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University of Chester

Department of English

MA Nineteenth Century Literature and Culture

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A Secondary Sisterhood:

Revisioning Nineteenth-Century Homosocial Bonds Between Women

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the ways in which revisionary fiction engages with understanding that nineteenth-century gender constructs negatively impacted women's homosocial bonds. It examines three different periods throughout the nineteenth-century to reflect upon the ways in which revisionary texts engage with changing cultural ideologies throughout the period. Beginning with Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and comparing this to the text and television adaptation *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011, 2013), Chapter one examines the ways in which James's text interprets Austen's potentially proto-feminist comment on female homosocialism. It draws upon the ways in which the 'Jane Austen' brand has potentially influenced James's text, but also reflects on how the brand continues to move with changing modern cultures through recent representations such as the internet comic, *Manfeels Park*. Chapter two takes a leap forward into the mid- to late-Victorian period and explores the ways in which lesbian potential may have also been affected by the secondary conditions of women's homosocial bonds. It examines how Sarah Waters' neo-Victorian texts *Fingersmith* and *Tipping the Velvet* write over the dearth of lesbian representation in canonical literature of the period. Chapter three examines representation of the New Woman in *The Odd Women* (1893), the film, *Hysteria* (2011) and *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002). It compares the ways in which her attempt to carve out a new kind of female homosocialism has a unique link to the present because of the New Woman's 'modern' approach. It examines the representation of her as an individual in revisionary texts, compared to her as part of a collective in *The Odd Women*, and how this makes suggestions about the state of modern feminism.

List of Abbreviations

Pride and Prejudice	*P+P*
Death Comes to Pemberley	*DCTP*
Goblin Market	*GM*
Tipping the Velvet	*TTV*
The Crimson Petal and the White	*CP*
The Odd Women	*TOW*

Introduction

A Secondary Sisterhood:

Revisioning Nineteenth-Century Homosocial Bonds Between Women

This dissertation will explore the ways in which revisionary fiction negotiates the understanding that homosocial bonds between women are affected by constructs of gender. It suggests that revisions of the nineteenth-century recognise that women's homosocial bonds were secondary to male homosocial bonds, and that such fiction reaches into the past to second both the confirmation of progress and the necessity for feminist efforts today. Although there are undoubtedly a number of factors that may affect women's homosocial bonds, including class and race, this piece of work does not explore these on the comprehension that they require a larger word count (or a smaller period of time to focus in on). Instead, it focuses on the politics of revisioning the past from three different points in the nineteenth-century, beginning with Jane Austen in the early period; moving on to the boundary between homosocial and homosexual relationships between women during the mid-Victorian period; and ending with the New Woman at the fin-de-siècle.

The politics of revisioning the nineteenth-century make up a complex and varied negotiation between the past and the present.[1] This dissertation uses the term 'modern' to refer to such revisionary works in the sense that they are 'modern' in comparison to the nineteenth-century texts. It uses the term 'revisionary' to umbrella the variety of texts used in this body of work. This term is broad enough to include: the fan-fiction sequel (*Death Comes to Pemberley*); the neo-Victorian (*Fingersmith, Tipping the Velvet* and *The Crimson Petal and the White*); and the half-winking nostalgic re-vision (*Hysteria*). They all fit the OED's

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[1] For a detailed breakdown of the varieties and reasons for such varieties of 're-visionary fiction', see: Peter Widdowson, '"Writing back": contemporary re-visionary fiction', *Textual Practice,* 20 (2006), pp. 491-507.

term 'revision': 'To form an image of again or afresh, esp. in one's memory; to envisage again', in the sense that they each 'form an image' of the nineteenth century.[2] Therefore, the terms 'revision' and 'revisioning' are used throughout this piece of work to refer to this literal process. However, the approaches towards revisioning are distinctly different in each text; and yet these methods and reasons invariably cross over and blend. P. D. James' *DCTP* merges her own interest in Austen's work with her usual crime-fiction genre. When she was asked: 'With which character in Jane Austen do you identify yourself?', her reply was that it 'has to be Elizabeth Bennet'.[3] This suggests that *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) resonates with modern female experience and that *DCTP* is potentially motivated by this idea. In contrast, the neo-Victorian texts, *Fingersmith* (2002)*, TTV* (1998) and *CP* (2002), write over gaps in representations of female experience in a nineteenth century setting. This means that the 'neo-Victorian' deliberately creates a new ('neo') version of the past to embed modern ideology and understanding into our image of the past, rather than suggesting that the past resonates with the present.[4] However, as suggested, although both ideas contrast, they do cross over and merge. The film, *Hysteria* (2011), uses a nineteenth century setting to illuminate the vast difference between then and now, 'half-winkingly' and 'nostalgically' mocking the ignorance of the past and celebrating the origins of modern perspectives. With these distinctions in mind then, each text bridges the past with the present (and vice-versa) in ways that either deliberately, or unavoidably, negotiate the leap of difference between social experiences for women then and for women now. Regarding the politics of revisionary fiction and its special relationship with feminist concerns, Adrienne Rich wrote in 1972 that:

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[2] http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/276072?rskey=fAHiAP&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid (accessed 5 September 2014).
[3] To read the full interview, see: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jul/15/pd-james-author-interview-readers (accessed 20 August 2014).
[4] 'neo: Forming compounds referring to a new, revived, or modified form of some doctrine, belief, practice, language, artistic style, etc., or designating those who advocate, adopt, or use it.'
http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/126016?redirectedFrom=neo#eid (accessed 20 Aug 2014).

>Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society.[5]

Revisions then, can act as an essential tool to portray and create discussion about women's experience despite the already constructed image of the 'male-dominated society' of the nineteenth-century.

The 'self-destructiveness [that a] male-dominated society' inflicts upon women affects female experience in a variety of ways. This dissertation will focus on how this 'self-destructiveness' affects literary representations of women's homosocial bonds in the nineteenth-century, and how the act of revisioning negotiates the 'refusal' of this understanding. The ways in which women's homosocial bonds might be affected by such 'self-destructiveness', especially in comparison to male homosocial bonds, is identified by Nina Auerbach. She points out that:

>Initiation into a band of brothers is a traditional privilege symbolized by uniforms, rituals, and fiercely shared loyalties: but sisterhood [...] looks often like a blank exclusion. A community of women may suggest less the honor of fellowship than an antisociety, an austere banishment from both social power and biological rewards.[6]

Auerbach's observation identifies that patriarchal structures backhandedly affect the ways in which women bond with each other: that, as a result of 'traditional [male] privilege', women's engendered friendships represent 'an austere banishment from both social power and biological rewards'. However, in contrast, Oulton suggests that: 'friendship is more often gendered – if implicitly – as female, in its emphasis on strong emotion and a potential loss of self control that at its worst involves the threat of madness'.[7] This contradicts the idea that

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[5] Adrienne Rich ,'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', *College English*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Oct, 1972), pp. 18-30 (p. 18).
[6] Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women, An Idea in Fiction* (London: Harvard University Press, 1978)
[7] Carolyn W. De La L. Oulton,., *Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 71.

constructs of gender make 'a community of women' into an 'antisociety' (although it does suggest that 'madness' is part of homosocialism's engendered make-up for women), and instead, suggests that 'friendship' is more closely associated with 'female' capabilities. However, this dissertation is centred on identifying how revisionary texts engage with the modern understanding that women's homosocial bonds can exist outside of traditional gender constructs. This is specifically because such 'traditional' constructs stimulate women's homosocial bonds on the shared biological faculty of motherhood; their relationship to men (marriage); and a long list of constructed binary 'feminine' traits such as 'strong emotion'. The understanding is that twenty-first century feminism is still in the process of negotiating the ways in which women can retain a homosocial bond based on these values, while also breaking down the dichotomous relationship that such traits have with patriarchy. Modern homosocial bonds between women, then, seek to exist on the premise that women and women's social experience is equally as valid and valuable as men's: that it includes the shared celebration of achievement, involves humour and is not restricted to biological capabilities or sharing a sense of backhanded inferiority. Revisionary fiction engages with this concern on the basis that it can see issues regarding engendered approaches to friendship 'with fresh eyes'. However, rather than identifying that such texts categorically represent a plain 'refusal' of patriarchal dominance, this dissertation explores how homosocial bonds between women can be seen to have progressed, and how they have potentially stagnated. It will explore how engaging with the past resonates with today and how modern ideas resonate with the past.

Throughout this piece, the terms 'femaleness' and 'maleness' are mostly used in place of the terms 'femininity' and 'masculinity'. This terminology deliberately blurs the distinction between genders and their constructed traits. Where 'female' is a biological label, 'femininity' is the construction of gender typically attached to that label. However, where

'femininity' has been argued to perpetuate and represent the subordination of the female sex, 'femaleness' has a deliberately paradoxical ambiguity and certainty about its meaning.[8] It associates with a person of the female sex, yet differentiates from 'femininity' in the sense that it has fewer vaguely negative connotations. 'Femaleness' instead, then, is directly linked to being 'female', but at the same time, presupposes that the female sex is a blank canvas of meaning, differing from person to person, yet indisputably 'female' and therefore separate from 'male'. Because this dissertation begins with the early part of the nineteenth-century, Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist perspective from her text *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) provides contextual relevance of how feminist ideas frame the nineteenth century. Wollstonecraft made a plea to her 'own sex' that they ought to:

> endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt.[9]

Wollstonecraft's agenda is clear. She recognises that the 'soft phrases' of femininity have been arbitrarily merged with femaleness, and seeks to expose the ways in which femininity alone breeds 'contempt'. Pointedly, this is explained without denial of female difference, recognising that '[I]n the government of the physical world, it is observable that the female point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male' (p. 24). Her rhetoric, then, at this point in the long nineteenth-century, recognises that women need to re-define femaleness on terms that are less likely to breed 'contempt', but without denying bodily difference. On the

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[8] Judith Butler points out that: 'Feminist theory has often been critical of naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality that assume the meaning of women's social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology. In distinguishing sex from gender, feminist theorists have disputed casual explanations that assume that sex dictates or necessitates certain social meanings for women's existence'. Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', in Julie Rivkin, and Michael Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd edn, (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), p. 901.

[9] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (London: Pearson Education, 2007), p. 25. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

opposite end of the frame, this dissertation uses feminist perspectives from recent sources such as the internet comic *Manfeels* Park, Twitter hashtags and Caitlin Moran's *How to be a Woman* (2011), to contextualise the cultural appropriation of feminist ideas of female homosocialism and how these reflect on the past.

Chapter one examines *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and compares it to P. D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011) and the television adaptation of the same name (2013). It explores the ways in which Austen appears to reject eighteenth-century ideas of gender (in a similar manner to Wollstonecraft), and the ways in which this is relevant to the portrayal of Elizabeth's homosocial bonds with women in *P+P*. Conversely, it reflects on how this rejection has been interpreted in *DCTP* (the novel and the adaptation) and the manner in which both texts appear to have been influenced by the 'Jane Austen' brand. Devoney Looser argues that 'Jane Austen has, according to one critic, been "pimped" or customised into a kind of "Have it Your Way" author. Austen has become 'an infinitely exploitable global brand', with *Pride and Prejudice* poised as the "representative Austen title".'[10] This is relevant to the ways in which each text portrays homosocial bonds between women because the 'Jane Austen' brand has interpreted Austen's contention with the boundaries of femaleness as a celebration of maleness. This chapter discusses how the 'Austenmania' that followed the 1995 BBC production of *P+P* glorifies Darcy, rather than Elizabeth's androgynous capabilities, and how this is interpreted in *DCTP*.

Chapter two explores the understanding that the secondary status of women's homosocial bonds are also affected by the ways in which mid-Victorian to late-Victorian texts portrayed homosexual potential between women. It explores the ways in which Sarah Waters' neo-Victorian texts *Fingersmith* and *Tipping the Velvet* write over this gap in

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[10] Devoney Looser, 'The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author' in Janet Todd (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 185.

representation, while still maintaining that women's bonds were affected by the negative impact of gender constructs. As this chapter discusses four texts instead of three, and covers two different time frames, it is slightly longer that the other two chapters. For this reason, it is also divided into two halves. The first half discusses how mid-Victorian ideas of 'romantic' friendship between women provided a smoke-screen for lesbian desire and how *Fingersmith* exploits the ironic potential of this. It compares *Fingersmith* with *Goblin Market* (1862) chiefly for the ways in which they mirror each other. Both texts glorify the femaleness of 'romantic friendship', suggesting that female bonds are superior to male connections and that women's biological maternal instinct is in part an explanation of this. However, Waters' neo-Victorian context deliberately deconstructs the idea that this also equates to an eventual concession to heteronormativity, and hints at how inflating the femaleness of bonding capabilities potentially perpetuated lesbian desire. The second half discusses how the lesbian potential of glorified femaleness later became suspect, and that this was justified as a reason to return to the deflation of femaleness in comparison to maleness. It examines *Carmilla* (1871) and *TTV* to compare the ways in which anxieties of lesbian desire and its link to femaleness are suggestively exposed. In *Carmilla*, the vampiric lust towards Laura, masked through the manipulation of 'romantic' female bonds, implies that femaleness is dangerously unstable in its propensity to encourage homosocial bonds between women. In contrast, Nancy's negotiation with the stability of maleness through transgendered dressing in *TTV* reiterates the understanding that femaleness was an unstable and contentious ground for female bonds. However, the neo-Victorian context of *TTV* also asserts that mimicking maleness for social and sexual validation through clothes is ultimately superficial.

