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**“MEN WRITTEN BY WOMEN”: MASCULINITY AND
THE FEMALE GAZE IN *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*,
LITTLE WOMEN AND *GOOD WIVES***

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ABSTRACT

The phrase “written by women” has drastically arisen on social media to describe real and fictional men who are respectful, courteous, and unintimidated by femininity, i.e. male characters written through the female gaze. In this list of idolised fictional characters, Fitzwilliam Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Theodore Laurence in *Little Women* (1868) and *Good Wives* (1869) are often mentioned. The present paper is a critical analysis of these characters through the contrast of gender standards in the nineteenth century and twenty-first century. Subsequently, I will also draw on film adaptation theories of classics portrayed on contemporary screens. Therefore, by focusing on these two acclaimed characters, their characterisation, and representation in cinema, I seek to shed some light on the question of what elements define this contemporary “canon” of male characters written by women writers, and the reasons for its success on social media and ergo, women readers.

Keywords: female gaze, femininity, Jane Austen, Louisa May Alcott, masculinity

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Introduction

In the revolutionary period of the eighteenth century, most importantly, during the 1790s in post-French Revolution Europe, there was a disruption regarding masculinity and its conception. Some examples of the rival models of late-eighteenth-century masculinity are the ones defended by Edmund Burke, and in contrast, by Mary Wollstonecraft. On the one hand, the former defends traditional and gentlemanly masculinity in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). The latter, on the other hand, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) defends a modern model of masculinity, assertive yet sensitive, as the author claims:

In life, an honest man with a confined understanding is frequently the slave of his habits and the dupe of his feelings, whilst the man with a clearer head and colder heart makes the passions of others bend to his interest; but truly sublime is the character that acts from principle, and governs the inferior springs of activity without slackening their vigour; whose feelings give vital heat to his resolves, but never hurry him into feverish eccentricities. (Wollstonecraft, *VRM* 6)

By these words from Wollstonecraft, one can see that the author believes in the balance between rationality and sensibility. Burke maintained the premise that men inherently possess gentlemanliness and affection, alleging that “We have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosoms . . . [and] it is natural to be so affected” (74). Nevertheless, his view on traditional chivalry is what Wollstonecraft criticised. The latter argued that this chivalry is the reason for the systematic subordination of women, as well as it is socially incongruous in the modern world and ergo, modern ideals. Therefore, being guided by these considerations, one can see that Jane Austen’s and Louisa May Alcott’s male characters are the results of these oppositions. As Meaghan Malone states “Austen’s heroes thereby embody an innovative model of masculinity, and are fashioned by the author as both subjects and objects of desire” (63). Similarly, Clare Bender states that “in *Little Women*, Alcott challenged society’s definition of stereotypical gender roles and pushed the boundaries of expectations that were placed on both men and women to

conform to society's standards'' (140). Thus, one of the reasons the main characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Little Women* and *Good Wives* are well regarded by the audience relies on this modern and flexible presentation of masculinity.

The present paper focuses on three of the most acclaimed historical fiction and romance novels, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) and its continuation, *Good Wives* (1869), and how they represent this innovative model of masculinity. In these novels, male characters are written by women authors and by female characters, "male sexuality is essentially created through multiple female perspectives, and the female gaze thus becomes integral to the ideal of masculinity developed in Austen's novels'' (Malone 63). In *Pride and Prejudice*, the plot and characters are filtered through Elizabeth Bennet's perspective. In the same vein, male characters in *Little Women* and *Good Wives* are introduced by one of the March sisters or other female characters: "As the title, *Little Women* would suggest the men, or boys, are not in the centre of Alcott's story but merely presented through the actions, remarks and thoughts of the girls'' (Zehren 3). Therefore, the reader is not only given information about how womanhood was being redefined but also about manhood. Thus, the purpose of the dissertation is to analyse how manhood is constructed in these novels and to demonstrate that Fitzwilliam Darcy along with Theodore Laurence represent a new "Man of Feeling'', psychologically, socially, and sentimentally equal to women. The text is analysed from a feminist point of view applying Edmund Burke's and Mary Wollstonecraft's premises, added to contemporary standards of masculinity.

This paper will apply the following methodology: the two first chapters correspond to the theoretical background by studying gender standards in the history of gender construction before and during the nineteenth century. Then, in order to understand the portrayal of masculinity in these three novels, it is important to study Austen's and Alcott's conceptions of masculinity, as well as the influence of cinematic adaptations on the depiction of masculinity. The last section of the theoretical background concerns the reception of Austen and Alcott both in academia and media. Finally, the third chapter corresponds to the practical analysis of the novels, focusing on a literary and cinematographic analysis of Darcy and Laurence.

The first chapter offers a contextualization and a theoretical base to contrast how gender was usually constructed and developed before the nineteenth century (1.1), and I will focus on Edmund Burke's and Mary Wollstonecraft's theories concerning femininity

and masculinity. In the next section (1.2), I analyse how gender theories, especially how masculinity is presented in Austen's historical context, that is the Regency (1811-1820), and in Alcott's context, the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) and the American Civil War (1861-1865). Likewise, the authors' personal and ideological context will be considered to understand their works and characters. Although both authors were astute observers of affection, they remained unmarried until their respective deaths. Concerning their educational background, their education was largely under the direction of their respective fathers, which might explain their deconstruction of gender relations, and in particular, "hegemonic masculinity". Therefore, the next section (1.3) aims to study Jane Austen's and Louisa May Alcott's definitions of masculinity in order to understand their male characters. The last section focuses on the definition of the male and female gaze, and the influence of cinematic adaptations on the depiction of masculinity (1.4) to observe how masculinity has been portrayed on screen.

The second chapter concentrates on the reception of Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott both in academia and in media for the purpose of observing the different readings of their novels, both in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Then, the reception of the authors will be treated separately. Nevertheless, both authors and novels experience similar receptions, both positively and negatively. On the one hand, some scholars praise Austen's and Alcott's novels for offering characters that differ in complexity, from women and men characters that respect the authors' contemporary standards to others that go beyond the prototypical gender presentations. On the other hand, scholars and authors did not validate *Pride and Prejudice*, *Little Women* and *Good Wives* for its "happily ever after" ending, for presenting an uninteresting and claustrophobic lifestyle focused on estates, courting, marriage, the daily basis of higher classes, etc.

In the third chapter, I analyse the elements and reasons that characterise these two male characters within this canon. One of the clearest examples of this modern masculinity is Austen's Fitzwilliam Darcy, followed by Alcott's Theodore Laurence. Certainly, the difference in age between these two characters is an essential feature to understand the versatility of masculinity. For instance, Mr Darcy is presented as a "fine figure of a man" (Austen 12), and Theodore Laurence as a "little gentleman" (Alcott, *LW* 22). For this reason, the third section covers the analysis of both characters, both in the literary text and their cinematographic adaptations. The two characters will be

analysed in terms of descriptions, their estates, their depiction on portraits and sketches by their female counterparts, and the final love confession. As there are numerous adaptations, and the canon of “men written by women” is a modern phenomenon, the latest two adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Little Women* and *Good Wives* are the ones most highly regarded by social media users. Then, in the following section (3.1) I analyse Mr Darcy both in the literary text (3.1.1) and in his cinematographic versions (3.1.2). In fact, the most praised adaptation by the (modern) audience is the BBC’s 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* mini-TV series, directed by Simon Langton, adapted by Andrew Davies, and starring Colin Firth. Likewise, the 2005 version, directed by Joe Wright and starring Matthew Macfadyen, is also heavily referenced amongst social media users to this day. Similarly, as regards *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, the next section focuses on Theodore Laurence (3.2) both in the text (3.2.1) and cinematographic adaptations (3.2.2), being Gillian Armstrong’s 1994 adaptation, starring Christian Bale, and the most recent adaptation by Greta Gerwig in 2019, starring Timothée Chalamet.

Finally, the last section will provide the conclusions reached after having analysed these male characters. The main purpose of this paper is to analyse the “Man of Feeling” that Fitzwilliam Darcy and Theodore Laurence represent and identify the elements and reasons that construct the idealisation of these male characters and women authors, and as result, recognize to what extent their respective cinematic adaptations have had a role in this canon of sentimental male characters written by women authors, and in the preservation of Austen’s and Alcott’s heritage.

1. Theoretical framework

To understand the different approaches to masculinity that took place in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to analyse how masculinity was culturally constructed before this century. Likewise, it is important to study how masculinity was constructed during the nineteenth century by men and women writers. The perfect example of the type of masculinity that is most acclaimed by women readers can be seen in Jane Austen’s Mr Darcy and Louisa May Alcott’s Theodore Laurence. Last but not least, the last section features cinematic adaptation theories that help to understand their notions of masculinity and how they can be articulated on screen.

1.1. Gender construction before the Nineteenth Century

In general terms, masculinity can be defined as the quality of being a man, whose habits and traits are typically dominated by society. These traits often involve physical strength, courage, determination, moral endurance, independence, and leadership. This masculinity has been defined and reinforced since Antiquity, where men were expected to follow masculine ideals in myths of gods and heroes. Later, in Medieval times the promoted “ideal man” was inherited from the classical period. Besides this chivalric masculinity, religious determination and the possession of an unalterable Christianity were essential. The inherited superiority that men claim to possess was perpetuated in theology. In addition, in medieval understanding, anatomy and physiology determined each sex’s intellectual capacities (Cadden 62-63). Thus, all the positive attributes of “mankind” were centred on men. This system doomed men with the mission of imposing a masculinist perception of the universe and most importantly, “they had also fused personhood with manhood, and to defend their manhood they had also to become ever more manly” (Lees et al. 22). Therefore, medieval masculinity was the epitome of primitive masculinity.

In the eighteenth century, the French Revolution (1789-1799), perhaps the most important event of the Modern Age, not only provoked changes in an entire political system based on estates; it also fuelled a fierce dialectical dispute among European intellectuals. These types of discourses were recurrently distributed in magazines and periodicals, such as *The Spectator* founded in 1711 by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele with the aim of upbringing critical discussions in middle-class households and promoting the ideas of the Enlightenment. Years later, between 1744 and 1746, Eliza Haywood founded *The Female Spectator*, considered the first periodical written by women and aimed at women. Then, one can see that from the early eighteenth century there was an accentuation of gendered discourses.

The type of masculinity that was defended was a polite and refined one through conduct manuals and moral literature. Nevertheless, by the end of the eighteenth century, “politeness began to be questioned . . . because of its incompatibility with a masculine national character. . . . These tensions contributed to the end of politeness as an ideal for the fashioning of gentlemanliness. . . . In fashioning themselves as polite, men risked

becoming effeminate” (Cohen 314-322). Also, according to Cohen, this transformation in taste associated with the revival of chivalry can also be associated with the development of antiquarian inquiry about ancient Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the investigation of the origins of English liberties and the English constitution in England’s past (317). Therefore, this revival of chivalry responds to a revision of the nation’s past in a context where it was being defined. Then, the key to capturing the nation depended on developing a type of masculinity that was emotionally and physically capable of wielding the power of the nation.

In this context, Edmund Burke’s and Mary Wollstonecraft’s disputes regarding masculinity are the point of departure for the changes in the definition of the gentleman and ergo, in the definition of masculinity in the early nineteenth century. Burke’s famous lament that “the age of chivalry is gone” can be considered the start of this disruption of masculinity. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790; 2003) Burke laments that the chivalric code of altruistic loyalty to the monarchy was replaced by a modern liberal economic self-interest, “Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom” (65). In this context, he laments the execution of Marie Antoinette, whom he admired, “Burke’s gendered fantasia of Marie Antoinette as the epitome of the beautiful and symbolic incitement to be our best (chivalric) selves” (O’Donnell 797). This serves as an introduction to his speech concerning emotions and sentimentality, “that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched” (Burke 65). Thus, Burke had a chivalry sense of sentimentality as he associated it with courage. He also possessed a Christian pessimistic view of human nature, alleging that individual selfishness and vices were the roots of all that social unhappiness in the French revolution. As chivalry masculinity was being theorised, extreme masculinity was defended, because as Raewyn W. Connell states, “if there is weakness . . . there will be anxiety which motivates an exaggerated emphasis on the masculine side of things” (16). Connell’s quote perfectly summarises and to some extent justifies the revival of chivalry in eighteenth-century England.

Moreover, Burke argued that people were ruled by passion rather than reason. Nevertheless, he believed that emotions are natural to men, since “we [men] have real

hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosoms . . . when such ideas are brought before our mind, it is natural to be so affected” (Burke 74). Subsequently, in further lines, he associated this sentimentality with religious terms, alleging that “We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility” (Burke 74). To Burke, all other feelings are false, corrupt minds, and are incompatible with rational liberty.

