

Reflections on the Relevance of Manners, Marriage And Romance in *Emma* Adaptations

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Abstract

The paper explores the adaptation of Jane Austen's "Emma" in various forms such as "Clueless" and "Aisha." Focusing on manners, matchmaking, and romance, the research delves into the semiotics and depictions of marriage and relationships in these adaptations, employing literary theory to analyze the evolving portrayal of societal norms across different mediums. These adaptation are not merely a translation of the 18th century novel. They have incorporated the features, needs, mannerisms and outlooks of the times that they have been made in. More interestingly given *Emma* a more universal appeal, not to forget its relevance across cultures and time. The three adaptations are strung together with a common base story but as the stories unveil they all differ from one another. In more recent adaptations it has become more a question of 'what women want?' than someone else interpreting 'what women need'? The paper builds on the various narratives well in their own time frames to highlight the 'new normal'.

Keywords: Jane Austen, Emma, Clueless, adaptations, culture

Introduction

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" – *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen set the tone of her writing in the very first line of her very first book that was published. Humor. What she knowingly or unknowingly also did was presented her common theme of all her books that were about to come. Marriage. Interestingly enough *Pride and Prejudice* went on to become a favourite not only among literature circles but also made it to 'Books to be read before you die' list. Marriage in Victorian era was understood to be the one and only way to have a shot at a 'respectable' life, a 'comfortable and full' life to live. In addition to this they had to marry well, and by 'marry well' we mean marry a man with a 'good fortune'. Historians claim that Austen herself never got married for which her reason was that she never found love, a love where she'd be treated as equal. Ironically enough she did not get to marry the man she had fallen in love with for if he'd marry her he would have been dis-inherited from the family money. Hence, he wasn't a suitable match for her in entirety.¹ Why is this aspect of her life 'ironic', one may ask. In all her books/ stories Austen presents her heroines as young, single, headstrong, charming, intelligent and a woman who believes in herself, stands up for what she believes in and most importantly *not* looking to get married.

¹ 1795 (December): It is believe that Jane very much fell in love with Tom Lefroy based on her letters to Cassandra...
1796 (January): Tom Lefroy is taken away from Stevenson and Jane by his family as the marriage arrangement is deemed highly impractical as both have no money (tom has a promising future if he returns to London from a distant relative); Jane Austen timeline, www.janeausten.org. 26th February 2013

Another aspect that adds to the irony that I mentioned earlier is the evident “comic method of exposing social follies and hypocrisies”² that were prevalent in her time. “She also uses it to suggest the tragic aspects of the self that is isolated from its own society. This irony, which is more evident in pervasive attitudes than in details of style, grows out of the author's intimate involvement in her heroines and their feelings.” (Shaw, 1975) Austen in her own way would create a rupture and then re-instate order. Be it *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*, her heroines would start off from being comfortable with themselves and confident and move from that passage to being constantly critiqued and opposed either by the society or by the hero of her novel. This would lead on to her own confusion (in matters of love) and discomfort in admitting it. Very often it would be the hero alone who can criticize her because of the stature that the heroine holds in the society no one other than the hero seems to have the authority to stand up to her. Now the hero himself ‘is in position of a good fortune’, a better fortune than that of the heroine’s and not to forget that he is a man in the Victorian Era and she is a woman (stating the obvious). With some justification it has been said that all of Jane Austen’s novels are really stories of young women finding husbands. But this is just a surface view, or the simple story line; the total subject matter, however, is much more than that. It is a portrayal of the conventions of a class ridden society and within that society, the position of women who are confined to the household and expected to remain there. Feminist critiques have taken the works of Jane Austen as evidence of a male-dominated society and the social conditioning that they had to undergo if they had to succeed (read ‘marry well’) in society.

"Authorship for Austen is an escape from the very restraints she imposes on her female characters. And in this respect she seems typical, for women may have contributed so significantly to narrative fiction precisely because it effectively objectifies, even as it sustains and hides, the subjectivity of its author" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979).