Chapter three discusses the ways in which the New Woman negotiates female bonds as part of her political agenda to reassign equal value to femaleness. For her, re-establishing female worth based on values other than motherhood and marriage is an essential motivation.

She also has a unique link to the present in the sense that her values were understood to be modern, which means that revisioning her resonates with modern feminism in particularly poignant ways. It compares the representation of the New Woman in *The Odd Women* (1893) with the way she is represented in *The Crimson Petal and the White* and *Hysteria.* The most obvious disparity between the two contexts is that both modern representations emphasise the New Woman's social isolation, whereas Gissing deliberately alludes to the understanding that she was part of a collective of 'Women'. However, they do all demonstrate the necessity of a new kind of female homosocialism, and their unique bridge between the modern New Woman of the period and the modern woman today also asserts that this process is not quite complete.

Chapter 1

Nineteenth Century Beginnings:

Women's Homosocial Bonds in Jane Austen and 'Jane Austen'

Literary revisions of the early nineteenth century through an Austen lens automatically

engage, however tenuously, with the complex manner in which Austen's novels explore

women's homosocial bonds. In *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet,

befriends her sister, Jane, and her neighbour, Charlotte, with relative ease. However, Austen

also makes the suggestion that femininity can create a social barrier between women,

especially in comparison to masculinity. Janet Todd points out that 'The dichotomous

psychology of the eighteenth century separated sense or reason from emotion or sensibility

and associated the first with men and the second with women'.[11] With this in mind, female

friendship in its engendered mode is deprived of sense or reason. Austen recognises that these

engendered traits had a potentially troubling effect upon women's homosocial bonds, and

creates a heroine who challenges the 'dichotomous psychology' of the century she was

leaving behind. One of the ways in which Austen does this, is through the suggestion that

Elizabeth's 'sense' allows her a unique social connection to male characters, as well as

female characters. Mr Bennet favours Lizzy for her 'quickness' in comparison to her sisters,

and 'the evening conversation [...] lost much of its animation and almost all its sense' her in

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[11] Janet M. Todd, 'Female Friendship in Jane Austen's Novels', *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries (New Brunswick, NJ)*, 39 (1977), pp. 29-43 (p. 31).

absence.[12] Elizabeth transcends the social limitations of her gender and this is symbolised

through her close social affiliation to male characters. This gives primacy to maleness, but

also makes the suggestion that women are not incapable of embodying an androgynous ideal,

retaining the state of femaleness, but abandoning the derogatory codes of femininity. By

challenging the gender binary though Elizabeth's social achievements, Austen associates

femaleness with 'sense' as well as 'sensibility'. However, Austen also makes the suggestion

that blurring the gender binary affects Elizabeth's relationships with women in ways that

illuminate the social boundaries of gender.

       P. D. James's fan-fiction novel, *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011), and the television

adaptation of the same name (2013), revision Austen's heroine with a similar preoccupation.

In the adaptation in particular, Elizabeth's relationship with Darcy is exemplified through its

emphasis on equality. When the magistrate stumbles around the details of his visit, waiting

for a male only audience, Darcy states: 'Forgive me, Mr Selwyn: my wife and I have no

secrets'.[13] Darcy's apologetic response to Selwyn is indicative of the transgressive nature of

such an idea and boosts the contention that Elizabeth is revolutionary in her social capacity.

However, James emphasises the potential difficulties that Elizabeth faces in her absorption

into Darcy's male world. Therefore, the idea that blurred concepts of gender are invasive to

women's social experience are also explored in both texts. In specific contrast to Austen,

James explores Elizabeth's blurred gender characteristics with a much stronger emphasis on

the problems associated with transgression, and this is played out through her disconnection

from and struggle with female homosocialism. The difference between the ways in which

each text approaches this issue can be traced through the texts' contextual relationship with

the 'Jane Austen' brand and feminist discourse. Rebecca Munford observes that 'The cultural

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[12] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), p. 4; p. 54. All further references will be given in the body of the text.
[13] Daniel Percival (dir.), *Death Comes to Pemberley,* BBC1 (26-28 December 2013).

capital of Austen in the 1990s (and beyond) has [...] been fed by the return to and the

reinvigoration of heterosexual romance and traditional femininity that gives shape to

postfeminist discourse in its nostalgic mode'.[14] Austen's proto-feminist potential in *P+P* is

revisioned in *DCTP* in a 'postfeminist [...] nostalgic mode' in the sense that the 'heterosexual

romance' between Elizabeth and Darcy is given primacy over any positive assertions about

female friendships. This chapter will discuss the ways in which *DCTP* revisions Austen's

comment on the relationship between femaleness and friendship. It will explore the

contextual relevance of all three texts in relation to the ways in which they negotiate the

heroine's homosocial experience as a woman during the period.

Austen's novel closely follows Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of
Woman* (1792), and although it is unclear whether Austen read this text, James utilises the

contextual relevance of it in *DCTP*. James writes (through Alveston's dialogue):

> We have entered the nineteenth century; we do not need to be a disciple of Mrs
> Wollstonecraft to feel that women should not be denied a voice in matters that
> concern them. It is some centuries since we accepted that a woman has a soul. Is it not
> time that we accepted that she also has a mind? [15]

The use of the pronoun, 'we', imparts the suggestion that Wollstonecraft's ideas were

collectively recognised during the period. Moreover, Alveston's reference to the progression

of ideas concerning women over 'centuries' resonates with the idealised link between

Austen's bicentennial context and its pervasiveness today. The implication is that the

'centuries' of progress concerning gender (that Alveston mentions) have also passed between

Austen and James (thus allowing James to make her own comment on gender with modern

readers in mind). Alveston's feminist proclamation is made in the context of his love of

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[14] Rebecca Munford, '"The future of Pemberley": Emma Tennant, the "Classic Progression" and Literary
Trespassing', in *Uses of Austen, Jane's Afterlives*, eds. Gillian Dow and Clare Hanson (Basingstoke: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2012), pp. 61-2.
[15] P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), p. 134. All further references will
be given in the body of the text.

Georgiana, who wishes to 'be of use to Elizabeth' (p. 134). Therefore, it is in recognition of

the need for women to have 'a voice', in order to orchestrate their own rights to female

friendship. However, although Alveston's comment appears to be an attempt to blur the

expectations of femaleness to encourage female friendship, it is also apparent that

Georgiana's voice does not influence Darcy without going through Alveston first. Moreover,

James writes that 'Elizabeth had been sitting quietly wondering whether she could speak

without making matters worse' (p. 134). This means that despite referring to Wollstonecraft's

text with the positive assertion that it represents Austen's proto-feminist potential, James

actually perpetuates the idea that women struggled to find a voice. However, Elizabeth's

sense of responsibility for potentially 'making matters worse' in a conversation about gender

suggests that James was aware of the hostility towards Wollstonecraft's ideas in Austen's

period. Johnson points out that: 'No woman novelist, even among the most progressive,

wished to be discredited by association with Mary Wollstonecraft, particularly after

Godwin's widely attacked *Memoirs* disclosed details about her sexual improprieties and

suicide attempts'.[16] With this in mind, James's suggestion that Elizabeth would have

considered remaining quiet, mirrors the potential response from Austen. This means that

women's overall inability to demonstrate female unity, without the need for a male

intermediary (who apologetically refers to Wollstonecraft), ultimately implies that female

homosocialism in the early nineteenth century was a challenging enterprise, and is reflected

dutifully in James's text.

The struggle for Elizabeth to voice her opinions in favour of companionship with

another woman in James's text also resonates with the ways in which the 'Jane Austen' brand

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[16] Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen, Women, Politics and the Novel* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1988) p. xxiii.

associates Austen's texts with the denigration of women's friendships. In relation to other

revisions of *P+P,* Devoney Looser points out that:

> Andrew Davies's 1995 six-part BBC adaptation, starring Colin Firth, singlehandedly transformed Austen's cultural stock. [...] Although some critics called this mid-1990s period 'Austenmania', others accurately dubbed it 'Darcymania'. It is of significance because it marked the moment that Darcy became for many readers and viewers the imaginative centre of *Pride and Prejudice,* taking that role over from Elizabeth.[17]

The observation that Darcy has been transformed into the 'imaginative centre of *Pride and*

Prejudice' correlates with the understanding that Darcy's male world is the anxious high-

point of achievement for James's Elizabeth. James's post-'Darcymania' text topically

reiterates the aggrandisement of Darcy at the expense of Elizabeth. The BBC's webpage for

DCTP contains no fewer than four video interviews with Matthew Rhys, who plays Mr

Darcy, and none with Maxwell-Martin, who plays Elizabeth.[18] Also, the reviews of Maxwell-

Martin's performance, and the decision to cast her, are negatively received on IMDB. In the

message board titled 'Elizabeth casting' she is chastised for being 'matronly', 'plain' and

'ugly', despite the comprehension that as an actor, she injects some much needed strength

into Elizabeth's character (from the book's outline).[19] Maxwell-Martin is reputed for her

roles as serious, rational characters such as the headmistress in *South Riding* (2011)*,* Esther

Summerson in *Bleakhouse* (2005), and the (more physically) androgynous Kay, in *The Night*

Watch (2010).[20] However, the 'Darcymania' that followed the 1995 production was largely

centred on the sexual objectification of Colin Firth as Mr Darcy. This means that in the 1995

adaptation, while the 'imaginative centre' was transferred, it was done so in a way that

reversed gender roles of activity and passivity. This impacted modern constructions of female

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[17] Devoney Looser, 'The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author' in Janet Todd (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 182-83.

[18], www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01mqkm5/clips (accessed 22 August 2014).

[19] 'Death Comes to Pemberley: Elizabeth Casting', www.imdb.com/title/tt2951788/board/nest/223856152?ref_=tt_bd_1 , (accessed 22 August 2014).

[20] Emine Sander, 'Anna Maxwell Martin: 'I don't like playing saps': www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2011/feb/16/anna-maxwell-martin-south-riding (accessed 24 August 2014).

friendship, because as Looser observes, 'It was said that British women held 'Darcy parties'

to watch [the lake scene] over and over'.[21] However, while *DCTP* maintains a Darcy focus, it

leaves the sexual objectification of him behind and keeps the glorification of him at

Elizabeth's expense. Moreover, the encouragement of female homosocialism through the

objectification of Darcy seems to have been a short-lived 1990s phenomenon, and now

viewers seem to expect Elizabeth to carry the burden of being aesthetically appealing.

Elizabeth's anxious connection to her husband, and troubled connections with

women, make the suggestion that challenging femaleness puts women in a liminal social

position. Todd argues that in Austen's novels, friendship 'is engendered by social restrictions

and pleasures, [and] by the friends' own conventionality'.[22] This means that transgression

from 'conventionality' is alienating, but also, friendship with women involves 'social

restrictions'. During a conversation at Netherfield shortly after Elizabeth's visit to see Jane,

her muddy hem and decision to walk leaves a dramatically different impression on the men

and women in the room. For Bingley 'It shows an affection for her sister that is very

pleasing'; and in Darcy's opinion, Elizabeth's 'fine eyes' 'were brightened by the exercise'

(p. 33). However, Caroline protests that it shows 'an abominable sort of conceited

independence'. It is evident that Caroline's observations are the result of jealousy, but the

particular attack on Elizabeth's 'independence' suggests that Austen was illuminating the

engendered difference between men and women in social expectations. As Todd points out, it

is Caroline's 'conventionality' that provides a barrier between herself and Elizabeth. This

means that the 'engendered' opinions of Caroline represent the idea that women's social

expectations are too closed and rigid. Moreover, these boundaries of expectation can also

clearly be used as a means of abuse and social rejection. The male responses to Elizabeth's

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[21] Looser, 'The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author', p. 182.
[22] Todd, 'Female Friendship in Jane Austen's novels', p. 1.

country walk in comparison, then, demonstrate the opposite about male approaches to friendship and social 'restrictions'. Bingley and Darcy look on approvingly at Elizabeth's actions because they can confidently orchestrate the acceptability of it. Bingley sees the positive in Elizabeth's action because he is in love with Jane, and Darcy, because his feelings for Elizabeth override engendered expectations. Austen makes it clear that it is not class standards orchestrating their differing opinions because Darcy, Bingley and Caroline are of the same rank. Instead, the male engendered privilege to determine new social boundaries according to personal whim exposes the barrier between women's homosocial potential because of their gender.