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *Vindication of the Right of Men* (1790; 1999) and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792; 1999) to bespeak the weaknesses and contradictions of Burke’s arguments. In contrast, she believed in a positive and individualistic human nature, the equality of individuals, and the natural right of individuals to determine their own destinies. As Jane Todd writes in the introduction of the 1999 Oxford edition of *Vindication of the Right of Men* and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft “praises adult masculine rationality, while giving examples of infantile self-absorption and the desire to be desired” (23). Wollstonecraft also addresses the rights inherited at their birth by men as rational creatures and “in receiving these, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights” (*VRM* 12). She also identifies the root of the problem regarding her contemporary masculinity suggesting that men have been crafted to be “artificial monsters” and by the capacity of reasoning, “[they] would not have failed to discover, as his faculties unfolded, that true happiness arose from the friendship and intimacy which can only be enjoyed by equals; . . . [and] an intercourse of good offices and mutual benefits, founded on respect for justice and humanity” (Wollstonecraft, *VRM* 9). Nevertheless, she believes that men are only superior to women in their bodily strength. But she adds that “Men in general, seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they can scarcely trace how, rather than to root them out” (Wollstonecraft, *VRW* 76). Thus, Wollstonecraft did not only attack hereditary privilege, but she also embraced a civil society with reasoned sensibility based on empathy and fellowship contrary to Burke’s negative notions of human nature and ideals of a civil society that propagates insincerity and prejudices.

On this opposition between emotion and reason, a topic that both Edmund Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft address in their respective works, the latter author states in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*:

Affection, when love is out of the question, authorises many personal endearments, that naturally flowing from an innocent heart, give life to the behaviour; but the personal intercourse of appetite, gallantry, or vanity, is despicable. When a man squeezes the hand of a pretty woman, handing her to a carriage, whom he has never seen before, she will consider such an impertinent freedom in the light of an insult, if she has any true delicacy, instead of being flattered by this unmeaning homage to beauty. These are the privileges of friendship, or the momentary homage which the heart pays to virtue, when it flashes suddenly on the notice—mere animal spirits have no claim to the kindnesses of an affection! (174)

As one can see, Wollstonecraft relies on reason to seek a moral and effective life. Furthermore, she does not see reason and passion as opposites, but as complementary virtuous traits, as a reasonable person can perfectly be compassionate and amiable, and at the same time, righteous and truthful. In addition, Wollstonecraft also addresses Burke's conception of the sublime and the beautiful. Burke identified the sublime with power and masculinity, and beautiful with weakness and femininity. Wollstonecraft defines this gendered rhetoric and claims it is harmful because it stigmatises women and detaches them from the public sphere. Likewise, it also obliges men to fit unreachable standards.

These ideas can be seen in literary works written by male authors such as Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones* (1749). Fielding's *Tom Jones* perfectly illustrates how education plays an important role in the process of education of a boy that eventually is expected to become a gentleman. Fielding's hero grows under the education and kindness of Squire Allworthy, a compassionate and wealthy man as the name suggests. Nevertheless, as Jones grows up, he eventually becomes a mischievous womaniser, but he is still kind at heart. Contrariwise, Master Blifil, Squire Allworthy's nephew, represents the antihero who feels a sort of competence with Jones for Allworthy's property. Although Blifil and Jones grew up together under Allworthy's kindness and are blood brothers, while Jones is benevolent and humble, Blifil is malevolent and greedy, since these character traits result in his quest to obtain the entirety of Allworthy's inheritance. Therefore, this work presented two types of men. On the one hand, Tom Jones embodies a realistic depiction of a man, a gentleman yet faulty. He has a good heart and poses chivalry which depicts him as a gentleman despite his irresponsibility and promiscuity. On the other hand, Blifil represents a man who succumbs to passions,

jealousy, and selfishness. Thus, Fielding implies that a man who is generous, virtuous, and does not succumb to passions is the true definition of gallantry and gentlemanliness, as Tom Jones himself represents.

Manhood in the United States also presented important changes. First, as Michael S. Kimmel states, “it is this tension between the multiplicity of masculinities that collectively define American men’s actual experiences” (4). Furthermore, in this line of analysing American manhood, he also addresses the widespread anxiety of not accomplishing the masculine standards alleging that “throughout American history American men have been afraid that other will see us as less than manly, as weak, timid, frightened, . . . afraid of not measuring up to some vaguely defined notions of what it means to be a man, afraid of failure” (Kimmel 4). Kimmel connects the earliest manifestations of manhood in the United States with the first professionally produced play in the history of the country, *The Contrast* by Royall Tyler. This play was first performed on 16 April 1787, and focuses on two men: Billy Dimple and Colonel Manly. Kimmel describes Dimple as “a feminized fop, an Anglophilic, mannered rogue who travelled to England and returned a dandy” and Manly as “former military officer, modeled after George Washington, fresh from the victory over the British— a man loyal to his troops and to honor and duty” (11). Kimmel also identified a third important male character, Mr Van Rough: “a successful urban businessman who is looking to solidify his newly prosperous economic position with a marriage to the well-positioned Dimple” (11). Furthermore, Kimmel identifies these three male characters with the three dominant ideals of American manhood at the turn of the nineteenth century: the Genteel Patriarch, the Heroic Artisan and the Self-Made Man. For instance, Dimple embodies the Genteel Patriarch, “a dignified aristocratic manhood, committed to the British upper-class code of honor . . . with exquisite taste and manners and refined sensibilities. . . . Manhood meant property ownership, . . . philanthropic work, church activities and deep involvement with his family” (13). Manly represents the Heroic Artisan, an archetype influenced by European standards, and this type of man is “independent, virtuous, and honest, . . . stiffly formal in his manners with women, stalwart and loyal to his male comrades . . . [and] an honest toiler, unafraid of hard work, proud of his craftsmanship and self-reliance” (13). Lastly, Mr Rough represents the Self-Made Man, a model of manhood based on “a man’s activities in the public sphere, measured by accumulated wealth and status, by geographic and social mobility. . . . The Self-Made Man is

uncomfortably linked to the volatile marketplace . . . [and] continued mobility” (13). These three types denote the moral and social activeness that men were expected to possess.

In this line, I would like to again quote Kimmel, who writes that “Being a man meant being in charge of one’s own life, liberty and property. Being a man meant also not being a boy. A man was independent, self-controlled, responsible; a boy was dependent, irresponsible, and lacked control” (14). This premise will be essential to the analysis of the characters of Darcy and Laurie in Chapter Three. Therefore, as one can see, it is important to clarify that this paper does not feature universal masculinity but the development of masculinity in a given context and geographical position, Britain and the United States.

To summarise, the history of masculinity usually identifies a shift from a stern seventeenth-century manhood to a polite and civil eighteenth-century masculinity. As stated earlier, this shift responds to historical changes and the anxiety of becoming “effeminate” in a historical and cultural context where the primitive definition of masculinity was requested.

1.2. Gender in context: The Regency (1811-1820), the Victorian Era (1837-1901), and the United States in the Nineteenth Century

The Georgian era in England presented explicitly gendered politics. Both historical contexts were characterised by a stratified society, where nobility embodied lavishness and luxury, and manners were extremely important. Their gender politics were based on the superiority of men towards women, where the former personified the public realm whilst the latter embodied the domestic realm. The Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815) and Britain’s conflict with France provoked social and political turmoil. This constant menace was a source of anxiety for British citizens of all social classes, especially for the male populace. This resulted in mass volunteering and the arming of British men. As men were the head of the nation and the family, they were expected to possess some qualities that prototypically were associated with masculinity, that is to say, authority and strength. The social reformations that took place during these years resulted in the revision and

redefinition of these gender roles. As a result of this conflict between Britain and France, “Britain wanted a hero to prove its power and manliness against the French” (Cohen 6). This context justifies why both men and women authors were concentrated on constructing literary masculinities, and ergo offering different and various approaches to masculinity.

Austen’s contemporary context was the Georgian period, named after the reigns of Georges I-IV (1714-1830). Specifically, the Regency of George IV (1811-1820) coincided with her adulthood, and it presented an accentuated political masculinity. Thus, politics and masculinity were complementary. Moreover, the first Industrial Revolution from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century resulted in an individualistic society, and therefore, individualism prevailed over the community. This new social order reinforced the authority and independence of men in both social and domestic realms in contrast to the subordinate and sentimental domesticity of women. Public life was increasingly seen as an exclusively male domain. In addition, “‘Manliness’ became the identifying code of both the business class and the ‘respectable’ working class. The virtues of rugged individualism and personal integrity were emphasised at the expense of sociability and ease of manner” (Tosh 455). This subjective individualism was one of the characteristics of the Romantic Movement well established by the time of the Regency. Other characteristics of this prosperous movement were creative freedom in opposition to academicism, rejection of norms and rules, and celebration of the self. Moreover, the eighteenth century was marked by the Enlightenment, an intellectual movement that reiterated reason over fanaticism, freedom of thought and faith in progress as a new meaning of history.

During the Regency, conduct books were replaced by etiquette books. Thus, instead of teaching manners in essential moral patterns, etiquette books “reduced the perplexities of behavior in company to strict conformity to fashion” (Tosh 455). In this context, John Tosh claims that politeness is the factor that differentiates and connects manliness and gentlemanliness:

Politeness was a critical fault-line between the gentlemanly and manly ideals. . . . One can be born a gentleman in fact, gentle birth gave one a clear edge in status over other brands of gentleman. Manliness, on the other hand, was socially inclusive. . . . Manliness

has to be earned, by mastering the circumstances of life and thus securing the respect of one's peers. (458)

Thus, gentlemanliness is inherited whilst manliness is learned (by society). Also, gentlemanliness responded to a valued social refinement whilst manliness responded to a resilient individualism. In short, it is a dichotomy between politeness and authenticity. In this shift of cultural prestige, politeness became redundant, and manliness was conceived then as a guide to a certain lifestyle rather than an educational or moral tool. Regarding this etiquette, values and “manly speech”, Tosh states that “Directness and sincerity might well cross the boundary of propriety and appear brusque or even rude. When a man had nothing to say from the heart, the right course was silence” (460). This manliness is focused on sincerity and honesty, and it highlights the man of action and few words rather than an eloquent and expressive man. The ideal type of man was then a “man of simplicity”. Moreover, the property was also linked to manliness, as it reflected the growth of modern Britain Empire and a solid economic and social order focused on craftsmanship and mercantilism. Therefore, the ideal man ought to be a man of international, national, and local power in order to preserve the English nation. In addition, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, parallel to the modernization of the British nation, patriotism was inevitable as well as expected. Patriotism was a way to strengthen their individual, civic and social responsibilities and it was important in terms of solidification of national and individual identity but also it was advantageous “because of its growing need for the bodies and sexualities of bourgeois men” (Krampp 19). Thus, one can see that during the Georgian period, and specifically, the Regency, gentlemanliness was subjected to contradiction and diverse interpretations.

In order to comprehend Austen's definition of masculinity, it is necessary to analyse how her contemporary male authors understood masculinity. For instance, Lord Byron and his well-known satirical poem *Don Juan* (1819). In the original myth by Tirso de Molina, Don Juan is the quintessential seducer, a handsome, self-confident, and libertine man. Nevertheless, Byron reverses the main character trait of Don Juan as a womaniser and rewrites this character as an unsophisticated man who readily succumbs to desires and women. By doing this, Byron reverses the culturally inherited polarisation of male activeness and female passiveness and demonstrates the absurdity of these (biological)

stereotypes. Unlike Fielding's Tom Jones, Byron's Don Juan seems to be heroic, but he is in fact naive, and the adventures do not respond to his fate nor strong moral compass but occur by accident.

Later, in the Victorian Era (1837-1901), manliness was associated with civic duties, i.e. work, pray, advocating rights, etc. Victorians were less interested in politeness than Georgians, and there was an emphasis on individualism. In Victorian society, individualism was more important than sociability. Unlike the Georgian rational aim, the Victorian era presented a fixation on romanticism and mysticism. Etiquette was re-conducted to physicality, and social relations between the sexes became distant. Due to the changing context, masculinity was an elusive term and it experienced differences and inconsistent approaches by religious and social authors. Nevertheless, it was clear that unlike Georgian manliness focused on pretence and etiquette, Victorian manliness was focused on work and acquired a utilitarian aim. As expected, it stressed virility and the basic approach to masculinity based on physicality, strength, and courage. In Georgian society, men were ideally involved in social intercourse, but Victorian society presented a sectarianism that responded to the competition and discipline between the different economic sectors dominated by men. This sectarianism was also reflected in gender intercourse, where the polarisation of the sexes became extremely limited and stereotypical, "Manliness claimed the active virtues for men, naturalising the privilege by dwelling on their female opposites: dependence, caprice, emotionality, and timorousness" (Tosh 466). In addition, Victorian men considered the company of women as something avoidable, insipid, and impractical.

In Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) the main character and narrator is Philip Pirrip, also known as Pip, who socially evolves from a domestic rural man in Kent to a wealthy gentleman in London. In the story of Pip's bildungsroman, his masculinity is built as the story advances and his character unfolds. For instance, there is substantial character development from Pip in the earliest chapters, where he is conquered by fear, to Pip in the last chapters, where he has acquired more confidence and influence. Thus, Pip experiences the common character development in Victorian novels through the acquisition of pronounced character traits such as authority and physical dominance. In addition, through interactions with fierce women throughout the course of the novel, Pip reflects on gender identity and the association of physical dominance as masculine traits and passivity and weakness as feminine traits.

Parallely to Britain, the United States experienced substantial national and social changes during the nineteenth century. Here it is important to mention names such as Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), one of the first women to professionally practise literary criticism and journalism while advocating for women's rights in the US, with essays published in Ralph Waldon Emerson's Transcendentalist magazine *The Dial*, such as "Woman in the Nineteenth Century" (1843), also known as "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women". The development of the wage-labour system defied manhood norms in all social classes, as women acquired authority within the family and middle-class (men) acquired more social and economic recognition (Lombard 194). As Kimmel writes:

The emerging capitalist market in the early nineteenth century both freed individual men and destabilized them. No longer were men bound to the land, to their estates, to Mother England, or the tyrannical father, King George. . . . America was entering a new age, and men were free to create their own destiny, to find their own rise as high as they could, to write their own biographies. (17)

From the beginning of the century, the Self-Made Man embodied the economic autonomy of the country. The most remarkable event of this century is the Civil War (1861-1865), the event that undoubtedly defined the nation's identity. As it has been mentioned, Kimmel identified the three dominant ideals of American manhood at the turn of the nineteenth century: the Genteel Patriarch, the Heroic Artisan, and the Self-Made Man. Nevertheless, in the last decade before the outbreak of the Civil War, it was uncertain which model of manhood would be the predominant one (Kimmel 27). Therefore, as the national identity was being crafted, the education and training for the adulthood of children became a national preoccupation. As Kimmel writes "the American man was now free to invent himself. The birth of the nation was also the birth of a New Man" (15). The place of the Self-Made Man was the workplace because if manhood had to be proved, it had to be proved in the eyes of other men. Taking into account this premise, this latter author remarks on another core element of manhood, which is homosociality, that arose in the early nineteenth century and can still be seen in the present day. Moreover, "White men in these societies had for centuries described ideal manhood in terms of men's successful fulfilment of their roles as fathers and masters of households" (Lombard 196).

As expected, this self-discipline and self-assertion of the “Self-Made Manhood” was inculcated in boys, and their boyhoods appear like little manhoods (Kimmel 38). To summarise, adult men were expected to be authoritarian, rational, and physically intimidating in order to be steady role models to younger generations.

In the masculine culture of nineteenth-century America, sociability and “jolly fellowship” (a term coined by Richard Stott in *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America*) were common behaviours that involved drinking, fighting, and gambling. This was also reflected in literature, as men readers were interested in stories about tricking, gambling, fighting, and thus, strong men tormenting weak men (Lombard 198). Nevertheless, a needed “moral revolution” was simultaneously taking place in the nation, and this ethos drastically declined by the 1850s (Stott 2). An interesting development of American manhood occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century when there was an increasing paranoia of men becoming effeminate. Consequently, everything became a test, his connection to nature, work, women, and other men. This resulted in the return of primitive masculinity and masculinization of American culture. Men “restore” their masculinity by escaping from the civilising constraints and by attending to activities that involve physical activities such as bodybuilding, sports, and violence. In brief, activities that helped to release their aggressive impulses and that at the same time, illustrate that men were products of a particular system of social control.

In literary production, moral literature was the prevailing genre where “adult men were still expected to behave rationally, responsibly, and peaceably, though now refinement and sympathy were added to the general traits expected of the ideal man” (Lombard 199). In fact, these ideas can be found and contrasted in Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854). Alcott’s intimate friend Henry David Thoreau defended a simple man free from any material bond and with a strong sense of self-reliance, i.e. a Self-Made Man. This relies on the Transcendentalist emphasis on spirituality, unity, innate goodness, appreciation of nature, and experience rather than logic. In *Walden*, Thoreau acquires a unitary voice speaking for men’s desires. His ideal masculinity is a (white) man engaged in political activism (often subjected to the abolishing slavery cause), independent and virtuous. In his speech and later essay called “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (1859), Thoreau defended an honourable and heroic type of man like Brown who would perish for honourable causes (in this case, abolitionism) and thus achieve a life with purpose. As Kimmel writes “. . . –self-control, exclusion, and escape– have been the dominant themes

in the history of American masculinity until the present day” (31). Therefore, it is important to notice that Thoreau did not conform nor defy his contemporary ideal of manhood, but he did construct his own ideal of manhood.

All these ideas, changes, and notions concerning masculinity illustrate that male identities are constructed and ergo, they are variable. Therefore, there is no such a male identity in general but diverse masculinities. Nevertheless, one can identify and compare patterns of male behaviour in a given society and period. As one can see, the development of masculinity consists of a cycle between primitive masculinity and suitable modern masculinity crafted by contemporary society, or both interviewed in one.

1.3. Jane Austen’s and Louisa May Alcott’s definition of masculinity

In the previous sections the reader can see that canonical masculine behaviours experienced numerous changes in their respective historical and geographical context. Therefore, in order to understand Austen’s and Alcott’s male characters, it is important to comprehend their notions of masculinity, and whether Darcy and Laurie were influenced by real men in their respective lives. Although it might seem evident, it is important to remark that the historical context is a decisive factor in the portrayal of their characters because one was contemporary to the Napoleonic War in England, whereas the other was contemporary to the American Civil War. Despite evident differences between the authors, one can identify patterns in their conception of femininity and masculinity. Even though there are no solid comparative studies that address these similarities, one of the aims of this paper is to understand why the audience appreciates and includes Darcy and Laurence in the canon of the “ideal man” being such different characters.

As it has been mentioned, in Austen’s novels women and men characters are complementary to each other and they support each other’s development. Moreover, her male characters are likewise meticulously drafted as her heroines. Nevertheless, as Jane Todd writes in *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen* (2006), “Austen accepted the inescapable fact of female dependence on men, and the anger of Wollstonecraft is not openly expressed in the novels” (3). Even though Austen presents complex male and

female characters, Austen presents different kinds of men, from ones that could be considered heroes to ones that can be considered villains. Concisely, Austen presents what a man shall be, free from any stereotyping and anterior models of masculinity inherited by her predecessors. Nonetheless, she parts from “the “masculine paradigm” that was embodied by national Romantic figures— such as Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington” (Malone 69). Austen’s male heroes respond to the aforementioned “man of simplicity” where the ideal man ought to be a man of international, national, and local power to preserve the English nation. Her heroes are men of action and few words rather than eloquent and expressive men who possess a “manly speech” focused on direct sentences, sincerity, and honesty.

By attending to letters to her sister Cassandra, historians suggest that one of the men that inspired Darcy was Thomas Lefroy. Here, both in their 20s, found much in common and shared opinions and books. In fact, “their relationship was a close one, as evidenced by the fact that he lent her *Tom Jones*” (“The Real Tom”). Even though their romantic relationship was ambiguous, they undoubtedly had affection for each other. As Jane Austen wrote in one of her letters to her sister Cassandra:

“I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together . . . He is a very gentlemanlike, good-looking, pleasant young man, I assure you. But as to our having ever met, except at the three last balls, I cannot say much; for he is so excessively laughed at about me at Ashe, that he is ashamed of coming to Steventon, and ran away when we called on Mrs Lefroy a few days ago.” (*Letters* 127)

Thus, it is plausible that Austen used Lefroy to portray some of her characters. In fact, Jon Spence in *Becoming Jane Austen* (2003) proposes that Austen used herself and Lefroy to portray the characters of Elizabeth and Darcy. He suggests that Elizabeth Bennet reflects part of Lefroy’s personality and Darcy reflects part of Austen’s personality. Austen, however, remained unmarried until her death, and Lefroy married another woman. In his last years, he was questioned about his relationship with Austen, and he admitted he had loved Austen, but it was a “boyish love” (Walker). Thus, this illustrates how the state of yearning for a partner’s love can be perfectly seen and described in Austen’s novels.

Their recognition as heroes or villains depends on their character development, i.e. characters that undergo psychological transformation are heroes (in this case, Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley), whereas the ones that remain psychologically static are depicted as villains (in this case, Mr Collins and Mr Wickham). Then, their endings are subjected to their postures to transformation. By deconstructing their masculine superiority, they eventually find happiness and self-fulfilment. For instance, Austen's heroes are chivalrous, they are never imprudent nor deceitful. By the end of the novel, Mr Darcy experiences a process of self-awareness, he identifies his defects, abandons his pride to ask for forgiveness, and achieves an equal relationship with Elizabeth.

Paradoxically, although Austen drafts her male characters in complex stances, they are simplified in terms of (un)desirability, that is to say, "Austen significantly refashions masculinity, however, by suggesting that these modern men are also capable of being fashioned as sexual objects . . . Austen's brand of masculinity is one that develops in response to women's objectification and sexuality of men" (Malone 68-73). Nevertheless, due to her historical context, the social and political unrest provoked by the Napoleonic Wars, and Britain's conflict with France, her views on masculinity changed in her latest novels. As patriotism arise, her construction of desirable men characters was based on a man's possession of international, national, and local power, and which type of men could appropriately wield this power in order to preserve the English nation (Ailwood 10). In all cases, "Austen criticizes the morally pernicious equation of female virtue with passivity, or masculinity with aggression" (Gilbert and Gubar 119). In summary, her male characters first respond to the needs and wants of women, secondly, they deconstruct their social and cultural processes of masculine behaviour/performance, and finally, they also respond to the national preoccupation with political, social, and economic power, i.e. they respond to England's national interest.

By studying Louisa May Alcott's biographies one can see that her fiction is not fictional at all, to a major or lesser extent, fictional characters in her novels are based on her acquaintances. For instance, the two men that had significant romantically and/or intellectually impact on Alcott were her schoolteacher and mentor Henry David Thoreau, and her neighbour, Ralph Waldon Emerson. In Alcott's first novel, *Moods* (1864), the young protagonist Sylvia Yules falls in love with her close two friends, Geoffrey Moor and Adam Warwick. The wise Geoffrey Moor represents Emerson, and the naturalist Adam Warwick represents Thoreau. Likewise, Friedrich Bhaer in *Good Wives* is inspired

by Emerson (Reisen 127; Rioux 11-44). Furthermore, the old men-young women attraction motif is frequently used in Alcott's romances. As biographer Harriet Reisen writes in *Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women* (2009), "In Thoreau, Louisa found an outlet for her romantic imagination, while Emerson appealed to her adolescent sense of what made a man great. A well-educated man (as Louisa's father was not), Emerson became her literary mentor" (126). Rioux develops Alcott's infatuation with Emerson and states that Louisa called Emerson "my beloved master" and she wrote love letters to him, influenced by the letters Bettina Von Armin sent to Goethe and were published in Goethe's *Correspondence with a Child* (1835), a book that Emerson loaned to Alcott (45). Moreover, the man that inspired Laurie was Ladislav Wisniewski, a boy that Alcott met on her first trip to Europe in 1865. In fact, after the publication of *Little Women*, Alcott herself acknowledged him as the model for Laurie, always referring to him as "Laddie" (Reisen 247; Rioux 42). Rioux observes that "Theodore Laurence's Europeanness, his poor health, his lack of parents, and his talent as a pianist all come from Ladislav" (42). Reisen further develops this character and claims that Laurie's timeless immaturity and youthful essence respond to Alcott's memory of Laddie (241). It is also important to remark that Alcott hastily wrote for the sake of money and substance. This can explain why Alcott used people around her as inspirations for her characters.

As it has been mentioned in the historical context, American men were likewise invested in their domestic roles. Therefore, as the national identity was being crafted, the education and training for the adulthood of children became a national preoccupation. This can be seen in adult male characters in *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, being Mr Laurence, John Brooke and Professor Bhaer. These three adult men fulfilled the ideal manhood by being authoritarian, rational, and to some extent, physically intimidating. In a few words, they are Thoreau's type of man, independent and virtuous. Throughout the novel, Mr Laurence and John Brooke try to educate Laurie to make him a true educated gentleman. The aforementioned increasing paranoia of men becoming effeminate in American manhood towards the end of the nineteenth century can also be seen in the patriarchal character of Mr Laurence, who often tells his grandson to repress his emotions because being rational and not being owned by emotions is the essence of manhood. Laurie, however, often refuses to convey these standards and he follows his own standards. Likewise, the essence of Professor Bhaer as a figure of authority is preserved throughout the novel. Nevertheless, I would say that the type of authority Bhaer (like

Emerson) represents is not a social one at all, but it is an intellectual one. Regarding this intellectuality present in Alcott's and Jo's life, the reason why Jo's most direct paternal figure does not appear is because it is based on Bronson Alcott himself (Rioux 20). Mr March's absence in *Little Women* and *Good Wives* is justified by his participation in the war, whereas in real life it illustrates Bronson Alcott's escapes to Philadelphia where he aimed to study literature and philosophy. His escapes did not only involve intellectual aims but also, it could remit, according to Rioux, to the Christian belief portrayed in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress* (1678), one of his favourite books, where spiritual awakening can only be found apart from home and family.