Many feminists have argued that the creative talents of women were suppressed and were not allowed to express themselves. The male ego/ pride they say would not allow them to do so.³ All these arguments stand true for all of Jane Austen’s works, but as said earlier, Austen’s stories are not merely young women hunting for ‘well to do husbands’ or in many of her stories the mothers are looking out for their daughters. “Lessons of her novels are not to do with morals, ethics or religion, but with behavior.” (Daiches, 2007) It seems to become the woman’s responsibility to be that ‘ideal of conduct/ manners’. It seems to become her responsibility to train her children, to make sure to live up to the expectations that their families have set for them first before marriage to behave in a certain manner and fetch herself a ‘decent man’ and then after marriage to live with the rules and regulations that her husband had laid out for her in order to have a peaceful marriage (as though the only role that men are supposed to fulfill is to further their progeny and ear money). The catch is these manners, rules and regulations are those unsaid/ unwritten ‘codes of conduct’ is that once, just once they move from its vicious circle then one would never be excepted back. Or if you are not already a part of this elite culture then it’s difficult to make your way in. These circular games are played by the people in power as always, people at the top of the class hierarchical order. These unsaid/ unwritten rules/ manners/ code of conducts by default judge

² Shaw discusses these ironic method of exposing ‘follies and hypocrisies’ to highlight the fact that Austen’s novels appear to be discussing ‘mundane’ issues of life while she very cleverly loaded her work with a critique of the society that she herself inhabited and the society that her heroines occupy. (Shaw, 1975) p.: 282

³ Brown discusses this understanding of Austen and how it has Austen’s writing and Heroines have been understood over time. She marks her standpoint with the Feminist Literary Theory where Austen’s work was put under the microscope in terms of depiction. (Brown, 1990)

people by their background which includes the families that they are associated with and the money that family owns. In the text as well Emma 'adopts' Miss Smith clearly stating that looks like those of Miss Smiths and here intelligence must come from a 'good' family.

Women and marriage is a topic well explored by feminists and theorists. The constitution of marriage is one that has been defined as a union of two souls or a social obligation for women for a respectable life or the end of a 'independent life' for a bachelor or a bachelorette or a beginning of a new adventure. These definitions are some examples of the fact that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' understanding of this important aspect of many lives. Oxford dictionary defines marriage as – “the formal union of a man and a woman, typically as recognized by law, by which they become husband and wife”. Devoid of all human emotions Oxford Dictionary offers us a universally accepted 'meaning' of marriage, forgetting the fact that in many cases marriage is not only about the 'man' and 'woman' (not keeping account other sexualities). In 1812 Samuel Johnson's Dictionary defined Marriage as “the act of uniting for life a man and woman for life according to law”(Johnson & Hamilton, 1812). So, we can see the leap that our society has taken from calling it a union for life to a law ordained obligation. In the eighteenth century divorce was not even a option. The lives of women in that era have been carefully studied by theorists and feminists and they have by large agreed to the fact that women had no other 'respectable' option for a happy-social life (discussion about 'private lives' seemed to be a sin). As mentioned earlier Austen herself never got married. She had good reasons for it, even though she shows her own insecurities in her writing, her single and successful life says it all. Women were not allowed to work as professionals at that time, their main agenda for life was outlined by the patriarchy, which was to get married at an 'appropriate age', take care of their husbands and their household, bear children and then take care of them and if one has a daughter it is the mother's responsibility to marry her daughter 'well'! That said, moving on to *Emma* the question often asked is if *Emma* is a novel 'about' marriage. In order to understand the extent and implications of the question one need to consider how many marriages, beside's Emma's own, the novel involves.

