

Representing gender in contemporary adaptations of canonical 19th century novels: the case of *Pride & Prejudice*

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Foreword

Deciding on a topic for my Master thesis was not easy. I believe it has taken me close to half a year to finally come up with my exact research question. But what I knew from the beginning is that I wanted to do something with modernised versions of canonical works. This has been something that has interested me for a long time and I was and still am excited that it did become the topic of my Master thesis. Especially since I was able to incorporate the large theme of gender in my research, which is another big interest of mine. Doing this research I was able to combine my two big interests and I am really happy about that and proud of what has come out of it.

Of course, I did not undergo this process all by myself. I have been very fortunate to have Prof. dr. Stijn Reijnders as my supervisor. I do not believe there is another supervisor so dedicated and that usually replies within the hours, remains calm when I am stressing out over still not finalising my exact topic and proposing something completely different every day (or perhaps even closer to that). I want to thank you for your guidance, support, telling me the difference between interesting and relevant, and our great cooperation. I also want to thank Niels van Poecke MA for agreeing to be the second reader on this Master Thesis. Finally, I want to thank those who were of personal support to me during this process, you know who you are.

I would like to end this foreword by wishing you lots of pleasure in reading this thesis.

Floor van Twuijver

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1. Introduction

Pride & Prejudice is seen as one of the most famous books of all time (Walsh, 2013). It was written by Jane Austen in 1813 and tells the romantic story of Elizabeth Bennet and Mister Darcy. In the following centuries the novel has not been forgotten at all: it has been adapted into new media forms, which follow the plot to a certain extent. However, the more recent adaptations tend to use the plot as a basis and implement different settings and storylines, such as modern women in contemporary society. This trend started in the 1990s. Numerous canonical works were adapted into big Hollywood teen movie productions. In these 1990s adaptations the setting had changed so much that one actually had to know the original work in order to know it was in fact an adaptation. The most famous examples are *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) (based on Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*) and *Clueless* (1995) (based on Jane Austen's *Emma*).

The 1990s trend has evolved over the last decades and not just film and television adaptations are made, but with the rise of internet, internet series also emerged, such as YouTube vlogging series in 2012. Numerous classic works have been turned into a fictive vlogging – or video blogging - series on YouTube. One of the first was *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012), based on Austen's *Pride & Prejudice*. This series is set in contemporary United States and uses the media platform of vlogging, where one or more persons speak into the camera/webcam to usually share about one's own life and/or interests. Vlogging is usually used as a reality platform. However, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a staged fictive vlog: it is made with professional actors and the creators of the series have adapted *Pride & Prejudice* into a contemporary setting. This contemporary setting urges for a change within the plot and the way characters deal with certain situations, but in order to be constructed as an adaption, the adaptation has to follow the plot to a certain extent.

Another relevant case on changing the plot is the 2016 Hollywood production, *Pride & Prejudice and Zombies*. The film uses the famous title of *Pride & Prejudice*, but the story evolves more around killing zombies. This film therefore suits the description of a contemporary adaptation in which the scenery and storyline has changed drastically and is therefore a relevant case to research these contemporary adaptations: how has been made use of the *Pride & Prejudice* plot within this production, and how relevant is the original story line?

These last two examples of *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations are film adaptations and do follow many of those conventions, on which I will elaborate in the theoretical framework chapter. But as videogames have risen in popularity during the last decades as well, stories have also been adapted to these videogames. This leads to an interactive approach of adapting: the games follow a story line in which the player develops him or herself within the story as a character. They level up. *Pride & Prejudice* has also been turned into such a game: the player uses the character of Elizabeth Bennet to play the game and evolve within the story. These games attract a new audience to a classical work, such as *Pride & Prejudice*. It also works the other way around: *Pride & Prejudice* fans want to involve as much as possible with their favourite story and this can lead to the start of gaming activities (Bernal-Merino, 2009). The change of scenery and plot, but also the possibility to interact with the characters show a new form within adaptation.

Every contemporary adaptation has its own way of constructing meaning and different signifiers and signs (Barthes, 2006) are used in order to do so. The large differences in use of signs and signifiers within contemporary adaptation is a relevant tool regarding adaptation theory, since it is a new way of looking at how the original is used as a signifier for contemporary adaptations. Adaptation theory has a wide range of focus upon which not all researchers agree, especially when it comes to how the original work signifies the adaptations. Hutcheon (2006) pleads for a broad approach that includes seeing videogames and theme parks as adaptations, whereas Leitch (2008) argues to merely focus on adaptations that position themselves as adaptations. This research combines these two approaches by acknowledging that adaptations can only be discussed as adaptations when they are positioned as such, but can still be adaptations in the broadest sense. Hutcheon's broad approach opens doors for adaptation theory by expanding its horizon. This research focuses upon the way these adaptations profile themselves and make use of the narrative of the original work when they are seen in a much broader sense.

This research highlights gender roles within the researched adaptations to provide a clear focus on the similarities and differences with the original work. Gender as a central theme was chosen for this research since it is an important signifier within *Pride & Prejudice* in order to construct meaning. Gender will be used in this research following the following definition: "The culturally constructed forms of behaviour that roughly correlate with sexual difference" ("Gender", 2002). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Social Sciences* also adds that "traditionally, differences in behaviour and roles have been assumed to "naturally" reflect

sexual difference. Modern social science, however, has become careful to distinguish between gender and sex; it has generally laid the burden of explaining behaviour, practices, roles, and social organization on the former” (“Gender”, 2002). This research will follow the course of modern social science and will distinguish gender from sex.

Strong female characters are symbolic for Jane Austen’s work, including *Pride & Prejudice*. However, the view upon the role of women has changed since *Pride & Prejudice* was first published. How do these contemporary adaptations deal with gender? And does it relate to the original work by Jane Austen? Seeing a characteristic of a novel as an important part of a loose adaptation, such as the ones discussed here, has also not been researched in such detail before. This will be researched by answering the following research question: how are gender roles represented in contemporary adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* and how can the similarities and differences with the original work be explained?

Researching this question will provide an insight in how the way the original work is used to create a narrative within contemporary adaptations and how characteristics are changed in order to suit the adaptation, keeping the fidelity issue in mind. Nineteenth century canonical novels belong to the most popular genre to adapt into films and of these *Pride & Prejudice* is one of the popular novels with eighteen noted adaptive versions (“The Jane Austen Society of North America - Pride and Prejudice Film Adaptations”, 2016). Both the notion of gender and the understanding of the novel have undergone a historical development in both the twentieth as the twenty-first century; and both these developments have played a role in the way adaptive versions have emerged. This is why the connection of gender with *Pride and Prejudice* is used in order to research the use of the original work in adaptations. Besides having undergone a similar development, gender is a topic that plays a societal role and can be used to look at the contemporary zeitgeist, regarding the representation of gender roles. This research provides thus empirical data on *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations, but it also provides a new approach on how gender is used as a key tool to show the relationship towards the original work, including the differences and similarities. By emphasizing gender this way, this research draws a new focus within adaptation theory.

Previous research has shown the importance of canonical adaptations, such as *Pride & Prejudice*, in order to keep the original work relevant (Cartmell, 2003). This has helped to shape the academic debate concerning adaptations and its theory, but this debate is still ongoing. However, an understanding of what the debate has been regarding adaptation theory

and the representation of gender roles is vital and will therefore be used as a framework for doing this research.

2. Constructing gender roles in adaptations

A theoretical framework is needed for answering my research question, since it provides knowledge on the ongoing academic debate concerned with gender representation in contemporary canonical adaptations. This framework focuses on adaptation theory and will work its way to the representation of gender in contemporary adaptations, and especially in *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations. Within this framework, film adaptation theory will be discussed elaborately, but there is also special attention to the theory on the conventions of other media theory; since it is helpful to create an understanding of the media forms that are used in this research, such as YouTube vlogs and videogames. This theoretical framework provides the insight on the theory on gender roles within popular culture, contemporary adaptations and especially within the works of Jane Austen and Jane Austen adaptations, which is vital for answering the research question.

2.1 Film adaptations

The adaptation cases used in this research are all visual adaptations and two out of three are film adaptations to a certain extent. It is therefore important to have an understanding of film adaptation theory. When spoken of film adaptations, we speak of the films of which it is commonly known, they have been adapted from a literary source. Leitch (2004) states that actually every film is an adaptation, since it adapts a script into a film. The film therefore becomes an interpretation of the script. Leitch states that there are multiple fallacies when it comes to contemporary adaptation theory. These fallacies focus on the binary positions between text and film. Leitch argues that the binary approach should be let go of. First, he speaks of these binary positions in terms of the possibilities of the media, whereas Geraghty (2008) mentions that the comparison made, is often more about the storyline. She argues that it is not just the comparison of the adaptation towards the original, but also comparing the different adaptations, especially those using the same medium, towards one another. Leitch actually states that the novel is mostly seen as better than the film, and that this is a pretentious approach. This approach of merely comparing the adaptation towards the original, does however seem to be the most dominant one.

Relating the novel to the film has been done since the emergence of film adaptations, which have been around for almost as long as the existence of film. Christine Geraghty points this out in the introduction of her book *Now a major motion picture: film adaptations of drama and literature* (2008): the approach of contemporary adaption theory leads to the comparing question where the book is seen as something to be loyal to. It cannot be seen as a

mere interpretation anymore. Even though it is stated by multiple researchers that it is time to move on to a less judgmental approach, it appears to be hard not to be prescriptive about the do's and don'ts when it comes to adaptations. Geraghty mentions that even critics who have challenged this approach are prescribing what the pitfalls are and stating that if transposition is prioritised over interpretation, the film can be seen as a failure. This might be the reason why classic adaptations set in a contemporary setting are relatively rare. Geraghty thinks this could be "because they pull away too much from the connections to previous versions and lose the cultural values associated with a classic adaptation" (2008, p. 16). These values are a key determinant in the works of *Pride & Prejudice*, since values such as status, money and marriage are major themes within the novel. Geraghty thus states that these themes are subordinate to what has been used in previous versions and its setting.

The approach of comparison leads to the issue of fidelity. According to Leitch fidelity "is unattainable, undesirable and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense" (2003, 161). The source texts will always be better at being themselves and this is a trivial understanding in order to let go of this hierarchical approach. Leitch argues that the maintaining of this approach is more institutional than theoretical: classics over modern texts. This means that the way that contemporary adaptations are valued is also more institutional: they let go of the historic, original setting, but they can pull from the cultural values. Adaptations cannot be loyal to and the storyline and the setting and the values in order to create something new. This is also what distinguishes adaptations from other films. They have a special value (Geraghty, 2008): the story has proved to work before, but it has been adapted for new contemporary audiences. This promises change and transformations from its predecessors. So, even when repetition marks adaptations, it also allows a more open narrative process, including variations in how certain situations or characters are handled and how the familiar is updated.

Geraghty's approach can be a solution of letting go of this hierarchical approach of fidelity. Hutcheon (2006) also argues for the deconstructing the discourse of fidelity: she states that an adaptation is a reproduction without being a replication. She uses the dictionary definition of 'to adapt' which is 'to alter, adjust and make suitable'. This can be done through a transposition or transcoding, where the context is altered, such as the time frame or the point of view; or the genre or medium form. Adapting something is always a process of creation, according to Hutcheon, which involves interpretation. It can therefore never be an exact copy of the original, or the predecessor. This means that fidelity as a measurement of a successful adaptation is actually rather odd, as it disembarks the creative process.

The adaptation is however still seen as something that is signified by the original, and it is relevant to know to what extent this is done in different adaptations because it provides an insight on how the original work is used. This research follows the semiotic theory of signifying as set up by Barthes (2006). Research on semiotics within adaptations has shown that there seems to be a thin line between intertextuality and adaptation. Stam, as mentioned by Geraghty, comes up with a post-structuralistic approach that argues that texts are always intertextual, and therefore that what is seen as the original as well. “This range of sources makes ascribing cultural value more difficult and challenges the sweeping judgments made about low cultural forms such as Hollywood films” (Geraghty, 2008, p. 2). This is interesting in line with Boose & Burt’s conclusion that the original, in their case Shakespeare, is still an necessary signifier:

“He is that which must be posited and the debt that must be acknowledged before – and in order for – popular culture to declare itself so unindebted to the S-guy [Shakespeare] that it may get on with the production of itself and its own narrative” (1997, p. 19).

However, if the original is seen as the signifier, this means that adaptations can let go of the strict fidelity towards adaptations when it comes to the plot. The original work as signifier does mean that the message of the adaptation has to be in the same line as the original. This is a relevant given for my research: it follows Geraghty’s theory on adaptations in a contemporary setting. It must therefore be researched if the original work functions as the main signifier and in what ways this is done.

Transposition is thus one of the determining factors of adaptations, and Hutcheon argues that adaptations should not merely be seen as literature into film adaptations, but the range of adaptation theory should be broadened. Hutcheon states that computerised gaming is one of the most frequent forms taken in the adaptation process that adapts telling or showing into interactivity. She does note that videogames have a very close relationship to film, rather than to prose. This interactive form creates a “sense of coherence [that] is spatial and is created by the player within a game space that is not just imagined or even just perceived but also actively engaged” (Tong and Tan, 2002 as cited by Hutcheon, 2006, p. 51). Another large difference between film adaptations and game adaptations is that games work towards a goal, and therefore leaves less space for creating meaning, as they leave fewer gaps to be interpreted. Hutcheon’s research thus creates the need to look at new media forms to be

researched in their relationship to adaptations, as the scope is too narrow just to look at film productions.

2.1.1 Vlogs and videogames as adaptations

Since this research broadens this scope of research by looking at vlogs and a videogame, it is relevant to define the differences within adaptation theory. Not much research has been done on game adaptations and it will therefore be treated as a visual, and thus film adaptation, but the differences between those two forms will be highlighted in order to distinguish them.

Vlogs

Jetnikoff (2009) poses vlogs in the blogosphere and sees it as a part of blogging. She states that the blogging phenomenon began as online journals and reports, but has made a shift, and also includes fiction now. Lohnes and McLeod (2009) speak more of the emergence and rise of video blogging. They open their article with the increasing possibilities that the internet, and specifically YouTube, has to offer. They state it has “created a new space in which notions of community, new forms of interpersonal communication, and tactics for subversion” (p.1) are becoming more and more apparent. They note that, in 2009, the vlog is one of the most popular video formats and that it accounts for five percent of all YouTube videos. They describe the format as follows: vlogs are used for expressing everyday thoughts and feelings, and are usually recorded in the performer’s house. Vlogs have an unrehearsed nature which actually emphasises the aesthetic implications and should be put in the context of virtual performances. Both these works still speak of the vlogs in their non-fiction nature. The question that then rises is whether the same opportunities are created for the fictive vlog, as for the vlogs in the way they are defined by Lohnes and McLeod.

The fictive vlog does try to make this unrehearsed feeling their own, by pretending to be non-fiction. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012) is therefore a special case, because the series seem to embrace this unrehearsed feeling, but does not make a secret of the fact that it is a professional production. In this case it is actually difficult to categorise the series as a vlog or as a series in the traditional sense, but then on the internet. But because of the shortness of the episodes, approximately five minutes each, and the webcam setting within the episodes, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a series that makes use of the vlog format. It is an overlap, but the format is different than that of traditional series.

Videogames

When it comes to computer games, the format is definitely a different one than the traditional adaptations. The main question therefore is, if they can provide a narrative and actually tell a story. Juul (2001) has argued in favour of this. He does state that it functions in a different way than films and novels do. Films and novels are more about reconstructing certain thoughts and events on the basis of the presented discourse. These events have happened before, even though they are written in the present tense or acted out now. One cannot interfere as if it is happening now in front of his or her eyes. In a game the player can influence the events and the next step in the game needs to be determinant by the actions of the player. Interactivity and narration cannot happen at the same time according to Juul, as narration is part of the reconstruction process. Frasca (2003) wonders whether it is always a narration, or that games can just be seen as simulation. Do we always need a narrative in order to construct these games? Since the player is experiencing these simulations and events at the moment itself, there cannot be spoken of a narrative, according to Frasca. This might lead to the conclusion that the narrative is the retrospective and evolvement of the game. The game starts at a certain point and evolves through a simulating world. While this evolvement is going on, the narrative is created within the simulation.

