the one extending an olive branch shows her growth. As Mr. Martin is given a larger focus than in other adaptations his presence in the narrative is more impactful. He is presented with deeper layers shown for instance in his emotional reactions to Emma's meddling. His character is quiet, reserved, and caring, which the viewer understands within the few scenes he is present. In this adaptation, Harriet herself informs Emma about her betrothal to Mr. Martin. When relaying the information she is reserved, seeming to expect rejection by Emma and an end to their relationship. However, Emma responds positively to the news and welcomes them both to Hartfield to dine. As pointed out by Lapina-Kratasyuk and Gromovetskaia, "[s]uch a twist could hardly be imagined in the times of Jane Austen due to a

different societal structure and the conduct that structure imposes. Instead, Emma's actions in the film correspond to the contemporary notion of friendship".[98] The positive reaction is one of the modern interpretations of the plot, one in which would not be plausible in Austen's time. The marriage of Harriet and Mr. Martin is implied both as a way for Emma to gain her happiness, and as an act of kindness as Emma finally looks after her friend's best interests. The film's ending shows how it has a larger emphasis and focus on relationships in all shapes, degrees and sizes. Though the adaptation does not feature the gradual dismissal of Harriet and Emma's friendship, it is implied that they walk their separate ways to two different futures, but this is not emphasised or apparent to viewers unfamiliar with the text. I understand the film as supporting class as a fixed structure that benefits the community, in accordance with my reading of the novel. It does ridicule aspects of class without breaking with the structure by showing Emma and Mr. Knightley being patrons of their community. The film invites the audience to think about the structure from a historical perspective whilst being vague about the ending not unlike Austen herself, as class itself is not ridiculed, but those who are obsessed with adhering to its hierarchy at all costs instead of showing kindness over snobbery.

The 2020 retelling of the story differs from its predecessors by way of giving the story an entertaining superficial layer and a deeper meaning behind it. The film alternates effortlessly between humour and seriousness, as is emphasised in the inclusion of Emma's nosebleed when Mr. Knightley proposes as a visual determiner of her inner turmoil. Readers of the novel will understand on a deeper level her misunderstanding and misinterpretation. On the surface, it is a humorous story with comedic timing, but readers of the novel gain a deeper understanding of what the facial expressions and body language actually mean. Thereby the story is simultaneously telling a story for a wider audience than the two 1996 adaptations as they cater to one or the other whereas the 2020 adaptation keeps both audiences in mind. An additional objective that the 2020 version is able to successfully reproduce is its storytelling centred around Austen's humour which is highlighted by the script and director choices to gain an appreciation for Austen's writing and why it is still relevant today. As mentioned previously this is in part because of the gap the adaptation fills in the adaptation market, being produced by two women who interpret Austen's work by focusing on the relationships and emotions experienced by these three-dimensional characters.

The newest *Emma* adaptation also takes after its 1996 predecessors and creates a circular narrative, with stylistic and integral meaning to the plot. The opening scene sees Emma lying

[98] Lapina-Kratasyuk and Gromovetskaia, "Digital Adaptation of a Regency Novel in Emma. (2020, Dir. Autumn de Wilde): History, Irony and Palimpset in Contemporary Period Drama," 126.

in bed and opens her eyes, to signal the start of the story and the beginning of her vexation. The film ends with Emma closing her eyes at her wedding to Mr. Knightley, which indicates the end of this chapter in her life, especially the loneliness and disorder she has experienced throughout the plot. The film has a specific focus on eyes throughout the narrative, the expressions become a substitute for a narrator's voice and a device for the viewer to understand the full meaning behind the characters' remarks. When framing the story with a focus on eyes they signal where the focal point of the story is to understand what is going on and what the viewer is to expect. It is a skilful use of the visual medium to frame the narrative and place the main focus on Emma and her growth throughout her journey.

The Significance of the Fusion Adaptations

The two adaptations discussed in this chapter are both categorised as fusion style, which I argue is the most successful approach when translating Austen on screen. This is because the fusion style highlights important themes in Austen's story while altering it to fit the medium which creates new interest in the story.