The novel opens with the marriage of Miss Anne Taylor with Mr. Weston. This leads to Emma's match-making for Miss Smith and Mr. Elton, and the special interest aroused by Frank Churchill. When Mr. Elton clears the air about his feeling towards Emma, leaving Miss Smith emotional distraught and gets married to Augustha Hawkins, a fresh round of scheming starts, first with Frank Churchill and then with George Knightley (who is pulled into Emma's plotting despite of his best efforts to stay away from them). The end of the novel sees the marriage of three others, who have grown out of the 'conspiracies', courtesy Emma and the plot development of the novel. The question that really needs to be examined is weather the novel is about marriages or about “the necessary preparations and preconditions for it; about courtship, in fact.” (Daiches, 2007) Looked at closely, the plot develops around the processes of courtship, how things get soured up and then change course rather than the inner dynamics of the marriage itself. As far as the inner dynamics ('private' still not to be discussed) of the institution of marriage itself is concerned, we are provided a superficial glimpse into three marriages: the marriage of a middle-aged couple, the Westons (which completely absent in the theatrical adaptations), which has its own particular tone for definition of happiness, second the marriage of a young couple, the Eltons (again absent in the theatrical adaptations) which may represent a harmony of minds but which has been bought by Mr. Elton by 'rejecting' another girl who was not of his own class and did not have money that Mr. Elton expected and third the marriage of John Knightley's, a couple with five children. Jane Austen does not give a picture of the 'marriage' itself. It is a very social understanding of all these marriages, its

tensions or its problems. There is no ‘romantic union’ either, which can be seen only in the end when Miss Smith accepts Mr. Martin’s proposal and between Emma and Mr. Knightley. The larger image that is portrayed in front of the audience is that of a “content and happy lives”, which is as far from truth as the success and Emma’s match-making skills. In all this commotion what becomes evident is the ‘manner’, the ‘code of conduct’ of the characters in the events that take place. The confusions and the misunderstandings that float on the surface level which provides the comic element to Austen’s *Emma*, what emerges as the base to all this is the ‘Victorian morality’ and the defined ‘code of conduct’. Interestingly enough for Emma a proper ‘manner’ seems to be the defining characteristic of what may or may not happen in her life or Harriet’s life apart from the evident hierarchical difference between these characters. As mentioned earlier a woman in this period is expected to behave in a certain pre ordained manner and Emma is the epitome of this ‘manner’. A woman of her class does not indulge with ‘commons’ like Mr. Martin, even a conversation between them would not last past a mere ‘Good morning’ or a ‘how do you do’. Which again is a indication of her humility and his status. This code of conduct comes from the regent England. Unfortunately or fortunately so this fashion of hegemony has continued even after 180 years. In the adaptations that I have proposed to analyze these ‘mannerisms’ find their own peculiar way into the lives of the ‘modern’ beings. Jane Austen's introduction of characters tends to stress qualities (which yet again puts these characters in a mould of manners that those times internally inhabited) that are not directly visible but will shape and account for the behavior of the characters in the story that follows.

“The comic frame of these novels allows us to pursue such irony with pleasure, to scrutinize the world they present with enough freedom to observe its incongruities as well as its implicit purposiveness. It is in manners that Jane Austen's world exhibits greatest density, for manners are concrete, complex orderings, both personal and institutional. They are a language of gestures, for words too become gestures when they are used to sustain rapport; most of our social ties are established in "speech acts" or "performative utterances". Such a language may become a self-sufficient system: polite questions that expect no answers, the small reciprocal duties of host and guest, or elder and younger; the protocol and management of deference. Such a code provides a way of formalizing conduct and of distancing feeling; we do not feel the less for giving that feeling an accepted form, which allows us to control its expression in shared rituals.”(Price, 1975)

While manners may be a self-sufficient code, more often it is a game of signifiers, still at their most important they imply feelings and beliefs, moral attitudes which stand as their ultimate meaning and warrant. This stands true for the adaptations that followed the text years later. The manner in which one communicates or presents himself/ herself alters as to how others would look at them.