Then, taking into account these ideas, Alcott did not present heroic men but ordinary men. Moreover, by presenting diverse types of men, Alcott might have believed in the interdisciplinarity between masculinity and femininity. She portrays men that are comfortable with their assigned gender (roles) and men that are not, which is the case of Laurie. This is something that distinguishes Alcott from Austen. Another difference is that Austen's stories end with weddings, which overshadows her belief in the physical and psychological independence of women. Contrariwise, Alcott did indeed believe and verbalised the physical and psychological independence of women by rejecting marriage and what it implies. However, as it will be seen in the section (2.2) examining the reception of Alcott in academia and media, Alcott wanted Jo March to remain single like herself, but she had to write a "happy ending" for Jo to satisfy her audience's and editors' demands.

Despite these differences, like Austen's, Alcott's women and men characters are complementary to each other because they balance each other's development. Her masculine characters do not respond to stereotypical representations of men, but they are products of their own context and education. In short, Alcott conceived masculinity in terms of being virtuous or not. Austen also presented ordinary men as products of their own context and education, but Austen's main male characters can be easily classified in binary terms between villains and heroes. Her heroes easily fall into the literal meaning of heroes, because it is important to remember that they rely on Austen's contemporary national interest where men ought to have international, national, and local power in order to preserve the English nation. Notwithstanding the similarities and differences in their female gaze, it is important to remind again of the importance of the historical context

and the incongruity of demanding contemporary standards to novels written in different parts of the Atlantic fifty years apart.

To summarise, it can be seen that Austen defined her main men characters on a scale of being desirable or undesirable determined by their high or low moral compass, and Louisa May Alcott defined her characters between virtuosity and vices and determined by their intelligence. Subsequently, both authors agree that one's moral compass and intelligence outstands over physicality.

1.4. The influence of cinematic adaptations on the depiction of masculinity

To understand the cinematic representations of Fitzwilliam Darcy and Theodore Laurence, it is fundamental to study how masculinity has been portrayed in literature and screen. But before analysing this precise point, it is important to develop the term 'masculinity'. This term is an elusive and difficult term as the qualities and attributes associated with men and masculine performance are not general nor timeless, but historical. In each period, society considers a series of qualities that men ought to have in order to be suitable for the nation. This dismantles the premise of gender and sexuality being justified by nature, and instead, they are constructed by society. Moreover, men's individual personality is also involved in this complex structure. Nonetheless, masculinity on-screen has generally tended, subtly and not so subtly, to reinforce patriarchal notions about what it means to be a man. Raewyn W. Connell, based on the ideas of the Frankfurt School, scrutinises two general types of masculinity:

The 'authoritarian' type was a masculinity particularly involved in the maintenance: marked by hatred for homosexuals and contempt for women, as well as a more general to authority from above, and aggression towards the less powerful. These traits were traced back to rigid parenting dominance of the family by the father, sexual repression and conservative morality. The 'democratic' character was less clearly drawn, but included markedly more tolerance and was linked to more relaxed and affectionate family relationships. (18)

In Connell's explanation, one can see that there is diversity even within the same categorization. Rather than definite character types, there are different gender forms as individuals exist, as there are different ways of life. These categorizations are central to understanding the main characters that are being analysed in this paper, Fitzwilliam Darcy and Theodore Laurence. Moreover, the term "gender roles" is also a term worth analysing. Connell also develops the stance of "gender roles". Her first approach is that "the roles are seen as specific to definite situations" (22), and the second approach, which is more common, is "in which being a man or a woman means enacting a *general* set of expectations which are attached to one's sex - the 'sex role'" (22). Connell in further paragraphs clarifies that this theory of gender roles is "logically vague" because of the "shifting bases on which 'roles' are defined, role theory leads to major incoherence in the analysis of social life" (26). That is to say, masculinity varies to an internal and external extent. To an internal extent it differs between individuals, and to an external extent, it varies in the historical period. Therefore, as Connell advises, "we must not take them as fixed categories. . . . It is essential to recognize the dynamism of the relationships in which gender is constituted" (37-38). Nevertheless, one can identify basic patterns and attitudes associated with traditional masculine roles.

Returning to Connell's identification of two types of masculinity, men in literature and cinema have been generally portrayed in these two opposite binary spectrums, an "active" (authoritarian) masculinity and a "passive" (democratic) masculinity. Likewise, this also occurs with femininity, as we as human beings tend to simplify everything in binary sequences. Typically, in a patriarchal and heterosexual society, unlike the female body, the male body is not expected to be the main erotic object, and even more, by the male gaze. Generally speaking, "whereas women are investigated, men are tested. Masculinity as an ideal, at least, is implicitly known. Femininity is, by contrast, a mystery" (Neale 16). Masculinity is portrayed in literature and films in different forms, both positively (innocuous behaviours/traits) or negatively (destructive behaviour/traits). At the extreme of the spectrum lies hypermasculinity, which portrays ultimate primitive masculinity that involves domination and violence.

In these lines of roles and types, cinema materialises the physicality and psychological obsessions of a given society. As cinema is linked to society, the psychic processes in which cinemas have been involved are fundamentally patriarchal. In fact, this is the main premise in Laura Mulvey's chapter "Visual pleasure and narrative

cinema” (1975; 1989). Based on Sigmund Freud’s and Jacques Lacan’s ideas, she demonstrates that the interiorized patriarchal values shaped by society determine our cinematic experience. She also identifies two approaches by which (Hollywood) cinema produces pleasure, both by using the gaze. The first one is related to the objectification of the image, that is to say, scopophilia, the love of looking. The second approach is related to the identification, where the spectator identifies themselves with the main character, resulting in the formation of an ego libido. This is reiterated by Ann Kaplan, who writes that scopophilia “implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), . . . [and] demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator’s fascination with and recognition of his like” (39). Then, Mulvey argues that these mechanisms are gendered, taking into account the current male-dominant culture. She identifies the active look in the male and the passive object of the look in the female. This gendered conception of the gaze is also theorised by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* (1972;1977) where he writes that “men *act* and women *appear*” (47). As he further develops, the difference in depiction between women and men does not rely on differences between masculinity and femininity, but in the fact that the presumed “ideal” spectator is consistently assumed to be male (64). Thus, in this *male gaze*, women are placed as spectacles to be observed and objectified, and unable to own a gaze. In contrast, the *female gaze*¹ refers both to the gaze of the female director, character or spectator in a given artistic production and the representation of women as subjects, not objects.

As a feminist theory, the female gaze rather than being a gender issue, it is an issue of representing women as subjects with agency. Consequently, all genders can create films with a female gaze. Nevertheless, it is logical that a man writing from the female gaze will be positioned differently from a woman writing from the female gaze “in relation to gender-based social injustice” (Morris 2). There can still be sexualization of women from the female gaze, but the representation is more realistic and intimate if we compare it with women characters written from the male gaze. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that even though work is written by a woman, it does not make the

¹ The focus on “female” instead of “women” relies on Mulvey’s own definition of the representation of women and men on screen. Even though Mulvey’s idea is to theorise the representation of women on screen, the term female gaze also has the meaning of perspective, and it endows more diverse voices that are often obliterated. Therefore, in this case the term “female” is detached from any essentialism or biologism, and it refers to women’s voices in literature and cinema, and the representation of women on screen.

work intrinsically “feminine” by means of values, attitudes, or perspectives. Likewise, one cannot also assume that a woman’s writing is automatically attached to a political agenda and is essentially feminist.

Furthermore, Steve Neale (based on John Ellis’ and Laura Mulvey’s ideas) associates the images of men with three psychic functions: identification, voyeuristic looking and fetishistic looking. First, regarding identification, Neale claims that “Every film thus tends to specific identification in accordance with the socially defined and constructed categories of male and female” (5). Thus, identification changes and is non-steady. In this context, Neale stresses John Ellis’ distinction between two forms of identification: one that involves narcissism and the other that involves phantasies. Ellis in *Visible Fictions* (1982; 2001) suggests that this process of socially constructed male-identifying themselves with male heroes and vice versa is not as simple as it may seem. He states that:

Identification is therefore multiple and fractured, a sense of seeing the constituent parts of the spectator’s own psyche paraded before her or him; a sense also of experiencing desire for the perfected images of individuals that are presented over and above their particular phantasy roles. These forms of identifications, through narcissism and through the playing-out of phantasies, are not identical in every individual by any means. (43)

Thus, as it has been mentioned, each film assumes and renews these divisions. Neale states that both narcissism and narcissistic identification involves “phantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control” (5). Emphasising these latter nouns, one can draw a primary connection between these narcissistic phantasies and patriarchal images of masculinity. In this line, Laura Mulvey theorises this connection:

As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence. A male movie star’s glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in original moment of recognition in front of the mirror. . . . The male

protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the looks and creates the action. (*Visual Pleasure* 20)

Considering the two fundamental types of spectatorships in cinema, it is important to recall Mulvey's thesis that the mechanism of objectification and identification in cinematic experiences are gendered. Mulvey considers the male star as the bearer of the look but denies him the role of erotic object. Nevertheless, in my opinion, despite the dominant male-centred culture, the male star can indeed exercise both as well as bearer and object of narcissistic phantasies. This can be perfectly applied to the films that are going to be discussed in this paper, the 1995 and 2005 cinematographic versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, and the 1994 and 2019 cinematographic versions of *Little Women* and *Good Wives* starring Colin Firth, Matthew Macfadyen, Christian Bale and Timothée Chalamet respectively.

In terms of voyeuristic looking, i.e the act of observing without being observed, Neale states, "Battles, fights, and duels of all kinds are concerned with struggles of 'will and strength', 'victory and defeat', between individual men and/or groups of men" (12). In these scenarios, male figures on the screen are subject to voyeuristic looking, both by the spectator and other male characters. Similarly, Mulvey distinguishes between two modes of looking, voyeuristic and fetishistic. She associated this voyeurism with sadism and mentioned expressions such as "making something happen", "forcing a change in another person", "a battle of will and strength, victory and defeat", etc. (*Visual Pleasure* 22). In the early pages, Neale also addresses the eroticism in which the male image can also be involved due to fluctuations between that image, on the one hand, as a source of identification, and on the other, as a source of contemplation. In addition, regarding the female spectator Mulvey claims that:

The female spectator may find herself so out of key with the pleasure on offer, with its 'masculinisation', that the spell of fascination is broken. On the other hand, she may not. She may find herself secretly, unconsciously almost, enjoying the freedom of action and control over the diegetic world that identification with a hero provides. (*Afterthoughts* 29)

Thus, another key concept is “pleasure”, essential to fetishistic looking. Mulvey claims that “Fetishistic scopophilia builds up the physical beauty of the object transforming it into something satisfying in itself . . . Fetishistic scopophilia . . . can exist outside linear time as the erotic instinct is focused on the look alone” (*Visual Pleasure* 21-22). Ellis claims that “the voyeuristic look is curious, inquiring, demanding to know. The fetishistic gaze is captivated by what it sees, does not wish to inquire further, to see more, to find out . . . The fetishistic look has much to do with display and the spectacular” (47). Likewise, in this line of fetishistic looking and narcissism, John Berger suggests when one “sees” a landscape, one imagines themselves placed in it, and likewise, if one “sees” the art of the past, one will place themselves in history (11). Then, this reiterates the gaze as a medium of desire and pleasure.

Also related to the gaze, for the past few years the expression “men written by women” have been arising on social media such as TikTok and Twitter. The term “men written by women” applies to fictional men characters written by women authors and thus, filtered by the female gaze. Nevertheless, this masculine canon defined by women has been detached from fiction and now also applies to real men that adjust to the wants and needs of women and are unintimidated by femininity. Hence, there is a pattern that has not been yet theorised by which women readers and spectators frequently select fictional men with the aforementioned qualities while thinking about their “ideal man”.

In short, men in cinema have been portrayed as women characters, in binary sequences. This polarisation can be perfectly summarised in Connell’s categorization of masculinity between the “authoritarian” type and the “democratic” type. Moreover, Mulvey’s article scrutinises the main ideas of this section: the male gaze responds to the active pleasure of looking and relies on the man, who is the one who looks, bears the look of the spectator, and facilitates the narrative and commands the phantasy. Even though the female gaze lacks a solid definition, execution and experience, it gradually legitimises a gaze that is often dismissed in a male-dominant culture and moreover, it creates complete characters; beings with feelings, emotions and own thoughts.

2. The reception of Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott

This section concerns the value of these authors in the history of literature, the different fields in which these works have been studied, and how they are conceived in media, specifically in cinema and social media. Despite evident differences, it is possible to identify similarities in their reception and success in mainstream culture in recent years.