Vlogs and videogames can thus be seen as media forms that have only recently entered the adaptation discourse, but do contain the formal elements necessary to construct a narrative and a story. These elements are on the level of the media form, but do not contain any information on the themes discussed in the actual adaptation. It takes more research to provide generalised insights on the use of themes, such as gender roles, within vlogs and videogames

2.2 Gender roles in contemporary canonical nineteenth century novels

Gender is a large theme within *Pride & Prejudice* that helps construct the narrative. Since it signifies the story to such a large extent, it is necessary to have a theoretical framework on how, especially, women are (re)presented within these stories. In order to understand gender roles within contemporary adaptations of 19th century novels, it helps to have a general overview of the theory of gender roles in popular culture and within Jane Austen first and foremost.

2.2.1 Gender roles in popular culture

Understanding gender roles in popular culture starts with defining the term, since it is often confused with femaleness, which is a biological matter and femininity, which is culturally defined (Moi, 1997). Feminism itself is a political movement. According to Moi, femininity is the most problematic term, because it keeps the social constructions as they are now, naturalised by the patriarchal order to make women believe that they were born with these social constructions: the essence of femaleness is femininity. Those characteristics consist of sweetness, modesty, subversiveness and humbleness. These are characteristics that feminists want to overthrow. Terminology remains difficult when it comes to literary critique and this is also said of Austen's writing and the definitions of "feminism" and "womanhood" (Brown, 1972). The themes of love and marriage that Austen discusses are not as simple and romantic, but approached with scepticism (Brown, 1972). Especially in *Pride & Prejudice*, where there is also a focus on women's education and its relation to marriage. Brown states that "Jane Austen's treatment of marriage in her work is best understood in relation to her scepticism about male definitions of female emotions, sexuality, education and modesty" (1972, p. 336). This is perfectly in line with the characteristics of femininity as stated by Moi. It can therefore be said that Austen is a feminist by trying to overthrow or mock these characteristics as natural.

But these characteristics are still seen through the male gaze: the women are the object of the gaze owned by men (Mulvey, 1975). Men are the ones who are active in their gaze and women passive. This functions at two levels: as an erotic objects for characters within the story and for the audience. This distinction between the active male and the passive female is wished for by the patriarchal order, according to Mulvey. The solution is given by Mieke Bal (2008): the woman should own the gaze and should see. Only then she is capable of thinking. The subject is the one capable of acting, the object is not. Therefore the subject is in control and the object is not. The representation of a subject is completely different than the representation of an object, which can function as a social political means. The main character in *Pride & Prejudice* is Elizabeth Bennet, who owns the gaze most of the times throughout the novel. This research will look into how this is done within the adaptations: is the female gender indeed constructed as if owned by the gaze of the men or are the women the ones holding the gaze? One option to do so is denaturalising authority. Bal opts for a denaturalisation of the canon as authority. This canon is again the institution that somehow guards value and regards one value as higher than the other. This has also been mentioned by Geraghty (2008), as discussed earlier. This can lead to a somewhat anarchistic conclusion,

that institutions and their hierarchical approach should be looked at more critically in general in order for denaturalisation of these hierarchies. Not just the institution could be denaturalised, but the authority of the male gaze as well: this can lead to making the women a full-grown subject, that can act. An opportunity lies here for the contemporary adaptations to evolve the heroines into these subjects that are not gazed upon, but gaze themselves.

When it comes to film, another realisation is to recognise that the male gaze is in fact not the most dominant gaze of all. Kaja Silverman (1983) states that the authority of the dominant gaze within a film is ascribed to the male, while it actually belongs to the camera. The camera generates this gaze, which actually makes the male gaze secondary. This primary gaze, belonging to the camera, is the only one producing and therefore providing the male gaze with identity. This brings possibilities for denaturalisation: the moment the audience realises this, it can distance him or herself of the male gaze and criticize this secondary gaze. It seems to be only the case for visual forms, but the external narrator in a book also focalises by creating the visual field of the reader. The differences of these focalisations within the different media will be of importance in order to analyse how gender roles are portrayed in different forms.

2.2.2 Gender roles presented by Jane Austen

Jane Austen used to be thought of to portray her characters in a conservative manner (Evans, 1986), but over the last decades, feminist critiques have described her work as feminist *avant la lettre*. The themes she addresses in her novels are criticizing the patriarchal, heterosexual, marital problems (Evans, 1986): women are given the capacity to have an adult perception and are valued for their roles in family and domestic life; the women are actors and encouraged to act instead of being objectified; the women are doing so independently of men and patriarchal interests. Austen's heroines thus represent "a departure from the conventional" (Lenta, 1981, p. 36). Her rebellion against the patriarchal order is to highlight women's limits on moral autonomy, by presenting a heroine "who determinedly and successfully maintains her freedom in this respect" (Lenta, 1981, p. 36).

Jane Austen thus approaches her heroines whom advocate independence in a certain in order to reinterpret the heroine's 'want' (Tauchert, 2003), and by having them want something for themselves, they can be seen as subjects.

“[Her] narratives work through variations on the resolution of intimate domestic tableaux disordered by the social demands of courtship, as experienced and

understood through the consciousness of a young woman between adolescence and marriage. Austen offers plausible narratives of positive female agency, and this is represented through feminocentric narration concerned with the significance of specifically feminine modes of female reason, and its ability to reform and transform the otherwise degraded social context” (Tauchert, 2003, p. 150).

Tauchert goes on, stating that it is Austen’s narrative technique that is aiming towards spiritual transcendence, and not material repudiation of the sexed body. Austen’s reasoning focuses on the true enlightenment of the heroine and engenderment of social enlightenment. She does this “through the narrative’s reinterpretation of mistaken perceptions, and facilitated by her awakening from perception to the truth of her [the heroine’s] situation” (Tauchert, 2003, p. 154-155). It seems thus clear that Austen portrays her standpoints through her narrative style, in order to mock society and the values attached to them. This ironic style can thus be seen as an important sign of Jane Austen’s feminism and it is therefore interesting if it is used in the adaptations as well.

2.2.3 Gender in contemporary adaptations of canonical 19th century novels

The ironic narrative style is not the only sign of Jane Austen’s feminism, but the way the heroines are portrayed in the contemporary adaptations also provides an insight in how Austen’s ideas of her heroines are perceived nowadays. According to Steenkamp (2009), contemporary women, seen as the main Austen-audience, look for a modernised version of their heroines: fiercely independent, more active and they have to challenge the men more passionately: they are more empowering. This, however, is not the case for the adaptations made for a younger audience, such as *Clueless* (1995). Steenkamp states that the main character’s ‘cluelessness’ is highlighted and she is not portrayed as that strong, emancipated woman. But the observations regarding social protocol, and pride and prejudice, as made by Austen in the nineteenth century, can be ascribed to this main character in *Clueless* and late twentieth century United States. This counters Geraghty (2008) who states that the contemporary feminism debate is pushed back to the past in adaptations of the classics: the heroine and her desire to independence ends up being an anachronistic figure. It will be therefore be important to see how the female (main) characters deal with these issues in the researched adaptations and whether they will be empowering, but indeed anachronistic.

This anachronistic view can lead to claiming that Austen has served as a role model for so-called post-feminist chicklit literature, such as *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996) and *Sex & The City* (1997). In this genre the heroines present themselves as somewhat competent

professionals, but are still primarily obsessed with men, relationships and living happily ever after (Jones, 2010). The corporate environments are often in the media industry, and is seen as a significant feature of those ordinary lives. It is argued that this is the distinguishing aspect between the chick lit and the traditional romance novels. Jones (2010) states that the financial independence is a key signifier of the post-feminist credentials. This is something that can be seen in line with Steenkamp's suggestion of the need for empowering heroines: financial independence is empowering and a measurement of success. As Jones claims that these chicklits are derived from Austen novels, this financial independence can indeed be seen as an empowering signifier in contemporary adaptations. In chicklits the heroines are also empowering through their ordinariness and by accepting that not "having it all" is okay. However, the derivation from Austen(esque) novels and themes, is thus not to be found in social limitation, as these women have careers and therefore status. If one is to check Austen(esque) subjects, such as "courtship, coming of age, and erroneous judgements about male suitors rectified in an actual or imminent union" (Jones, 2010, p. 70), the genre cannot be distinguished as much from traditional romance. The difference, which can be seen as post-feminist, is that the chicklit undermines the gendered assumptions, which are still dominant, about the importance of issues (Jones, 2010). It attacks the false forms of femininity, prescribed by other nineteenth century authors. Austen provides the authority to do so, according to Jones. Women in these chicklits are made into full potential subjects that are fully engaged in society.

But is it completely fair to prescribe this authority to Austen, and if so: what version of Austen, the novel or the film adaptation? It can be defended that Austen lends mere respectability and provides the chick lit with the status of literary fiction instead of popular (Jones, 2010). But this ignores the fact that Austen herself is a popular cultural commodity and her life has been romantically adapted into films and screenplays (Jones, 2010). The fear is thus that Austen's themes are reduced to lifestyle and romantic issues, being ignorant of the themes addressed in Austen novels. Jones argues that it is exactly those lifestyle issues that mark post-feminism: it is having the choice as a woman to leading such a life that can evoke an empowering heroine. However, unfortunately the personal choices in the plots are often more concerned with love and style statements, which, according to Jones, is "little more than a superficial makeover to suit the individualisation which, to dubious political effect, characterises late twentieth and early twenty-first century culture" (2010, p. 73). The true empowering chicklits are thus the ones that are more about ordinary women that use

Austen-esque themes as a signifier, but do take the irony into account of these love and relationship motives.

These chicklits are a form of contemporary adaptations in which the setting has changed to present day. However, contemporary adaptations that are thus (loosely) derived from canonical works do not necessarily have to be framed within a contemporary setting in order to have the same empowering heroines. It appears that empowering women are a key signifier in historical pieces and therefore canonical adaptations too. Jerome De Groot (2009) mentions that the status of women is a key concern within classic adaptation, and this status is often oppressed, controlled and/or fallen, but because of the setting within the past, which is present at all historical drama pieces, a distance is created. This created distance highlights the main differences between status of women back then and now. These oppressed women might therefore seem less empowering than the chicklit heroine. De Groot (2009) also states that many of the female characters in newer Austen adaptations are being kept indoors and protected against society. This can be part of a reconceptualization that happens as the viewer uses the drama to reflect his or her own life (De Groot, 2009). This reconceptualization can be seen as a way of highlighting the status of contemporary women in regards to what it was at the story time. This is why De Groot's conclusions are somewhat surprising in regards to the other notions found. Contemporary audiences demand a pro-active heroine that does not stand by the fact that she is held indoors.

It seems that scholars do not necessarily agree on the role of the heroine in the contemporary adaptations, but most of them see a surprising strong woman that is conscious of her wants and needs, just like the Austen(esque) heroines (Steenkamp 2009; Jones, 2010). This representation of gender seems to be a feminist success, but that the greatest need is still to find that one and only true love can be considered a setback. When a man comes along, the other empowering measurements of success do not seem to be as important. The ironic use of narrative as used by Austen seems to be lacking within these modern adaptations, even though it is seen as one of her recognisable way of writing and portraying the settings of her works. This research will tell if Austen is misunderstood as a signifier in this aspect.

Summarising, it appears that in regards to the storyline, in contemporary canonical adaptations, the original work and therefore its author is still recognisable as a key signifier (Burt & Boose, 1997), but that shifting the plot and changing it drastically is accepted more within academia. The notion of fidelity (Hutcheon, 2006; Geraghty, 2008) is however still very dominant and it seems that this fidelity does not merely function on the level of the plot,

but also when it comes to characteristics of the characters. A change of scenery or plot can be explained and accepted as long as the main characters, and especially the heroine in this case is recognisable from the original. If hold on to the original plot too much, the creative process will be disembarked. The heroine must therefore contain a certain set of characteristics that is in line with an Austen(esque) heroine, preferably the one from an Austen novel that can be recognised and interpreted as such. Characteristics that are often described to femininity are sweetness, modesty, subversiveness and humbleness (Moi, 1997) and Austen's heroines want to move away from those conventions and rebel against the patriarchal norms (Lenta, 1981). This is not merely done through characteristics but also an ironic, sceptical writing style (Brown, 1972).

Another important aspect of an Austen heroine is her activeness. Austen has presented her heroines as active subjects (Evans, 1986), which is progressive in regards to the gaze within stories. This gaze is traditionally ascribed to men (Mulvey, 1975), which then hold the position of actors that objectify the women they are gazing at. This notion has been naturalised by the patriarchal order and needs to be denaturalised in order to complete women's potential of becoming full subjects. Researching how gender roles are represented in contemporary adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* while also looking at the differences and similarities towards the original work, will provide an insight in these notions of gender, including the set of characteristics given and being the beholder or receiver of the gaze, and the way gender roles are indeed constructed.

3. Methods and data

This research, focusing on constructing meaning and representing gender within contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations, will be done through a qualitative textual analysis that is derived from the Narratology approach by Mieke Bal (2009). This chapter explains the choice of these methods and will afterwards describe the data units and the way they will be analysed.

3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research will be the method of choice in this research. In order to answer the question how gender roles are represented in contemporary adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* and the explanation of the similarities and differences with the original work, the focus is clearly not upon the quantity of the appearance of these roles, but on the way it is done. This makes quantitative research unsuitable. Another reason is that textual analysis is a qualitative study by nature, since one is interested in the in-depth meaning of these data and not interested in the quantities. Multiple aspects can be highlighted through qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2007), this can lead to interpretation of central themes and the use of languages to describe certain situations. This in-depth approach of qualitative research draws the research away from generalities.

3.2 Textual analysis

In order to answer my research question, textual analysis will be done of three contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptation cases. Every one of them can be defined as an *Pride & Prejudice* adaptation case, since it has been stated by their producers to be such. This follows the definition of adaptation as given by Leitch (2008): an adaptation has to be aware of and intentionally be deriving the story from another work in order to be described as such. The three chosen adaptations all provide a different form and/or setting. This makes them all relevant for this research, since they all have another approach towards dealing with the original. It will therefore broaden the research and give a more complete answer than if the adaptations would be closer to one another. The adaptations can be seen as contemporary since they do not exceed a time span of four years since they were produced. It must be noted that the original date of launching the *Pride & Prejudice* videogame has not been found. However, since it is a videogame merely downloadable online, it has been considered a fit in contemporary adaptations, as it cannot exceed too much time since being launched.

The textual analysis that will be used in order to research these data, will be done in the Narratology style, as set up by Mieke Bal (Narratology, 2009). Narratology is a

structuralistic approach that contains close readings of texts. Texts are considered in the broadest sense: it does not necessarily have to be a text with words, as it can also be interpreted as a visual text. Narratology focuses on the narrator and levels of narration. One of the most important aspects here is focalisation, which is the presented vision of that moment. Focalisation can be seen in the same line as the gaze: who is watching when and what within the story. To be aware of the act of focalisation, helps to deconstruct the text. Another important factor of Narratology is the fabula itself and the elements: the events, actors, experienced time, location. These aspects all have a certain meaning to construct the fabula and therefore the narrative. By deconstructing the fabula, one is able to close read texts and analyse them in detail in order to interpret the meaning and messages of these texts (Bal, 2009).

The narrative of the story is of great importance to analyse the gender roles, but it should be highlighted that the mise-en-scene within visual representations is important too (Verstraten & Bal, 2006). Mise-en-scene helps to construct meaning, since it is a form of a formal intervention that create certain stylistic elements that construct representations. This includes a range of interventions such as extradiegetic music, but also the use of colour, the focus of the camera, the angle of the camera etcetera. Being aware of these factors and actively using them in order to deconstruct and analyse the contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptation cases, will provide the tools to come up with detailed results which are only derived from the sources itself and therefore leaves less room for subjective interpretation. However, one must be aware that textual analysis remains an interpreting act which therefore can never be fully objective. This can thus be limited by only using the source text to provide the tools for the analysis, and arguments for the interpretation.