Marriage- wedding- love- equality- respect. Yes it is quite a mouth full, but this is what every Austen protagonist seem to be expecting for her life. By direct relation this is what seems to be one (or some) of the threads that string all the future adaptations that followed centuries later. These adaptations are spread over two decades and they adapt themselves into the existing atmosphere. Austen’s *Emma* has been adapted into various cultures, various time periods and in the case of *Clueless* it has been adapted in a different age group. As I have proposed I will be looking at three adaptations largely and I shall be referring to various other adaptations or modified versions of Austen’s *Emma* (1815). The three adaptations of *Emma* that I will be referring to are *Clueless* starring Alicia Silverstone, a 1995 Hollywood adaption directed by Amy Heckerling, a 2009 BBC adaptation into a mini-series directed by Jim O'Hanlon and *Aisha*, a 2010 Bollywood adaptation starring Sonam Kapoor and Abhay Deol,

directed by Rajshee Ojha. Emma and its popularity is evident by the fact that its being read, re-read and adapted by various directors across the world.

These adaptations are not merely a word by word or a scene by scene depiction of the 18th century novel. They have incorporated the features of the times that they have been made in and more interestingly given *Emma* a more universal appeal, not to forget its relevance across cultures and time. The three adaptations are strung together with a common base story but as the stories unveil they all differ from one another. In the newer/recent adaptations it has become more a question of ‘what women want?’

The BBC (British Broadcasting Channel) adaptations are the closest to the text. The 2009 version extends itself to the histories of the three young children of Highbury (Emma Woodhouse, Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax) and how their stories become essential to the turn of events in the novel/ the adaptation. The mini-series offers us a in depth understanding of the times and these characters that while reading the reader might miss out. Emma in this adaptation voices out, “Frank Churchill, Jane Fairfax and I are connected in some mysterious way.” (Emma, 2009, Episode 1) All these children have been distanced from their parents, Miss Fairfax’s parents died when she was young and as soon as Frank Churchill’s parents die his aunt (in possession of great fortune) offers to take him under her care as she believes that Mr. Churchill’s social standing is not the one that is ideal. In this mist of children being separated from their parent Emma stayed at home with a skeptical father who wouldn’t let his two daughters out of his sight since his wife died. So here is a father who believes that ‘marriage’ is not a good option for his daughter as it would require for them to leave him. Comparing this situation with a assumption that if Emma’s mother were alive she would have made it a huge deal to get her daughters ‘happily married’. This job now has to be designated to Emma’s governess who due to her status can’t ‘impose’ on her provider. Anne Taylor then assumes the role of a friend and a confidant for Emma’s father, Emma and to some extent even Mr. Knightly. But positioned lower than all the three, very evidently.

All these features are cleverly adapted in Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless* (1995). From the very beginning of both the novel and the movie, we can see the similarities between the two main characters. Emma Woodhouse is part of the rich, upscale society of a ‘large and populous village’ in nineteenth century England, while Cher Horowitz lives in rich, upscale Beverly Hills, U.S.A. In Highbury, the Woodhouses are ‘first in consequence there. All looked up to them.’ (7) Cher and her father are also among the cultural elite; he is a litigation lawyer, a prestigious and lucrative occupation in one of the most affluent cities in the world. Cher is also one of the most popular girls at her school. The description of Emma that Austen gives is also a description of Cher. She is “handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition.” (5) However, we shall see that Emma and Cher are not as perfect as they may seem. All the similarities add up to the relevance of Austen’s *Emma* after 180 years of its first publication. The film opens with a declaration that these are ‘Kids in America’ but the image gives us a very particular kind of ‘America’ and particular kind of kids. Cher is truly a child of Hollywood, her mother having died in ‘a fluke accident during a routine liposuction’, and her conception of the Beverly Center as the center of the world serves as the hub of Hollywood’s imperialism, its promulgation of a universalizing insularity, its relentless celebration of consumer culture and ready-to-go false consciousness. Cher thinks that Bosnia is in the Middle East and hazards a guess that Kuwait is in the Valley. The Valley itself, as far as these kids are concerned, is literally off the map. They get lost going to a party there. Cher can’t figure out why Lucy the maid, who comes from El Salvador, is angered when Cher assumes that Mexican is her language, and is duly rebuked by Josh, the Mr Knightly figure: ‘You

get upset if someone thinks you live below Sunset'. Amy Heckerling renovates old rhetorical devices in the service of new insights and pleasures. By reading Emma through the lens of a contemporary genre—the teen movie—and by rendering this teen world through a predominantly feminine consciousness, through conjuring up a girl's world, she exercises the sort of fictionally ethnographic exploration epitomized by Austen.