2.1. The reception of Jane Austen in academia and media

Jane Austen entered the literary marketplace in a context where the number of women novelists had been increasing. As Janet Todd suggests, “She wanted to be an author who was bought, read, and reread, whose books became both an experience and a challenge to experience, not simply once-consumed items” (*TCI* 10). By 1811, two years before the publication of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen had already sold the licence of the novel for £110 (*TCI* 11). It was in the late nineteenth century that Austen started to be extensively read by high society and literate audiences.

The development of Women Studies in the 1960s, Men Studies in the 1970s, and Gender Studies in the 1990s provided new patterns of re-reading classical and non-classical works through critical lenses. The deconstruction of the patriarchal system where the active (narrative) gaze relies on men and the passive women, resulted in the theorisation of various ways of reading and writing as women. As Pam Morris suggests in *Literature and Feminism: An Introduction* (1993), “to read as a woman means learning to read against the grain” (34). Consequently, to construct and identify the diverse ways of reading as women, we need to re-examine how men have read and written women throughout history.

The reception of Jane Austen’s novels is frequently under the lens of feminist studies and criticism, and as with every other novel, their receptions can be summarized in polarised opinions. On the one hand, some scholars praise Austen’s novels for offering characters that differ in complexity, from women and men characters that respect Austen’s contemporary standards to others that go beyond the prototypical gender presentations. As Todd writes, “Many critics have considered how Austen achieves her illusion of character through mere words, what rhetorical strategies she uses to represent the inner life and deliver as ‘realistic’ an intimacy with another unachievable in ‘real’ life” (*TCI* 27). Her heroines and heroes socially denounce women’s situations and advocate for equality. Moreover, Austen’s male characters are not the eloquent and

physically strong dominant figures of the nineteenth century. For instance, Mr Darcy is granted good physicality and wealth, but his personality and lack of social skills demonstrate that Austen presents realistic men, far from any idealisation.

On the other hand, scholars such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar did not validate *Pride and Prejudice* for its “happily ever after” ending:

Whereas becoming a man means proving or testing oneself or earning a vocation, becoming a woman means relinquishing achievement and accommodating oneself to men and the spaces they provide. Dramatizing the necessity of female submission for female survival, Austen’s story is specifically flattering to male readers because it describes the taming not just of any woman but specifically of a rebellious, imaginative girl who is amorously mastered by a sensible man. . . . The happiest ending envisioned by Austen, at least until her very last novel, accepts the necessity of protection and cover for heroines who wish to perform anything at all. (154-155)

They write that women artists from the nineteenth century, where Austen is included, dealt with essential female experiences from particularly female perspectives, but at the same time, they acknowledge their complex task of “achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards” (Gilbert and Gubar 72-73). This relies on Austen’s historical context and the context of the novel. The theme of matrimony was a recurrent topic during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in literary production. Likewise, most of the intellectual production aimed at women focused on how to be a good wife. Moreover, Bennet shows her disinterest in matrimony (and then, dependency on men) throughout the novel, and the fact that she later married Mr Darcy implies that Austen contradicts the heroine’s independent sense that captivates the readers. Likewise, it discredits any revolutionary quality that is often attributed to Austen’s equal treatment of her characters, regardless of gender. There are also male authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain and Ezra Pound that criticised Austen for several reasons. To these authors “and many other transatlantic male writers, she appeared mannered, old-world, and claustrophobic, negotiating with, rather than controlling, her environment” (Todd, *TCI* 33). Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote about Austen “vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conventions of English society, without genius, wit, or knowledge of the

world. . . . Suicide is more respectable” (768). Mark Twain claimed that a library that does not contain any of Austen’s work “would make a fairly good library” to one who has any of her works (381). Last but not least, for Ezra Pound, Austen bespoke a “dull, stupid, hemmed-in sort of life” (129). In a few words, these authors limited Austen in her portrayal of traditional gentry life.

In regard to the media, there has been an Austen revival for the past few years. The influences of their cinematic adaptations renewed the interest in the novels. Sue Parrill claims that there are three reasons that motivate films and television directors to adapt and sell Austen’s stories. First, it is because “they tell good stories – simple love stories which are still appealing, particularly to a female audience” (3). Linda V. Troost agrees with Parrill in saying that historical films based on Austen’s stories especially appeal to women, which is an audience often untended by film companies, by presenting women’s issues (75). The second reason relies on her name itself and the plausible quality that it implies. Last but not least, her novels are in the public domain and thus film producers and studios spare capital by not paying copyright licences. In fact, there are a total of at least seventeen film and television adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* since 1938. This also responds to the fact that until the mid-1990s there was a significant inclination for adaptations of British classic novels with the aim of educating and enlightening the public about British cultural heritage (Cardwell 183). In terms of adapting, Sarah Cardwell believes that cinematic adaptations of Austen are portrayed better in television series rather than in films due to “their emphasis on high production values, their ‘heritage aesthetic’, and their apparent nostalgia for a simple rural past” (184). The most famous adaptations are: Robert Z. Leonard’s 1940 American adaptation starring Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier; Simon Langton’s and Davies’s 1995 version starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth; Sharon Maguire’s series of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, based on Helen Fielding’s book series, which is a modern version of *Pride and Prejudice* starring Renée Zellweger, Colin Firth and Hugh Grant; Gurinder Chadha’s 2004 *Bride and Prejudice* starring Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Martin Henderson; Joe Wright’s 2005 classic starring Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen; and last but not least, Burr Steers’ 2016 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* starring Lily James and Sam Riley, which is based on Seth Grahame-Smith’s novel. If we take into account Cardwell’s premise, this explains why among all adaptations, Davies’ version is the best regarded by the audience with a rating of 8,8/10 on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb).

In social media now the audience focuses on Jane Austen's male characters, or as it has been circulating in social media, mostly Twitter and TikTok, the expression of "men characters written by Jane Austen". On these platforms, this positive expression applies mostly to Mr Darcy, Mr Bingley and Mr Knightley. As a woman author, Austen's novels are the result of a realistic depiction of the female gaze, and as it has been mentioned in the last section, the author characterised her main men protagonists with a high moral compass. For instance, there are forums and critical discussions on social media about whether Austen was a (proto-)feminist. For some, Austen's writings on marriage illustrate her acceptance of traditional nineteenth-century gender roles, whereas for others, Austen's advocacy of equal marriage and her own rejection of marriage shows her posture to advocate women's rights. These critical discussions can be seen in different web pages and forums dedicated to preserving Austen's legacy, such as *The Jane Austen Society of North America* (JASNA), *The Republic of Pemberley*, *Drunk Austen*, *Jane Austen Centre*, *Jane Austen's World*, etc. Likewise, by simply searching on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and TikTok for #JaneAusten or #Austenmania, one will see the impressive online engagement Jane Austen's name has in the twentieth-first century.

In these different adaptations of Austen's works one can see how overall eighteenth-century novels have been a source of twentieth-century entertainment. As mentioned earlier, Austen's stories have quality, cultural associations, good visuals and are free from copyright. This secures a generally good reception by the audience and critics, both American and British, or even international. Moreover, I would say that Jane Austen's stories also lead to a romanization of the past and a way of escape from a modern world of monotony, indifference, and dullness.

2.2. The reception of Louisa May Alcott in academia and media

The publications of *Little Women* in 1868 and *Good Wives* in 1869 were a total success. The first part of *Little Women* was printed in a total of two thousand copies, and they were sold out in two weeks². Seeing this success, a second part was written and published in

² Acocella, Joan. "How "Little Women" Got Bigger", *The New Yorker*, 20 Aug. 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/08/27/how-little-women-got-big> Accessed 7 Feb. 2022.

1869 by the name of *Good Wives*, and likewise it sold out quickly. As Barbara Sicherman writes “*Little Women* was the primary dream book for American girls of the comfortable classes for more than a century” (16). Likewise, less privileged classes “found in *Little Women* a model for becoming American and middle class, a way into, rather than out of, bourgeois domesticity” (Sicherman 16). Unlike Austen, who was promptly acclaimed as a canonical author, Alcott did not begin to be considered and appreciated as a canonical author until the second wave of feminism, around the 1960s and 1970s. Overall, the receptions of Louisa May Alcott can also be divided into different opinions.

On the one hand, well-known authors such as Simone de Beauvoir and Ursula K. Le Guin were amazed by Alcott’s writing and identified themselves with the character of Jo. Simone de Beauvoir writes in *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1958; 2005): “I believed I had caught a glimpse of my future self: *Little Women*, by Louisa M. Alcott. . . . I identified myself passionately with Jo, the intellectual. Brusque and bony, Jo clambered up into trees when she wanted to read; she was much more tomboyish and daring than I was, but I shared her horror of sewing and housekeeping and her love of books” (94). In further paragraphs Beauvoir claims that Jo’s superiority relies on her “passion of knowledge and the vigour of her thought” (95) and identifies Laurie as “the man I loved and by whom I had thought I was loved” (109) who “betrayed” her by marrying Amy instead of Jo, Beauvoir’s favourite character. Likewise, Ursula K. Le Guin discovers and reinforces her idea of a woman writer in Jo March as she writes in her essay “The Fisherwoman’s Daughter” (1987), “I asked my friends: ‘A woman writing: what do you see?’ . . . But first let me tell you my own first answer to my question: Jo March . . . as soon as I asked myself what a woman writing looks like, I know that Jo March must have had a real influence upon me when I was a young scribbler” (2). Moreover, with the development of Women and Gender Studies in the twentieth century, *Little Women* and *Good Wives* acquired importance for inquiring about the legitimacy of gender stereotypes beyond male and female. Thus, many acclaimed women authors indicated the importance of the novel and its author since it presents a realistic and inspirational image of a woman writer.

On the other hand, Gilbert and Gubar also criticised *Little Women* and *Good Wives* for the same reasons as *Pride and Prejudice*, for its “happily ever after” ending. In this novel, Jo’s rejection of any social contract that involves matrimony is made explicitly clear. Therefore, the reader expects Jo to marry at any moment of the novel as the

character frequently claims that she only wants to focus on his professional career as a writer. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Alcott wanted Jo to remain unmarried like herself, but due to the publishers' and readers' pressure, she was obliged to marry Jo to a male character in *Good Wives*, being Professor Bhaer. As she wrote to a friend after the publication of the first part of *Little Women* "so many enthusiastic young ladies wrote to me clamorously demanding that she should marry Laurie, or somebody, that I didn't dare refuse & out of perversity went & made a funny match for her" (qtd. in Reisen, 271). If Jo had remained unmarried as Alcott wished, or if she had married the hero, Laurie, the book would have had such a long-lasting appeal. Furthermore, like Austen, who was criticised for presenting a limited setting and lifestyle, Alcott's *Little Women* was also criticised as the beginning of "a decline in the radical power of women's fiction" (197) for its idealised domesticity, as Sarah Elbert believes.

In respect of her reception in media, the most recent and best acclaimed by modern audiences are the 1994 adaptation by Gillian Armstrong, and the 2019 version directed by Greta Gerwig. Gerwig's 2019 adaptation is the perfect example of the use of the female gaze. This version combines two stories: the first story might refer to Alcott's life and at the same time, Jo's semi-autobiographical story as they were similar, and the second story contains the story of the four little women. Gerwig combines the story of a woman writer (which may be Alcott) and Jo's story to illustrate the process and difficulties of becoming a woman writer in the nineteenth century. Alcott's essence can unquestionably be seen in Gerwig's *Little Women* which is explicitly the tale of the birth of a woman artist.

Finally, the name of Louisa May Alcott on social media has a significant online engagement, with web pages such as *Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women*, *Louisa May Alcott Society* and *Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House*. Likewise, the American author has a notable presence on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Although there is no substantial use of the expression "men characters written by Louisa May Alcott" on social media in comparison to Austen, her male characters are also praised because Alcott portrays men that differ in complexity, from men that are comfortable with their assigned gender (roles) to men that are not. Furthermore, they do not respond to stereotypical representations of men, but they are products of their own context and education. Although the content about Louisa May Alcott on social media is generally less extensive in comparison to Austen, the significant engagement of any content related to Austen and Alcott in social media results in the development of virtual

communities in which people feel connected to the authors and to each other, and it also illustrates the eternal appeal of both authors.

3. Literary and cinematic analysis

As this paper studies how masculinity is culturally conveyed, it is of paramount importance to study the elements that evoke masculinity in Fitzwilliam Darcy and Theodore Laurence. Thus, firstly I will cover a literary analysis of these characters and what are the elements that define their respective masculinity. Secondly, a cinematographic analysis will be conducted to see if the elements scrutinised in the literary analysis are reinforced, and to understand why the cinematographic adaptations have had such importance in the depiction of masculinity and the positive reception by the audience.