In *DCTP*, the prologue opens up with the resolved suggestion that:

Elizabeth had never been popular, indeed the more perceptive of the Meryton ladies occasionally suspected that Miss Lizzie was privately laughing at them. They also accused her of being sardonic, and although there was uncertainty about the meaning of the word, they knew that it was not a desirable quality in a woman, being one which gentlemen particularly disliked. (p. 8)

James draws upon the understanding that male approval and opinion orchestrates women's social boundaries in an Austen, early nineteenth century context. She also mirrors Austen's use of irony in suggesting that being 'sardonic' is 'not a desirable quality in a woman', because it clearly is to Darcy. Moreover, the direct, casual manner in which it is explained that 'Elizabeth had never been popular' suggests that it is not regarded as a serious blow to Elizabeth's sense of self. The women's opinions are made in 'uncertainty', using terms of accusation that they do not fully understand, which goes some length to support their general irrelevance to Elizabeth. On the following page, James enthusiastically writes that:

Mr Bennet was a clever and reading man whose library was both a refuge and the source of his happiest hours. He and Darcy rapidly came to the conclusion that they liked each other and thereafter, as is common with friends, accepted their different quirks of character as evidence of the other's superior intellect. (p. 9)

Her use of the clause 'as is common with friends' is deliberately un-gendered. However, in comparison to the casual assertion that 'Elizabeth had never been popular', James reiterates that Darcy and Mr Bennet 'rapidly came to the conclusion that they liked each other'. Their reasons for liking each other are directly suggestive of their privilege as men to accept 'different quirks of character', when in comparison, Elizabeth's ambiguous 'sardonic' tendencies are enough to discredit her with an unnamed amount of women. Moreover, their 'superior intellect' directly opposes the understanding that the 'Meryton ladies' used terms to explain their dislike that they did not understand. Despite the close placement of these two separate allusions to male and female attitudes towards friendship, James's inclusion of them does not appear to be ironically done. Elizabeth's alienation from the women in Meryton is too casually presumed, and moreover, their reasons for disliking her do not inspire the desire to be liked by them in return. However, for Darcy and Mr Bennet, their homosocial connection based on each other's 'superior intellect' is suggestively the ideal that Elizabeth should aspire to. Also, James's detail about Mr Bennet's 'happiest hours' in the library nod to the understanding that in Austen's text, Elizabeth is granted special access there on her androgynous merit. Overall, this reiterates the idea that women's access to friendship is impeded by the low expectations for education and independent thought for women.

In opposition to the way that James ironically suggests that male opinion is too peevishly followed, Austen portrays the idea that Caroline Bingley ironically rejects male opinion. Austen writes:

> "Eliza Bennet," said Miss Bingley, when the door was closed on her, "is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex, by undervaluing their own; and with many men, I dare say, it succeeds. But, in my opinion, it is a paltry device, a very mean art. (p. 37)

Caroline's speech undermines the male privilege to abandon social expectations in saying 'and with many men, I dare say, [undervaluing women at the expense of women] succeeds'.

Moreover, the idea that Elizabeth recommends herself 'to the other sex' is an accurate reflection of the ways in which Elizabeth abandons 'social restrictions' of gender, as symbolised by her unique connection to male characters. However, Caroline's suggestion that Elizabeth was 'undervaluing' her own sex is ironic in this context because Elizabeth's actions are in concern for Jane. Austen writes that 'Elizabeth joined them again only to say that her sister was worse, and that she could not leave her' (p. 37). The simplicity of this statement illuminates the irony of Caroline's presumptions, comically asserting that Elizabeth's primary concern is for her own sex. Therefore, in Austen's text, Caroline's challenge to Elizabeth's faithfulness and respect for other women is comically ironic, whereas James's suggestion that Elizabeth was unlikable because men disliked her is also ironic. Although they both suggest that Elizabeth's transgressive abilities were socially debilitating, they also both reiterate that femaleness generates social barriers between women. However, crucially, where Austen's use of irony illuminates Caroline's maliciousness, James's suggests that women are uneducated and incapable of their own opinions. As a result, Elizabeth's alienation from them is presented as a glorification of her own character.

Despite the post-marriage context of James's text, Elizabeth does have the comfort of Jane in her anxious moments. Remembering her link to Wickham, and fearing for her marriage, Elizabeth 'was visited by a tumble of emotions'; she could recall her memories 'only with self disgust' and suffers 'a resurgence of shame and humiliation' (p. 96-7). James amplifies Elizabeth's anxiety in her fears regarding her marriage, demonstrating a significant leap from the self-assured Elizabeth in Austen's text. However, the idea that Elizabeth can restore her issues about her fading connection to Darcy by sharing it with Jane are not portrayed as a straightforward and viable release for her anxiety. James makes it clear that Jane and Bingley represent a binary opposite to Elizabeth and Darcy. This means that their marriages are engendered in different ways: Elizabeth has met Darcy's masculinity, and

Bingley has met Jane's femininity. James writes that 'Darcy – proud, reserved [...] found relief in Bingley's generous good nature, easy sociability and cheerful assumption that life would always be good to him' (p. 34) and that 'Elizabeth could not speak to Jane, [without] knowing that she would be totally reliable in keeping a confidence and that any advice she gave would come from her goodness and loving heart' (p. 35). This sets Jane and Bingley up as matched in their virtues, providing a balance to the more cynical (and rational) Elizabeth and Darcy. James reiterates this during the murder crisis:

> Instinctively Elizabeth had moved forward to help but Lydia thrust her aside with surprising strength [...] Jane took over, kneeling beside the chair and holding both Lydia's hands in hers, gently murmuring reassurance and sympathy, while Bingley, distressed, stood impotently by. (p. 57)

James's word choice in describing Bingley's position as standing 'impotently by' in the crisis encapsulates Bingley's effeminised character. In the adaptation, Bingley is so irrelevant that they do not include him at all, which further suggests that feminine values are secondary, or even completely irrelevant in *DCTP*. While Jane is good at 'gently murmuring reassurance and sympathy', she cannot empathise with Elizabeth's anxiety about losing access to Darcy's male world. In the adaptation, Jane reassuringly states 'you know your husband, Lizzie, as I do mine', but pointedly, Jane's husband is effeminate and not visible. This means that her offer of empathy is portrayed as well meaning, but is ambiguously understood to be not very useful or adequately supportive (see appendix 1). Elizabeth's access to female homosocialism is therefore recognisable as problematic for the ways in which it is limited to sympathising and empathising with the shared experience of femininity.

In contrast, Lydia's rejection of Elizabeth with 'surprising strength' is ironically suggestive of Lydia's masculine ability to determine who can soothe her with feminine sympathy. Her slight against Elizabeth is reasoned by her jealousy and ignorance of truth regarding the disconnect between Wickham and Darcy, but it is the denial of Elizabeth's

ability to soothe her sister with 'murmuring reassurance' (that Jane can utilise) that is

exemplified as her method of revenge. This means that Elizabeth's connection to the female

world of empathy and sensibility is as much bolstered as her access to Darcy's male world,

further illuminating her anxious liminal social position. Moreover, the text perpetuates the

impression that being able to soothe Lydia is not necessarily a desirable right of access. The

pettiness of Lydia's demands are twofold in their satiric representation of female self-control:

her reason for slighting Elizabeth is ignorant, and denying Elizabeth the right to 'gentle

murmuring' is the lesser of Elizabeth's concern. Elsewhere in the adaptation, the care of

women in general is used as an attempt to make misogyny comedic. Mr Bennet pleads with

Darcy to let him help with the search for Wickham, glancing back at the ladies in a desperate

hope to be as far away from them as possible, murmuring 'please', in an amusingly desperate,

childish manner (see appendix 2). However, Elizabeth cannot amusingly avoid women for

comic effect like Mr Bennet, but neither can she be allowed in to demonstrate her

androgynous resourcefulness because of her rejection from Lydia. In comparison, Elizabeth's

struggle to maintain her femaleness, in caring and soothing the distressed Lydia, is decidedly

more serious than the male opportunity to avoid distressed women. Overall, this suggests that

being denied access to the 'sensibility and emotion' of femaleness is ironically welcomed for

both men and women. However, for Elizabeth, the lack of comedy value in this issue in

comparison to Mr Bennet, suggests that it is tragic to be denied it as a woman, but it is also

tragically second to her desire for access to the male social world. Moreover, the

understanding that Austen's comedic approach to the undesirable conditions of the female

homosocial world is transferrable and still resonates today, identifies that this stereotype still

persists.

The understanding that Elizabeth is trapped in a liminal space between femaleness

(and the secondary friendship that it allows) and maleness (and the homosocialism she cannot

wholly engage with) is explored in both texts with varying conclusions. In *DCTP,* the text

closes with her pregnancy and reconciliation with Darcy, whereas in *P+P,* the importance of

female bonds is emphasised through Elizabeth's connection to Georgiana. This suggests that

James's penultimate heterosexual romance takes the comprehension that glorifying the

qualities of maleness is primarily about the ways in which women can attach themselves to it,

rather than utilise such qualities for their own social purpose. Moreover, Elizabeth's

pregnancy at the end of *DCTP* closes the action with the conventional understanding that her

personal achievements are associated with her biology (see the closing scene in the

adaptation: appendix 3). However, other, more recent use of the Austen brand facilitates the

idea that *P+P* is a triumph for female friendship. The internet comic, *Manfeels Park*, uses an

Austen title to create a pun on the idea the maleness is potentially a source of backhanded

comradeship between women (see appendix 4).[23] The authors use male responses to feminist

articles on the internet to satirise the idea that maleness has been deprived of the right to

voice its 'manfeels'. However, as discussed, Austen contends with the understanding that

maleness allows the right to orchestrate social values, whereas women are more governed by

'conventionality'. In this comic, the artist uses traced stills from the 1995 production of *P+P,*

where, as discussed, 'Darcymania' was in part responsible for a temporary homosocial

affiliation between women (at Darcy's expense, rather than Elizabeth's). It is not surprising

then, that the authors use the adaptation's special addition 'lake scene' to further encourage

female bonding at Darcy's expense. This mirrors the way that Austen's text reiterates the

understanding that traditional femaleness is a lost enterprise for women in their attempt to be

homosocial, prompting new, alternative methods. When Elizabeth witnesses Mr Bennet's

humiliating request to Mary to 'Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit' on the piano

at the Netherfield Ball, Austen writes: 'Mary, though pretending not to hear, was somewhat

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[23] www.manfeels-park.com

disconcerted; and Elizabeth sorry for her, and sorry for her father's speech, was afraid her anxiety had done no good' (p. 87). Elizabeth's hopeless 'anxiety' on behalf of Mary represents a desire to encourage strength in the biological and theoretical sisterhood between the women. However, Austen makes it plain that the 'father's speech' overrides the sisters' feelings on the incident, and also their ability to stand together in prevention of it happening again. This differs dramatically by the end of the text, when Elizabeth's new 'sister', Georgiana, witnesses the married couple's behaviour. Austen writes of Georgiana that: 'By Elizabeth's instructions she began to comprehend that a woman may take liberties with her husband, which a brother will not always allow in a sister more than ten years younger than himself' (p. 324). With this in mind, the final image in the 'Lake Scene' comic strip from *Manfeels Park* adequately muses on the same psychology to encourage female homosocialism. The authors are 'taking liberties' with the comments found online to encourage the same kind of side by side fearlessness of writing over their engendered social trappings: the women use sense to 'call [men] on their misogynistic bullshit'. This notion of 'tak[ing] liberties' in comparison to the previous hopeless 'anxiety', closes Austen's text with the understanding that Elizabeth not only triumphs in her abandonment of the constraints of femaleness, but also imparts the suggestion that such behaviour can be learned and used to encourage female friendship in the same way that it does in *Manfeels Park*.