What we look at are the differences and why these differences. While Emma decides to take up 'match-making' as her life calling because she feels that she is 'bringing two beings together, that fit perfectly', Cher on the other hand does it purely for herself. Interestingly we see are shown that the entire school applauds for Cher's initiatives to bring her two professors together. This encompassed the 'high school' culture in the United States. She plans to bring two of her teachers together with the sole motivation of improving her grades. Similarly Cher 'invites' Tai (Miss Smith's character in *Clueless*) to be her friend, and refers Tai to Dionne as her new 'project'. An example of Cher's snobbishness can be seen in the scene where she and Dionne are explaining to Tai how to become more popular. Cher states that she has already started to elevate her social status "due to the fact that you hang with Dionne and I." Cher may be taking pity on Tai, but she does so with an air of arrogance because she knows she is from a higher social class. For both Emma and Cher their power comes from the money their families own. Cher sets out to improve Tai, her look and her social standing. The movie becomes a high school new comers guide to popularity. The dos and don'ts are elaborately explained by Cher to Tai, but here it's all about Tai's look and how to get the attention of the one boy (Elton). *Clueless* thus proceeds to become a pun on who is the one clueless here? Cher consistently calls Tai clueless about the on goings of the society and what is 'good' for her. This moves on to become a question about was it Cher who has been clueless about people's emotions and about her own self all this while. All these instances in the film add up to the ignorance and self importance that Cher inhabits from her status as a spoilt-rich and popular high school girl, which in the film throws a negative light on her and one starts to understand her to be as a 'all looks no brains' snob. It is to counter this image we see her scoring a A+ in calculus, running a collection drive and helping out her father with his work (which is mere highlighting of numbers, but still helps her image a little).

"Through her treatment of teenagers, the director suggests that the frivolity which Austen satirized in Emma—when, for example, her female characters are shown enthusiastically taking up shallow hobbies like collecting and solving riddles, a 'literary pursuit' which, as Austen implies, emphasized the limited participation women had in more serious literature—has endured all along." (Despotopoulou, 2006)

Clueless, instead of attempting a realistic picture of life in either the nineteenth century or the twentieth, focuses on extreme behavior and parodies it. Kim Ratcliff of *Entertainment Weekly* queried a group of students from Beverly Hills High School as to the realism of *Clueless*. They indicated that portrayals of the fashion, the language, and the lifestyles of the students in the film are "way exaggerated." Set in Los Angeles in the late 1990s, the film opens with Cher/Emma confident and in control. She is popular, rich, intelligent, and in need of new worlds to conquer. In voice-over, Cher admits, after she receives a 'C' in debate, 'I felt impotent and out of control, which I really hate.' Her solution at this moment is to go to the mall. Her long-term project is to do a make-over on newcomer Tai/Harriet (Brittany Murphy). Her friend Dionne (Stacey Dash) asserts, 'Cher's main thrill in life is a make-over. OK, it gives her a sense of control in a world full of chaos.' Regardless of Tai's preference for "loadie" Travis/Mr. Martin (Breckin Meyer), Cher tries to match her with the much popular and good looking hunk on campus

Elton/Mr. Elton (Jeremy Sisto), but Elton prefers the more beautiful and socially upscale Cher. After Tai falls in love with Cher's stepbrother, Josh/Mr. Knightley (Paul Rudd), Cher realizes that she herself loves Josh.

The characters spend a great deal of time shopping and doing make-overs, and Cher spends much of her time attempting to manipulate her father, friends, and teachers. The story line and the characters parallel in some ways those of the novel *Emma*, and although the film provides the reader of the novel with delightful shocks of recognition, it also has appealed to viewers who have never read the novel. The film was so successful that it inspired a television series by the same title.