3.1. Literary and cinematographic analysis of *Austen's Pride and Prejudice*

This section offers a detailed analysis of Jane Austen's Fitzwilliam Darcy and how Austen conceived masculinity through this character. In short, his textual masculinity oscillates between textual and visual descriptions, narrative voice and his masculine depiction symbolically materialised in portraits and estates. Therefore, the first subsection aims to analyse Darcy in Austen's text, and in the second subsection I analyse how Darcy has been portrayed in cinema specifically in the two best-regarded cinematographic adaptations by social media users, Simon Langton's 1995 BBC TV series adapted by Andrew Davies, and Joe Wright's 2005 version adapted by Deborah Moggach.

3.1.1. Literary analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*: Austen's Mr Darcy

From the beginning, the character of Fitzwilliam Darcy is characterised by a good physique, honourability, and pride, often subjected to prototypical images of masculinity. *Pride and Prejudice* opens with the universally acknowledged truth that "a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen 5), in order to introduce

the hegemonic masculinity and the dominant theme, that is, marriage. Curiously, here the attention does not rely on women, who are the ones that must seek marriage to secure their social respectability. The pressure now relies on men, especially in Mr Darcy. First, much of his charm depends on his physical description. He is presented by the third-person omniscient narrator as a “tall person, handsome features, noble mein; . . . The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, . . . he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners have a disgust, which turned the tide of his popularity: for he was discovered to be proud” (Austen 12). Here the first impression of Darcy is regarding his canonical physique and then, his personality. The narrator adds that “he was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again” (Austen 13). Like Don Juan, Darcy is an innate seducer, a handsome, and self-confident man. His pride is understandable due to his wealth and high social position, and he was taught to behave with such authority and to be treated as a socially superior figure by characters of lower social positions. Moreover, as it was mentioned in previous chapters, by the end of the eighteenth-century politeness began to be questioned because there was a widespread anxiety about men becoming effeminate. For instance, Mrs Bennet complains: “[Darcy] is the most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him! . . . I quite detest the man” (Austen 15). Through these interactions, the Bennets and the rest of the neighbours of Meryton, as well as the readers, become prejudiced against the gentleman. Wollstonecraft address this type of masculinity as “a master of a family, a husband, and a father, forms the citizen imperceptibly, by producing a sober manliness of thought, . . . a finical man of taste, who is only anxious to secure his own private gratifications and to maintain his rank in society” (VRM 22). Darcy also represents the Romantic hero that operates by his own moral code, and is isolated and haunted by the past. In short, this subtle sexualized manner by which Darcy is first introduced in contrast to his apparent narcissism, undoubtedly contributed to the reader’s interest in this character.

In regard to Darcy in comparison with other men in the novel, Michael Kramp indicates that “Darcy’s close relationship with Bingley suggests that the gap between new and old money is shrinking, and the hero’s kindness and collaboration with Gardiner demonstrate an astonishing degree of cooperation between the aristocracy and the tradesmen of London” (76). This is linked to the growth of the British Empire and its

main substance based on craftsmanship and mercantilism. This justifies why Bingley takes his friend's opinion very seriously. This last fact also responds to Austen's contemporary masculinity, "Darcy is concerned with the development of this newly wealthy man: Austen's hero both tutors Bingley's model of traditional male behaviour and encourages him to discipline his amorous desires" (Kramp 77). Here I want to recall Josh Tosh's differentiation between gentlemanliness and manliness. Bingley may represent this inherited gentlemanliness that responded to a valued social refinement whilst Darcy represents a manliness learned by society that responded to a resilient individualism. Thus, Darcy at the beginning of the novel embodies Burke's ideal type of man, an authoritarian and determined man driven by reason rather than passion.

Then, George Wickham, his childhood friend, is presented in *Pride and Prejudice* as a "very creditable, gentlemanlike set, . . . Wickham was as far beyond them all in person, countenance, air, and walk . . ." (Austen 75). Wickham is presented in a similar manner to Darcy, which denotes an innate competition between these gentlemen. In point of fact, this is verbalised by Wickham himself, "[Darcy] not a temper to bear the sort of composition in which we stood—the sort of preference which was often given me" (Austen 79). One can see that Wickham's first appearance is linked to Mr Darcy, as Wickham claims, "we are very different sort of men" (Austen 78). As the novel progresses the reader observes that indeed he is different from Darcy, Wickham is a man driven by a greed for money. He is insincere, manipulative and materialistic, and has no problem using other people to accomplish his aims. In this regard, if we take into account the characters of Don Juan, both Tirso de Molina's and Lord Byron's, Wickham might display the immoral side of Don Juan whilst Darcy represents the refined side of Don Juan. For instance, when Wickham spent the money, he asked Darcy to give him instead of the inheritance that Darcy's father left for Wickham, this latter reaches Darcy to demand his respective inheritance. Darcy, aware of Wickham's debts, refused this petition. Wickham then planned to obtain Georgiana Darcy's inheritance, but Darcy discovered it and demanded the expulsion of Wickham from Pemberley. Then, the reader can see that Darcy has, as Wickham himself says, "a *brotherly* pride, which with *some* brotherly affection, makes him a very kind and careful guardian of his sister . . . as the most attentive and best of brothers" (Austen 80). This duality recalls Fielding's Tom Jones and Master Blifil. Like Jones and Blifil, Darcy and Wickham grew up together, and Wickham differs from Darcy in his malevolence and greediness. Therefore, one can see

that to enact the hero, in this case, Jones and Darcy, an antagonist figure that represents the opposite is needed, in this case, Blifil and Wickham. On the one hand, Tom Jones and Fitzwilliam Darcy embody a realistic depiction of a man, a gentleman yet faulty. They have a good heart and possess chivalry, which depicts them as gentlemen despite their irresponsibility. Darcy thus might represent Fielding's definition of gallantry and gentlemanliness, a man who is generous, virtuous, and does not easily succumb to passions. On the other hand, Master Blifil and George Wickham represent the type of men who easily succumb to passions, jealousy, and selfishness. Like Jones and Blifil, Darcy and Wickham are undoubtedly each other's foil, Darcy is better regarded while Wickham's true personality is revealed. This again reflects the kind of chivalry Darcy possesses and was defended by Austen's contemporaries.

Moreover, this grandiosity around Mr Darcy is well preserved throughout the novel, as can be seen in Mr Collins' letter to Mr Bennet, where the former mentions that "This young gentleman is blessed in a particular way, with every thing the heart of mortal can most desire" (Austen 342). Darcy's moral maturity allows this character to encounter his own role in society. His unfriendly, unapproachable, extremely class position and private personality increase the mystery around this character. This is another factor that shows how Darcy represents Burke's ideal masculinity. Darcy detaches himself from a society that propagates insincerity and prejudices while embracing individualism. This lack of interaction between Mr Darcy and the citizens of Meryton also "illuminates the unequal and divergent social and political institutions that have been habitualized in Austen's world" (Hamilton 41). This is reinforced by the fact that much of the dialogues in this novel that involve Darcy show recurrent silences, pauses, and interruptions. In fact, "Darcy's boorish silences, his haughty tone, and the gasps in his rhetoric communicate an image of the hierarchical male. . . . Silence for Fitzwilliam Darcy is a means of control and strength" (Hamilton 77). Nevertheless, in the final chapters, these gaps and silences rarely appear in the text as Austen endows Darcy now with a more explicit physical and linguistic active role. As the novel progresses and Darcy becomes infatuated with Elizabeth, he has to leave behind his pride. Hence, love changes Darcy, and more importantly, love is the key by which he is re-taught and re-conditioned to forsake patriarchal notions of relations between men and women. This final deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity demonstrates that this suppression of emotions that men are

culturally subjected to is pointless because a person can be equally rational and emotional, as can be seen in Mr Darcy at the end of the novel.

Pemberley is also another important element concerning Darcy's personality and how people regarded him, considering that Austen's characters are defined by their fortunes, appearances, and manners. In the scene where Elizabeth visits Darcy's mansion and she meets his housekeeper, not only does Elizabeth change their perception of the gentleman, but also the reader themselves:

They gradually ascended for half a mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; —and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (Austen 235)

This fragment belongs to Elizabeth's first impressions of Pemberley, a description that undoubtedly concentrates a symbolic implication. Darcy also has a "natural importance . . . swelled into greater", something that refers to his pride, "but without any artificial appearance", which implies that his integrity, like the stream was "neither formal, nor falsely adorned". In addition, Deborah Cartmell states that "the description of Pemberley is in many ways the moral centre of the novel, the meeting place of Austen's central concerns with artificiality and nature, sense and sensibility, society and the individual, the marriage of art and nature" (*Screen Adaptations* 72). The estate reflects Mr Darcy's aristocratic lineage and cultural authority, and ergo, his personality, and most notably, masculinity, "manliness rather than gentlemanliness is what Darcy so openly displays and what Pemberley so loudly advertises" (Alvarez). Kramp adds that "Darcy carefully follows Burke's outline for a man of ancestral heritage. . . . His outstanding social/sexual standing, buttressed by the grandeur of Pemberley, allows him to serve as an administrator of social morality who effectively orchestrates and evaluates the activity of the novel"

(74). Moreover, the housekeeper speaks highly of him ‘‘he was not a good-tempered man, had been her firmest opinion . . . he was always the sweetest-tempered most generous-hearted boy in the world’’ (Austen 238). This description, while the readers imagine the beauty of this heritage space, increases the reader’s expectation of Mr Darcy, which justifies his high standards, as can be seen in the conversation between Mr Gardiner, Elizabeth’s uncle, and Darcy’s housekeeper: ‘‘‘If your master would marry, you might see more of him’ ‘Yes, Sir; but I do not know when that will be. I do not know who is good enough for him’’’ (Austen 238). As it was stated before, Wollstonecraft also showed her opposition to inherited privileges: ‘‘the only security of property that nature authorises and reason sanctions is, the right a man has to enjoy the acquisitions which his talents and industry have acquired; and to bequeath them to whom he chooses’’ (*VRM* 23). This inherited wealth legitimizes immorality and inequality. Therefore, the estate is what defines Darcy’s masculinity and further, promotes it. Moreover, the estate, like his master, is sexualized, and ergo, the estate can be a reflection of Darcy’s physical body.

This atmosphere surrounding Darcy’s virtues and charms serves as the introduction to one of the scenes where Darcy’s masculinity is greatly exalted. While the housekeeper guides Elizabeth and her uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Gardiner, through the interior of Pemberley, she reinforces that his master is different from other men, ‘‘not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves’’ (Austen 239). Once they arrive at the gallery, Elizabeth stares in-depth at a portrait of Mr Darcy. Austen describes how Elizabeth seems to study the gentleman’s physical features, which undoubtedly emphasises Darcy’s attractiveness. Here I observed that Austen’s language proficiency evokes this emotional deconstruction into two dimensions, the physical dimension, and the psychological dimension. Concerning the physical dimension, Elizabeth appreciates Mr Darcy’s physical beauty:

Elizabeth walked on in quest of the only face whose features would be known to her. At last, it arrested her—and she beheld a striking resemblance of Mr Darcy, with such a smile over the face, as she remembered to have sometimes seen when he looked at her. She stood several minutes before the picture in earnest contemplation. (Austen 240)

Then, here there is an emphasis on visuality and scopophilia, the love of looking at and being looked at. As Elizabeth admires the portrait of Mr Darcy, it is important to emphasise nouns and verbs such as “face”, “features”, “resemblance”, “smile”, “looked”, “stood” and “contemplation” together with strong adjectives such as “arrested”, “striking”, “earnest”, etc. The combination of these nouns belonging to the semantic field of visuality with such strong adjectives again emphasises the visual language and images that Austen characteristically uses.

Concerning the psychological dimension in Austen’s female gaze and the general female gaze, the reader and spectator see what characters are thinking and feeling; men are personified, and one can see and feel their feelings. The emotional change is likewise perfectly, linguistically mastered by Austen, as the narrator describes that “as [Elizabeth] stood before the canvas, on which [Darcy] was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before” (240). These descriptions introduced by the portrait contribute to exalt Mr Darcy’s manhood, and most importantly, for the first time, this character is explicitly conceived as an object of sexual desire. Hence, Austen’s heroine(s) manifest an innovative model of masculinity – through the *female gaze* –, both as subjects and objects of desire (Malone 63). Malone also states that by taking advantage of the sexual power of the female gaze, the type of masculinity that Austen develops in *Pride and Prejudice* is seemingly modern. In this respect, Monica Alvarez in “Deciphering Mr Darcy: Gendered receptions thought time” (2017) adds, “I suggest that Austen makes Darcy’s masculinity unique and enduring because she fastens it neither to perfunctory civilities nor to the business of the public sphere but to female needs and desires: never a courtier, whatever degree of politeness Darcy attains is a direct response to Elizabeth’s expectations”. Therefore, this explains why this novel and in particular this male character is well regarded by the audience, particularly by women readers.