In *Clueless* one can see why Austen is still relevant today with her themes of friendship, education and matchmaking. The structure is also kept, signalling the likeness to the coming-of-age story. However, considering the production country, the class aspect is altered, but in a way that corresponds to conceptions of social class that are widely held today. In the basic structure of *Clueless*, class is still present, showing the importance of the theme to the plot and that removing the class-structure eliminates the purpose of multiple plot points. *Clueless* essentially draws on multicultural America and the modern class society that is America instead of the Regency class from the novel, which creates a relatability to the modern audience to catch the novel's nuances in rank and social order.

Emma. is made by both American and British companies which creates a blended representation of class and a different emphasis on how important class is to the plot. Considering the film's countries of origin, the adaptation does a skilful job in adapting class whilst breaking some boundaries at the end. In *Emma.* the difference of having a female director creates a relationship-based film that focuses on the community and Emma learning how to behave according to her rank. It is a successful adaptation because it sees the potential of the story not yet told by choosing a direction and following it through. The adaptation brings great attention to detail and subtle clues, which become an easter egg for its audience to spot. The film has a feminist perspective, adding layers to the characters from a different gaze and focus.

What makes the films similar is their creative retellings of the story, and that both adaptations "interpret and explore" the text in new ways, which elevate the work of Austen time and time again.[99] The *Clueless* and *Emma*. adaptations choose a direction for the narrative and elevate the story with their reading of the text. Though they seem inherently different, the framework and Austenian feel remain the same. They show how the fusion style category of adaptation can seem vastly different but what connects them is their ability to create something new by recognising the best of both the heritage and Hollywood style. Considering that fusion style adaptations tend to be more successful with critics, it may be argued that this is due to their awareness of two audiences; viewers known or unknown to the story, thereby displaying the structure of the story and an ability to grasp its deeper meaning.

The filmmakers' ability to reimagine Austen's plot is what makes them stand out as two great cinematic retellings of *Emma* in their own right, especially considering how they handled class as a natural part of their narrative to bring layers to the characters and Austen's story. Both female directors adapt the story without undermining the crucial plot elements or blow others out of proportion. The 1996 adaptation from America distils the class aspect to benefit the screen time of the relationship of Emma and Mr. Knightley which alters the story's motive, while the production from the UK emphasises it with an alternate meaning to the plot to bring the theme into a different extreme. On the other hand, these two fusion adaptations show how to balance both fidelity and creativity – choosing a middle ground to tell the narrative. Especially seen in the 2020 adaptation is how to angle the story differently in both class analysis and the humane aspects of the story bringing emotions from the novel to life on screen. The story shows that through all the splendour in Emma's life there is a lonely heart beating, which is why she goes to extremes to fill the void, exemplified by Emma trying to overlook rank and break the class barriers by welcoming Harriet into her circle. This message is what is left out of other retellings and what makes the 2020 version a success. Although some things are left unsaid, for instance, the friendship between Harriet and Emma, the film still stays true to the class narrative presented in the novel, matching the motivation and aim behind it. The film exemplifies how to relay plot details without spelling them out in an unnatural manner but manages to give the Austenian feel by being organic and melodic through and through.

Focusing on the humour in the novel allows the other important aspects of the plot unfold in a natural manner. The two fusion style adaptations succeed in their translation of Austen in

[99] Cahir, *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*, 97.

their own way. The timeless story brings human emphasis and importance to the class narrative and displays its relevance to modern readers and or viewers of the story.

Conclusion

> "Examining the *Emma* adaptations as a group, it becomes fairly clear that they offer diverse and contradictory readings of the novel...they complement one another" (DiPaolo 143)

Austen's *Emma* is class-centred: class is important to the plot; at the same time the social distinctions presented are so nuanced that they are difficult to grasp for modern readers and difficult to translate into film. Scholars have also disagreed about how the novel's treatment of class is to be understood: as critique or affirmation of the existing social order. As I have argued, class is a stagnant ever-present hierarchy in the novel. Teaching characters and readers the importance of behaving in accordance with the social and moral codes appropriate to one's class and rank, the novel ultimately maintains harmony within the fictional society of Highbury. However, the representation of class in the chosen adaptations alters the overall structure and harmony created in the novel by reducing its importance as an overarching theme, especially through the ending of each film. The change in class representation is due to the varying interpretation of the theme and the filmmakers' aim when adapting the story, as well as the lack of a narrator to guide the viewer through Emma's thoughts and opinions on class and nuances of rank.