3.3 Data sources

Three different sources will be used in order to come to a conclusion of this research: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (a vlogging series), *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (a feature film), and *Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice* (a videogame). These sources have been carefully chosen as they all fit the description of a contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptation as mentioned earlier, but they are all very different in itself. They are a different form of adaptation in regards to medium, but also in regards to themes in the adaptation itself.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (2012) is the vlog series that is chosen to be analysed. It has aired originally on YouTube and the episodes last approximately five minutes each. The series consists out of 100 episodes in total in which the story of Lizzie Bennet is told. Often, vlogs are shot by a webcam or other simple camera in one single space. Stories are therefore mainly told in retrospective, unless something interferes with the recording. This is therefore a different format style-wise than other film adaptations, and therefore relevant to this research of contemporary adaptations.

Not just style-wise do vlogs differ from traditional adaptations, but also in regards to use of narrative. Vlogs are usually a reality blogging platform that are not intended to tell a linear story. However, often a certain theme is used to guide the viewer and create a certain interest, examples are food, sports, beauty and lifestyle. Vlog episodes are centred around these themes, but do not create a certain linear narrative that builds up along with the episodes. It can be assumed that, since *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, is an adaptation of a story with a clear plotline, there will be a form of constructing a narrative. It is interesting to see how this is done while holding on to the vlogging format, and how it differs from the other adaptations.

The vlogging format is not the only reason why this series has been chosen for analysis, but also the change to a contemporary setting and not Victorian Britain. Especially in regards to portraying gender, it is relevant to see how the main characters, which are mainly women have evolved from the original *Pride & Prejudice*.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies

The second case that will be analysed is the 2016 Hollywood production *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. It is a feature length film and is therefore not revolutionary in its media format when it comes to contemporary film adaptations. By adding zombies to the plot, the entire story has shifted into another genre. By making such a large alteration, the original functions as a completely different signifier than when it comes to traditional film adaptations. In regards to this research, it is relevant how *Pride & Prejudice* is used as a signifier in this case.

The story line is set in the same Victorian era as Austen's *Pride & Prejudice*. But since story's heroines have evolved in the contemporary film climate, as discussed in the

second chapter, the role women play in this battle against zombies and within the signifying aspects of *Pride & Prejudice*, is relevant to analyse in detail for answering the research question.

Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice

The third and final data source that is used for the analysis of this research is *Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice* (n.d.), which is a videogame that can be downloaded free of charge from internet, and is meant for computers. Videogames are a modern version of adaptations and are mainly adapted from films due to their visual aspects. This videogame has been adapted from the novel and not a certain film adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*. The visuals can therefore already be seen as an aspect of adaptation, but the most relevant part is the construction of the story, and especially gender, through the interactive approach of videogames. The changes in this adaptations towards the original are thus not necessarily the changes within the plot, but the transition of the media form.

3.4 Data processing

The episodes of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* will be accessed through its YouTube channel. It is important to realise that the internet can change the content any time. Therefore the accessed dates will be carefully noted within an Excel sheet, so that when the content is changed, it can be proven to be different from the accessed content for this research. However, since the series has been launched in 2012 and the content has not been altered since then, it is highly unlikely that there will be any alterations. The other cases are analysed in a hardcopy version on the computer and it therefore not necessary to keep track of these accessed dates, just the launching and downloading dates.

All cases will be analysed in a close reading manner, which means that certain moments in the adaptations will be analysed in detail as they stand out in regards to the research question. These moments will be kept track of in Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word in order to have a detailed administration of the analysis. Since the main focus of this research is the representation of gender roles in contemporary adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and similarities and differences towards to the original novel, the focus of the analysis will be the same. In detail this means looking at the (de)naturalisation of the set of characteristics (Moi, 1997) that are given to the characters which has been adapted from Austen's Elizabeth Bennet, and whether she is an object of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) or an acting female character that tries to overthrow this patriarchal concept (Bal, 2008). Is the

heroine truly empowered that has emerged from feminist notions (Steenkamp, 2009) or will finding romance remain the highest goal (Jones, 2010)? The analysis will also focus on the use of Austen ironic style (Brown, 1972) and how Austen is used as a signifier (Geraghty, 2008). The characters in the adaptations will be compared to the original concept of an Austen heroine that rebels against the patriarchal order (Lenta, 1981). The results of the analysed data will be divided within portrayal of the characteristics of the characters, positioning of the characters towards the opposite sex, and the underlying gender ideology in order to get a clear overview.

4. Analysis

The analysis is divided in three sections. The first section concerns the representations of men and women in the different contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, and *Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice*. After which the second part describes the portrayal of gender relationships within the adaptations: how are men and women represented in their interactions with one another and how is the relationship between men and women portrayed? The third and final section deals with the underlying gender ideology that is portrayed in the discussed adaptations and will look into the development of the characters. This sequence is derived from the article *Commemorating the myth-the myth of commemorating. Popular representations of the Titanic disaster* (Reijnders & Zoonen, 2005), which takes up on an analytic approach that goes more in-depth progressively, also regarding the representation of gender in the Titanic myth, in every paragraph. This analysis will lead to answering the research question: how are gender roles represented in contemporary adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* and how can the similarities and differences with the original work be explained?

4.1 The portrayal of men and women in contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations

There are several main characters in the different *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations. Not all of them play an equally important part in every adaptation, or even make an appearance at all. However, in order to analyse them, their role in the *Pride & Prejudice* story should be introduced. The most important character is Elizabeth, or Lizzie, Bennet. She is the main character in all versions of *Pride & Prejudice* and the researched adaptations. Her older sister Jane is another important character. Her affection for the rich and handsome Mr. Bingley (or Bing Lee in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*) and vice versa are an important aspect of the beginning of all events in the story. Mr. Darcy is Mr. Bingley's best friend who stays with him at Netherfield estate. He is the eventual love of Elizabeth Bennet. Lydia Bennet is Elizabeth's and Jane's younger sister, who is very flirtatious and interested in men. She elopes with Mr. Wickham, which does not precisely happen in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* where he eventually threatens to post a sex video online. Mr. Wickham happens to be Darcy's childhood friend and was supposed to inherit a piece of Darcy's father's fortune, but spends it all rather quickly. This fact is unknown until late in the story. These are the most important characters in all of the versions. But the characters of Charlotte, who is Elizabeth's best friend; Caroline Bingley/Lee, who is Mr. Bingley's/Bing Lee's sister; and the parents of the Bennet sisters. The final two characters discussed here are Mr. (Ricky) Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Mr. Collins is originally the heir of the Bennet estate and tries to marry Elizabeth. He

eventually marries Charlotte. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, he is a childhood acquaintance and he tries to persuade Elizabeth into working for his firm, which is then accepted by Charlotte. His lady, or investor in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, whom he works for is Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who also is Darcy's aunt. These are all the characters that will be analysed, since they all play an important part of representing gender in the contemporary adaptations. This will be done in the following paragraphs.

4.1.1. Elizabeth/Lizzie Bennet

Elizabeth Bennet is the main character in all the researched versions of *Pride & Prejudice* and this character is therefore discussed separately. This part discusses how she is portrayed in all of these versions. In *Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice*, the videogame that is researched, Elizabeth is portrayed as a very curious, nosy girl. This can already be seen in the first scene of the game where she is sent out of the room, so her parents can discuss something private. However, she still wants to know what her parents are talking about and builds a ladder in order to overhear their conversation. Regarding acquiring information, the videogame Elizabeth Bennet character is not shy at all: when she runs into Mr. Darcy at Pemberley Estate, which belongs to Lady Catherine, she asks him about Mr. Bingley's plans to return to Netherfield. After Darcy is gone, she wonders why he actually came to visit. She is looking for a reason behind everything, which can also be seen in the same remark that she makes close after the previous wonderings: "why did he come up to me instead of turning the other way, I wonder." This curiosity mainly concerns Darcy in the videogame.

The videogame Elizabeth appears to be the most curious of all researched Elizabeths. Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is merely curious when she notices something that seems off: she asks George Wickham if he knows Darcy after they have ran into each other, looked angry at one another and as a result Darcy immediately rides away on his horse. This is the exact same event when Lizzie Bennet from *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is acting really curious: In episode 44, she films her vlog immediately after these events have occurred and re-enacts the stare with her sister in the middle of the night. She then gets carried away with all possible reasons they could have for hating each other and expresses her need to find out. Lizzie Bennet is more enjoying the events afterwards and analysing them in order to finding out what really is going on, rather than being curious on the spot, out of curiosity. The latter is a character trait that is assigned more to the videogame Elizabeth Bennet. This curiosity is not a character trait that is defined as feminine by Moi (1997), and can therefore not be ascribed to patriarchal notions. However, it is the way she acts upon this curiosity.

Both these Lizzies are merely curious for their own benefit and do not act on their findings. This makes them owners of the gaze (Mulvey, 1975), as they are noticing and therefore active, but they do remain passive in their actual acting upon these findings and thus do not contribute to turnings in the plot on a narrative level.

The Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Elizabeth is especially curious when she sees or hears something that might lead to a form of zombie danger. This can be seen as a form of pro-activeness, rather than curiosity. Upon walking to the village, all Bennet sisters and Mister Collins here something from the woods. This eventually is a trick set up by a zombie to attain human flesh. Thinking they are encountering danger, all sisters draw their sword in order to fight and kill zombies. A similar event occurs at the Meryton ball: she sees Mister Bingley's butler being bitten by a zombie and while Mister Bingley wants to get away and want all the guests to leave, Elizabeth convinces him there is no time and goes in to fight the zombies. This Elizabeth is the most pro-active of them all, which can be seen in the light of the want for a pro-active woman that fills the need of empowerment (Jones, 2010 Steenkamp, 2009). The film Elizabeth has the most modern gender characteristics in this regard, since she has the empowering active elements, that are lacking in the videogame and vlog series Elizabeths.

The retrospective aspect of the vlog series might not allow this Lizzie to be as pro-active, but even when her filming is interfered by a live event, such as the sudden return of Bing Lee in episode 79, she only realizes in the next episode that she could have confronted him on leaving her sister without any communication. She then confronts Darcy about these actions, avoiding a direct confrontation. The videogame Elizabeth also avoids confrontation by trying to fix it before anyone notices. Rather than large events, this Elizabeth is more concerned with smaller problems, such as repairing the pearl necklace she borrowed from her mother after it has been broken at the Meryton Ball. It seems that she tries to appear better than she is, and therefore keeps up her appearance: to come across as tidied and organised are regarded as good aspects in the videogame, but only the women are concerned with these aspects, which is in line with Moi's notions of naturalised feminine character trades.

The concerns of the Elizabeth in the videogame seem to be of small proportion, but this can be seen as a way of portraying this Elizabeth in the Victorian Era, which is the same era as the novel takes place. Her concerns are more domestic, such as arranging flowers and sewing a dress, and this character is portrayed as a very caring young woman. Representing Elizabeth as such a woman in the videogame is not breaking with these virtues, nor is it

dealing with it in an ironic way, as was Austen's style. The character is then reduced to having caring as an end goal and to settle with these notions, being submissive to a patriarchal feminine notion. This goes hand in hand with the amount of pro-activeness of Elizabeth in the videogame and vlog series, whereas the motivation of the zombie-killing Elizabeth seems to serve a larger goal than sensation or appearances, providing her with a more empowering heroine aspect, rather than the other two that suggest that curiosity is mainly a means for a woman to spend her time by talking to the camera or overhearing conversations. This implies that in order to become a full subject, a woman has to serve a greater goal than just domestic life and thus have professional success, as is implied by Steenkamp (2009) who has stated that financial independence is a key signifier for an empowering heroine. The notion of professional success is associated with it: one must have other goals than romantic ones to be fully active and empowering.

The film Elizabeth thus caters to the need of a more modern heroine, such as described by Steenkamp (2009). This exemplifies in the conversation she has with Caroline at Netherfield. When she is being mocked by the latter, she stands up for herself and leaves everyone with their mouth full. She also refuses to promise Lady Catherine that she will never marry Darcy, even if she has no intention to. She also disobeys her mother's will to marry her cousin, and heir to their family estate, Mister Collins. She states that her virtue is to only marry out of love and affection and not for any other reason. Her personal virtues can therefore be seen as overshadowing the societal virtues. The physical attack on Darcy after his admittance on breaking up Jane and Bingley, is also not what is expected of a young woman in the Victorian age, which is also the placed time of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Politeness is seen as a virtue, but this Elizabeth rather sticks up for herself and her morals, even if she has stop being polite. This break with Victorian virtues is therefore also a break with their gender roles and underlines the notions of a modern heroine.

This is opposite of the videogame Elizabeth Bennet, who seems to regard politeness as a high virtue. This can thus be placed in the Victorian virtues, which makes this a conservative representation of femininity, just like the notions described by Moi (1997). This exemplifies in the following scenarios: upon asked if she can remove Jane's broken umbrella by Caroline, she merely answers 'alright' and does what is asked. She is only allowed to visit her sick sister after done so and even when she has removed the umbrella asks for permission to go. This obedience can be seen throughout the entire game: She arranges flowers for a bouquet upon request by her mother and also makes her a cup of tea, even

though there has been given no special reason why mother cannot do it herself. But also when Lady Catherine's servants have forgotten to set her at the table, she does it herself without asking why they do not do it themselves. After this dinner, Lady Catherine requests Elizabeth to play a song on the piano. She does not know it, but tries anyway. It should be noted that she already tries to cover herself with excuses that she will not excel, not knowing this melody. Her politeness becomes a bit over the top when she states to the game-player that it was polite of Charlotte to let her stay home and not having to join them at Pemberley. However, she is immediately impolite afterwards towards Darcy: when he declares his love for her, she states that she has every reason to think ill of him.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, politeness is traded for sarcasm. Lizzie handles situations with people she dislikes with a lot of sarcasm and irony. This is also how she mocks people with her unflattering re-enactments. When she meets her childhood acquaintance Ricky Collins at a video conference Lizzie and Charlotte are attending in episode 25, she insults him, even though he does not realize it, by being sarcastically polite. Through her sarcasm she speaks her mind freely and she seems unafraid to share her opinions and beliefs. In this light, Lizzie can be seen as empowering, since she is not afraid to let people know what she thinks of them and is not taken back in her position as a woman. This ironic approach can also be seen in line with Austen's sceptical and ironic style in writing. Austen's mocking of society is done through the addressing manner of certain themes and Lizzie does not rather similarly is handling certain situations. This creates a direct line to a signifying aspect of Jane Austen's original work that is transformed within this adaptation. This concept is in line with Geraghty's notions of contemporary adaptations.

Elizabeth's character is thus a curious one, which does not necessarily serves a patriarchal notion, but her lack of acting on her findings, especially in the vlog and videogame, cause for her to remain a passive characters that does not work upon the gaze that she owns. This has the result that she fails to play an active role in the development of the narrative. It does seem that professional success and activities, such as killing zombies, leads to pro-activeness, which then provides the empowering heroine that is wanted by contemporary audiences. If Elizabeth possesses an attitude that breaks with Victorian notions, she appears to cater to modern needs for a heroine and is therefore presented as progressive. If she remains submissive to Victorian virtues, as happens in the videogame, she can never be fully spread the empowering message as intended by Austen. Austen's tone should transform

and be used in another way in order to remain a topical tone. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, this is done through the sarcastic tone of the main character itself.

4.1.2. Mister Darcy/William Darcy

Darcy, being the main male character, is the other character that is analysed separately. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Mister Darcy is the first character to be introduced. He is immediately presented as a main character and as someone with power, since he holds the title of Colonel and finds it important that this title is used: he will probably be important for the narrative development. By presenting him in this way, the film begins patriarchal: the man is introduced first, has power and status and is of great importance to rescue the world.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Darcy is actually, in contrary to the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, objectified. When he expresses his love for his company, this is one of the rare moments where he is focalizing and expressing his own thoughts, rather than being interpreted by Lizzie. This objectification within the series, caters to the resolution for overthrowing the patriarchal order as is proposed by Bal (2008). In the series Darcy does not make an appearance in person until the sixtieth episode, until then his portrayal is presented by Lizzie and her family whom discuss him and re-enact him. She describes him as a stuck-up man who thinks it is really hard to be nice to someone. It can be that he comes across as inaccessible because of his closed character. By remaining discrete on his history with George Wickham, he seems to be having a closed personality. This can also be seen in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: he tolerates Wickham's presence at the ball hosted by his best friend, he does not say anything when they encounter each other in the village, but simply rides away in anger; and he lets George Wickham pitch his ideas to Lady Catherine and only gets mad when Wickham brings up Darcy's late father. In the videogame, it is made clear in written text that Darcy is not liked, but these conclusions are made without any context. Darcy is portrayed directly only a couple of times, just like in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, he is more spoken of than speaking himself. The way he is spoken of does not differ significantly from the other two versions: Darcy is first seen as arrogant and aristocratic, but somehow lovable in the end.