Last but not least, the final scene where Darcy confesses his feelings to Elizabeth is regarded as one of the most idolised, intimate, and mature scenes. As Sarah Ailwood observes, “the alteration of Darcy’s understanding of appropriate masculine identity is inextricably linked to his fundamental need to be desirable to Elizabeth, who requires a man to have an expressive emotional life which she can shape” (142). In fact, there are two proposal scenes where Mr Darcy confesses his feelings to Elizabeth. In the first one in Chapter Thirty-Four, Austen oscillates between direct and indirect speech (an

omniscient narrator) to describe the scene. Mr Darcy's confession is described in direct speech "In vain have I struggled. I will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (Austen 185), and his arguments in indirect speech "his sense of her inferiority, of its being a degradation, of the family obstacle, which judgement had always opposed to inclination" (Austen 185). Elizabeth's response is also described in indirect speech, "In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the complement of such a man's affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was the first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till . . . she lost all compassion in anger" (Austen 185). His affirmation of her family's inferiority and Mr Darcy's overconfidence by thinking Elizabeth would feel honoured to marry him are the attitudes that Bennet found offensive. This kind of behaviour shows that Darcy, a man that enjoys inherited wealth, thinks wealth can buy love. Here it is important to recall Williams Collins's proposal to Elizabeth. Both addressers assume that Elizabeth will accept their proposals taking into account their economic security and status. Nonetheless, the motives of Darcy's proposal are different from Collins' proposal, as Darcy's words and feelings are genuine whilst Collins directly addresses his need to marry. Therefore, Darcy distinguished himself from the other men in his moral and emotional honesty, an eternal virtue.

Darcy's masculine sensibilities are compromised when Elizabeth accuses him of not acting honourably towards her and her family. Thus, one can observe that Austen may have astutely chosen the epistolary genre to introduce Mr Darcy's narrative voice, and ergo, resulting in a more intimate and emotional outcome. This revealing letter along with the above-mentioned portraits leads to the second and final proposal, which supposes the final romantic climax. The gentleman's feelings are described in indirect speech "The happiness which this reply produced, was much as he has probably never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly as warmly as a man violently in love can supposed to do" (Austen 345). In addition, Darcy thanks Elizabeth for humbling him, alleging that "As a child, I was taught what was right but I was not taught to correct my temper" (Austen 349), and Elizabeth "taught [him] a lesson, hard at first, but most advantageous. By [her], [he] was properly humbled. . . . [She] shewed [him] how insufficient were all [his] pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased" (Austen 349). If we compare Darcy with the other notable man in the novel, Mr Wickham "While Wickham proves unworthy in his dependence on false manner and deceit, Darcy,

in the end, proves himself capable and the bearer of a sincere heart” (Hamilton 43). This sentimental Darcy can also be seen in the final chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*, where his “manly speech”, the silences, the gaps, and the pauses widely dissipate from the text, thus inferring that “Darcy is imbued with more sensibility, with thoughtfulness and feeling, and is changed in attitude and in behaviour into a new manner of being male” (Hamilton 79). This manliness focused on sincerity and honesty highlights the man of action and few words rather than an eloquent and expressive man. Thus, Austen’s female gaze embraces complete character regardless of sex or gender. In addition, Darcy represents Burke’s chivalry sense of sentimentality associated with courage, and at the same time, Wollstonecraft’s idea of reason and passion as complementary character traits. At the end of the novel, Darcy is compassionate and amiable, and at the same time, righteous and truthful.

Another notable fact is that in the novel there is no conversation between male characters, only between a man and a woman or between two women. This not only stresses Austen’s female gaze, but also her limited knowledge about male private affairs. Therefore, in this case, Jane Austen’s gaze is essentially feminine, as she departs to deconstruct the feminine stereotypes from the eighteenth century. As it will be mentioned in the next section, Mr Laurence represents Theodore Laurence’s paternal figure and encourages his grandson to become a gentleman. In the case of Mr Darcy, however, he is his own paternal figure influenced by the values inculcated by his deceased father. In fact, Darcy tells Elizabeth “I was spoilt by my parents, who though good themselves, (my father, particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable) allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own familiar circle” (Austen 349). Then, this happy ending is the result of a deconstruction of values of two adults, one that learns from their prejudices and the other who was to leave behind pride and pretension that is culturally inherited and perpetuated. As Hamilton states, “Elizabeth’s –and Darcy’s– refusal to conform to certain stereotypes and conventions associated with courtship and marriage, it also, in the end, affirms a rapprochement between self and society” (54). Therefore, this shows that masculinity and femininity cannot be separated, but are inevitably complementary.

3.1.2. Cinematographic analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*: Andrew Davies’s and Joe Wright’s Mr Darcy

Simon Langton's 1995 version of *Pride and Prejudice* adapted by Andrew Davies is set in the early nineteenth century and is regarded as the most faithful version of the original text. The reason for the success can rely on what Linda V. Troost suggests: there was a wave of Austen adaptations in 1995 and 1996 that fused Hollywood style and British heritage style, and the books were reviewed as potential visual films rather than "chatty dramatization[s]" (82-84). Troost also states that this version "brought to the surface Darcy's smouldering passion for Elizabeth, always kept in the background of the novel" (84), and how Darcy is now the object of the gaze by showing his intimacy. In this respect, in an interview between Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Staunton and Andrew Davies on 11 October 2004, Davies himself admitted that he wrote a "pro-Darcy" adaptation where the viewer could sympathise with Darcy. However, Davies restrained himself from writing scenes that Austen chose not to write ("Practical Understanding" 242). Mrs Bennet first introduces Mr Darcy in Episode One, remarking on the gentleman's fortune, and as in the original text, complaining about his disagreeable manner. In addition, the use of close-ups focusing on Mr Darcy's face undoubtedly provokes a sense of admiration in the spectator. His appearance combines (medium) close-ups and positions in the middle of the frame. This first frame undoubtedly foreshadows Neale's idea of eroticism in which the male image can also be involved due to fluctuations between that image, on the one hand, as a source of identification, and on the other, as a source of contemplation.

Furthermore, to stabilise the richness of Austen's textual descriptions, Andrew Davies introduces the symbolism of the horse to simulate the gentleman's majestic aura. Episode One opens with Darcy and Bingley on horseback galloping in the direction of Netherfield while Elizabeth observes them, which "sets the tone for the entire production with the very much the objects of the female gaze" (Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations* 68). Here the viewer hears Bingley asking for Darcy's approval to lease Netherfield, and when the positive answer is delivered, Bingley says that he will take it. As it has been mentioned in the literary analysis, this friendship is the result of cooperation between aristocracy and tradesmen, between a developing virile masculinity and a total virile masculinity, and between gentlemanliness and manliness. Moreover, recalling Neale's and Mulvey's associations of voyeuristic and fetishistic looking with battles, fights, and duels between "will and strength", "victory and defeat", between individual men or groups of men and expressions such as "making something happen", "forcing a change in another person",

etc., it illustrates the masculine authoritarian and democratic type Darcy and Bingley respectively embody.

Related to the acquisition of Darcy's point of view, the dance ball at Meryton is an example that emphasises Darcy's masculinity in contrast to the other men in the room. In this scene, the spectator acquires Darcy's point of view as the gentleman saunters around the room, finally focusing on Elizabeth. Then, there is a use of a low shot of Mr Darcy, and in the background a portrait of a monarch galloping a white horse. Then, the use of the dissolve leads to the scene where Darcy invites Elizabeth to dance with him. These images suggest Darcy's explicit fixation on Elizabeth and his aim to win Elizabeth's attention and heart. But more importantly, there are some instances in Episode Four where the gentleman acquires the narrative voice. It belongs to the scenes where Mr Darcy writes the letters to Elizabeth coining Mr Darcy's dealings with Mr Wickham where the spectator can hear Colin Firth's voice off-screen. In addition, Davies illustrates each situation described by Darcy, from Darcy and Wickham being college friends to Wickham's affair with Georgiana Darcy. By doing this, the competitiveness between these men is greatly exalted and the spectator emotionally connects themselves with Darcy and ergo, they are obliged to believe him. Also, these scenes reveal Darcy as a morally superior individual in comparison to Wickham, and a loving brother to Georgiana, as well they depict Darcy as a man of action and authority.

As expected, Pemberley's majestic presentation cannot be disregarded. Davies chose Lyme Park to portray the exterior, and Sudbury Hall to portray the interior. The mansion is presented by a panning shot, that is to say, the camera remains in place but moves horizontally on its axis. The use of this shot infers not only the extensive physical dimension of the country state, but also infers Darcy's influential masculinity. As Cartmell states, "The journey to Pemberley in this version takes on a quest-like dimension, the arrival at which is the cinematic and defining moment of the series" (*Screen Adaptations* 73). Pemberley is revealed to the reader as "if it's being undressed" (Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations* 73) when Mrs Gardiners suddenly gasps "wait", and non-diegetic music introduces us to the magnificent estate. In the next sequence, the spectator sees an astonished Elizabeth breathing heavily and admiring Pemberley's natural beauty. This connection between the house and the owner is explicitly reinforced by Mrs Gardiners who suggests that "perhaps the beauty of the house renders its owner a little less repulsive" (Davies, "Episode Four" 40:52). This is again reinforced by the camera

combining scenes of the Gardiners and Elizabeth admiring Darcy's possessions and Darcy fiercely galloping towards his estate. Moreover, as Eckart Voigts-Virchow writes, "the main function of period authenticity is to avoid dissonance in savouring the past utopia" (130). Thus, as Darcy's masculinity is exalted the viewer experiences a romanticization of the past through showcasing landscapes and costume props. Then, as nature and the past are romanticised, Darcy is also idolised in the process.

Minutes later the spectator is introduced to portraits of Mr Darcy, and indeed Davies's version strictly follows the original text and Austen's words. As it has been referred in the literary analysis, this scene is predominantly visual, and scopophilia and the fetishistic looking play important roles. Firstly, as the housekeeper praises his master, the camera focuses on a miniature of Mr Darcy, and seconds later, it focuses on a bigger portrait. This depiction of the gentleman again emphasises his masculinity. But before introducing the spectator to a miniature of Mr Darcy, the spectator first sees a miniature of Mr Wickham, to which the housekeeper comments: "He turned out very wild, very wild indeed, I'm afraid" (Davies, "Episode 4" 43:02). Then the housekeeper shows the miniature of Darcy, and she emphasises Darcy's good nature, manners, and beauty. She adds that people incorrectly call him proud only because "he does not rattle away like other young men" (Davies, "Episode 4" 43:59-44:04; Austen 239). Therefore, this difference between Wickham and Darcy is again palpable and reinforced by the housekeeper's comment, where she announces the gentleman's uniqueness.

The confession scenes are also worth remarking. The first confession in Episode Three in comparison to the last confession in Episode Six shows character development in Mr Darcy. In the first confession, there is a combination of low-angles, medium close-ups, and panning shots. The specific use of a panning shot to follow a nervous Mr Darcy around the room indeed increases the intimacy and his troubled mind. Moreover, as Elizabeth is seated while Darcy confesses his feelings to her, the use of a low-angle shot means that the spectator acquires her point of view. The use of this type of shot can also convey the gentleman's emotional and economical superiority in comparison to Elizabeth's in this exact moment. In fact, in this sequence, Darcy speaks outside the general social behaviour, and Elizabeth refers to him as ungentlemanly. In this respect, a comparison between Mr Collins' proposal and Mr Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth is needed. This adaptation exactly follows Austen's words and there is a lack of close-ups

of Collins in comparison to Darcy's proposal, which obviously highlights Collins' lack of esteem for his cousin Elizabeth.

Furthermore, the presence of the mirror in which Darcy's face is reflected in the background implies that "Darcy . . . is at fault for speaking as much to himself as to Elizabeth" (Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations* 44). Consequently, this illustrates how this version acquires a dominant male perspective. As Deborah Cartmell claims, Andrew Davies's adaptation has stood its position between the several *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations on television by successfully changing the centre of the narrative from Elizabeth to the mysterious and alluring Darcy, and in addition, it has become the former "definitive" version (*Screen Adaptations* 60). Cartmell also adds that Davies' adaptation has been regarded as a "'preservation' of Austen's text in its attention to language and historical detail, and 'interpretation' as it rereads the novel from a male rather than female perspective, and as a 'transition' as it is inevitably of its own rather than a recreation of the early 19th century" (*Screen Adaptations* 22). Likewise, the set of an almost high angle in Elizabeth also indicates that the spectator simultaneously acquires Darcy's point of view. In this scene there is a clear use of voyeurism, where the spectator observes Darcy and Elizabeth in their intimacy. Then, throughout the use of different angles and points of view in Davies' adaptation, the focus of this adaptation is not Elizabeth but Darcy.