My objective has been to examine how four different film adaptations have chosen to represent the class theme: which aspects they have given emphasis, and how they understand its relevance to the plot. In doing so, I have given particular attention to certain scenes where the novel's class theme is particularly significant. I have also focused on the different endings, as these are vital to understanding each adaptations final "message" about class. Most adaptations have a larger focus on the matchmaking aspect of the story. Reducing the importance of the class framework and placing the mainstream themes in the forefront, removes the reasoning behind the suitable matches and why they fall into the established ranks. One scene where class shows its significance in most adaptations is the Box Hill picnic which looks similar and has the same effect on the story in all three period adaptations. All four adaptations in question have a scene where the main character speaks out of turn, which leads to her eventual moral growth and acceptance of social class. What the adaptations are lacking, however, is a fuller representation of the minor characters who instigate commentary on class aspects in the novel, as most adaptations place the focus on the main characters rather than the community and its more nuanced positions in relation to each other. As discussed,

such changes are in part a result of the medium and the need to fit a story into a two-hour-timeslot rather than a novel unfolding details in depth. Nevertheless, the cutting of details is easily overlooked when considering the changes made to the ending.

All Regency adaptations of *Emma* contain a circular narrative with varied class involvement and opinions on what they communicate. The endings seen in the UK adaptations keep the viewer's attention on the injustice of the hierarchy rather than the co-dependence that the novel illustrates. The poachers either make the viewers focus on the class differences or shift the focus away from the close-knit society of Highbury. The use of the globe in the American adaptation can be understood either as a way of framing class within the narrative and keep the attention on Emma's opinion of those in her community, or alternatively as keeping up a fairy tale illusion. *Emma*. uses the gaze to signal a focus on the actor's body language as a guide to information and to signal the beginning and end of Emma's vexation by finding her place within the hierarchy. Though *Clueless* does not have a circular composition, it does share a similar fate to that of the 1996 adaptations and some aspects of the 2020 film, as there is harmony in society and within the friend group at the class narrative's expense. What all the adaptations do keep is the friendship between Emma and Harriet, with different intentions to be sure, but all signal a continuation of the mismatched class friendship in favour of showing Emma's growth and acceptance. This shift breaks entirely with the novel's theme and makes the separations kept throughout the narrative meaningless. The interpretation of how Regency society and friendship worked in the adaptations is unlike what we encounter in the novel, as their acquaintance and how to socialise with lower classes was different to that of those within similar rank. The filmmakers understanding of this aspect shifts how the ending is communicated and understood. The final "message" about class then can be summed up with the American 1996 adaptation voicing a Regency nostalgia with a modern twist to create a wide selling mainstream rose-tinted retelling of the novel. The British 1996 adaptation focus on poor vs. rich, a social critique through the camera lens without elaborating upon the theme, showing the harsh reality from the other side of privilege. *Clueless* displays an updated class structure to fit into contemporary America with a focus on economic wealth and social influence to make class understandable to a modern audience without removing its importance altogether. Lastly the 2020 *Emma*. showcases rank nuances through body language, soundtrack, and subtle hints, making the story mainstream with its superficial wit and comedic timing whilst communicating a deeper meaning behind the humour to those already familiar with the story.

Making the theme appear subtle and somewhat up for interpretation, like the novel does, sparks a re-reading and appreciation for Austen's novel.

I understand adaptation with Linda Hutcheon, as deriving from another work while not being secondary in value, because "Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication."[100] As Hutcheon makes clear, a film should not be evaluated in terms of its fidelity to the source text. Consequently, my objective has not been to assess the films' degree of fidelity to the novel's depiction of class, but to examine each adaptation's particular take on this aspect of the novel: what concept of class they operate with, how much emphasis it is given in the film, and what is the film's final statement about the significance of class. Each adaptation translates the novel with a specific aim and interpretation of what Austen's story is to look like. To only focus on the film's fidelity is to remove the filmmaker's own voice and creative choices when adapting, thus limiting the analysis of the final work. Consequently, it is important to utilise adaptation theory for an objective academic analysis of the films. In the translation to a new medium, the aspect that changed drastically from novel to film is the narrator voice. With an absent narrator, the concepts of class the films employ lead to a simpler story and a limited class understanding. The adaptations tend to fill the void left by the narrator with dialogue-heavy narration from the characters themselves to inform the viewer of class-related aspects of the story. This leads to a reduced degree of emphasis on class, but at the same time highlights the few class scenes included, for instance, the focus on servants, the paper globe, and the Box Hill picnic. The novel's final statement about the significance of class is watered down in translation because the way Austen communicates class is not easily translated on screen. Analysed by means of Troost's categories, however, the objectives and creative choices of each adaption become clear.