Despite his introduction as a protagonist in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Darcy is also more gazed at than being the gazing character. Being the object of focalisation provides a tool for overthrowing the patriarchal gaze. This is the case in all *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations where Darcy is gazed upon and being interpreted by the female characters. He is focalised as being arrogant and having a closed personality, making him impossible to

understand for these female characters. But it is apparent that the gaze that is directed towards him, is an analysis and interpretation of his actions. It does appear that Darcy is often the one that is acting and helps to progress the narrative of the story. So, even though his objectification is progressive in regards to the concept of denaturalising the male authority of the gaze. The female characters are still side tracked when it comes to developing the narrative. They merely reflect Darcy's actions.

4.1.3. Other female characters

Besides Elizabeth Bennet, there are some other important female characters, which are analysed in this paragraph.

Jane Bennet

Jane Bennet is Elizabeth's older sister. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Jane often does not feel comfortable with Lizzie's sarcasm. She is portrayed as the sweet and kind sister, who does not really like to mock others. This can be detected in her comment in episode 19: "you [Lizzie] always make mom seem unhitched". This is an opposing position than the one Lizzie has. After establishing that Lizzie's irony marks Austen's sceptical tone, it is relevant to look into what this utter politeness of her older sisters marks. It can be interpreted as the conservative order that was mocked by Austen, since Lizzie mocks it all, including her sister's politeness. However, Lizzie does state that Jane's sweetness is practically perfect, in episode 2. Being perfect thus then goes hand in hand with being modest, shy, utterly kind and apologetic, which are all character trades of this Jane Bennet, and the characteristics ascribed to patriarchal femininity (Moi, 1997) and therefore serve a conservative notion. By Lizzie's confirming belief that this is in fact perfection, the irony gets lost and this does not mock those characteristics as naturalised femininity and draws away from the Austen narrative style.

Jane in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* worries less about confrontation and is not as apologetic. She is presented multiple times as the fairest of all daughters, especially by her mother. Others do still see her in this conservative notion of femininity, but she seems more concerned with other stuff, making it seem that she broke internally with these ascribed characteristics, although she is not speaking against them. It must be noted that she is a much smaller character in this film than in the vlogs. She also fights zombies like her other sisters, and is pro-active in drawing her sword, therefore also catering to the need for an empowering heroine. However, at the dance where she first meets Mister Bingley, she needs Elizabeth to motivate her to speak and dance with him. This Jane is not one of many words. She lets

people speak on her behalf: her mother mentions to Mister Collins that Jane is already spoken for and when Jane is still ill, but Elizabeth wants to leave Netherfield, she does not speak up about not being ready to be moved yet. By not speaking up, or even saying what is on her mind, she is more of an object than a subject within this storyline, which is in line with the notion of being oppressed and not empowered.

In the videogame, Jane is an even more reduced character. She is mostly active in losing her items, which is not displayed on-screen and is merely mentioned. She can speak for herself, but does not really have anything to say, except for making loving comments on Mister Bingley. Her opinion is being kept to herself and everything has to be kept respectable. This might make her seem conservative, since it again does not overthrow the patriarchal naturalisation of female characteristics. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' Jane also tends to serve this notion: whilst sleeping at Bing Lee's estate Netherfield, she is sleeping in a different room in order to keep it respectable. She also tries to hide her grief after Bing has left, by acting everything is fine. Work-related she knows she is not earning what she should, but does not confront her boss, as she believes this is the industry and if she mentions it, she gets fired. Jane's politeness stands in her own way to be as pro-active in order to speak up for her true beliefs and therefore becomes an object rather than a subject. By reducing her character, Jane becomes an object of the gaze. However, this objectification also appears in the vlog series, Jane does not progress the narrative, but simply reflects on it. She places herself in the position of an objects and seems to find it a safe spot. Her needs and wants are interpreted by others, both male and female, throughout the entire story. Not fighting against this notion, make Jane a subordinate character.

Lydia Bennet

Lydia, the youngest Bennet sister, is presented as the opposite of Jane's so-called perfection. Especially in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, she is portrayed as needing attention, reckless and even slutty. However, when being called a slut by Lizzie in episode 3, she does stand up for herself. Unlike Jane, Lydia is straightforward: she is not apologetic about her interest in men, and their money. She likes to party and flirt with men and does not feel when something is wrong with that. These interests are frowned upon by her family, especially Lizzie is opinionated. So, although coming out for your "unconventional" interests is not as empowering as might be thought. This provides not the most progressive look upon gender: Lydia's behaviour is frowned upon because it is not ladylike, making this subordinate to Moi's (1997) patriarchal characteristics.

She is also more pro-active in getting things done, while her sisters are more reflective on past events. This does have an impact on the course of the storyline, making her of importance for it. However, these are minor events and the greatest narrative development that includes Lydia, the sex video, is one which she passively stands by. Her pro-activeness is less to not apparent in the other two versions. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Lydia is flirting with men, probably more than her family would like her to, but this is not really discussed or as frowned upon as is done in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. When she has eloped with George Wickham, she has no lines that explain her choice in doing so. She is held captive when rescued and appears to be very weak: she is not able to sit straight on a horse. In the *Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice* videogame, Lydia does not even have her own character. She is merely talked about by Jane and Elizabeth and their mother when she has eloped with Wickham. This is presented more as an event that needs to be taken care of than a character that made a decision. Just like Jane, Lydia becomes an object or even an event in this two versions. She is focalised and not focalising, being an object that is unable to act herself.

It seems that by expanding the duration of the adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* being the longest, there is more space for characteristics for other persona's. The vlog series offers a more in-depth character than the other versions do, which makes ascribing an actual layered personality, in this case flirtatious but straightforward and even pro-active, possible. It seems that the concept of subjectification and being the actor (Mulvey, 1975; Bal, 2008), goes hand in hand with having this layered character.

Charlotte

The appearance of Charlotte, Elizabeth's best friend, also varies within the different adaptations. She hardly appears in the Zombie-film and the videogame, but plays an important part in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. In the latter one, Charlotte is portrayed as the responsible one. This can be seen in her choices career wise: she chooses to leave her graduate school in order to work for a company in order to make her own money. But she is also challenging and confronting Lizzie on what she says on camera and nuancing Lizzie's perspectives. Charlotte can therefore be seen as Lizzie's conscience. She is playing the devil's advocate on several issues Lizzie is dealing with, such as career planning in episode 21. This decreases Lizzie's authority on her beliefs and in regards to Austen's ironic tone (Brown, 1972), it implies that Austen's scepticism was sometimes misplaced. This undermines Austen's position as a signifier in a minor way by placing the mocked events in a bigger light. The importance of those issues thus become subordinate to their personal issues, which in a way is also an

Austen-esque message, as presented by Jones (2010). Seeing Charlotte as Lizzie's conscious makes it that Lizzie is, just like her two sisters, incapable of acting on her own and is in need for someone to help her making these decisions. Given that Charlotte is also a woman, makes this a difficult case in regards to gender. It can be said that women are incapable of making their own decisions and are in need of others and multiple opinions to help them to their decisions.

In the other two versions Charlotte's character, just like Lydia's, is reduced to a means to an end: an excuse for Elizabeth to visit Pemberley Estate and run into Darcy again. Their friendship is not discussed. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Charlotte is actually the opposite of Lizzie by stating at the first dance where they meet Bingley and Darcy that she finds marriage to be the most important goal in life. Upon which Elizabeth reacts by stating that she would never trade a man for her sword. Charlotte thinks she would for the right man, upon which Lizzie answers that the right man would not ask her to. This implies that Charlotte finds finding the right man, or any husband, more important than pursuing one's passion, making her more conservative than the Bennet sisters.

Charlotte is thus presented very differently in all adaptations and it is therefore difficult to analyse her character as a whole. In the vlog series, she serves the concept of signification by Austen, but fails to present an full acting subject, and in the other two versions she serves Moi's patriarchal tendencies on ascribed female characteristics. This makes her a two-fold, ambiguous character when summarised as one.

Caroline

Caroline is Bingley's/Bing Lee's sister. In the videogame she is immediately presented as a vixen. Vixen in itself is a word that is related to the female gender. These characteristics can thusly only be ascribed to women and serve the naturalisation of femaleness (Moi, 1997). By introducing Caroline as such, these characteristics are again only ascribed to a woman, making this a conservative patriarchal notion of what a bad woman is. This exemplifies as follows: when Elizabeth comes to visit her ill sister, the only comment she gets from Caroline is to collect the broken umbrella. The fact that she has walked the five miles through the mud to reach Netherfield in order to see her sister is also frowned upon, and when Elizabeth is having dinner at Lady Catherine, and Caroline is also present, she ruins Elizabeth's dress by spilling wine on it on purpose. The reasons for these actions are not explained in the videogame and one needs the other versions in order to recognize her motives. In the *Zombie-film*, it is clear that Caroline fancies Mister Darcy. Her impolite attitude towards Elizabeth at

Netherfield can also be seen to impress Darcy: when Elizabeth does not want to play cards, she speaks in a language that Elizabeth is unfamiliar with, as mentioned earlier. She then speaks down on the Chinese martial arts in comparison to the Japanese. She mocks Jane and then tries to find eye-contact with Darcy in order for him to join her in these comments or to see if he is impressed by her wit.

Caroline Lee, from *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, is more subtle. She first plays nice to win over Jane and Elizabeth, and even helps Elizabeth out with her videos. Her alternative motives can be detected when she encourages Lizzie to stay home when the rest of them, including Darcy, go wine-tasting. She encourages Lizzie's dislike of Darcy by confirming her observations. When finally her actual feelings are revealed, she actively tries to stop everything by barging in on the video blog in episode 95 and exclaiming that Lizzie has ruined her brother's life and will ruin Darcy's too. Lizzie analyses this plan as a last attempt to not being left alone, which according to Lizzie, is what Caroline is mostly afraid for. Although presented as a vixen and serving the concept of this patriarchal notion, Caroline is acting and attempts to develop the narrative in her favour. This, in its own turn, is then a denaturalisation of that same male authority (Bal, 2008). It is thus presented that a woman cannot possess both those ascribed feminine characters and be a full actor. This causes an ambiguous notion towards the representation of gender.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh

Lady Catherine de Bourgh is Mister Collins' boss, or landlady, and Mister Darcy's aunt. In all versions Lady Catherine is portrayed as a strong woman, mostly by Mister Collins who speaks in awe of her virtues, but her power is recognized by all characters. Especially in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Lady Catherine appears to be a national heroine who has slaughtered the most zombies in combat. She is an imposing woman, having dark hair and dark clothes and wearing an eyepatch. Being a strong woman, even a heroine, thus goes hand in hand with being imposing: one cannot achieve such things without being (a little) intimidating. This is the same ambiguous notion as just touched upon about Caroline's character. One needs to lack those ascribed female characteristics in order to be an acting subject. However, here her acting is merely reflected upon. Her actions remain in the past and even though she is presented as powerful, she contributes little to nothing to the narrative development.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, she is a stuck-up old lady, who has a cripple dog, and she apparently feels that women should have many virtues, otherwise they are unworthy as

women, thusly providing conservative notions and thus a very different presentation than in the film. This is an impression given by Lizzie, after she has had dinner at her place. The actual Lady Catherine is not seen on screen. Lady Catherine in the videogame resembles this Lady Catherine: she looks like an old, cantankerous women, including a mole. The videogame Lady Catherine does not say anything nice to Elizabeth and even challenges her to play an unfamiliar melody, and she insults and upsets Elizabeth at the end of the game. The impoliteness goes a step further in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, where she tries to forbid Elizabeth to marry Darcy. Lady Catherine can thus in all versions be seen as a strong, imposing woman, by whom one can better be in her good graces.

The female characters are thus either passive and being focalised, or when they are active they are in need for professional goals or not possessing traditionally ascribed feminine characteristics. Being an empowering woman does not stand by itself and always needs the help of something or someone extra. And even when empowered, it is not put to practice: female characters often pose themselves on the side line of the narrative development. It is relevant to see how this differs from the male characters in the researched adaptations.

4.1.4. Other male characters

Besides all the female characters, there are a couple of important male characters. These characters will be discussed in this paragraph through looking at their characteristics, representing traditional male virtues or overthrowing them.

Mister Bingley/Bing Lee

Bingley can be seen as the complete opposite of his best friend Darcy. He is portrayed as a kind man who loves Jane for her virtues and cares less of status. He is interested when having a conversation, such as with mother Bennet at the first dance where they meet in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. He does not really have a personal character in the game, but is a tool for the love of Jane and the progression of the story. He is thus an objectified character there. Having a male character that is object of the gaze, is a progressive notion, according to Bal (2008). He therefore has no power to be the acting one and can only be acted upon, which is how women have been mostly portrayed in stories. Opposite to this, is his portrayal in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. He has a true personality there. He is very considerate: he sends Jane flowers to work and offers her and Lizzie to stay at his large mansion when their own house is being renovated. He even chauffeurs Jane to work. He acts to get her attention and is pursuing her, even courting in the traditional sense. This is a more traditional notion on masculine behaviour, but this way of pursuing is also frowned upon as if it does not match his gender.

His kindness is namely being expressed as soft and not masculine: when he offers to buy Jane a romantic piece DVD in order for her to watch while being ill, Lizzie confronts him on his masculinity. His masculinity is also being questioned when it seems that he is not able to make his own decisions and trusts others more than he trust himself in episode 79. This is also apparent when Bing confesses that he only started studying medicine because of his family, while actually he wanted to do other things of which he is only starting to think of it now. His softness is something that is apparently unsuitable for a male. This is in line with the traditional sense of a patriarchal male: even though Bing is the one who should be pursuing and courting the woman, he cannot let go of traditional manly characteristics because that is not admirable in a man. This means that characteristics are thus ascribed to both men and women and are naturalised: Bing's characteristics do not fit manliness and are therefore less accepted. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* points towards this, but does not criticize these ascribed characteristics.

Bingley's soft character is also visible in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: this starts with his looks. He has a constant blush and dreamy eyes. He falls in love with Jane at the first glance of her. Unlike Bing Lee, he is capable of acting out hard decisions: he decides to blow up the bridge as he ordered to do by Darcy at five o'clock, even when Darcy and Elizabeth are not back from the other side, where the zombies live. However, this is acting out a decision that has been made for him. This can also be, because he is outranked by Darcy. Even though, he does not made the decision to blow up the bridge, he does make the decision to act on it even if he could have waited for his friend to come back. The two Bingleys and Bing Lee are thus all presented different from one another: from lacking any characteristics to being soft and indecisive to acting on other orders but firmly even though it breaks his heart. But they are all presented as less masculine than Darcy: he is the one that has power over Bingley/Bing Lee and is in control. He can steer Bingley's life into a certain direction. This firmness is seen as strong and masculine, meaning that it is holding on to the traditional notion of gender and ascribed characteristics to males that are equally naturalised, similarly to the ascribing of female characteristics (Moi, 1997).

George Wickham

Where Bing Lee/Bingley has its heart obviously in the right place, George Wickham is portrayed as the villain. In all versions he turns out to be the lying bad guy. In the game it is merely because of his lies about the inheritance by Darcy's father and his elope with Lydia, which in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is portrayed as putting up a sex video online with Lydia,

using her YouTube fame. He crushes her heart after making her believe he loves her. His cruelty is taken to the next level in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: not only does he tell the same lies, but he tries to conquer England with a zombie-army. This action can be somewhat explained by the given that Wickham turns out to have been an almost-zombie for a while. This makes him less human and can be seen as an excuse.