In Cher's social group, it is 'uncool' to enjoy physical activity. Cher does not participate in her physical education class, but stands on the sidelines talking/ gossipping. When called upon to strike at a tennis ball from a ball machine, she is so busy talking that the ball almost hits her. She asserts to her exasperated teacher that this is a 'lawsuit waiting to happen.' Dionne refuses to hit a tennis ball because she says that doing so might undermine skills that she learned in private tennis lessons. Obviously, private lessons represent status; physical education classes are not to be taken seriously. Another friend, Amber (Elisa Donovan), says that her plastic surgeon told her not to participate in activities that involve having balls fly near her nose. All in all, Cher and her friends hold themselves aloof from physical activity for their own sake and from sports without the realizing the importance of it, the question that I raised earlier of who is clueless here, I believe can be seen in these events.

However, Cher encourages Tai to work out in order to improve her figure. The implication is that Cher also works out, but although she appears in an exercise outfit, she is never shown exercising. At one point as she is experiencing a rare moment of self-loathing, she says, 'I feel like such a heifer.' Working out to improve one's appearance is activity sanctioned by her peer group, but her peer group would not approve of any excessive effort (uncool). This also defined what physical activity women need to practice, that not only helps one get in shape but also keeps up with their status in society. For Cher, this is only another device for reshaping and controlling her protégé. Tai allows Cher to assume control of her exercise, makeup, hair color, clothing, and friends. In Cher she blindly trusts, it is so until the moment when she starts to feel at par with Cher that she finally confronts. This Cher cannot accept, for only one could lead and according to Cher it should be her. Cher's confidence, as mentioned earlier lies in her social standing, which is shaken once Tai starts believing that she is no less than Cher, where as Cher believes that by helping Tai find her ground in the school would make Tai indebted. Women's position in this film is treated with great irony and satire. Heckerling's *Clueless* shows us women who are in control and aware of their position. They use it to their advantage. But in doing so they make fools of themselves. Dionne, during her practice session with her boyfriend fights with him over her driving skills which on screen seems no skills et al. She crosses signals, she can barely drive straight, but in the end Cher comments on how much in love Dionne and her boyfriend are. Which one is left to wonder, if it was a point at all to be stated.

So it is the 'manner' in which you project yourself to the world and there are a set of unsaid- unwritten of 'code of conducts' already in place for one to be as popular as Cher. These set of rules existed in the 18th century but, yes they were more to do with genteel social conduct. No, I am not trying to justify these set of rules, just trying to state the difference. These rules have always left out people from the small rigid circle. In *Clueless* it's a different matter in terms that Tai's family is left out of the loop completely. Finding a boyfriend and becoming famous is all that seems to encompass her life, courtesy Cher. Though Tai comes in her own once she starts feeling that all this while Cher's been treating her as

a project and not as a friend. The film is made in a very serious tone so one can't decide if the director has attempted a satirical approach or is she really serious while showing the early 20th century rich-LA (Los Angeles)- teenage life? Heckling created her own set of mysteries in her film. By missing out on some of the characters that are important to Emma's transformation in the text like Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax and transforming the characters of the Westons to High School teachers to be used for Cher's benefit and Frank Churchill's character to a 'gay best friend'. Amy Heckerling, the script writer and director of *Clueless*, probably excluded the character of Jane Fairfax (as well as Mrs. Bates and Miss Bates) for the sake of complexity and time constraints. Or the possibility that she wanted to add some contemporary complexities that the early 20th century projected. It is in this period that we see the stereotypes attached to the queer community. Gay men could be a woman's best friends, they love to go for shopping, they enjoy dancing and not to forget that they are gorgeous (as these are the only factors in a friendship that matter). Movies like *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993), *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997), *Three to Tango* (1999), *Boat Trip* (2003), *Made of Honor* (2008) and *Over her Dead Body* (2008) reflect the same stereotypes.

“MODERATOR: In addition to the Jane Austen structure, tell us about the primary research that you did into the character, into the contemporary scene?”