I have chosen to use Troost's categories because they allow me to study the films on their own terms: in the context of their genre, their country of production, and their intended audience. The categories help achieve an individual interpretation of the class aspect in accordance with their overall adapting goal. I have found by using these categories that the novel's complex world cannot seamlessly be entered into film, as the films only interpret and emphasize parts of the class aspect dependent on which category they belong to. Viewing the films on their own terms helps create an objective understanding of their interpretation of class. As previously examined, adaptations from the US tend to lessen the class aspect and alter its significance to the story, whereas British adaptations have fewer new historical

[100] Hutcheon, *A Theory Adaptation*, 7.

aspects to communicate, leaving the final product closer to the novel and Regency class. UK adaptations also make the theme an obviously rooted element of the story for the audience familiar with the story to comprehend. The anticipated audience alongside the origin country help shape the class narrative.

The Hollywood style shapes a story dependent on beautiful visuals and a mainstream appeal to carry the major themes. Likewise, the focus on class becomes less apparent in the 1996 adaptation from America, to favour the surface-level romance plot. Whereas heritage style communicates class with an intention to translate the story with little to no changes made. The British made 1996 adaptation shows an insufficient class tale by refocusing the class gaze from being about the social ranks to the wealth gap. The adaptation interprets class unlike its category whilst adhering to other elements like camera angles, plot progression and displaying the servants which bring some class aspects to the film. Fusion style has proven to be the most effective class retelling of *Emma*, by those who fuse fidelity with creativity. *Clueless* efficiently modernises the class aspects whilst keeping the framework of the story, illustrating that when adapting *Emma,* class is and remains an important part of Emma's motivation and influences the plot outcome. *Emma*. establishes how a Regency drama containing sparkling wit creates a lively story bringing past and present together to show its relevance in this day and age. Through subtle audio and visual cues, the film indicates essential class elements in an efficient approach. Surprisingly, the chosen heritage adaptation proved less efficient in showing the novel's class aspects than the fusion style was able to.

Of the films I have studied, I argue that the 2020 fusion style adaptation has made an interesting contribution to the history of Austen adaptations while also offering new perspectives on the novel as it builds on its predecessors whilst bringing life once more to the story. The film is able to combine the light-hearted themes alongside the more serious ones to be a combination of the two 1996 adaptations whilst bringing the wit shown in *Clueless* to the Regency backdrop of the novel. The film also brings to life the community in a way that is neither forced nor takes the focus away from Emma, by balancing the class details alongside the witty dialogue. It shows how to bring layers to a film, to be enjoyed by knowing and unknowing audiences to shed light on the multiple themes from the novel. The fusion category succeeds in demonstrating why a novel from 1816 can attract modern viewers by displaying an interpretation of the past based on the novel. Within my approach to the adaptations, the significance of the newest adaptation is made apparent because it fills a gap in the long line of adaptations. The film demonstrates a new approach by writing and directing a story that centres around Emma's motivation for matchmaking as a way of filling

her loneliness, and by placing Austen's humour alongside the presentation of class and rank. This interpretation and translation of the text have brought the conversation about Austen, class, and adaptation one step further by adding new layers to how the story is adapted on screen.

Further research might take a far closer look at the 2020 adaptations than I have accomplished in my thesis, utilizing film theory to draw out all the subtle ways in which the film signals class distinctions and descriptions. By analysing every decision made when placing the actors in frame, colour choices, camera angles and a greater understanding of how the soundtrack shapes characters in a class sense as well as their personality one would achieve a more comprehensive analysis. Building on my analysis about class and adaptation, one could also add the mini-series to see what happens when there is in fact a longer running time, and what elements of class are still cut out from the adapted work. Is rank included, and if so, how is it communicated to the viewers? Or is the mini-series limited to aspects that are easier to adapt? Future research can then include a broader spectrum of adaptations of *Emma* as well as making a more in-depth analysis of the ones selected for the purposes of this thesis through the use of for instance film theory. There is in other words significantly more to study within this field of research.

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