In contrast, James picks up this idea of teaching women to 'take liberties' with their husbands, rather than wait to have such 'liberties' bestowed in the encouragement of female homosocialism. The text and adaptation open up with the understanding that 'At first, Georgiana had been surprised, almost shocked, to hear her brother being teased by his wife, and how often he teased in return and they laughed together' (p. 31). However, 'under Elizabeth's tactful and gentle encouragement Georgiana had lost some of her shyness' (p. 31). Again, in the adaptation, Maxwell-Martin's performance as Elizabeth adds to this idea

when she argues with Darcy about Georgiana's right to choose her own husband, sternly

stating, 'We *discussed* this, Darcy! We agreed!'. This suggests that Austen's encouragement

of female homosocialism is transferred into James's novel and the adaptation. However,

Georgiana buckles under the pressure of her status and accepts Colonel Fitzwilliam, rather

than Alveston as her fiancé, something which Elizabeth pointedly cannot influence on her

own. This means that in comparison to *P+P,* where Elizabeth rejects Darcy out of respect for

Jane, her 'most beloved sister' (p. 164), James's text diverts from this championing of female

friendship and instead, highlights its weakness in comparison to male bonds.

Where Austen makes the suggestion that the lack of acceptance between women of

blurred gender ideals in friendship is tragically comic, but not reproachable, James follows a

culture that uses the Austen brand to illuminate female inadequacy in their liminal social

position. The 'Jane Austen' brand became an emblem of 'chick-lit' following Helen

Fielding's novel use of it in, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), and as Genz and Brabon state, this

genre typically:

> provides the fiction of an 'authentic' female voice bewildered by the contradictory
> demands and mixed messages of heterosexual romance and feminist emancipation.
> This reliance upon the subjective voice has been interpreted as a postfeminist re-
> enactment of the consciousness-raising experiences of second-wave feminism.[24]

James's emphasis on 'the contradictory demands and mixed messages of heterosexual

romance and feminist emancipation' is suggestive of the ways in which her text can be

'interpreted as a postfeminist re-enactment of the consciousness-raising experiences of

second-wave feminism'. For both of the Darcy women, 'heterosexual romance' clashes with

'feminist emancipation', and despite the 'consciousness-raising' elements that have been

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[24] Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism, Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 86.

transferred from Austen, James's text explores the female consciousness, largely by focusing on the crisis of such 'contradictory demands'.

Overall, the necessity for women to recognise each other on new homosocial terms outside of, but also including, their biological capabilities, is recognisable in all three texts. However, the manner in which Austen's proto-feminist concerns about gender and social codes have been skewed by the 'Jane Austen' brand potentially suggests that two centuries is two too long for closely regarded reinvention. On the other hand, Austen's didactic approach to alluding to gender concerns may more likely be the reason for such overturned concepts. Claudia Johnson points out that: 'In 1821 Archbishop Whately praises Austen for declining the didactic posture – which assumes the ambition as well as the authority to teach the public – and for opting instead to hint at matters of serious concern inobtrusively and unpretentiously'.[25] It seems then, that 'inobtrusively and unpretentiously' alluding to the dependence that women have on maleness for social recognition can be mistaken for assuming the 'authority to teach the public' that maleness is unarguably superior in Austen's texts, after a certain length of time. However, bearing in mind the use of Austen in *Manfeels Park,* Austen's decline of the 'didactic posture' evidently means her texts can provide a variety of scope in a modern society that is governed by a variety of contradictory ideals. Moreover, Claire Tomalin points out that, for Austen: 'Growing up in a school meant that Jane knew exactly what to expect of boys, and was always at ease with them; boys were her natural environment, and boys' jokes and boys' interests were the first she learnt about'.[26] This biographical detail that Austen's childhood was integrated with 'boys' jokes and boys' interests' does potentially go to some lengths to explain her glorification of male homosocial bonds. However, it could also be argued that such a personal experience of the difference

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[25]Johnson, Claudia L., *Jane Austen, Women, Politics and the Novel* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. xv.
[26] Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen, A Life* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 261.

between homosocial conditions propelled the ambition to create an androgynous heroine who can at least be welcomed in a man's homosocial sphere. At the most, of course, Elizabeth's inclusion in bonds that are made up of humour and respect for rationality, despite not having the opportunity to mix among women who share such capabilities, is an '[u]nobtrusive' way to suggest that this is what women need in their own spheres. In contrast, Elizabeth's struggle in *DCTP* more candidly suggests that women attempting to enter male spheres are on a quest for self-destruction, and returning to the safety of biological capabilities (pregnancy) is the best that women can hope for.

Chapter 2

<u>'Romantic Friendship' and Revisions of Lesbian Desire in</u>

<u>*Goblin Market, Fingersmith, Carmilla* and *Tipping the Velvet*</u>

If female homosocial bonds are troubled by constructed femininity in modern revisions of the

nineteenth century, revisions of a sexual connection between women are potentially portrayed

as more problematic. This assumption is exacerbated by the underrepresentation of lesbian

desire in nineteenth century British literature. However, although '[S]erious depictions of

lesbian love based on personal experience or careful thought were extremely rare' in

literature during the period, recent discoveries reveal otherwise.[27] Therefore, this suggests

that the lack of literary representations was not due to the lack of such a reality. It does

however imply that despite the reality, lesbian desire was not culturally significant enough for

literary representation, especially in comparison to allusions to male homosexual desire.[28]

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[27] Graham Robb, *Strangers, Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Picador, 2003) p. 201; 'The discovery that middle and upper-class women's intimate friendships in this period were not sexual was dramatically challenged in the 1980s by the discovery of Anne Lister's diaries. Conducting research in a Yorkshire archive in 1981, local historian Helena Whitbread uncovered the diaries of an early-nineteenth century Yorkshire gentrywoman, Anne Lister, which recounted a succession of passionate physical relationships with other women from adolescence and throughout her adult life. The diaries were written in code, based on ancient Greek' Rebecca Jennings, *A Lesbian History of Britain, Love and Sex Between Women Since 1500* (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007), pp. 41-2.

[28] See Robb, *Strangers, Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century,* for a more detailed summary on the difference between lesbian desire and male homosexual desire, p. 201.

This suggests that the glorification of maleness backhandedly subjugated representation of homosexual as well as homosocial relationships between women. However, Sarah Waters' texts, *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith* revision women's homosocialism in the nineteenth-century with the suggestion that lesbian desire was a pervasive aspect of it. This renegotiates the idea that the dominant patriarchal ideals of constructed femininity hindered female bonds, and instead, asserts that lesbian desire is beyond cultural constructions. Moreover, despite the lack of 'serious depictions of lesbian love' in nineteenth-century texts, Waters' revisions utilise the understanding that 'romantic' friendship between women was an accepted nineteenth century ideal. Oulton states that 'romantic friendship':

> enjoyed a high, although sometimes ambivalent, cultural status for most of the nineteenth century. This form of friendship depended on both strong feeling and what may now seem startlingly rhetorical expression. Friends could describe their response to each other in terms of love and mutual dependence, in language that initially appears, at least by later standards, to have been uncircumscribed in the extreme. [29]

Such 'uncircumscribed' language therefore provides a useful backdrop for modern revisions of lesbian desire during the period. However, Jennings points out that: '[T]he absence of appropriate femininity was frequently used to distinguish between acceptable and suspect romantic friendships in literature'.[30] This means that the lack of 'appropriate femininity' in friendships symbolised the threat of lesbian desire to heterosexual norms. Oulton also points out that:

> by the end of the century, the image of "unconscious innocence" that romantic friendship had successfully promoted emerged as the very ground on which its claims could be attacked. By the end of the 1890s the theories of sexologists had come, irreversibly, to locate a specifically sexual tendency in the intensity and self-sufficiency of romantic friendship.[31]

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[29] Oulton, *Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature* , p. 1.
[30] Jennings, *A Lesbian History of Britain*, p. 44.
[31] Oulton, *Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature,* p. 2.

With this in mind, the texts explored in this chapter will discuss the ways in which portrayals of 'romantic' friendship demonstrate this kind of 'self-sufficiency' from the potential social alienation that heteronormativity demanded during the period. The first half will examine *Goblin Market* (1862) and *Fingersmith* (set in the 1860s) to explore the ways in which 'romantic' friendship facilitated female bonds during this time under the guise of 'appropriate femininity'. The second half will examine *Carmilla* (1871) and *Tipping the Velvet* (set in the 1890s) to explore the ways in which 'romantic' friendships became 'suspect romantic friendships' during this later period.

In *Goblin Market* and *Fingersmith*, the accepted ideal of 'romantic friendship' allows an intense form of intimacy between the friends: they share a bed, in *GM*: 'cheek to cheek and breast to breast'; and in *Fingersmith*, they: 'double up like girls'.[32] However, where Rossetti concludes with a heteronormative ending 'when both were wives' (l. 544), Waters writes of a lesbian reconciliation between the friends. This suggests that *Fingersmith* deliberately reiterates this 'romantic' ideal to revision and write over its concession to heteronormativity. In turn, this imparts the idea that intimate bonds between women are of the same value as heterosexual relationships, and that femaleness is not necessarily secondary to a male connection. In contrast, then, to the suggestion that femaleness is a hindrance to female bonds in *P+P* and *DCTP,* in *GM* and *Fingersmith*, it is chiefly the friends' femaleness that appears to be responsible for their intense bonds. Waters deliberately deconstructs the suggestion that 'appropriate femininity' indicated 'acceptable' (or non-lesbian) friendship with a lesbian conclusion, using a neo-Victorian context to parody the ways in which 'romantic' friendship and 'appropriate femininity' perpetuated potentially lesbian bonds.

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[32] Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*, l. 197. All further references will be given in the body of the text; *Fingersmith,* p. 89.

Martha Vicinus explains the approach to gender dichotomy taken by Patrick Geddes in his text, *The Evolution of Sex* (1889). She writes that he:

> predicted a great increase in altruistic feelings to be brought about by the elevation of women in a society formerly ordered by male egoism. Females, through their nurture of the young, had unrivalled opportunities to develop their capacity for social feeling, and Geddes expected that their increased participation in social and political life would result in a redirection of social change toward a cooperative society, provided that it preserved separate sex roles appropriate to male and female temperaments.[33]

Although his text follows *GM* some thirty years later, his suggestion that there would be an 'great increase in altruistic feelings' through the 'elevation of women' follows the maxim of Rossetti's poem. The idea that '[F]emales, through their nurture of the young, had unrivalled opportunities to develop their capacity for social feeling' refers to the unique maternal instincts apparently inherent to women. It follows, then, that *GM* and *Fingersmith* suggest that femaleness warrants this concept of maternal instinct as a unique facet to their social capability. Both texts also reject 'male egoism' and glorify the mirrored, rather than dichotomous, condition of women in their female and feminine state. Waters' lesbian conclusion mirrors these aspects that are identifiable in Geddes' text and *GM* in such a way that Rossetti's text appears to maintain a lesbian consciousness by comparison.

As suggested, both texts utilise the idea that women are inherently maternal to suggest that their 'capacity for social feeling' is greatly improved by their femaleness. Cosslett points out that in *GM:*

> [Lizzie] offers Laura a maternal physical contact, as she urges her to 'Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices', and Laura 'kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth'. This scene is analogous to the many scenes of maternal cherishing between female friends, often accompanied by images of nourishment, that exists in nineteenth-century fiction by women.[34]

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[33] Martha Vicinus, ed, *Suffer and Be Still* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 145.
[34] Tess Cosslett, *Woman to Woman, Female Friendship in Victorian Fiction* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1988*)*, p. 72.