AMY HECKERLING: I could call it research. It's more like fun. I went to Beverly Hills High School and sat in on debates and plays, and had long conversations with the kids. Finding skateboarding contests that would be within driving distance... finding the various places I wanted to go to see what I needed to see. Also I watch MTV constantly, you know.”⁴ (1995)

Heckerling tried to make Austen's characters as contemporary as they could get. Mr. Martin's character as a skateboarder and Cher does not hold a high opinion of him and quite literally shoves him off by the mere comment 'he is so into skateboarding, it's so last year'. When asked about the similarities between *Emma* and *Clueless*, Heckerling responds, “I had this character in my head, the girl, and the kind of things she was doing, saying and the journey I wanted to take her through. But I needed a strong plot and I had read *Emma* in college. I read it again and said, This just lays out perfectly, this is just the most perfect structure for what this girl should go through.”⁵

Marriage and manners are the two souls to this text, that this text might not be as interesting and fascinating otherwise. While *Clueless* becomes more of a story of a teenage social life from time to time it does concentrate on the courtships and dating culture that is prevalent in the time. It is in this light that Cher finally decides to find herself a 'man' and not the typical high school boy whom she dismisses with a consistent statement 'as if' throughout the film. What is even more enthralling is the character of Josh (Mr. Knightley's character in *Clueless*), he is Cher's step brother by her father's second wife. Also it is riveting to see Cher trying to get Josh's attention compared to the way she tries to attract Christian (before she knew he is gay) once she realizes that she'd been in love with him all this time. All her 'code of conducts' fail to impress him. She has to now take interest in things that he prefers, like listening to world news rather than cartoons. “It is true that some classic films present love indirectly-to be consistent with hard-bitten heroes and/or the conflict of strong egos too proud to submit to love.”(Henderson, 1978) Drawing from Austen's world men with ego and pride. They are smart, intelligent, mysterious and rich. What appealed the most to the audience is the nostalgia of a peaceful south England that set the tone for 'ideal romance'. The notion of romance is much hyped in *Clueless*. It

⁴ Extracts from an interview with Amy Heckerling, director of *Clueless* at the American Film Institute, September 14, 1995

⁵ Extracts from an interview with Amy Heckerling, director of *Clueless* at the American Film Institute, September 14, 1995

is also how she assumes romance to be. It is clear from the way she tries to catch Christian's and Josh's attention.

A adaptation about a woman/ girl's assumption that, she can make the world a better place by 'bringing loved ones together' and is proud of her 'match-making skills', it is not possible to not talk about romance and the much obvious comic elements within the text and the films. *Clueless* is clubbed under the genre of Romantic-Comedy and Aisha is said to be one of the very few films in Bollywood that can be categorized as 'Hindi Romantic Comedy'. *Aisha* (2010) offers some more interesting deviations in the story, it is a story set in two cosmopolitans of India. This is 185 years post the first text and five years post the interesting and captivating adaption by Amy Heckerling. I shall be discussing Aisha in much detail in the third chapter.