The difference with Wickham's actions and Caroline's vixen attitude is that Wickham's actions cannot be distracted immediately from his personality: his actions speak, but he is still capable of being charming and kind. Caroline is not capable of these virtues and her actions are therefore linked with her personality. With a man, this can be separated. It provides a sense of difference in capability and perhaps even intelligence. George is more successful in his actions than Caroline is, because he is capable of having the others falling for his charms and therefore his plans. This cruel action is surprising until they are so apparent that they are undeniable. This denaturalises his character: his actions are separate and thus do not fall under a notion of a man, whereas the opposite happens for a comparing female character.

Mister Collins/Ricky Collins

Mister Collins is Elizabeth's cousin and heir to her family estate. Ricky Collins is *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'* adapted version of this and is Lizzie's neighbourhood acquaintance who later is Charlotte's boss when she accepts the job offer Lizzie refused. In both *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, he is a flamboyant figure and in a way conservative. This is actually presented to such an extent where it becomes mockable and not taken seriously. He does not seem integer, but merely focused on achieving status, which in the film and the videogame is seen as getting married and be in the good graces of his employee. It is difficult to interpret this in regard to gender roles: Collins thinks he holds the power by courting women, but in the end it turns out that all women have power over him: both Lizzie and Lady Catherine are able to reject him. Charlotte also has this choice, but chooses not to, making Collins the winner in the pursuit of marriage. However, he is not as popular as the other men because he seems not to know very well how to deal at social events. This can be seen as that a man should be able to know how to impress a woman and if lacking in these skills, one is not as desirable as a man and not as popular. Social skills are thus not seen as merely important for women, but equally for men. However, they are the same means to a different end which can be separated for the two genders, where the one for the male is

active: to impress and for the women passive: to be impressed. This underlines the conservative traditional notions that ascribe the gaze to the men (Mulvey, 1975).

The characteristics of Mister Collins are left out of the videogame and just like some of the other characters, he has the mere function to make the player progress in the game. However, his flamboyant but conservative character is seen in the other versions and are somewhat similar. The ambiguity can be seen within his progressive career views: his main investor is a woman in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and wants to hire both Lizzie and Charlotte, and in all versions he speaks in awe of Lady Catherine. This ambiguity makes him a layered character that might be less cartoonish as to be appearing in the beginning.

The male characters are all objectified through the female gaze, which can be seen as progressive in regards to ideas of gender. It is not merely the men anymore who do the gazing and are focalising, and not merely the women who are gazed at and objectified. However, what is seen upon this gazing is still functioning within the patriarchal order: stereotypical types are maintained; men are supposed to be strong and determinate and able to woo a woman. If they are lacking these characteristics or skills, they are seen as less masculine than their fellow males. Their character traits are thus being naturalised in a patriarchal notion, similar as what is happening to women.

4.2 Relationships between different genders

Where the previous part focuses on the way men and women are portrayed in the different adaptations, this part analyses how the relationship between men and women are portrayed within the adaptations. In detail this means: how are the characters of opposite sex acting towards each other, and how is this visualised? This section will be subdivided in romantic relationships and work relationships. This divide will help seeing whether differences and similarities in the different fields.

4.2.1. Romantic relationships

In all versions, there are two very dominant romances present: between Jane Bennet and Mister Bingley/Bing Lee, between Elizabeth Bennet and Mister Darcy/William Darcy, the triangle between George Wickham and Lydia and Elizabeth Bennet, and the pursuit by Mister Collins of Elizabeth. This paragraph focuses on these romances or the attempts towards romance and will analyse how the ones involved in the relationships are situated towards each other. What must be noted before analysing these two dominant romances, is the lack of homosexual romances. Not one of the characters is openly homosexual and there are no homosexual references in all versions. This maintains the idea that romance and marriage in

particular is something that is saved for a man and a woman with each other, not for those of the same sex. As it remains undiscussed, traditional gender roles in romances are also maintained, holding on to the patriarchal traditional ideas.

Jane Bennet and Mister Bingley/Bing Lee

In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, it is love at first sight for Mister Bingley. He sees Jane at the dance and states towards Darcy that she is the most beautiful creature he has ever seen. He gazes towards her and then goes over to action to dance with her. The motivations for his affection are thus limited to her appearance. Only her looks seem important for his affection and this objectifies Jane (Mulvey, 1975, Bal 2008). Her personality is of no importance. Women are thus valued merely for their looks. This notion is even more present in *Jane Austen: Pride & Prejudice*, the videogame. Bingley tells Darcy that he finds Jane the most beautiful, but nothing else happens and then suddenly, Jane is invited for dinner. There is no soft gaze or dancing shown. Both Janes from the film and from the game, do not demand more. This shows their acceptance of this matter. They do not seem to care that they are only valued for their beauty and this acceptance also helps to maintain these patriarchal ideas of objectification.

In the game, Bingley is thought of to be so kind by Jane when sending for a doctor when she is really ill and afterwards when asking about her health. She mentions his kindness and thoughtfulness after the ball again, but no further details on their romance are given. When he comes back after being absent without any communication and reason for leaving his estate and Jane, no explanation is asked by any of the women or rest of the family, they are all more than happy to welcome him back and accepting his marriage proposal to Jane. The same goes for Jane in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, there is no serious conversation about him leaving and why he has changed his mind. However, a difference with the game is that when Caroline has sent Jane a letter telling her they have left, Jane does not seem heartbroken, but believes that if they are meant to be, they will end up together. She is not mad about his leaving and already forgives him by making this statement.

The women are thus not critical towards Bingley. Even small talk is taken as very polite, but he does not have to excuse himself for hurting others or even explain himself for his actions. This implies that women are still subordinate to men and their will. Men have the power and are put on a pedestal to look up to. Men and women are thus portrayed as unequal. This is especially strange for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* where the women are

portrayed as pro-active and opinionated. It can be interpreted that having those characteristics is not enough to be seen as an equal in a relationship between different sexes. This supports the statements made by Jones (2010) that although women are represented as ambitious, they are still falling for the concept of finding a husband and romance as the most important aspect. This is not in line with Austenesque themes that mock the patriarchal notions (Lenta, 1981) and move away from the conventional.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the relationship between Jane and Bing is a much larger theme than in the other two adaptations. Especially in the beginning of the series, it is Lizzie's main topic. Lizzie and Charlotte are both opinionated on how Jane should act around Bing: Charlotte feels that Jane should actively encourage Bing more otherwise he might lose interest. Lizzie replies that there is "nothing more pathetic than a girl who throws herself at a guy the minute he starts to show the tiniest interest". This happens in episode 11. In the end it seems that Charlotte might have a point, as this was one of Darcy's reasons to question Jane's motives for being with Bing. Charlotte thus urges for more pro-activeness in order to achieve the want. But here again, the men have the power, being in the position to decide whether Jane is suitable or not, and therefore an unequal situation regarding gender is created.

When Bing leaves town and therefore Jane, she does not allow herself to be grieving. She eventually triggers herself during a re-enactment scene in episode 48 and breaks into tears. However, she still blames herself for Bing's sudden move without any communication and does not blame him for his actions. She does move to Los Angeles, knowing he is living there too. But is not that confrontational that she forces him to speak with her. This seems to make this move look like a way of not letting go and by holding on to something that does not exist anymore, rather than fighting for getting an explanation. Jane is the one that is longing and not able to forget, whereas it is focalised that Bing has moved on since he does not get in touch. This makes the female character the victim and weak, and the men to remain strong. This fits completely into the concept of the traditional patriarchal order.

However, when Bing returns to Netherfield and wants a second chance, she does not say yes immediately. She tells him that they can have a fresh start, but first as friends. She is thus not as easily persuaded as the other two Janes. Soon after they reconcile, Jane gets a job opportunity in New York, which is across the country from where the Bennet family is living now. She does not want to let this opportunity go for Bing, feeling she has more to live for than being a trophy wife, which was already mentioned by Lizzie in the second episode. This is one of the moments that is actually progressive: the men follows the woman where she can

pursue her career. She has the power over her own life and actively makes decisions in her own interest. Bing does the same: he wants to be with her and finds that most important. The traditional roles have switched without making this scene appear ironical. Even though the roles are switched, Bing is not portrayed as oppressed or passive, but the fact that he is the more romantic of the two fits in the notion of the feminine characteristics and thus denaturalises these ascribed notions (Bal, 2008; Moi, 1997). However, since he is the one to decide they are both portrayed as completely equal.

Elizabeth/Lizzie Bennet and Mister Darcy/William Darcy

Elizabeth and Darcy seem to have an opposite romance of Jane and Bingley: while the latter one seems to be set in stone and fit from the beginning, Darcy and Elizabeth start off disliking each other. For someone that dislikes someone else, it is noted that Lizzie in the vlog series, talks a lot about Darcy. She talks about him and her dislike towards him from the beginning of the show. This is noted by Caroline, who notices that Lizzie has a good memory for what Darcy says in episode 30. So, even when it is claimed that there is no interest in the other, the man remains the topic of the conversation among women. Especially since it is the main topic of the vlog series, it provides Darcy with a power that he is unaware of. His actions are the most appealing and almost take over Lizzie's life. What does this say about gender roles? Well, it can be interpreted as an unequal divide between the two sexes. The men are the most important aspect of the women's lives. What they do or say is of importance to these women and they need them to have a topic of conversation. Their own lives are not as interesting as those of the men.

Even though Darcy is the main topic, Lizzie mainly spurs out her dislike of him and their mutual disapproval towards each other is made clear when Darcy offends Lizzie after a dance at a wedding by saying to Bing that she is tolerable, but why would he dance with her if no one else does. This is a reasoning based on social standards. Lizzie must have a popular status in order to dance with Darcy, according to Darcy. This says more on his social views than it does on gender. Lizzie does not confront him, but merely retells the story to the internet, where she does not blame herself for his words. None of the Elizabeths confront their Darcy in the different versions. Although all Elizabeths get mad over these words, they do not act upon it, again leaving Darcy with the power. He is to say what he wants and he gets away with it, because he is not confronted with his insults. The zombie-fighting Elizabeth does not overhear the conversation, but listens to it on purpose. She comes closer to overhear them. Darcy's reasoning is based merely on looks and not on personality, which is different than

Lizzie's Darcy, and again objectify Lizzie (Bal, 2008). However, this Elizabeth let his words hurt her, as she runs away crying. Again, the woman is valued for her appearance and not for her intellect or character. Making her an object that is seen as unequal.

Elizabeth from *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, seems to be drawn from the beginning to Darcy, unlike the other Elizabeths: When staying at Netherfield, she watches him practice his sword fighting secretly from her room and thus owns the gaze. She does this again upon her visit to Lady Catherine's estate where Darcy is also present; and another time when she and her family leave Netherfield it is Elizabeth that gazes, of which it is implied by the camera that it is to Darcy. Whereas this Elizabeth seems to be drawn from the beginning to Darcy, Elizabeth from the videogame does not seem concerned with Darcy as a person that much. She merely wonders why he came to visit and why he was at Lydia's wedding. But other than that, she seems busy with other occupations than being concerned with Mister Darcy. However, she does not want him to see the stain Caroline made on her dress on purpose. He is given as the sole reason to cover this up, again providing him with status that remains unmotivated, but he is the only man in the room. She is also thinking of her appearance when being in his presence. So, even though she is not afraid of sharing her low opinion on him, it seems that it is still important what he thinks of her and especially her appearance. This makes Elizabeth also objectifying herself: her looks are more important than her character because that is what Darcy sees. Therefore providing him with power again as she gives him the gaze instead of directing it herself.

Elizabeth does become active when she tells Darcy her opinion of him when he comes clean on his feelings towards her. All versions are quite similar here. Darcy offends Elizabeth during his marriage proposal when he speaks of his feelings: her family is not of the right status and acting ridiculous, but he cannot suppress his feelings. Darcy does not speak of looks or appearance and seems blown away by Elizabeth's personality. This is a shift from previous outings that were merely considering appearances and looks and that were not concerned with personalities. This shift makes the characters more equal as they both are forming their opinion based on character. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, it seems that Darcy is still ashamed of his feelings, or perhaps scared of Elizabeth's reaction as he does not dare to look her in the eye. This makes the proposal seem less romantic, since Darcy does not really express much emotion, but it does give Elizabeth power. He is afraid of her reaction and she is the one that is able to reject him. She can tell he is afraid because he does not control the gaze and she is the one that is able to act now. This could help cause Elizabeth's

cool reaction: she does not become hysterical in any way, but rejects him with harsh words and also lacking emotion. Once he is gone, she does show her emotions and starts to cry. The same goes for the videogame Elizabeth Bennet: she cries and then distracts herself with her embroidery. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the viewer does not get to see her emotions afterwards, because the audience is to believe that Lizzie is in control of what is aired in her video blogs. Elizabeth/Lizzie thus does feel that she needs to remain strong and cannot show any emotion. This is a character trade usually ascribed to men. However, shifting this character trade to a female character does not actually mean it is empowering. It shows that one has to fulfil a certain role that comes with certain characteristics and those are ascribed to genders and are still naturalised (Bal, 2008). Once Elizabeth starts to cry it means she is out of that role where she has to be strong and lacking emotion. Since she is portrayed alone, she does not have to play any role that is ascribed to her and can show her natural emotion. These ascribed emotions and characteristics have to be denaturalised first, before one is to denaturalise gender roles, which follows Bal's (2008) and Moi's concepts (1997).

In the end of the vlog series, the moment where Lizzie and Darcy end up together, Lizzie's character does decide to post the trivial conversation she has with Darcy in her vlog. Although it seems that it is an equal conversation, a detailed view shows that it is actually Darcy who does most of the talking and Lizzie who either looks at him longing, hoping for him to see that, or she looks away with sad eyes, thinking he does not see her feelings. He is leading the conversation, and reflecting on his experienced feelings and thus controlling the narrative development. Lizzie is merely answering the questions. However, when push comes to shove, she is the one to silence him by kissing him and confirm his feelings. This is done differently in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: Elizabeth leaves Darcy for being dead and then admits her feelings to him. The only time she does act is when it is thought of unable to progress the narrative. Darcy turns out having survived the blowing up of the bridge and apparently he was not even unconscious and heard Elizabeth declaring her love. This leaves him confronting her with her statements and not her expressing her feelings directly and being the eventual active, progressive one. The pro-activeness of the girls is thus implied, but effectively minimalised as it is still Darcy who has to take the big leap of expressing his feelings.

However, there are some other moments where Elizabeth or Lizzie speaks her mind freely to Darcy: when Darcy sends Wickham away after his pitch at Lady Catherine in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Elizabeth tells Darcy that he is as unfeeling as the undead. His

response is looking away and walking out of the room. After which Elizabeth is told by Lady Catherine that she is too opinionated. Apparently it is not Elizabeth's place to make such comments. This can also be detected in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*: in episode 80, Lizzie confronts Darcy on having broken up Jane and Bing. However, they are having this conversation dressed up as themselves, making it a fictive, unnatural conversation. It seems that it is the only way to confront Darcy on his actions: to denaturalise their roles and create a distance from their ascribed roles. It seems in this conversation that instead of Lizzie attacking Darcy on his action, Darcy is actually nuancing Lizzie's beliefs. Being upfront and challenging does therefore not seem to be apparent on Lizzie's behalf in the video blogs, she is the passive one as her actions are taken over and she lets this happen, again not being of use for narrative development. This is a difference with the zombie-film, where Darcy runs away after being called out: he is afraid of the confrontation, where Elizabeth is the one that searches for it. The level of pro-activity is thus not the same in every version, but it can be stated that Elizabeth in all versions needs to have a way out when she wants to confront Darcy, a safe way that is unnatural from her regular conversations.

George Wickham and the Bennet sisters

George Wickham takes up a special place within the *Pride and Prejudice* dynamics. He is a love interest of two Bennet sisters, although not at the same time. First, he has flirtatious encounters with Elizabeth and secondly with her younger sister Lydia. However, Lydia is already flirting with him from the beginning in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* and in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. In the latter she objectifies Wickham's body by throwing a glass of water on his shirt and makes him take his shirt off, while she is gazing at him with luscious eyes. At that same moment, Lizzie walks in and laughs sheepishly and does not know how to position herself. This is the end of episode 45 and it is therefore unclear how this situation finishes in the cuts to the next episode. This shows the difference between the two characters on dealing with men. Lydia is more progressive and willing to go after her wants: she is literally able to objectify George. Lizzie on the other hand remains passive and feels uncomfortable with the option to objectify. This shows that Lizzie seems to stay in the old-fashioned traditional roles, whereas Lydia seems to denaturalise those. It is also interesting that Wickham seems to have no problem with having him and his body objectified. This can be interpreted as a sign that Wickham's character is also positioned in favour to overthrow this patriarchal order. However, with him being the villain of the series and Lydia ending up

ashamed for her actions, it seems that the message that they send in this episode might also be demolished in the end.