The intimacy of their 'maternal cherishing' is suggestive of the 'unconscious innocence' of romantic friendship during this period. Moreover, the allusion to the maternal act of breast feeding specifically refers to female biology, which in turn associates femaleness with an inherent capability for nourishing social bonds. However, in a modern context, Lizzie's maternal response does appear to be 'uncircumscribed in the extreme', despite the surreal nature of the poem in general. In comparison, *Fingersmith* draws upon the concept of 'maternal cherishing' in Sue's relationship with Maud. The text also has a central matriarch, Mrs Sucksby. Sucksby trades in the care of infants and her name is ironically suggestive of the biological female ability to be maternal: 'Mrs Sucksby would go among [the babies], dosing them from a bottle of gin, with a little silver spoon you could hear chink against the glass'.[35] Sue's first person narration implies a kind of nostalgic fondness for this negligent act carried out by Sucksby. The 'little silver spoon' and 'chink against the glass' connote the celebration of gift giving and glass chinking. However, recalling Mrs Sucksby's maternal style is deliberately bitter-sweet. This illuminates the irony of biological assumptions, and this irony is transferred into Sue's relationship with Maud. Before the scheme is revealed, Sue demonstrates this kind of ironic 'maternal cherishing' in her relationship with Maud. Her narrative states:

> "Well that is sharper-" I began. // "Than a serpent's tooth, Sue?" she said. // "Than a needle, I was going to say, miss," I answered. I went to her sewing box and brought out a thimble. A silver thimble to match the flying scissors. [...] She looked at me, then opened her mouth and I put the thimble on my finger and rubbed at the pointed tooth until the point was taken off. I had seen Mrs Sucksby do it many times, with infants. – Of course, infants rather wriggle about. Maud stood very still, her pink lips parted, her face put back, her eyes at first closed then open and gazing at me, her cheek with a flush upon it. Her throat lifted and sank, as she swallowed. My hand grew wet, from the damp of her breaths. I rubbed, then felt with my thumb. She swallowed again. Her eyelids fluttered and she caught my eye. (p. 97)

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[35] Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith* (London: Virago, 2010), p. 6. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

Like the scene of 'maternal cherishing' in *GM,* this scene in *Fingersmith* is intimate and

tempered with the 'unconscious innocence' of such social interaction between women. Sue's

recollection of Maud's 'silver thimble to match the flying scissors' marks this moment out as

'appropriate[ly]' feminine; and separating this sentence draws attention to these female

trinkets and the unnecessary, but welcomed way that they 'match'. The reference to Mrs

Sucksby deliberately reiterates the understanding that this 'maternal cherishing' between Sue

and Maud is an ironic facet of their 'acceptable' friendship. In the same way that Mrs

Sucksby is not traditionally maternal, the intimacy between Sue and Maud during this scene

is not of the 'unconscious innocence' demonstrated in *GM*, both because they are scheming

against each other, and because they are sexually attracted to each other. The recognition that

'Maud stood very still' rather than 'wriggle[d] about' like an infant of Mrs Sucksby's,

deliberately queers the maternal act when carried out on an adult. This illuminates the idea

that 'maternal' acts between adult women are detached from the maternal instincts associated

with biologically assigned bodily capabilities. Sue's narrative also uses erotic language to

describe this scene: 'her pink lips parted'; 'her throat lifted and sank'; [Sue's hand] 'grew

wet' and [Maud's] 'eyelid's fluttered'. The detail that her 'hand grew wet, from the damp of

her breaths' does not need a comma in between each clause, but the inclusion of one

deliberately detracts the 'unconscious innocence' away from sentence if it were to read

without a pause. Moreover, Maud's reference to a 'serpent's tooth' is suggestive of the

biblical association between women and serpents.[36] Like Adam and Eve, Sue and Maud are

seen to remain innocent of (homosexual) sin by buffing away the sharpness of Maud's

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[36] 'Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the
woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" [...] So when the woman saw that
the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one
wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. // Then
the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made
loincloths for themselves.' Book of Genesis, *The Holy Bible,* v3. l. 6+7, www.biblegateway.com (accessed 2
September 2014).

'serpent's tooth'. Overall, Sue's first person narration knowingly recounts this period of suspense before the 'eyes of both were opened', and later wishes: '[i]f only there had been some stain upon her, some speck of badness in her heart -! But there was nothing' (p. 144). However, it is also evident that this pretentious display of 'maternal cherishing' and 'romantic' friendship based on their performance of femininity is ironically the foundation for their eventual lesbian reconciliation. This means that 'maternal cherishing' between Maud and Sue is distinctly and ironically linked to their sexuality, satirising the idea that the femaleness associated with this act equates to 'appropriate' (or non-lesbian) friendship.

In the same way that altruism and maternal cherishing are associated with the biological female ability to be socially successful, 'male egoism' is backhandedly rejected in *GM* and *Fingersmith.* This means that as well as identifying the idea that 'maternal cherishing' perpetuated lesbian bonds, this glorification of femaleness also involves the lesbian technicality of backhandedly rejecting maleness. In *GM,* the sisters eventually have a heteronormative ending, but this is only indicated in one line that states: 'when both were wives' (l. 544). Cosslett points out that 'the goblins are the only males in the poem, and there is a strong contrast between their deceitfulness and violence, and the peaceful world of the sisters'.[37] Moreover, the sinful allure of the goblin men is specific to their race: Rossetti repeats the line '(Men sell not such in any town)' (ll. 101, 556). The parenthesis and repetition of this line differentiates non-goblin men as a type who are potentially more appropriate as husbands, but also, a type who do not have the same appealing gifts. This means that either way, males represent 'deceitfulness and violence', or pale into insignificance in terms of artistic representation in *GM*. The 'peaceful world of the sisters' is therefore maintained as the ideal in this poem, rejecting 'male egoism' in much the same way as *Fingersmith.* In this text, Maud's narrative states: 'You think me good. I am not good. But

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[37] Cosslett, *Woman to Woman*, p. 69.

I might, with you, begin to try to be. This was his plot. We can make it ours' (p. 284). Here, the idea that the women can override the 'deceitfulness' of Richard's 'plot' rejects maleness and recognises that femaleness presents the opportunity for the women to form their own 'plot'. Maud's eyes are open regarding Sue's betrayal, yet she still figures that she 'might [...] begin to try to be' good with her. In contrast, Sue's narrative states:

> For all I knew it might have been an ordinary thing, for a mistress and her maid to double up like girls. / It was ordinary at first, with Maud and me. [...] We slept, quite like sisters. Quite like sisters indeed. I always wanted a sister./ Then Gentleman came. (p. 89)

Here, the value of having a 'sister' (either biological or non-biological) is glorified in the same way as it is in *GM,* where Rossetti writes: 'For there is no friend like a sister' (l. 562). Initially introduced with subtle mockery for its infantile nature, they 'double up like girls', Sue goes on to repeat the word 'sister[s]' three times, emphasising the idea that their relationship generated strength and meaning in the repetition of sharing a bed night after night. The abrupt conclusion of the chapter, in its own paragraph to state 'Then Gentleman came', plainly asserts that his male presence was an unwelcome and sharp intrusion into their peaceful, if pretentious, sisterhood. However, it is not until the end of the text that Sue and Maud find their reconciliation. Before this happens, Maud's narrative states that:

> Richard clears the dressing-table of brushes and pins and they lay [the legal papers] there, then sign: a paper each. I don't watch them do it, but hear the grinding of the pen. I hear them moving together, to shake each other's hands. (p. 302)

The replacement of the women's 'brushes and pins' with the documents that legally bind Sue's incarceration (and separation from Maud) indicates that the materials of male power (legal documents) override the emotional integrity of the women's connection. For Sue and Maud, 'brushes and pins' were part of their daily routine as maid and lady. Rivers' communication with the doctor reiterates the trump-card of male homosocialism in

comparison to the women's emotional bond, symbolised with a handshake and etched onto Maud's visualisation like the 'grinding' of the pen.

In contrast to the contextual relevance of 1860s Britain in *GM* and *Fingersmith,* by the end of the nineteenth century, the blurry line between 'romantic' friendships and lesbian relationships became more suspect. If friendships were deemed 'appropriate', they were:

> thought to afford young women an education in romance which could lay the foundations for their future heterosexual experience. Similarly friendships were thought to compliment heterosexual love, as friends could act as allies in the courtship process and later as sympathetic listeners during the occasional difficulties of marriage.[38]

This type of romantic friendship is definitely present in *GM* and *Fingersmith.* However, Waters writes over the understanding that 'friends could act as allies in the courtship process' by presenting women who act as, yet privately oppose the point of, allies. Eventually their relationship exceeds this concession to 'heterosexual experience', and as a result, this is championed as a resistance to what female friendships were 'thought' to be based upon. However, *GM* and *Fingersmith* do share the understanding that the friends can renegotiate what female friendship and femaleness means. Despite its heteronormative ending, the rejection of 'male egoism' in *GM* is emphasised through Lizzie's empathy for Laura's transgression. Cosslett points out that:

> Laura now sees the sensual delights for which she 'fell' as unwholesome and disgusting, though her 'fall' is still not seen in terms of 'sin'. The physical similarity between the sisters also implies a refusal to judge or condemn Laura, and an assertion of female solidarity.[39]

This 'assertion of female solidarity' based on the 'refusal to judge or condemn' women who become involved in 'sensual delights' is mirrored in *Fingersmith.* At their penultimate reconciliation, the pornographic literature that Maud writes for a living shocks Sue, but Maud

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[38] Jennings, *A Lesbian History of Britain*, p. 41.
[39] Cosslett, *Woman to Woman*, p. 69.

explains to her that '[i]t is filled with all the words for how I want you....' (p. 547). This mirrors the forgiveness warranted between women for going 'astray' as identified in *GM*. It also mirrors the understanding that their relationship is actually built upon the deviant element: Maud uses the revelation of writing pornography to literally explain her sexual feelings for Sue, and this literature consolidates their lesbian connection. Moreover, the lack of a lesbian connection in *GM* may be marked out by the friends' biological sisterhood and eventual marriages, but the night that is so 'longed' for by Laura is gendered as female. Rossetti writes that: 'the stars rise, the moon bends her arc,/ Each glowworm winks her spark' (ll. 247-48). This means that overall, the manner in which the friends forgive each other asserts 'female solidarity' based on 'a refusal to judge or condemn', but in both texts, this refusal is suggestively acknowledged as an empathic confirmation of the femaleness of sexual desire, whether homosexual or not.

Carmilla (1871) represents the beginning of this shift of suspicion of 'romantic' friendships between women through its dubious suggestions about Carmilla's vampiric 'lust' for the young and beautiful Laura. Her desires are facilitated through the abuse of trust that a 'romantic' friendship, based on 'appropriate femininity', would have presumably inspired. This means that this text provokes suspicion of friendships between women that do not involve at least one woman who overtly rejects 'appropriate femininity'. Of Carmilla, Laura confirms that: 'Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish; and there was always a languor about her, quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health'.[40] The first person narration from an older, wiser Laura, who confirms that Carmilla was always 'girlish' and 'incompatible with a masculine system', reiterates the suggestion that there were no indicators of Carmilla's 'inappropriate' lust. Moreover, this

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[40]Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla,* in *The Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu* (New York: Dover, 1964), p. 293. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

suggests that relying on 'appropriate femininity' as an indicator is a flawed and dangerous enterprise. However, although Carmilla's 'appropriate femininity' performs its function as a smoke screen for her lust, Carmilla repeatedly and openly tests the boundaries of 'appropriate' friendship. In what seems to be an exaggerated parody of romantic friendship between the women, after a kiss, Laura states: 'I am sure, Carmilla, you have been in love; that there is, at this moment, an affair of the heart going on' (p. 300). To which Carmilla replies: 'I have been in love with no one, and never shall [...] unless it should be with you' (p. 300). Laura represents the presumption that Carmilla's romantic gestures are part of her 'education in romance', only to discover that Carmilla's desires surpass this notion. The first person narration from an older Laura deliberately demonstrates the understanding that 'romantic' friendships were easily misunderstood, even in hindsight. Therefore, lesbian desire is both suggestively invisible, yet paradoxically validated in *Carmilla.*

Although mirroring the first person narration of *Carmilla,* Nancy's narrative in *Tipping the Velvet* reverses the concern for lesbian desire in the late nineteenth century. Rather than identifying the invisibility of lesbian desire as a concern for unsuspecting women seeking friendship, Nancy's first person, older narration voices the concern that the femaleness of romantic friendship deflates the integrity of lesbian bonds. When Nancy discovers Kitty's affair with Walter, he states: 'I know [...] that you were – sweethearts, of a kind'.[41] The hesitation to put a name to Nancy's relationship with Kitty illuminates the invisibility of lesbian desire. It is deliberately down-played with the pre-marital term 'sweethearts' in the understanding that women could not marry. Moreover, Walter's assumption that the women's relationship can be so easily dismissed reflects the understanding that female bonds, sexual or not, are easily rendered insignificant in

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[41] Sarah Waters, *Tipping the Velvet,* (London: Virago, 1999), p. 173. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

comparison to heterosexual ones in a patriarchal, heteronormative society. Therefore, this rejection of the sincerity of lesbian desire mirrors *Carmilla* specifically for the ways in which it draws attention to the invisibility of female/female bonds that were 'incompatible with a masculine system'. However, unlike *Carmilla,* the 'inappropriate' nature of their relationship is not exposed as a threat to heterosexual norms, but rather, a tragic denial of homosexual norms. Moreover, Nancy's frustration and anger at this rebuff of the integrity of her desire is played out through her transgendered dressing, thus making her compatible with 'a masculine system'. After the revelation of Kitty's affair, Nancy returns to collect her male costumes from the theatre because the thought of leaving them 'was too much' (p. 176). This means that Nancy represents a resistance to the inadequacy of femaleness and femininity, specifically identifying her transgendered dressing as a retaliation to the invisibility of femaleness.