As discussed earlier the relevance of marriage and the lack of emotion (namely romance) in the couple that are already married. The novels were a critique of the society that Austen herself inhabited, she was working with the society and the limitations of it. Despite of this Austen's novels are said to be some of the earliest works that have become 'classic romances'. These romances happen between protagonists largely. Otherwise romance seems to be a very secondary thought, ensued deep within the text. A 'Romantic Comedy' in simple terms would involve a series of misunderstandings, consciously or unconsciously created by the protagonists of those who are relevant in making a story change its course. So there be a 'happy' picture portrayed of the protagonists life and then slowly show the loop holes that give way to the protagonists space to change over the course of the story (to become more aware of themselves and their surroundings). All Austen stories are so, all her female and male leads come with a baggage of pride, prejudices, class discrimination, 'lost in their own happiness', etc. *Aisha* deals a lot more with the idea of 'love' and marriage while *Clueless*, as discussed earlier, is a story of Cher's idea of a 'popular social life' and what is now categorized a 'coming of age' film. There are hints of love and what a love story must look like in the scenes of the two teachers that Cher prides herself to have brought together and the scenes of Tai and Travis (Mr. Martin's character in the film) which she only consents to when she decides to see that people's private lives are as not her playground. Theorists have argued that Austen 'disapproves' of romance, this makes the situation even more ironic as the adaptations that have followed since the 1990s give us the impression of 'a classic romance'. Or this could be understood in terms of the nostalgia that stories such as *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice* have left us feeling nostalgic for the period of time. The luxurious countryside settings and to belong to the class that could enjoy it. "That Jane Austen disapproves of Romance as a model world is of course true and has often been argued; this essay is intended in part to show once more, from several perspectives, how that disapproval informs her fiction. But it will also be insisted here that when she reacts against Romance, she does not simply choose life instead. Rather she designs a new milieu, a preferred model world which does not in fact banish Romance but moves it from the center to the border of her narrative. Romance for Jane Austen is not so much an implausible as an undesirable pattern of expectation. The plot *Emma* acknowledges the accidents of Romance, and allows them to occur, but only at a safe distance from the sort of accident that is morally to be desired. The center of her territory requires another name, and the one proposed here is 'Georgic Comedy⁶.'" (FRY, 1979)

⁶ Emma is clearly comic, no matter what one's definition of comedy may be, and it is almost as apparent that the novel has georgic qualities, if we understand "georgic" to mean the teaching of useful and sociable skills against the backdrop of a farm...Jane Austen's values are without a doubt communally centered, but they are still rural values that the community discovers by locating itself firmly in the nature it cultivates, reaping as it sows. This is a key theme of *Emma*, in which

The understanding of ‘Romantic Comedy’ in one particular way or in one particular context. ‘Romantic Comedy’ can be understood from various angles and various contexts.

“Romantic comedy is a family of resemblances. Filmic romantic comedy is one branch of that family but also, as we have seen, a family in itself with diverse sub-branches. Since the branches of romantic comedy include entire art forms and their traditions-ballet, drama, painting, novel, opera, poem, symphony-it is necessarily true that the differences among them, which are material, are greater than the similarities, which are semantic, abstract, thematic. (As is the heading "romantic comedy" itself.) This is why transformations of subjects or themes from one medium to another are never automatic and never equal and why they offer an excellent perspective on the signifying processes of both, especially on the second or receiving system, on which the burden of transformation falls.”(Henderson, 1978)

In this one paragraph Henderson gives us the gist of how *Clueless* fits perfectly in the ‘Romantic Comedy’ genre. He, in this one paragraph explains the complexity of trying to define this genre (or any other genre for that matter) but what is more curious is the moderated adaptations are much easily put under a label than the text itself. The key point that marks the validation of a movie to be a part of this genre is that these movies are supposed to have ‘happily ever after’. *Aisha* works on similar scale only with moderations according to the time and culture that it is set in.

So I think it would be fair to say that *Emma* might or might not be about marriage but is surely about how ‘marriage’ effects the society and that our protagonist’s inhabit or the other way around. In the case of *Clueless* it is about ‘courtship’ and ‘relationships’ as in a ‘modern’ world of 15 year olds. As mentioned earlier Manners come along with the ‘concept of marriage’ as a package deal. Our protagonist belonging to a particular rich- sophisticated -learned- beautiful category, they belong to the top of the hierarchical order that had been created by the people of that society. Austen critiques this power that comes from being the alpha in the hierarchical order. Emma and Knightley are these alphas. The kind of lives these people lead, every move that they make is a trend setter. But Mr. Knightley is allowed to lecture Emma because he is older, wiser and knows the ways of the world, which exactly what our female protagonists seem to be missing. But in their heads it is Emma/ Cher/ Aisha’s understanding of marriage/ courtship or romance/ love or their behavior/ manners is what seems dominates their society.

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marriage and becoming the mistress of a farm are interdependent signs that the. expansive egoism of Romance has been modified by a moral expansion of territory, a georgic extension of village and estate. (FRY, 1979)

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