Even though Lizzie does not know how to position herself in this particular situation, she does objectify Wickham's body herself in a previous episode, namely episode 38. The difference with this episode and the 45th episode is that Wickham is not physically present. She discusses him and his body with her sister Jane. This seems to lead to the conclusion that Lizzie feels that she can speak more freely when the discussed person is not present and therefore avoids confrontation. She apparently does not feel that she is in the position to criticize and confront male personages, but is only able to speak to other females. This notion positions herself as unequal, and this is surprising as she is not forced by anyone to take that position. It can be said regarding gender roles that Lizzie has naturalised this unequal position and needs to step out of the comfort zone in order to denaturalise this notion and step out of the patriarchal order of characteristics.

Where Lizzie in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* avoids confrontation, Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* confronts Wickham when she disagrees: he tries to elope with Elizabeth first, before he succeeds to elope with Lydia. She tells him he is crossing the line when he asks her to run away with him. When she does this, she lets go of his hand and this is their final separation. Wickham does not appear to be heartbroken and only cares about the presumably upcoming battle. In the other versions their parting is not as actively announced: in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, he leaves town and it appears on Twitter that he is hanging with other girls. Lizzie tells Lydia that she already got the hint that they were not exclusive and seems to be okay with that. In the videogame Elizabeth is actually warned for Wickham by a character that is not introduced, but is most likely her aunt, looking at the original novel. She tells Elizabeth that Wickham is not to be trusted. But this Elizabeth does not seem to care about that, since her answer is that she thinks that Wickham would never fall in love with her anyway.

How Elizabeth deals with Wickham is thus very different in every adaptation, but what the last two versions have in common is that Wickham has the power: in the videogame he can decide whether Elizabeth is good enough and in the vlog series he is the one to leave town and does not consider any options that will involve Lizzie. Both of these girls are not bothered by this fact, which can be related to the previous patriarchal assumption that it is naturalised that the man has the power in the romance. The only one who has denaturalised

this is Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: she feels she the power to reject him and acts upon it. This makes her the one to denaturalise the notion of patriarchal power.

The situation of the elope of Lydia and Wickham is also portrayed very differently within the different versions. In the videogame, neither George nor Lydia gets a stage to portray the relationship and elope with Wickham and it remains thus unclear what the motives were. It is treated as a situation that can only be handled by putting it into marriage, leaving out the ironic Austen tone. The result of marriage is irrelevant in the other two versions: in the zombie-film, Lydia is taken to a dangerous area by Wickham. It turns out that she is held captive so that Darcy would come to save her and he could fight Darcy. She is thus treated as a form of prey, making her an object that is used as a tool. This is the ultimate objectification. In the vlog series, the process takes a little longer and the result of Wickham's actions is to put shame upon the family, and according to Lizzie, to get back at her for telling the truth about him: Wickham dates Lydia when Lizzie leaves town and is on non-speaking terms with Lydia. He convinces her to make a sex video and then puts up a website that will air it if there are enough subscriptions, using Lydia's implied YouTube fame. Again, Lydia is used as a tool in order to plot a revenge or at least make money from her. This is, just like the zombie-film, a major objectification. Lydia is dehumanised in order for the man to achieve his wants.

Lydia is unaware of this website until shown by Lizzie. She blames herself for her actions: she was told she was asked to do this in order to prove her love for Wickham. Lydia does not consider him more guilty than herself for putting the video online. She is merely wondering why he does not love her and despite everything she still declares her love for him. In the end she comes to repentance and does feel that what he did was wrong and never wants to speak to him again. This also goes for Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: she does not express romantic feelings towards Wickham after her captivation, but remains numb and inexpressive in every way. So, although they are empowering characters by knowing and in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* openly stating that he is to blame and has done something awful, they stay away from the confrontation. In the case of the film there is no confrontation possible between Lydia and Wickham since he is killed shortly after her liberation, but in the vlog series he gets away without any consequences or confrontation, making it possible for him to try to do his again. It is a step forward in pro-activeness of female characters that she feels Wickham is the one to blame, but the fact that this has no further consequences justifies the impression that the man goes scot-free, while the woman has to deal with the consequences of his actions.

Elizabeth and Mister Collins

Even though it is not a mutual romance, this relationship suits best here: Mister Collins tries to pursue Elizabeth to be his wife in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. It is implied by Elizabeth's mother in the videogame that he has proposed to Elizabeth as well, but he is only mentioned after being engaged to Charlotte and that she is sensible. Mister Ricky Collins does not pursue either Elizabeth or Charlotte romantically in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, but for a job offer. Therefore, the relationship in that version will not be discussed elaborately in this paragraph, but in the next one.

Collins' characteristics, as mentioned earlier, seem to have created a personality that is unaware of his lack of social skills. He does try to court first Jane, and then Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: he requests to speak with Jane in private, which seems to be a euphemism for proposing to her, but her mother states that she is already been spoken for, and that her daughter Elizabeth is almost as fair as Jane. Elizabeth does not respond to these insults in words, but merely looks at her mother in anger. Collins does not notice this, or the fact that his words are insulting to Elizabeth, and from then on he turns his affections and courting towards Elizabeth instead of Jane. This implies that he feels that the women he is encountering have no say in the matter of proposing. He is the one that has the power and perhaps even the gaze: he gazes and chooses the one he likes best rather than choosing each other. Again, the male character has the power to objectify the female character and comes away with it. He is the first decision maker in who he wants to propose to. The women are silenced and therefore remain passive. He is the one that is acting and therefore not overthrowing Mulvey's (1975) and Bal's (2008) notions on overthrowing the concept of the acting male.

There are more occasions in this film where Collins is unaware on how he comes across. For example, when Elizabeth is carrying all the weapons after she and her sisters have killed zombies on the way to the village, accompanied by Collins, and he sees that she is struggling to hold them. He comes towards her and offers his help by putting them up on her shoulder, instead of helping her carrying them, which is implied by the awkwardness of the scene. After this action he states that gallantry is not dead. Elizabeth does not confront him by telling him he could have helped her in another way, or anything at all. This is therefore another example where Collins misinterprets the situation, but is not confronted. His personal interpretation of the situation remains the most important one as he leaves Elizabeth feeling gallant, but this is interpreted otherwise by Elizabeth. The fact that the viewers can detect her

annoyance with this action is a step in the direct of becoming a subject that can act. But by remaining silent, the acting does not take place, keeping her passive, and again let the man get away with his unkind actions.

By his actions Collins does try to impress Elizabeth: he tries to make sure his title of Parcel is being used and he tries to impress Elizabeth with his moves at the ball. However, it seems that he merely tries to show off his status and skills, and these are the same reasons he gives her while proposing. This showing of skills and status appears to serve the maintaining of the patriarchal order and the importance of it: these notions are the most important and apparently valuable aspects of Collins and they are used to impress Elizabeth. They are ascribed to masculinity and therefore maintaining these patriarchal notions.

Elizabeth does not want to be proposed to in the first place and tries to stop this when Collins asks if he may speak with her privately. However, this is ignored by her mother and she arranges that they speak privately. Elizabeth is thus silenced and objectified and her character seems to have no influence in the development of the narrative. It is implied in the beginning that Collins has more power over the situation, but Elizabeth remains in control by rejecting his proposal. This is the moment where she becomes active. The fact that she has to wait for the final opportunity to do so implies that it is not easy to overthrow this patriarchal order and values. After her rejection, Collins does seem desperate for a wife and proposes to Charlotte. When Elizabeth chaperones Charlotte to the estate of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Collins shows no sign of affection towards Elizabeth, making his previous courting seem like a business endeavour. There was no romance present, it would merely be a convenient arrangement. This business approach of marriage marks the status of marriage in the adaptation and is criticised in this way. The marriage is needed by Collins in order to achieve this masculine status of husband and securing an heir.

Looking at these romantic relationships, it becomes clear that there is still some inequality in these relationships between men and women. Women are courted in a traditional sense and often objectified, remaining passive. They have few say in the matter, and the opportunity only arises at the final point. Although there are some moments of a progressive attitude towards gender, it all remains very traditional: the romances are all heterosexual, the man needs to impress the woman and the woman needs to be impressed by the fact that she is chosen. If something is not liked by these women, they remain silent and stay passive. The fact that the viewers can detect their true emotions can be seen as a minor progressive step

regarding the representation of these females in the adaptation, but it is not a strong progressive message.

4.2.2. Work relationships

The relationships in the different versions are not merely romantic relationships, but also function at a professional level, to certain extends. The fact that these relationships are so apparent that they can be analysed in the first place and not because the lack of it, is already something worth noting. Women are not merely seen as romantic interests in the adaptations, but also as professionals. Seeing women as characters that have a professional life next to their private, domestic life is a progressive notion that follows the ideas of Jones (2010) and Steenkamp (2009) that empowering heroines have a successful professional life. The portrayal of professional women does not necessarily mean that this is the way men see them in the different versions. This paragraph explains the differences and similarities in work relationships between the different characters of opposing sexes and how the women are looked upon as professionals. This will focus mainly on Elizabeth/Lizzie's work relationships and Mister Collins' different work relationships, since those will capture to all important professional relationships in the different versions.

Elizabeth/Lizzie's professional relationships

Besides a romantic relationship, in two versions of the researched adaptations Darcy and Elizabeth also have some form of a professional relationship: in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Darcy is the boss of one of the companies Lizzie researches for her own Master thesis. Upon selecting this company, she is unaware of this but does not decide to choose another company where she has no other personal connection with the CEO upon finding out. For one of her assignments, she interviews Darcy about his company. However, like in other situations, he takes over the entire conversation. Instead of answering her questions, he asks Lizzie questions and makes the interview evolve around her and her reflecting herself. Therefore it seems as if Darcy does not see Lizzie as an equal professionally, but as someone he can teach. Lizzie seems to be unaware of this turning of the table and it seems that he can therefore teach her. In the company he is not a superior since he is not Lizzie's boss, but he still intimidates her with his answers rather than merely cooperating. This positions him as her superior even though officially he is not.

Although Lizzie does not seem to realise that her conversations are taken over by Darcy, she does not want him to be her superior officially: when he offers her a job at his

company, she refuses to take it since they are lovers next to it and she does not like to be the boss's girlfriend. She then tells him that she wants to found her own company and become his immediate competitor. Darcy accepts this, and even offers to help her, which then makes him more of a teacher again. Trying to become a professional equally is thus an example of an empowering heroine. But she is still not seen completely equal since she needs to learn. Her love interest is therefore also her teacher and thus still unequal. It can be defended that he wants to help her out of experience, rather than being of patriarchal notion of male professional success.

In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Darcy can be seen as a professional zombie warrior and he regards himself superb in this matter, but finds his match in Elizabeth: he rescues her of a zombie first, which is not appreciated by her, since she did not ask for it. But when seconds later zombies arrive at the dance, Elizabeth and her sisters kill them all, whereas Darcy remains passive and looks at the Bennet sisters. This is also the moment where Darcy presumably starts to admire Elizabeth: he looks at her in awe and compliments her to Bingley. However, he does not compliment her achievements, but only mentions her appearance and looks. Darcy and Elizabeth rescue each other an equal amount of times, while slaughtering zombies. However, the final rescue is made by Elizabeth when she rescues Darcy of Wickham who tries to kill him. So, contrary to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, men and women are seen as equals in skills. This equal positioning of both genders can be interpreted as rather progressive: it denaturalises characteristics ascribed to gender completely as both characters from different sexes are equally capable of the same things. However, the fact that she is merely admired for her looks afterwards can be seen as degrading: even though she is equally superior in her skills, she remains valued for her appearances.

In the film, the sisters do not need any teaching in their warrior skills, and it must be said that the Bennet sisters are exceptional in these skills. They are trained by their father in order for their immediate survival and are the only female characters that are shown to possess these skills. Elizabeth takes this role very serious and knows she is capable to fight. This can be seen at the end of the film, when she sees her sister Lydia and knows that she is rescued by Darcy, but remains in the dangerous area to fight the zombies she sees, even though she went there in the first place to rescue her sister. Her cause is therefore greater than immediate survival: she wants to win war and feels capable to do so. This make her a professional warrior beyond anything else. This is a difference between her and Darcy, where

he is the official professional, he crosses the zombie border for romantic reasons. He appears to be the charming knight rescuing his damsel in distress, or at least her sister in order to come in Elizabeth's favours. His motivations for becoming a hero are purely personal. Jane's motivations are anything but personal. Unless she feels she has something to prove, but no sign of this is detected. Even though they are thus both regarded as equal warriors, Darcy has to fight less for the same acknowledgements. He has already been acknowledged as such through his title, which is not obtained by Elizabeth. Therefore he can choose to have personal motivation that subscribe his warriorship. This no option for Elizabeth. This can be seen as a detail that still shows the unequal recognition of their actions. Elizabeth has to do something extra in order to be appreciated more. However, her fighting for another cause than recognition can be seen as empowering and progressive for gender representation.

Mister Collins' professional relationships

Mister Collins can be seen as the one who is at the centre of most professional activities. Especially his relationship with Lady Catherine is one that is apparent in all adaptations. In the videogame, he appears only once, but then speaks of Lady Catherine in awe and takes Elizabeth and Charlotte, to whom he then already is engaged, to Lady Catherine. This in awe speaking of Lady Catherine happens in all versions. In the game and in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, she is his landlady. In the latter he compliments her for killing the most zombies. He admires her warrior skills and does not criticize her fighting being a woman. She is seen as a national heroine for her zombie killing. This is stated by Elizabeth when she is challenged for a fight by Lady Catherine: Elizabeth says that fighting her would be fighting England. Having Lady Catherine represent the national hero for warrior zombies is progressive in regards of representing gender: it shows that women are equally capable of being a warrior and it provides a female role model. The fact that her sex is not something that is of discussion helps this notion as it seems natural that she can be a warrior, and even the best warrior of all being a woman. The feminine characteristics that counter these notions are thus all non-existent and therefore denaturalised.

Lady Catherine is presented as an imposing woman, and it seems obvious that Collins desperately wants to impress her, looking a bit foolish doing so, as it is so extreme. An example is when Collins, Elizabeth and Charlotte are visiting Lady Catherine and she is laughing at Wickham for his proposal, Collins start to laugh with her. It seems that he does this in order to impress her and becomes in her favours. He does look up to her and admires her. It remains however unclear whether he admires her personality or her professionalism,

especially since he criticizes Elizabeth's fighting. He admires her so greatly that he gives the girls rules on how to behave around Lady Catherine: do not speak unless spoken to, etcetera. She is then in fact his superior, holding power over him. The behavioural rules are also given in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, which seems more odd than in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies*, as the zeitgeist is different in the two presented settings. Collins comes up with a list to make a favourable impression when Lizzie is first having dinner at Lady Catherine. He does this in a way which is offending, even though it seems that he tries to mentor Lizzie in her behavioural skills. Lizzie's face has an expression that states that she is not amused by this mentoring, but again is not speaking out. In the vlog series, Catherine is Collins' primary investor and therefore of great importance. She is presented as a successful career woman, but nobody emphasizes her femaleness. It appears not be surprising or even shameful to have a female primary investor: Lady Catherine does have the eventual power over his business with her money flow, and this does not seem to bother Ricky Collins as he only speaks well of her, in extreme forms.

This is the only case of a female being a (direct) official superior of a man. Apparently an imposing character, which is especially apparent in the film, is needed to be taken that seriously as both a national heroine and a direct boss or investor. This provides the notion that if women want to achieve such professional status they have to be hard in order to achieve this. Lady Catherine is presented more intimidating than the other characters, even the male characters, which ascribes this notion. This implies that losing the feminine characteristics ascribed to women is necessary in order to be seen as a successful professional.