Nancy's negotiation with maleness through her use of clothes mirrors the various stages of her sexual experience with women: from sexual awakening with Kitty; to wilful exploitation with Diana; and finally reconciliation with Florence. At each stage, Nancy's degree of engagement with maleness symbolises the suggestion that lesbian desire struggles to be recognised when correlated with constructions of femaleness. Regarding the sexual politics of cross-dressing, Vicinus argues that:

> [t]o cross-dress is always a self-conscious act, and whether temporary or permanent, it indicates a chosen public identity in opposition to one's biological sex. Cross-dressing symbolizes sexual fluidity, an assertion that what is seemingly natural and immutable is socially constructed.[42]

Nancy's cross-dressing, then, 'symbolizes [her] sexual fluidity' and marks out her rejection of the 'socially constructed' associations of femaleness. During her relationship with Kitty,

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[42] Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends, Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 176.

she states: '[t]he truth was this: that whatever successes I might achieve as a girl, they would be nothing compared to the triumphs I should enjoy clad, however girlishly, as a boy' (p. 123). In a similar way to Carmilla, who was always 'girlish', yet lustful towards Laura, Nancy's 'girlish' presentation 'as a boy' provides a smoke screen for her lesbian relationship with Kitty. However, merging the boundary between cross-dressing and transgressive sexuality is not a straightforward resolution for Nancy. In their public life she felt: 'bound and fettered with iron bands, chained and muzzled and blinkered. Kitty had given me leave to love her; the world, she said, would never let me be anything to her except her friend' (p. 127). Her social experience as a 'friend' dehumanizes her sense of self, making her feel akin to a wild animal that needs to be 'chained and muzzled'. The 'girlish' performance as a male on stage filters through to Nancy's social experience, preventing her from overturning the 'socially constructed' behaviour between women. Waters' neo-Victorian context then, illuminates the ways in which women performing the social acts of men as a pair on stage (in a deliberately 'girlish' manner) was fetishized for its novel appeal during this period (1889), but that it also did not facilitate social fluidity. Nancy ponders:

> I cannot say what it was that made the crowds like Kitty and me together, more than they had liked Kitty Butler on her own. It may have just been, [...] that we were novel [...]. It may have also been [...] that the sight of a *pair* of girls in gentlemen's suits was somehow more charming, more thrilling, more indefinably *saucy,* than a single girl in trousers and a topper and spats. (pp. 125-6)

The understanding that a '*pair*' of girls may have been more appealing because it was 'novel', but also that such novelty was 'indefinably *saucy*', illuminates the idea that female bonds mimicking male bonds was something outside of public consciousness in a patriarchal society. It suggests that women imitating male homosocial bonds was improbable in an everyday context, for the very fact that it was a novelty.

When this relationship ends and Nancy moves on to another lesbian relationship with Diana, the politics of her social experience are dramatically different. Instead of maintaining a deliberately 'girlish' appearance with the novelty of performed maleness, in this relationship, it is Nancy's ability to pass as male in public that drives their relationship dynamics. The most symbolic gesture of Nancy's adoption of maleness is perhaps the couple's use of a dildo. Nancy reflects on a performance involving the dildo, held for Diana and her friends:

> I was Hermaphroditus. I wore a crown of laurel, a layer of silver greasepaint – and nothing else save, strapped to my hips, Diana's *Monsieur Dildo.* The ladies gasped to see him. / That made him quiver. / And the quiver did its usual work on me, I thought of Kitty. I wondered if she was still wearing suits and a topper, still singing songs like 'Sweethearts and Wives'. (p. 281)

It is deliberately ironic that this performance reminds Nancy of her relationship with Kitty, wondering 'if she was still wearing suits and a topper, still singing songs like "Sweethearts and Wives".' The memory and thoughts of the song that contains the word 'Sweethearts' (the same word used to deflate her relationship with Kitty because of its femaleness) illuminates the understanding that this bodily symbol of maleness is even further away from the kind of sexual validation that Nancy required. Moreover, Kitty's performance of maleness combines both genders like Nancy's, however, rather than mimicking maleness with a degree of 'girlishness' to appease a homophobic crowd, the act involving *Monsieur Dildo* purposefully imitates maleness to please a homoerotic crowd. Therefore, rather than representing a clear resolution to the invisibility of her relationship with Kitty, by exaggerating the imitation of maleness, Nancy's exploitative relationship with Diana is deliberately problematic. Her hierarchical relationship with Diana eventually transcends into one of violence and disdain, leaving Nancy 'miserable, and peevish, and vengeful' (p. 317). Such negative association with this extreme embodiment of maleness is potentially suggestive of Water's comment on Freud's ideas about lesbian desire and 'penis envy'. Creed points out that: '[t]he lesbian body

of Freudian theory is one that attempts to overcome its 'castration' by assuming a masculine role in life and/or masculine appearance through clothing, gesture, substitution'.[43] With this in mind, the maleness of Nancy through adorning the dildo is potentially a deliberately crude enactment of such 'attempts to overcome [...] "castration".' Nancy's 'miserable' experience ironically validates the Freudian idea that lesbian bonds are categorically centred on imitating the male body. This suggests that mimicking maleness to validate lesbian bonds between women in a Victorian context is still overwhelmed by patriarchal discourses that dispute the sincerity of the appeal of femaleness.

By the end of the text, Nancy's negotiation with femaleness mirrors her reconciliation with her last partner, Florence. Neither a theatrical parody of maleness for the homophobic stage, nor a crude, fetishized representation of maleness for a homoerotic crowd, Nancy's manipulation of gender takes the more subtle form of a haircut and a new pair of trousers. In this sense, Waters' manipulation of the neo-Victorian form deliberately resonates with modern female experience. The understanding that modern women can wear trousers and have short hair (to hint at sexuality or not) is illuminated as a pre-emptive glimpse at the future of representing gender and negotiating homosocial bonds. After an erotic dream about Florence, Nancy states: 'when I woke, there was a prickling at my scalp and a tickling at the inside of my thighs that remained insistent, and I fingered my drab little curls and my flowery frock in a kind of disgust' (p. 404). Waters makes it clear that the femininity of Nancy's 'flowery frock' and 'drab little curls' are associated with her neglected sexual expression. However, dressing for a night out with Florence, Nancy recalls: 'For all that it was skirts and stays and petticoats that I pulled on, I felt as I thought a young man must feel, when dressing

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[43] Barbara Creed, 'Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys and Tarts' in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader,* Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick eds. p. 115. Creed paraphrases Freud's theory, but the understanding that it has been interpreted in this way by Creed in this text demonstrates the ways in which feminist theory can interpret his work, and can therefore be potentially understood in a wider, modern cultural context.

for his sweetheart' (p. 411). This means that by this point, Nancy's gendered clothes are only a material boundary to her sexuality, yet Waters makes the suggestion that the thoughts that 'a young man must feel' still take primacy over dressing and feeling like a young woman. The suggestion that Nancy's state of mind as 'a young man' overwhelms the potency of the 'stays and petticoats' is deliberately suggestive of the ways in which assertive social connections resonate with male experience in a Victorian setting. However, by deliberately suggesting that her biological femaleness and outward display of femaleness are irrelevant to this sensation, Waters paradoxically suggests that biology and display cannot confirm social feeling, despite Nancy's narrative naively drawing that conclusion. Overall, the neo-Victorian context of *TTV* makes allowances for Nancy's dependence upon maleness for assertive social and sexual interaction with other women. However, it also suggests that Nancy negotiates such bonds despite her unavoidable, biological femaleness.

In contrast to Nancy's fraught negotiation with maleness to facilitate homosocial and homosexual bonds with women in *TTV*, Carmilla's negotiation with gender for the same purpose is instead, an extension of the feminine. Where Nancy defaults to associations with maleness for the ways in which they (problematically) inspire a new kind of homosocial regard between women, anxieties about the instability of gender are emphasised through Carmilla's default to femaleness in *Carmilla*. Regarding the manner in which the female body is represented in literature, Creed summarises Kristeva's theory that:

> Unlike man's body, the female body is frequently depicted within patriarchal cultural discourses as fluid, unstable, chameleon-like. [...] Insofar as woman's body signifies the human potential to return to a more primitive state of being, her image is accordingly manipulated, shaped, altered, stereotyped to point to the dangers that threaten civilisation from all sides.[44]

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[44] Creed, 'Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys and Tarts', p. 111.

In *Carmilla,* it is the 'unstable, chameleon-like' ways in which her body transforms during her acts of lesbian desire that 'point to the dangers that threaten civilisation'. Laura's narration states:

> I saw something moving round the foot of the bed, which at first I could not accurately distinguish. But I soon saw that it was a sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat. It appeared to me about four or five feet long for it measured fully the length of the hearthrug as it passed over it; and it continued to-ing and fro-ing with the lithe, sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage. (p. 304)

With Kristeva's theory in mind, Carmilla's bodily transgression into a 'monstrous cat' is typical of the ways in which the unstable 'female body is frequently depicted within patriarchal cultural discourses'. This means that instead of anxieties about using maleness as a default of stability to negotiate sexual bonds with women, Carmilla's animalistic body represents anxieties about the 'primitive' condition of lesbian desire and the female body. In both texts then, femaleness is a condition that perpetuates sexual invisibility when it exists in its 'appropriate' form. However, its 'fluid, unstable, chameleon-like' capabilities towards an extension of femaleness (rather than the stability of maleness) are presented in *Carmilla* as a justification for social concern. Laura states that Carmilla's affections were like 'the ardour of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet over-powering' (p. 292). In the final paragraph of the text, the appeal and intensity of Carmilla's femaleness is further validated when Laura states:

> to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations – sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door. (p. 339)

Such 'ambiguous alternations' imply that the 'hateful and yet over-powering' appeal of Carmilla is a welcome mystery. Her femaleness, marked out by the fantasy of her 'light step', symbolises the understanding that despite the knowledge of her 'fiend[ish]' ways, her biological femaleness is ultimately an absorbing and appealing prospect. Overall, this means

that Waters' text makes the suggestion that using the stability of maleness to counteract the suspicion of romantic female bonds (and the fluidity of femaleness) was also a flaw in female experience. Lillian Faderman points out that: 'love between women had been encouraged or tolerated for centuries – but now that women had the possibility of economic independence, such love became potentially threatening to the social order'.[45] It seems that either way, the concept of women bonding homosocially, with homosexual potential, was scrutinised for the ways in which it threatened the 'social order'. Waters' neo-Victorian revision of this anxiety about the potential of femaleness asserts that this moment in time, suggest that 'possibility of economic independence' for women increased the urgency to identify with constructs of maleness.

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[45] Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Junction, 1981), p. 240.

Chapter 3

Gissing's *The Odd Women* and Revisioning the New Woman[-Friend]

in *The Crimson Petal and the White* and *Hysteria*

In comparison to Elizabeth in *Death Comes to Pemberley* and the lesbian friends in *Fingersmith* and *Tipping the Velvet,* the revisioned New Woman in *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002) and *Hysteria* (2011) is outwardly political about her social preference. Neither drawn towards women specifically because of sexual orientation, nor dismissive of femaleness because of its misgivings, the New Woman prioritises female company with a new kind of female homosocialism in mind. Jennings points out that:

> [i]n the last decades of the nineteenth century, debates about gender and female sexuality came to be dominated by the figure of the 'New Woman', a term used by contemporaries who believed that they were seeing the emergence of a modern type of woman, obsessed – supposedly – with novel experiences and sensations [...]. The

financial independence and expanding social role sought by real New Women also promoted greater intimacy between women, enabling pioneering women to reject marriage and motherhood in favour of an intimate and supportive relationship with another woman.[46]

In each text examined in this chapter, the New Woman favours 'novel experiences and sensations' that counteract ideas of traditional femaleness. Moreover, her 'expanding social role' is driven by a new concern for 'financial independence' instead of shared concerns about 'marriage and motherhood'. However, despite the understanding that her actions are motivated by women's liberation, the New Woman's social experience with women is not always portrayed as 'intimate and supportive'. Cosslett points out that:

> [i]n the attempt to create the 'New Woman' as a fictional type, she was often constructed as a heroic *individual*: the odds she had to battle against increased the impression of the injustices done to women, and her isolation increased the impression of female heroism.[47]

In the neo-Victorian texts explored in this chapter, the New Woman's relationships with other women feed into this romantic representation of her as 'heroic' in her 'isolation'. However, Gissing's novel, *The Odd Women* (1893), is deliberately titled with the collective noun 'Women', who are both 'odd' in numbers and 'odd' in attitudes to orthodox social expectations. Patricia Ingham points out that:

> Gissing satirizes these romantic accounts [*The Heavenly Twins* and *The Yellow Aster*] of the New Woman by changing the epithet. In doing so he takes up Greg's conventional perception of unmarried women as superfluous because "unpaired" and makes the point that this involves seeing them as 'odd' in the more common sense of 'abnormal, eccentric'.[48]

This means that *TOW* satirizes the 'impression of female heroism', and recognises that women negotiated a new homosocial regard for each other because of the amount of

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[46] Jennings, *A Lesbian History of Britain,* pp. 57-8.
[47] Cosslett, *Woman to Woman,* p. 138.
[48] Patricia Ingham, 'Introduction' to George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. vii (Ingham refers to Greg's article 'Why are Women Redundant').

'unpaired' women after the Crimean War. However, Gissing's portrayal of their political effort to renegotiate femaleness is generally in reverence and sympathy. The female friends in *TOW* are seen to face the crisis of challenging gender norms, but also, the crisis of socialising with each other without their traditional homosocial bond: marriage and motherhood. In contrast, the stereotypical neo-Victorian New Woman, who is 'constructed as a heroic *individual*', seemingly renegotiates female experience without a new homosocial framework. She does, however, appear to work tirelessly in helping other women, particularly the 'fallen'. This chapter will argue that the neo-Victorian New Woman, who favours new homosocial bonds between women, is revisioned as socially isolated to mirror the genre stereotype and emphasise her 'heroism'. Moreover, it will suggest that the neo-Victorian New Woman's 'heroism' in her social isolation resonates with the complexity of modern female bonds that exist without an 'odd' surplus of women.

Revisioning the New Woman in a neo-Victorian context negotiates the present's relationship with the past in ways that revisions of the non-outwardly feminist character cannot. Wexler's 2011 film, *Hysteria,* portrays the New Woman, Charlotte Dalrymple, with the direct assertion that she is ahead of time in her approach to female concerns and female friendships. The first scene involving her contains a loud speech about women's rights, where she deliberately uses collective terms 'women', 'us', 'our' and 'we'.[49] However, as discussed, she has no female friends who share her enthusiasm and feminist diatribe. The second time we see Charlotte, her transition into the scene is deliberately contrasted with the masculine, patriarchal environment of the doctor's office. In the office, Dr Dalrymple administers his therapy to one of his clients, narrating as he goes: 'and slowly - slowly, in a circular motion'. This is accompanied by frequent shots of the clock on the wall, with its loud, steady tick-tock: a reminder of their masculine place in the present, patriarchal society (1880s). In

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[49] Wexler, Tanya (dir.), *Hysteria* (Informant Media and Forthcoming Films, 2011).

contrast, Charlotte's pedalling feet are the first part of her in shot: moving considerably faster than the 'circular motion' of Dr Dalrymple's hand and clock (see appendix 5).[50] The mise-en-scène changes with Charlotte's entrance from a colour palette of rich reds and golds in the office (indicative of the doctor's wealth and indulgence) to sensible, muted pastel-greys and blacks; and the music is light and quick with short notes, mirroring her assertive, unpretentious personality. Using its neo-Victorian context, then, this film establishes Charlotte's link to the modern woman by suggesting that she is ahead of her time, and thus more representative of the present (and that the modern woman is assertive). With this in mind, her lack of female accomplices who are presented in the same way, emphasises the understanding that demonstrating ideas of new female experience did not involve a female collective state of mind. This, combined with her reiterated connection to the future (the present), paradoxically suggests that her mindset fits a modern context, but also, that a modern context does not require her feminist enthusiasm because her concerns have been realised.

Charlotte, as the New Woman, does have friends in *Hysteria,* however, her bonds with other women do not represent the kind of homosocial fantasy that her 'modern' behaviour potentially inspires. Instead of having a circle of like minded women to share her revolutionary ideas with (like Rhoda, in *TOW*), her relationship with her visible friends, Fanny, the working class mother, and Molly, the ex-prostitute-turned-housemaid, is one of emotional and economical prop (see appendix 6). She condescendingly says to Molly, 'staying out of trouble, I hope?', and offers financial and medical support to the regretful needs of Fanny: 'take it', 'no, I can't'. In each shot, Charlotte's (Gyllenhaall's) height

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[50] The New Woman is often associated with the bicycle, symbolising 'new' freedoms for women. Cady Staton, during the period wrote: 'The bicycle will inspire women with more courage, self respect and self-reliance and make the next generation more vigorous of mind and of body'. See http://bikeleague.org/content/march-womens-bike-history-month and Sue Macy, *Wheels of Change* (Washington D. C.: National Geographic, 2011), p. 77.

emphasises her role as supporter, rather than social equal. This makes the suggestion that Charlotte's 'modern' persona and perspective of women's rights is readily absorbed by the working-class community of women, and implies that her 'modern' perspective is consequentially philanthropic. However, Charlotte's prioritisation of women in the circumstances presented in *Hysteria* reiterates the understanding that female bonds were not yet established on the same homosocial grounds as male bonds, despite her 'modern' approach. Her female friendships are based on sympathy, rather than empathetic comradeship. This contrasts with the images of male homosocialism in the film (see appendix 7). Granville's homosocial relationship with Lord Edmund is emphasised for their equal celebration of each other's achievements: their bodies, clothes and actions mirror each other as they chink glasses. Moreover, in the scene where they try their new device, the uniform manner in which they all put the protective goggles on at the same time comically demonstrates their homosocial connection despite their differing occupations and levels of experience. The comedy value of the male homosocial bonds, in contrast with Charlotte's tragedy-ridden friendships, is suggestive of the ways that a modern audience can understand engendered Victorian friendships because of the ways in which they resonate with today. If Charlotte is 'modern', and her relationships with women are un-amusingly problematic, a modern audience clearly gets the joke, which suggests that such gendered stereotypes of friendship still pervade.

In contrast then, the impression of a collective of women who are both 'odd' in numbers and 'odd' in behaviour in *The Odd Women* contrasts dramatically with the isolated neo-Victorian New Woman in her social environment. In *The Odd Women,* Mary Barfoot professes:

> I am a troublesome, aggressive, revolutionary person. I want to do away with that
> common confusion of the words womanly and womanish, and I see very clearly that

this can only be effected by an armed movement, an invasion by women of the spheres which men have always forbidden us to enter.[51]

Her understanding that a feminist movement, centred on reassigning meaning to the 'words womanly and womanish' is narrated through the pronoun 'I', but this is fused with the collective terms 'woman' and 'us'. Gissing uses this scene to identify the derogatory associations made with gender, and to suggest that their 'odd[ness]' has educated them on this matter. Much like the way that term 'feminine' is separated from 'female' (because the former is more frequently identified as a construct associated with weakness and irrationality), Gissing asserts that a feminist manifesto must also separate 'womanly' and 'womanish'. This speech is mirrored in *Hysteria* by Charlotte, who demands that women are 'welcomed in the universities, [and] in the professions': the 'spheres which men have always forbidden [women from] enter[ing]'. However, where Charlotte professes in a 'troublesome, aggressive, revolutionary' way to her father and a room full of bemused, silent women, Mary's speech is pointedly to an assembly of listeners who 'understood what made her so passionate' (see appendix 8; p. 153). It is no coincidence that Mary talks of 'spheres' that have been denied to women while making a self-confessed 'troublesome, aggressive, revolutionary' speech to a group of likeminded women. The very action of gathering an 'invasion by women' is clearly identified in *Hysteria* as part of the feminist struggle given that the women in Charlotte's space are blankly resistant to her ideas.

Despite Gissing's suggestion that the 'odd' amount of 'unpaired' women made up a community who were establishing a new social method, the idea of the New Woman as socially unwelcome resonates with historical sources. Lynn Pykett points out that:

> [o]pponents of the New Woman tended to represent the phenomenon in terms of the world-turned-upside-down of revolutionary excess [...]. Linton, who had been an extremely vocal and opinionated commentator on modern woman since the 1860s,

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[51] George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 152. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

viewed the embryonic New Woman through the "mirror" of recent history in which she saw "the Parisian woman of the Revolution ... repeated wherever analogous conditions exist".[52]

As someone who was understood to represent 'the Parisian woman of the Revolution' in 'a world-turned-upside-down', the New Woman's attempt at finding social purpose on account of there not being enough men is a vast contradiction of reasoning. Apparently, she was either making the best of an unfortunate situation, or purposefully engaging in 'revolutionary excess'. Gissing implies that she was both, and that her discovery of a life without marriage and motherhood meant that her eyes had been opened to new, more rewarding social experiences. In her denial of a romantic connection to Everard, Rhoda states: '[m]y work and thought are for the women who do not marry – the "odd women" I call them. They alone interest me. One mustn't undertake too much' (p. 163). Her modest suggestion that 'One mustn't undertake too much' pre-emptively downplays the 'revolutionary' presumption of her avoidance of marriage. However, it is made clear that prioritising the 'odd women' was a more appealing social option, whether presented as 'revolutionary' or not. Rhoda's romantic involvement with Everard eventually dissolves in favour of her social preference for women, albeit after a series of awkward twists in their engagement. The narrator states:

> If it became known that she had taken a step such as few women would have dared to take – deliberately setting an example of new liberty – her position in the eyes of all who knew her remained one of proud independence. (p. 293)

This suggests that in avoiding marriage ('a step such as few women would have dared to take'), Rhoda's 'proud independence' is prioritised and becomes emblematic of her dedication to a new kind of female homosocialism. Rhoda's prioritisation of 'the odd women' despite the offer of marriage deliberately undoes the idea that female company is only more

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[52] Lynn Pykett, *The 'Improper Feminine', The Women's Sensation Novel and New Woman Writing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 139.

valuable on account of a lack of male partners. Her 'revolutionary excess' of 'proud independence' is directly associated with her dedication to 'setting a new example of liberty'.

In comparison, Faber's engagement with the portrayal of the New Woman in *CP*, suggests that she is both 'revolutionary' and 'individual' in her heroism. Faber presents her without a community of visible likeminded women (although there are mentions of the women at the 'rescue society'), and her 'revolutionary' ideas are seen to negotiate her attempts at friendship with women in a similar way to Charlotte in *Hysteria*. She is presented as a pillar of strength, supporting Sugar when in distress. However, unlike Charlotte in *Hysteria,* Faber writes of Mrs Fox as the New Woman with a more satiric jibe at her social isolation. When in the park with Sugar, Mrs Fox advises her to tip her head back to prevent a nose-bleed after she reveals that Sugar's mother is dead. The narrator states that:

> Sugar's head is tilted so far back now that she sees pedestrians walking along Pembridge Square past the park, upside down. A topsy-turvy mother suspended from the ceiling of the world pulls a topsy-turvy little boy along, scolding him for looking at the lady with the blood on her face.[53]

Mrs Fox's advice leads directly to this surreal image for Sugar. The 'topsy-turvy mother' and 'topsy-turvy little boy' become the surreal embodiment of Mrs Fox's approach to amity with her. It is also, however, potentially suggestive of Faber's inference that the New Woman's lead in to a 'topsy-turvy' world is haphazard, given that the medical advice following a nose-bleed is to tip the head forward. Sugar's 'shoulder-blades pressed painfully hard against the iron bench, her face blinking into the blue of the sky. Blood is filling her head, trickling into her gullet, tickling her windpipe' (p. 712-13). The blood 'filling her head, trickling into her gullet, tickling her windpipe' graphically emphasises her discomfort and the erroneous method encouraged by Mrs Fox. This is juxtaposed with the uniform, peaceful 'blue of the

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[53] Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002), p. 713. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

sky', which serves as an ironic reminder of their shared world and conflicting ideas of how to live under it. The potential romance of their female bond is punctured by this detail, as well as the later comment from the narrator that 'Sugar [couldn't] help noticing that there [was] a bright cinnamon smear of earwax stuck in a curlicue of [Mrs Fox's] ear' (p. 713), right before Mrs Fox makes a romantic statement of comradeship. She states:

> I take you to be [...] a young woman who has found her calling, and means to be true to it, whatever her former means of livelihood may have been. That's as much as the Rescue Society can hope for the girls it puts into good homes, and many of them, sadly, return to the streets. (p. 713)

Here, the collective of the 'Rescue Society' is a reminder of Mrs Fox's female friends who share the same 'hope' for girls like Sugar. However, the portrayal of Mrs Fox's social awkwardness and Sugar's regrettable awareness of Mrs Fox's physical flaws deflates the idea that women have successfully managed a new kind of homosocial bond.