Catherine's power leads to the sending of Darcy to Collins' firm, which is called Collins and Collins. He has to make an operational report on the company. This gives him power over the firm and as a result also over Lizzie's personal life: she feels she cannot confront Darcy about his actions on splitting up Jane and Bing, because this might influence the report on Collins and Collins. This is another case where Darcy gets ascribed power that is not official handed to him. He seems to be unaware and again here his motivations were personal and romantic, as he later admits he did the report to become close to Lizzie. This reasoning undermines Lady Catherine's power. The report becomes a mock, since the only meaning of it was for Darcy to be close to Lizzie. It remains uncertain how it was decided to do a report and to let Darcy do it, but it can be assumed that Darcy abuses his connections to get what he wants on a personal level. This is again a patriarchal notion of male power. The

women can be used for the men to achieve what they want and regard women as personal interests and not take their jobs seriously.

Darcy's report is why Lizzie also will not tell Charlotte about her findings on Jane and Bing. In the end it is Charlotte who confronts Darcy, regardless of his authority over her. She decides that her personal life matters more than her professional. This is in the same line as Lizzie's rationality: she wants to protect Charlotte's job by keeping still. This implies that one cannot speak freely in the work environment, and especially the women are silenced. Darcy's reasons for being there turn out to be personal, but the women have to keep their personal matters to themselves because it can affect one of them professionally. This is a paradox that favours the male characters and works against the female characters. However, the latter is more an emotion than a fact, because once Darcy is confronted he does not let it influence the report. This can be an argument for women to fight these notions of inequality and urge them to speak up rather than drawing conclusions beforehand.

Charlotte working for Collins and Collins is adapted from the marriage proposal in the original work. It is a work offer in this version rather than a marriage proposal. This offer is first rejected by Lizzie, and Charlotte is only then considered an option. Lizzie rejects Ricky Collins because she feels that working for him is selling her soul. He does not get this and tries to make his offer more lucrative. He does not understand that Lizzie does not speak in terms of money. This might be interpreted as objectifying as Ricky treats her as something that can be bought. However, this is one of the moments where Lizzie remains active and speaks up for herself. This makes this attempt for objectification unsuccessful. Money is however Charlotte's main reason to accept Ricky's offer: this will lighten the financial pressure on her family. Can it then be said that Charlotte is bought and therefore successfully objectified? Well, accepting Ricky's offer is not a result of him adding more money in order to persuade her, but it is presented as she has no doubts about the job in itself. She feels she trained to do this and therefore it would only be fair to make her work out of it. Her acceptance of the offer is thus actually the opposite of objectification. She acts independently and goes after her professional wants and becomes financial independent, which is presented as one of the aspects of a modern heroine.

In the end, Charlotte gets promoted being the director of the USA endeavours of the company when Ricky moves to Canada to set up the firm there. Before this promotion, Ricky does call Charlotte his partner and treats her as an equal most of the time. An exception is when it is Thanksgiving and Ricky is already leaving to go home and he makes Charlotte stay

last minute to work at a deadline. He pressures her into this and does not feel like she deserves to be home with family as much as he does. In the end he comes around because Lizzie blackmails him. He thus only sees her as a partner when it is beneficial, but treats her as an employee when that in its own turn is beneficial. So, even though the men and the women are presented as equals, this is only done when it favours the male characters and this is also decided by the male character. Charlotte, being the female character, does not speak up for herself and needs Lizzie to do this for her. This shows an unofficial power belonging to the male that is used to oppress and victimize the female. However, the women are in to blame for feeling it is impossible to speak up for themselves. It also appears that every time they do speak up for themselves, everything turns out to be fine. It remains unclear why they feel this is impossible. It might be that in regards to gender ideology, the women still feel inferior towards these men in regards of status and have this naturalised.

This naturalisation of inferiority by the women is not necessarily acknowledged by the male characters. The women are not seen as unequal on purpose, but do behave as being in an inferior position by remaining silent and passive whenever they disagree. When male bosses are finally confronted, it seems that they are able to reflect their positions against these women and do not take it for granted. However, it is implied that in order to be professionally successful as a woman, one has to be hard and thus acquire ascribed masculine characteristics. This means including personal trades with the professional ones, whereas men seem to be able to separate those.

4.3 Underlying gender ideology

The previous paragraphs have highlighted the characteristics and their development of the different figures and relationships between the different genders. This paragraph will include an analysis of aspects that are assigned to the different genders. What is considered to be female and feminine and male and masculine?

4.3.1. Femininity portrayed

The women in the *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations seem to be empowered to a certain extent: they know their wants and needs. The Bennet sisters do have other priorities besides getting a husband, which still is, in all versions, their mother's priority. In the videogame, this is noticeable in Elizabeth's concerns with her family: whenever something influences her family, she is most concerned with their feelings and how she can help them feel better. However, this Elizabeth remains a very static character. She does not undergo any

transformations that help develop her character. This leaves her to be a curious, caring girl that has less concerns rather than her family, but is active in protecting them.

She also remains obedient to others, also to male throughout the entire game: at the end when Darcy asks her why she is not feeding the birds, she goes feeding the birds immediately without even answering his question. The only time she has a reply that counters is at the end when Lady Catherine urges her not to get engaged to Darcy. However, this does upset Elizabeth very much afterwards. This obedience without questions asked is a conservative notion regarding gender ideology. Without even having an ironic aspect about this theme in the game, it serves the dominance of the patriarchal order and sends a message that obedience is to be accepted by women.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the girls are also occupied elsewhere besides family, even though this is presented as important. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the girls are obtained by getting their degree to become financially independent or have a decent job which makes one happy or makes one able to provide for their family. This providing is taken to the next level in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, where the Bennet sisters are not merely concerned with keeping themselves and their family alive, but rescuing their country from zombies. Not only the Bennet sisters, but also Lady Catherine is portrayed as a national heroine and nobody seems concerned with the fact that she is a woman. Therefore, it can be said that, especially in the last two versions, women are portrayed as capable as men and this is seen as natural. However, they do position themselves as less capable, internalising this notion. This is a missed opportunity in regards to gender ideology. The women are portrayed as less secure as the men in their jobs and perhaps even positioned inferior, although they are equals on paper.

Besides having these professional concerns, the women are also very concerned with their appearances and how they come across towards these men, or in public. In the videogame, Elizabeth is often concerned with her clothing of which she states she needs for the dance or the ball or even for a visit to London. Keeping up appearances seems to be of great importance, but also a challenge for the women in the videogame. The women are constantly losing items and all items in the game are broken and need to be collected first: everything lingers around and nothing is tidied up. This is merely done when a man comes to visit, just like Bingley at the end of the game. However, this clumsiness is not merely portrayed as a bad thing, but beneficial at some other times too: when throwing over a doll, one finds items that are needed to progress in the game. It is difficult to analyse the meaning

of this: it can also be implied that it is expected of the game player, impersonating Elizabeth, to throw over the doll and this is inherent to the game and unavoidable to happen. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the women are also very concerned with how they should dress and what to wear when they go to parties or a bar. It seems a key issue in what impression they will make apart from their personalities. It is also apparent close to the end of the series, when Jane is saying goodbye to the camera and Lizzie tells the viewers that they are going to discuss favourite hairstyles of Jane, which then is implied to be a key determinant of Jane's presence on the vlog series.

This focus on appearances is way to provide a justification for the gaze of the men and them objectifying these women. The receiving of this gaze is naturalised by the women as they appear to be concerned with their appearance that much. Lydia is the character that might lead to the denaturalisation of this gaze, as she embraces this notion with pride and gazes herself as well: she makes herself an equal of these gazing men. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Lydia can actually be seen as one of the most developing characters: the events that evolve around her after the sex video, mark her development into adulthood. She loses her innocence and thus her energetic character. However, she does feel that she has the right to make her own choices and live life likes she wants to. This is visible when she receives a birthday gift from Lizzie that criticizes her life choices. They have a fight over this, which leads them to be on non-speaking terms, as she feels she deserves a direct apology which is not given by Lizzie. The big development is that Lydia seems to make her choices consciously and is not merely driven by the need for attention, which is implied at the beginning of the series. This notion marks a possible progressive manner for the other female characters: Lydia succeeds in speaking up for herself and starts to see that she is the director of her own life. This is however not done to those of the opposite sex, making it a beginning of empowerment and not the reaching of a goal.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries' Lydia is the Lydia that has been given a true character, more than the other Lydia's in the researched adaptations. Not appearing in the videogame in person at all, makes for a lacking development, as there is no character to be discussed. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Lydia does make multiple appearances. However, she is portrayed more of an object than a subject, as she seems to be unable to speak for herself. Being held captive has turned her silent, as she has no lines whatsoever afterwards. Before her elope with Wickham, she is portrayed as merely flirting with men. This seems to be the only aspect of her character, reducing it to a minimum and not worth valuing as a full character for

the viewer. This is thus a complete opposite portrayal than the one describe previously. Reducing her character helps it to objectify as it leaves no room for focalisation by the character itself. She is merely discussed than is the one actively discussing, making her passive and lacking personality. This is disadvantageous regarding empowering gender notions, as it serves the dominant male gaze.

It is striking that the moments where women are active, these scenes have a jealous character. Caroline Bingley/Lee is one of the most important figures that does this: she tries to make Jane and Elizabeth look bad in order for them to make a bad impression on Bingley/Bing Lee and Darcy. It appears that jealousy motivates her. She only admits to do this in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and in the other versions it is strongly implied. This can be interpreted as follows: women are still fighting over men, which are seen as more important than friendship or even being kind, making romance the end goal for women and not kindness towards each other. This serve the notion that the most dominant goal in life is still nature's goal of reproduction. Siding this with women's jealousy naturalises this characteristic.

Romance does indeed seem to be the key issue that concerns the women in the adaptations. Even though they can provide for themselves, the romantic quest still seems to be of the greatest importance for the storyline. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, this can be detected that the few moments Lizzie brings up her work or her school progress: she mentions that it is not interesting for the viewers or someone else tells her to skip "the boring part" and fill the viewers in on her sister's love life, her own love life or other dramatic events. Professional issues therefore become second-rated. A noteworthy character development on this notion is Jane's: in episode 70 of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* she states that she does not need a failed relationship to define herself; she becomes more empowered throughout the entire series. In the beginning she is concerned with her relationship with Bing and how that should progress, but in the end family and career are her priorities. This denaturalises the notion of reproduction as an end goal as just described.

In the film and videogame adaptations, Jane's expressed concerns are all regarding her relationship with Bingley, but she is rather passive in her pursuit, or expressing any of her own thoughts, except for when she is alone with Elizabeth. When Bingley returns to Netherfield and proposes, there are no questions asked about him leaving earlier on. These two Janes are thus rather static. The women are thus not critical towards the men that have left them before or spoke ill of them. No questions asked when marriage is in reach, which is also advocated by the mother in all versions. Even though Elizabeth despises her mother's

interference, marriage is the end goal and the end of all versions. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the final scene is the wedding of both sisters, after which it is implied they will live happily ever after. Having all versions end with a successful romance makes it the end and ultimate goal of all heroines and criticizing events can only be in the way of that.

This is again another example of how men still have the power over women. The women are actively pursuing marriage whereas for the men it seems that it is just something that happens to them. This ascribes the need of romance to women and takes it away from men, which is a conservative notion of the positioning of sexes: the women need the men in order to survive and not vice versa. Although, in the zombie-film men are rescued by women, they ultimately save them by getting married and providing them with a form of security.

4.4.2. The positioning of the *Pride and Prejudice* men

Even though the male roles in the contemporary *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations are the same characters, the way they are portrayed in each version is actually rather different. In the videogame, the men are not focalising at all and are merely an object seen by the heroine Elizabeth. They do not own the gaze, but are gazed upon. However, they appear to be crucial when it comes down to key determining moments in the story. The men are thus still the most powerful as they make the events twist: it is Darcy's decision to rescue Lydia, propose to Elizabeth twice and it is Bingley who decides he cannot live without Jane and returns to his old house. This happens more in the videogame than in the other versions, but it appears in all versions where even though the women are the heroines, the men are the actors: in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Darcy takes down the website that has Lydia's sex video and it is also Darcy who rescues Lydia from Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. On the last one, it must be said that Elizabeth was on her way to do the same, but it was Darcy who succeeded in doing so. Darcy does feel the need to be the rescuer, since he is the colonel of the army that is fighting the zombies, and he uses Lydia's rescue to come in Elizabeth's good favours. It seems that the women are seen by the men to still be the damsels in distress and they should act upon it, making them traditional and conservative portrayals of men.

However, besides being the hero, it is noticeable that Darcy's character moves into another direction: he becomes more humane. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Darcy seems to live only for conquering zombies in the beginning, and it is only after the moment where Elizabeth and her sisters kill zombies that his gaze is directed towards Elizabeth and being highlighted through extradiegetic music that works softening and calmly, as if a new world opens for Darcy. His tone of voice shows that he is surprising himself with these

thoughts. By expressing these thoughts the viewers already know that Darcy is developing feelings for Elizabeth and she is the one that needs to find out. This development goes towards a softer version of himself. It shows a romantic side that is more easily detectable in him than in Elizabeth. This means that characteristics that are ascribed to women are now ascribed to a male and this can be embraced. This can be seen as a sign that overthrows these notions of characteristics.

In the videogame, Darcy's change has been literally described in text lines: he compliments Elizabeth's good taste on her dress and this is the moment where she acknowledges that he has become a different person. It is this mere comment that shows change of character, but can also be interpreted as the moment that Elizabeth notices that he is not who she thinks he is. However, this is only a compliment that concerns her appearance and which apparently influences Elizabeth's opinion of him. As mentioned earlier, he summons Elizabeth to feed the birds and this summoning does not show a difference with the beginning where he also acted as if his opinion is dominant by labelling women and their value during the dance.

It can therefore be defended that it is not truly Darcy that undergoes a real character development, but it is merely the way he is seen by others that changes. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Darcy makes his first appearance in episode 60, which is a little over the half of the length of the series. Before this, his character has only been described by others. Lizzie accuses him of being arrogant and incapable of being polite and nice. But as soon as Darcy appears in own person, he is sensible and polite, remaining calm where Lizzie is the one to become angry and accuses him of all sorts of things. In all the remaining episodes in which Darcy appears, he still seems to be helpful, even though he has been accused of several things that are not complementary. It is in the sixtieth episode where he declares his love for Lizzie. He is thus being introduced as being honest, even though it overwhelms his judgement. This is something that Darcy does throughout the entire series: he is being honest even if it does not make him look good. Honesty is therefore marked highly by him. It seems that by portraying him more often in person, the viewers are able to form their own opinions on Darcy and become less influenced by Lizzie's judgement. Alongside with the audience, it is noticeable that Lizzie starts to see Darcy's other side too. It is therefore because of his late introduction on screen, that is hard to define whether his character has developed, or it is Lizzie's character that shows new insights.

Giving Darcy a stage to appear in person humanizes him and provides tools to assign him characteristics that are not necessarily ascribed to the patriarchal notion of men. This provides evidence that it is needed to be subjectified rather objectified in order to focalise and get a more honest and layered view upon a character. These layered views then provide to create a character that is not archetypical, and especially not in the traditional ascribed gender characteristics.

However, even if the characteristics are denaturalised, it seems that power is still ascribed to the male characters. This male power can also be detected in their positions: as mentioned, Darcy is the colonel of the army in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Although Elizabeth and her sisters are also very capable warriors, they have no status on this whatsoever. Lady Catherine is seen as a national heroine, but her status seems to be an aristocratic one. The status of these men is regarded highly, especially among themselves: both Darcy and Collins urge that their title is being used instead of mister. The professional positions of the male characters are not really discussed in the videogame, but even more in the vlog series: in all companies, male characters are still the directors or owners. Even when Charlotte gets promoted to a position that previously belonged to Ricky Collins, it is because he gets an even higher position. So, even when women are empowered, men still hold the higher official positions. This naturalises the higher status of men in regards to women. They can only climb the ladder if the men still outrank them. This notion spreads the message that women cannot be complete equals to men.

Bing Lee from *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is an exception to this rule. Unlike all the other male characters, including Bingley from the other versions, he does not seem concerned with status or even a career, as he gives up his lucrative and high status career as a doctor when he realizes this is not what he wants in life. But it is also this character that is said to be soft and even unmanly, while in fact he may be the most emancipated character of all in the end, not choosing for his status or masculinity, but making his own choices and being confident of that. This is one of the greatest character developments in the entire series: in the beginning Bing is very easy to be influenced by his sister Caroline and by his best friend William Darcy. His choices in relationships rely on their opinions and persuasions. In the end it turns out that he became a medical student because of his family's wishes. In episode 92 he admits that he does not care about his family's opinion and that he will make his own choices now. Instead of thinking what other people want for him, he is then trying to find out who he wants to become and what he wants to do.

One of the big changing moments can be seen during a conversation earlier on in the series that Bing has with Lizzie in episode 79. She tells him that he trusts his family more than he trusts himself. Bing finds this too confrontational and walks away out of sight of the camera. Two episodes later she tells Bing more directly to take more responsibility for his own actions: if he tries to communicate to Jane via Lizzie, she tells him to call her himself and if that turns out not to be a good idea, at least it will be his own not so good idea. The next time he appears on the series it is to win Jane back, making this taking life in his own hands rather than let others decide it.

It is unsure how Bingley in the other two versions comes to the conclusion that he does want Jane to be his wife. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, it could be that he realizes she is the love of his life when she is the one to rescue him from zombies on her way to save Lydia. After he sees it was Jane that rescued him, he looks her in the eye and laughs happily. They do not speak of past events and a few scenes later he comes to speak to Jane privately and to propose to her. This conversation is not part of the film and it remains therefore unclear what caused him to change his mind. In the videogame Bingley comes to dinner without any announcement. This is the only appearance he has in person after the dance. There are no explanations given and it remains therefore uncertain how his character has developed, as it is not shown. He has not been given much character traits in the videogame to begin with that could be developed. This lack of character in the videogame is therefore the complete opposite of the character development in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, which is even less than the guess of how Bingley's character evolves in the zombie-film.

This shows again that the more in-depth a character is portrayed, the less objectified he comes across. Bingley in the film and videogame need to be interpreted and their true feelings, beliefs and convictions can only be guessed, making him an object of the gaze. Given that the male is the object of the gaze denaturalises the order. It is uncommon for a male to be the object of the gaze. However it seems to be the viewers that are gazing and in need of interpretation of this character, and this is not taken up by the female characters which is a missed opportunity in this regard.

Summarising, it is easier for the males to take on the active roles. This comes from their ascribed status that seems inherent to the male sex. The men still gaze upon women as if they are to be rescued. This is a conservation notion. Although, throughout all versions Darcy seems to become more humane. But it remains difficult if he is the one that is really developing or that Elizabeth's character develops, whereas she is the one to look at him

differently. The characteristics that are ascribed to Darcy later on are not necessarily traditional masculine characteristics, which shows a less archetypical and more layered character. However, in this layered character that overthrows traditional notions of gender, men still have the power and outrank women. Bing in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is the male character that seems not to be impressed by this power. His ascribed characteristics are seen as feminine. In the end, he overthrows these characteristics by standing up for his own beliefs. In the other versions, Bingley is less exposed. This provides evidence that lacking a personality or characteristics makes it easy to objectify.

The results of this analysis show that both male and female characters can be subjects and be the ones to hold the gaze and objectify other characters. The main difference is that the male characters are more likely to become truly active and these characters are therefore of more importance for the development of the narrative. It seems it is more naturalised for these men to be acting figures, whereas women often do need to possess with other ambitions that are uncommon for a woman in the patriarchal notion. A woman cannot have the naturalised patriarchal characteristics as defined by Moi (1997) and be represented as a full acting subject. The tools to do so are given, by obtaining the gaze (Mulvey, 1975) and focalising (Bal, 2009), but somehow they are not used.

In the researched adaptations, the ironic style of Austen, as described by Brown (1972), can only be found in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, where it has been transformed to the direct narration of the main character who mocks other characters and their behaviour. This form of irony is not really detected in the other versions. However, the empowering modern heroine that has transformed to modern standards, as drawn up by Steenkamp (2009) in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: fiercely independent, more active and they have to challenge the men more passionately. This heroine is also present in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, where financial independence is also striven for, but in the end romance remains the end goal, making this again a partial success. Especially in the videogame, this is the main goal and without the ironic approach Austen's voice seems lost. Therefore it seems that one does have to transform the adaptations in order to spread the same message the original work did. These results will be elaborated more on in the following conclusion.

5. Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this research, visual adaptations of canonical nineteenth century literature have been popular for several decades. A trend within those adaptations has emerged that tries to steer away from the original work in settings, story line and use of media forms, but they still use the original as a signifier. This is a relevant given regarding adaptation theory: it is another way of looking at the use of the original work within contemporary adaptations. In this thesis this trend within adaptations has been related to the famous canonical work *Pride & Prejudice* by Jane Austen and three contemporary adaptations of the novel.

This research has followed the broad approach of adaptations by Hutcheon (2006), but has narrowed it with Leitch's (2008) argument that an adaptation has to position itself as an adaptation to be recognised as such. The focus of this research has been on the profiling of the researched adaptations in regard to gender ideology and their usage of the signifiers of the original work. This provided a clear focus on the similarities and differences with the original as gender roles are an important signifier within *Pride and Prejudice*. Seeing a characteristic of a novel as an important part of a loose adaptation, such as the ones discussed here, has also not been researched in such detail before. This has been done in the attempt to answer the research question: how are gender roles represented in contemporary adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* and how can the similarities and differences with the original work be explained?

In order to answer this research question, a qualitative textual analysis as set up by Mieke Bal (2009), was done. This approach is called *Narratology* and contains a structuralistic close reading of texts. This has provided an in-depth insight in the data and has given the tools to interpret the gender roles in the researched adaptations. Those adaptations were chosen because they met the criteria of contemporary *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation and all provided another media form and setting. This has made the research broader than if they were closer to each other. The chosen adaptations are the videogame *Jane Austen: Pride and Prejudice*, the online vlogging series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and the Hollywood production film *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

Through this analysis certain conclusions can be drawn on the representation of gender roles in the contemporary adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and the usage of the original to represent those roles. This will happen in the next two paragraphs. Lastly, these conclusions will be incorporated with the theory in order to provide more insights, and a discussion for follow-up research will be written that will conclude this research.

5.1 Gender roles in contemporary *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations

Looking at the three adaptations has given some insight of the representation of gender within these versions and how it relates to the original *Pride and Prejudice* novel. Both genders are able to own the gaze and focalise, in the notions of Mulvey (1975) and Bal (2008). This is a progressive tendency in regards to the traditional conservative objectifying way to represent, especially, women. The women have the tools to be full subjects and are opinionated. This seems to be a feminist success and a progressive way of portraying these women. However, the transformation is not a complete success. The women do not seem to fully use the tools that are given in order to become these full acting subjects and therefore do not influence the narrative.

This is seen in the relationships with men, both romantic and professional. Their true emotions are only shown to an anonymous viewer that is unable to interfere or confront these women with their passivity. However, it seems as if they are not necessarily forced to this passive attitude. The male characters often seem unaware of their superior approach to women, as if their position is naturalised. This is of course a very classical patriarchal notion. But when finally confronted in rare moments, the men seems to be able to reflect properly and do not necessarily see women as inferior. However, women should work harder for acquiring the same status. Official status is still seen as more suitable with men, which makes it easier for them to take on active roles. In regards to representation of the gender, this is very conservative.

Women need extra tools in order to transform from passive to active characters. This can be found in professional success but also in possessing character traits that are often described as masculine, or not feminine at least. If women do not serve something or someone else and their duties do not strike beyond domestic activities or something close to their personal life, they remain passive and objectified. In romantic relationships women are courted in a traditional way and are receiving attention and affection, rather than actively pursuing it: they wait their turn and thus do not take matters into own hand. The man is thus active and the woman passive, serving the dominant male gaze. The representation of marriage as an end goal for women also holds them in regards to women's empowerment. The women are actively pursuing marriage in contrary to men, for whom it appears to be something that is coincidental and definitely not necessary. Since the marriages are all heterosexual, this is a cause where women actually need men and not the other way around. Only in the film adaptation, which is the most recent one, men and women need each other

equally, but this is in a professional sense and not in the romantic one. Romantically, here as in all versions, the men is the one that needs to be active and secure these women of marriage. Also noticing the lack of homosexual characters and/or relationships in all versions is a very conservative notion, that still ascribes certain roles for certain sexes.

Looking at the set of characteristics and how they are viewed, the ascribed characteristics do not seem to differ that much. What differs is the way they are valued. Jane is described as perfection. Her kindness and humbleness are thus portrayed as perfect character traits, which fit perfectly in the ascribed feminine characteristics of the dominant patriarchal order (Moi, 1997). Whereas Bing in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, being close to having the same set of characteristics is regarded far from perfect. The fact that they are of the opposing sex makes their valuations become opposite of each other. The notions of perfect men and women are thus still stereotypical: men are supposed to impress, strong and determinate, whereas women should create the opportunity for the men to show of these skills.

It is however this exposure of Bing's character that makes him less of an object and create a true character. Lacking characteristics provides the main tool for objectification and the adaptations have shown that this goes for both sexes. The layered characters are the ones that are focalising and are the beholders of the gaze. This is a progressive notion as it denaturalises the male gaze. The women can see and can be active: the tools are given, it is merely for them to act on it. This is done more in the film and the vlog series than in the game, and therefore providing the first two with a more progressive representation of gender than the latter. But in short, the women do seem more progressive and represented as a subject at first glance, since they have acquired the tools, but as these tools are not fully used they remain partial objects as they leave the big narrative developments in the hands of the male characters.

5.2 The relationship towards the original *Pride & Prejudice*

In all the researched versions the relationship towards the original is clear. The storyline of the original can be easily detected in the adaptations. However, it seems that the two versions that have drawn away more from the original actually have created the space to send more empowering messages and create more feminist heroines. The story has evolved and transformed with the zeitgeist and thus has tried to preserve Austen's messages. Austenesque heroine's do advocate independence (Steenkamp, 2009) and this is done to a certain extent in the researched adaptations, such as the approach of the themes love and marriage to be

approached with scepticism (Brown, 1972). This only succeeds partially, mainly in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. However, in the end love and marriage remain the end goal. There is a certain attempt to approach romance with scepticism as both Elizabeths do not fall in love immediately and they are no easy win-overs, but in the end marriage is the happily ever after. The videogame does not approach any of the themes with scepticism and the characters are only concerned with romance and leaving good impressions. By reducing the narrative to such an extent that it only serves explaining the game, sending societal messages are lost and therefore the videogame does not deliver in regards to Austenesque themes, making it very conservative and thus less progressive as the original *Pride & Prejudice*.

In the videogame, all irony is gone and love and caring are the only goals. The videogame therefore fails to successfully use Austen's style as a signifier. Irony is used in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, by presenting Lizzie as a sarcastic, sceptical character. She mocks the events and people around them, mostly regarding their behaviour. This mocking is done reflectively and not direct. People are not confronted with ridiculous behaviour, as there is still a glimpse of politeness visible. This means that it is on the same level as 200 years ago and whereas Austen was progressive providing women with opinions and in want of overthrowing ridiculous societal gendered roles (Evans, 1986; Lenta, 1981), it has not progressed and transformed to contemporary notions of gender roles in society. This means that in fact the adaptations are less progressive than the original work, while they present conservative tendencies that are not as progressive as they were in the time of the original novel.

Summarising, Jones' Austenesque subjects are not all undermined and the gendered assumptions are not all overthrown. Courtship is still presented in the traditional sense and Austen's ascribed authority to attack those false forms of femininity is not used to its full potential, but only to a certain extent. The women have not succeeded in becoming full potential subjects but stuck to being a partial subject. This marks the overall conclusion that attempts have been made, especially in the film production and vlogging series, to use Austenesque notions, but have only partially succeeded in doing so, since the women do not mock the patriarchal notions to a full extent. This ultimately leaves the adaptations to be less progressive in its own time that Jane Austen's work was 200 years ago.

5.3 Discussion

Looking at the used theory on adaptation and gender representation, the following can be said on the results of this research: It seems as if the heroines of the adaptations do fit exactly within the contemporary notions of gender representation. The hierarchies of the gaze are denaturalised whereas both men and women have the option to gaze, but it seems that it remains rather unnatural for those women to take this opportunity and actually become the beholders of this gaze, leaving the power with the male characters. The women do not attribute to development of the narrative, leaving this with the male characters. This can be seen as disappointing in regards to the progressive ideas of representing gender, as described by Mulvey (1975) and Bal (2008).

The female characters hold onto their naturalised patriarchal characteristics (Moi, 1997), such as being perfect and fail to denaturalise them. Feeling that they need something extra besides those characteristics in order to be empowering, but not being able to be just empowering as a female with or without these characteristics. If missing these characteristics as a woman, one can be empowering and successful, but with the side note of being intimidating: this combination goes hand in hand and therefore fails to overthrow the ascribed characteristics. However, De Groot's (2009) conclusion on the oppression of women becomes a little less surprising. The women are not literally kept indoors, but remain silent and passive, even if it is unnecessary. This does indeed create a distance, but does not necessarily highlight their status. Therefore it can be said that there is need for that empowering heroine that is outdoors.

Hutcheon's notion that videogames do leave less space for constructing meaning is also detected in this research. The videogame is indeed the adaptation that has the most static and objectified characters. But also in constructing the same values as the original, the videogame lacks in touching upon Austenesque irony, which was detectable in the other two versions. Which is surprising, since the videogame was the most loyal to the original storyline. It therefore seems that Geraghty's (2008) approach is right and that it is needed to step away from the original in order to keep the value and keep the original to be the key signifier and represent gender roles in a progressive way, as intended by Austen, rather than remaining close to the original, which then loses the style and therefore the signs.

This research has provided empirical data on contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations and has shown how gender can be used in order to research the signifying tools of the original work. The results have shown that stepping away from the original work provides

the tools for keeping the original message, but that the adaptations often do not use these tools to their full potential. Since this research has only looked at three contemporary *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations, these results are not generalizable. Future research on other canonical nineteenth century literary novels or perhaps even a broader scope of canonical works in itself could be used to generalise these results. Not just on the signifying use of the original, but also in regard to the representation of gender roles.

These results have shown that objectification does not only happen to the female characters, but is more a matter of character development. However, the women in the researched adaptations were more often passive than the male characters. The representation of gender is therefore progressing in regards of equal representation, but is still subordinate to patriarchal notions. There is a difference with the first impression upon looking at these gender roles, where women are seen having these tools and being opinionated, and are therefore empowering. However, looking further it is noticed that they are stuck in their patriarchal role and are therefore not fully represented as progressive. This is a result that is not necessarily bound to adaptations, but can be researched in a scope that is as wide as visual media. It is wise to look at other researches that have already researched gender roles and women's portrayal and to test them on the concept of influence on the narrative development, such as Reijnders and Zoonen's research (2005). How important are these women for the development of the story and therefore portrayed as equals?

Researching three different media forms have shown that the choice of media is also rather important in what one wants to portray. The videogame ended up being less suitable for an in-depth representation of characters and therefore representation of gender, whereas the long duration of a vlog series has shown that more characters were able to develop which created layered personages that stepped away from gendered assumptions more easily. The film has limited the character development to their main characters which objectified the other appearing characters. This is another relevant given for future research: to what extent does length of the medium matter for the representation of gender? Doing more research on this subject will also provide more theoretical and empirical data on the subjectification of characters, denaturalising characteristics and other tools needed for representation of women's empowerment.

Ultimately, this research has linked the theme of gender representation to the signifying use of the original work, which has provided insight in how an original work is used to create an adaptive version. This remains a relevant tool in adaptation theory and the

use of gender as a tool of constructing meaning is a new focus within this theory. The representation of gender has proved to be an important signifier within *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, but the results have shown that the creators of those adaptations have not completely succeeded in representing fully empowered and active female characters, even though an attempt was made. One needs to present a fully subjectified female character that is able to act and of real importance for the development of the narrative, acting not only to viewers but also to other characters. Only then one is representing a fully empowered woman that is an active heroine that is not subordinate to any male character and ultimately in line with a true contemporary Austen heroine.

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