Faber's use of the neo-Victorian as a form bridges the past with the present in ways that deliberately exploit the nostalgic idea of the New Woman as closely linked to the modern day woman. Mrs Fox's social awkwardness with women illuminates the ways that the New Woman was socially rejected during the period, but also the ways in which her deliberate prioritisation of women is recognisably awkwardly today. The understanding that the female social reformer is rejected by other women resonates with the battlefield between modern women and feminist reform. Faber plays with the understanding that people such as Linton associated the New Woman with 'the Parisian woman of the Revolution'. The narrator states:

> Oh Mrs Fox knows there is gossip about her, generated by ladies who judge her to be a disgrace to polite society, a *sansculotte* in disguise, a Jacobin with an ugly face. They would sweep her – or, preferably, have her swept – out of their sight if they could. (p. 208)

The OED states that a 'Jacobin' is: 'A sympathizer with the principles of the Jacobins of the French Revolution; an extreme radical in politics or social organization. About 1800, a

nickname for any political reformer'.[54] Mrs Fox's social rejection is illuminated through the

perspective of the 'ladies' who opposed the New Woman, judging her 'a disgrace to polite

society'. However, although this cultural correlation between the social activist New Woman

and the French Revolution is not used today as a derogatory jest, the snipe at her 'ugly face'

is concurrent with modern feminist issues.[55] Like the awareness of the 'smear of earwax',

Mrs Fox's uneasy aesthetic appeal is suggestive of the unflattering stereotype of the modern

feminist.[56] This stereotype has been counteracted in modern culture with movements such as

'Lipstick feminism', or the more recent Twitter hashtag #FeministsAreUgly, but the neo-

Victorian representation of her as 'ugly' nonetheless perpetuates the idea, whether ironic or

not.[57] Faber's representation of her as 'ugly', then, links the Victorian New Woman with the

neo-Victorian New Woman and the modern day feminist. Like the 'Jacobin', the modern

feminist is the 'political reformer' under scrutiny from women for her behaviour and its link

to her appearance. Further emphasising this point, the narrator states: 'By next century,

predicts Mrs Fox, buttering a slice of bread, women like me will no longer be regarded as

freaks. England will be *full* of ladies who labour for a fairer society' (p. 208). The reference

to Mrs Fox's feminist agenda while she is casually 'buttering a slice of bread' reiterates the

idea that her imagined ideal of England '*full* of ladies who labour for a fairer society' is her

'bread and butter'.[58] However, this comment deliberately illuminates the understanding that

such idealism is still on-going, and that concept of women appreciating other women who

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[54] www.oed.com/Jacobin (accessed 15 Nov 2014).

[55] The revolutionary has been romanticised in popular culture, largely thanks to productions such as *Les Misérables.*

[56] This is also emphasised, though perhaps to a lesser extent, in *Hysteria.* Maggie Gyllenhaall, who plays New Woman, Charlotte Dalrymple. See: http://www.imdb.com/list/ls004536222/.

[57] http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-lipstick-feminism.htm; See: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11021571/Ugly-feminists-are-tweeting-selfies-to-prove-their-beauty-to-haters.html; https://twitter.com/search?q=%23FeministsAreUgly&src=tyah, and https://twitter.com/search?q=feministsareugly&src=typd (accessed 3 September 2014).

[58] OED: 'Taken as a type of every day food; the means of living; hence *attrib.* in many elliptical and allusive expressions'. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/22890?redirectedFrom=bread+and+butter#eid, (accessed 3 September 2014).

actively socially reform, encouraging a new kind of female homosocialism, is still not fully realised in the 'next century'. Like the 'ladies who judge [Mrs Fox] to be a disgrace to polite society', the female resistance to 'ladies who labour for a fairer society' in a modern context is exposed through Mrs Fox's link to modernity as a New Woman.

Overall, despite the understanding that the New Woman's focus is the improvement of women's lives, the Neo-Victorian representation of her actively emphasises her struggle to form new homosocial bonds. Comparing the texts with *The Odd Women* identifies that the notion of new female homosocial bonds (outside marriage and motherhood) was linked to a numerical gender balance. This means that either way, the suggestion that females can bond with each other organically on new terms is ultimately problematic. However, despite Gissing's reminder of the 'odd' amount of 'unpaired' women, Rhoda's dedication to re-writing female social experience is sympathetically portrayed. Moreover, Gissing imparts the suggestion that their new bonds had unearthed a radically more rewarding social experience. Mary proclaims:

> I am *glad* that I can show girls the way to a career which my opponents call unwomanly.// "Now see why. Womanly and womanish are two very different words, but the latter, as the world uses it, has become practically synonymous with the former. A womanly occupation means, practically, an occupation that a man disdains. And here is the root of the matter. (p. 152)

For Mary, the separation of 'Womanly and womanish' is paramount to her cause. Recognising the disparity between the two terms makes her '*glad*' to introduce women to 'unwomanly' roles. However, McDonald points out that:

> Gissing's perspective on the feminist movement has been notoriously difficult to define. Reflecting this ambivalence, David Grylls calls Gissing a 'woman-worshipping misogynist with an interest in female emancipation', while Jacob Korg

argues that he was 'an enemy of the Victorian myth of inferiority of women, he believed firmly that women were the intellectual and spiritual equals of men.[59]

With this in mind, the understanding that misogyny permeated female attempts at a new kind of homosocialism between New Women was potentially something that the 'misogynist[ic]' Gissing was interested in exploring. In contrast, the ways in which the New Woman attempts new homosocial bonds in the neo-Victorian texts explored in this chapter identify that portraying female friendships in this way is disingenuous to modern concepts of female experience as well as historical ideas. In Caitlin Moran's recent feminist text, she writes that:

> For women, finding a sympathetic, non-judgemental arena is just as important as getting the right to vote. We needed not just the right legislation, but the right atmosphere, too, before we can finally start to found our canons – then, eventually, cities and empires.[60]

Her nod to achievements in feminism, brought about by nineteenth century Suffragettes, asserts that despite their efforts to change legislation, women still lack the 'right atmosphere'. *The Odd Women* portrays the 'revolutionary' attempts at reassigning social meaning to the word 'womanly', but crucially, it also includes the understanding that the New Woman should also be 'sympathetic' to her sex. After the exposure of her affair, Monica pleads with Rhoda: 'If you were more human – if you tried to believe' - / The agitation which found utterance in these words had its effect upon Rhoda. In spite of herself, she was touched by the note of womanly distress' (pp. 344-5). Here, then, women are still evidently bound to acknowledging 'womanly distress', which, in turn, establishes the idea that sympathetically recognising 'womanly' concerns is fundamentally part of the process. The sympathetic New Woman in neo-Victorian fiction may be without the kind of female homosocialism that the

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[59] Tara McDonald, 'Gissing's Failed New Men: Masculinity in *The Odd Women'*, in *George Gissing and the Woman Question, Convention and Dissent* Christine Huguet and Simon J. James, eds. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 42.

[60] Caitlin Moran, *How To Be a Woman* (London: Random House, 2011), pp. 256-61.

amount of 'unpaired' women inspired, but her concern for the damage left behind by

patriarchal ideals is concurrent with modern ideals.

Conclusion

By chronologically signposting this dissertation with Wollstonecraft in 1792, and *Manfeels*

Park in 2014, this piece of work identifies that the concept of women forming a new kind of

homosocialism, based on respect for traits typically associated with maleness, has gone

through a variety of appropriation. From Wollstonecraft identifying that femininity has the

potential to breed 'contempt'; to Austen tentatively mirroring Wollstonecraft's ideas (after

Wollstonecraft was ostracised); to the creators of *Manfeels Park* who literally use the resistance to feminism as an ironic narrative: the ways in which women carve out a new kind of homosocialism is ultimately based on their ability, or inability to connect with each other. The space explored in between 1792 and 2014 identifies that modern texts borrow from the obvious social injustices for women from the past to illuminate ongoing concerns as well as progress. However, even when women's bonds were celebrated for their binary opposition to maleness, in texts such as *Goblin Market*, this too was seemingly disrupted on account of how it posed at threat to patriarchy and heterosexual norms.

Today's cultural environment involves a cacophony of feminist ideas. Perhaps most polemical, and relevant to the idea that women's social experience is stunted by traditional femininity, is the Twitter hashtag #WomenAgainstFeminism. A space for women to state their reasons for rejecting feminism and their interpretation of what it means, it is full of statements that perpetuate misogynistic cultures both by making direct accusations against feminist women, but also indirectly, by missing the idea that feminism might benefit themselves and the entirety of their sex. However, it is also purposely flooded with women who write over this misogynistic space to demonstrate the ways in which misogyny needs to be tackled with the female solidarity that feminism can offer. It is also repudiated by the Tumbler site *confusedcatsagainstfeminism.tumblr.com*, which asserts that comedy has a place in tackling internalised misogyny between women.[61] Caitlin Moran's bestselling book also makes the point that feminism, and a new kind of female homosocialism needs humour as part of its narrative, stating that: 'we just need to look it in the eye, squarely, for a minute, and then start laughing at it' (p. 14). Therefore, the ways in which modern texts engage with

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[61] A space used to satirise the evident confusion of 'women against feminism'.

the past to either directly, or indirectly portray the politics of women's homosocialism also includes an engagement with the unsettled feminist conditions of today.

Overall, then, it is evidently imperative that texts keep reaching into the past to illuminate the ways in which the blockades to female homosocialism are also bent onto the gender binary. Given that *Manfeels Park* in 2014 resonates so clearly with Austen's proto-feminist potential at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, and uses humour to elucidate its point, it is also clear that part of a new kind of homosocial bond for women absolutely must engage with traditionally male homosocial elements, fused with biological femaleness to encourage the belief in its value.

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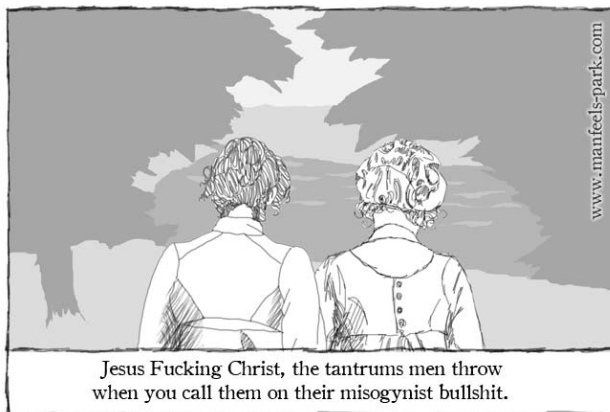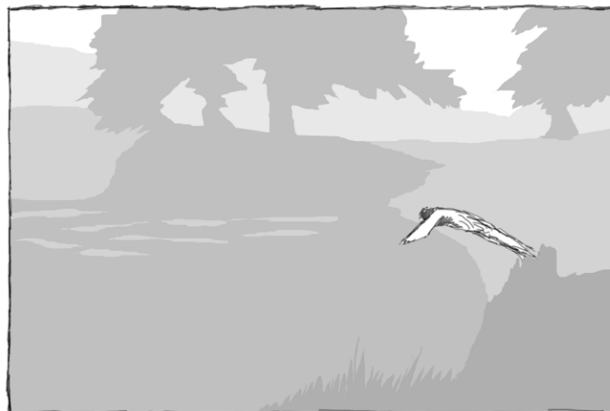
<u>Appendices</u>

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

'Mr Bennet, come along, you're needed'

 'Please...'

Appendix 3

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[62] Appendices 1-3: Daniel Percival (dir.), *Death Comes to Pemberley,* BBC1 (26-28 December 2013).

Appendix 4

Jesus Fucking Christ, the tantrums men throw
when you call them on their misogynist bullshit.

Appendix 5

'and slowly - slowly, in a circular motion'.

Appendix 6

'staying out of trouble, I hope?'

Appendix 7

Appendix 8

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[64] Appendices 5. 6. 7. and 8: Tanya Wexler (dir.), *Hysteria* (Informant Media and Forthcoming Films, 2011).