In the second marriage proposal, the spectator follows Elizabeth and Darcy walking on a lane near Longbourn. In this instance, there is a sequence shot and this has the same result as the panning shot, to increase sentimentality. The success of this adaptation can also rely on the actors' effective acting perfectly fitting the intimacy of this scene, "Firth manages to suggest the intensity of Darcy's struggle between his love for Elizabeth and his proud reluctance to ally himself with her family" (Parrill 74). Other reason for its success, as Andrew Davies suggested in an interview, is that *Pride and Prejudice* is a great book and it is formed by great characters, and furthermore, the story focus on visuality and magnificent landscapes, houses, and costumes, which makes the book and adaptations difficult to dislike³. Moreover, since this mini-TV series develops the ending

³ "Andrew Davies Interview - Period Drama - Pride & Prejudice." *Youtube*, uploaded by Red Carpet News TV, 29 March 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcKvU-BAwWQ&ab_channel=RedCarpetNewsTV

with Elizabeth's and Darcy's wedding and a final kiss, Davies secures a happy ending expected and liked by readers and spectators.

There are additional scenes that increase Mr. Darcy's masculinity that are not reflected in the novel. According to Sue Parrill, these scenes are added "to give the viewer a sense of Darcy's life away from Elizabeth and to reveal him as a physically active and sensitive individual" (66). One of the scenes is Darcy practising fencing in Episode Four. In this scene, Darcy practises with his instructor while other men observe them. The instructor praises Darcy and asks him if he would come the next day to practise. Then, Darcy answers that he would not because he has "business" to resolve in the north, and ends whispering to himself "I shall conquer this! I shall!" (Davies, "Episode 4" 37:16). This "business" likely refers to his relationship with Elizabeth and his previous failed confession. This image could recall Neale's theory of voyeuristic looking, where duels of all kinds represent a confrontation between "will and strength", "victory and defeat", between individual men and/or groups of men, and again it implies that male figures on the screen are subject to voyeuristic looking, both on the spectator and on the other male characters. Likewise, here the spectator experiences a narcissistic identification because by adding this intimate scene, they feel involved in this affair, and like Darcy, they want the affair to end as they please. Thus, unlike the novel, in this adaptation one can see intimate scenes involving two or more men characters.

Then, in the other additional scene, the gentleman appears in the famous lake scene. In this scene, as it has been already mentioned, Darcy arrives on a horseback galloping a white horse, and before reaching his estate he stops in a near lake. In this location, Darcy undresses to swim in the lake, wearing all white, and a second later the spectator sees a *mise-en-scène* of Darcy walking towards Pemberley. In this scene, Davies wisely uses cross-cutting with the sequence of the Gardiners and Elizabeth admiring portraits of Mr Darcy. This alternation of such symbolic sequences unquestionably displays a latent eroticism and admiration around Darcy's persona. These scenes aim to emphasise Darcy's physicality and please the viewer's gaze, because as Parrill states "The spectacle of Colin Firth in a shirt open at the throat, a look of frustrated passion on his face, may have been responsible for the 'Darcymania' that swept over England after *Pride and Prejudice* appeared on the BBC" (66). As Cartmell also suggests, "as the majority of audiences for this sort of film are female, the films tend to pander to a female audience by adding female-friendly episodes to the storyline" (*Screen Adaptations* 13). This

adaptation undoubtedly modified Darcy “from a stuffy and reluctant romantic hero into a full-blown Hollywood heart-throb, with an increasing female fan base” (Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations* 125). In another interview with Cartmell and Whelehan on 23 February 2005, Davies himself also addresses this scene and says that “that wet shirt moment is really the first time Elizabeth has seen Darcy as a natural man, as it were” (“Practical Understanding” 246). Therefore, in this scene together with the scenes where Darcy practises fencing, there is a voyeuristic look where the spectator has access to Darcy’s intimate affairs. Unquestionably, these scenes serve to exalt Firth’s physicality and emphasise Darcy as an erotised object.

Contrary to Mulvey’s negation of the male star as the erotic object, these last two scenes show how the male star can indeed exercise both as well as bearer and object of narcissistic phantasies. The spectator experiences what Elizabeth felt while admiring a portrait of Darcy. Both scenes significantly rely on scopophilia, specifically on Ann Kaplan’s idea of scopophilia where there is a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen, i.e active scopophilia. Furthermore, these scenes demand the identification of the spectator’s ego with the object on the screen through their fascination and recognition of their like. Likewise, these scenes contribute to the spectators’ identification with the characters and recalling Mulvey’s ideas the female spectator in a “masculinized” surrounding, she may find herself detached from its “masculinisation”, and ergo detached from pleasure and fascination, or the other way around, she may identify herself with a hero and find herself personally and perhaps unconsciously appreciating the freedom of authority over the diegetic world. In short, on both occasions, there is a fetishistic gaze where Elizabeth and/or the spectator are captivated by what they see, as a medium of desire and pleasure.

The 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice* adapted by Joe Wright is also a widely appreciated adaptation. Unlike the 1995 version, set in the early nineteenth century, this adaptation is set in the late eighteenth century, when the novel was first drafted. Also, there is a significant change in the audience. According to Linda V. Troost, Davies’ version aimed at both British and American audiences, but Wright’s version aimed to attract a different audience, teenagers, because this film “superficially looks like *Pirates of the Caribbean* crossed with *Wuthering Heights*: an edgy heroine in stays (Keira Knightley) meets a broody hero in a long coat (Matthew Macfadyen)” (87). In my opinion, while the 1995 version is recognisable for Davies’ screenplay, the 2005 version

stands out for its impactful visual intimacy. That is why I focus on Wright's task as the director rather than in Deborah Moggach's task as the writer of the film. The first time the spectator sees Darcy is not on a horseback, but in the Netherfield ball as in the original text. In a crowded frame of people dancing and enjoying the ball, Mr Darcy along with Charles and Caroline Bingley appear in the middle of the frame, seen from the back. Like the 1995 version, this version takes advantage of the visuality that cinema offers and increases the curiosity around them but specifically to Mr Darcy who is symbolically placed in the centre. Nevertheless, instead of being introduced by Mrs Bennet as in the original text, this expectation around his persona is emphasised by Charlotte Lucas who remarks on the gentleman's affluence "Miserable, he may be, but poor, he most certainly not" (Wright 06:44). Despite these changes, Mr Darcy's affluence and "disagreeable" personality are preserved.

Related to Darcy's narrative voice, like Davies, Wright offers Darcy's narrative voice, narrating the content of the letter. Unlike Davies' adaptation that visually narrates the affairs, in this adaptation, the viewers only listen to his narration. He is still introduced within the visual narrative through scenes of him on a horse galloping through the forest. Even though the method to empathise with Darcy is less explicit in this version, the results are the same. The spectator easily connects Wickham's personality and dishonesty as the source of Mr Darcy's discomfort.

In this version, Pemberley is also presented using a panning shot and a long shot to show the dimensions of the estate. The mansion chosen to embody Pemberley is the opulent Chatsworth House. Thus, Wright selected refined homes with richer interior decoration than the BBC's version, and moreover, he uses panning shots to admire the distinctly coloured paintings of nude figures in biblical and classical scenes. Before arriving at Pemberley, the Gardiners and Elizabeth discuss about Darcy's wealth, alleging Elizabeth, with a negative connotation, that "He's so rich", to what Mr Gardiner responded "By heavens, Lizzie, what a snob you are. Objecting to poor Mr Darcy because of his wealth. The poor man can't help it" and Mrs Gardiner added "He won't be there anyway. These great men are never at home" (Wright 1:21:03-13). This admiration and compassion towards Darcy are stressed by a sequence of a group of deers bustling through the countryside. The use of deers before showing the estate is symbolic and indeed reinforces the gentleman's masculinity, because as Alison Field claims "With their fearsome antlers, muscular bodies and impressive size, European red deer appear to be

the epitome of masculinity’⁴. The fact that this version features images of Darcy involved in certain activities may recall Neale’s and Mulvey’s categorization of the voyeuristic and fetishistic looking and dynamism that is often associated with images of men in cinema.

In this respect, Wright maintains the use of paintings to evoke Darcy’s opulence and masculinity. Nevertheless, in this version, oil paintings of Mr. Darcy are replaced by sculptures. While Elizabeth wanders around the sculpture gallery, the use of cuts introduces different pieces that resemble classical characters. The most remarkable sculpture that is shown is a sculpture of a naked Achilles trying to remove the arrow in his heel. The statue thus suggests two unexpected elements, eroticism, and pain. Emotional affliction is explicit in the novel, but physical pain is not too often presented (Jane Bennet’s cold at the beginning of the novel is only a plot artifice). Thus, this sculpture serves as a link to visually convey the physical pain that starts the recurrent emotional affliction. In this circumstance, another sculpture of a naked masculine body, which again reinforces this spectacle of men as objects of desire. The camera moves horizontally to finally focus on a final statue, a bust of Darcy. While the Gardiners and Elizabeth study the bust, the housekeeper asks Elizabeth “Do you not think him a handsome man, miss?” to which Elizabeth responds “Yes. I daresay he is” (Wright 1:23:53-1:24:03). Therefore, like Elizabeth, the spectator is convinced to see Darcy’s beauty, and ergo, he is a target of desire. In addition, Deborah Cartmell adds that this scene “evokes erotic awakening, thought the sexual posturing of the figures, and mourning” (*Screen Adaptations* 89). Concisely, the use of biblical and classical paintings and sculptures may imply a recall of ancient, idealised masculinity, a masculinity that at first sight Darcy embodies as his bust is the last sculpture that is shown to the spectator. Likewise, this sequence summarises the extreme visuality that this adaptation stimulates.

Last but not least, the proposal sequences in this version are also highly esteemed by public opinion. The first proposal possesses a melodramatic tone, set outside Rosings in the pouring rain. Recalling Mr Collins’ proposal to Elizabeth, in Wright’s version “The small Tom Hollander’s Collins is made even shorter by his continual slouching and bended knees, with Darcy literally head and shoulder above him” (Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations* 32). In addition, Collins’ blue coat visually blends with the wall behind him,

⁴ Field, Alison. “Why masculinity is not something to roar about in the deer world”. *University of Sussex*, <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/3978> Accessed 05 Jan. 2022.

something that metaphysically implies Collins is narratively and personally meaningless and does not suppose a danger to Darcy's masculinity. In contrast, even though these two proposals are originally set inside, Wright places Darcy outside in a neoclassical temple in the pouring rain, which insinuates Darcy's physical superiority in contrast to Collins.

Moreover, before the second proposal, it is important to mention a scene involving Darcy and Bingley, where these two men characters can be seen chattering in the distance. In this scene, Darcy is helping Bingley with his proposal to Jane Bennet. Thus, unlike the novel, this version, as well as Davies', features private affairs between two or more men characters. Then, the second proposal shows a more relaxed Darcy strolling toward Elizabeth. According to Deborah Cartmell, "The inevitable intertextual reference to the 1995 meeting of Darcy in a wet diaphanous shirt . . . is postponed until the climax of the 2005 version, with Darcy and Elizabeth meeting at dawn, . . . and with Darcy in an open shirt and flowing overcoat, a clear nod to Firth's Darcy's famous state of undress" (*Screen Adaptations* 90). Like Firth in the famous lake scene, here there is an exaltation of Macfadyen's physicality. In this version, Darcy as the object of the gaze is still preserved. In this sequence as well, the spectator acquires Darcy's point of view while the gentleman awaits Elizabeth's answer. This intimate and mature proposal is anticipated in the famous hand flex scene at the beginning of the film, where Darcy helps Elizabeth into the carriage outside Netherfield where he holds her hand for slightly longer than necessary. The close-up of the hand, the first touch between lovers, anticipates the final pairing where Elizabeth literally and metaphorically accepts Darcy's hand. Thus, Wright's version relies on physicality and visuality. This scene recalls Wollstonecraft view on affection: "When a man squeezes the hand of a pretty woman, handing her to a carriage, . . . these are the privileges of friendship, or the momentary homage which the heart pays to virtue, when it flashes suddenly on the notice—mere animal spirits have no claim to the kindnesses of an affection!" (*VRW* 174). In addition, like the novel and the 1995 version, this version relies on visuality, as Meghan Malone suggests:

The gaze is not only a medium of communication for forbidden wants, it also allows the lovers to see, literally and figuratively, eye-to-eye. Elizabeth and Darcy's is a relationship of sexual reciprocity, and nowhere in *Pride and Prejudice* is Darcy feminized because he is an object of female desire; he remains virile and unquestionably masculine until the last. (86)

Therefore, the novel and the adaptations as well are a multi-sensorial experience, and although Wright's version is less faithful to the novel in comparison to Davies' adaptation, the film's visuality and physical intimacy indeed pay a great tribute to the female gaze in which Austen wrote.

3.2. Literary and cinematographic analysis of *Alcott's Little Women and Good Wives*

This section offers a detailed analysis of Alcott's Theodore Laurence. In short, like Darcy, his textual masculinity oscillates between textual and visual descriptions, point of view and his masculine depiction symbolically materialised in portraits and estates. Therefore, the first subsection aims to analyse Laurence in Alcott's text, and the second subsection analyses how Laurence has been portrayed in cinema, specifically in the latest and best-regarded cinematographic adaptations by social media users, Gillian Armstrong's 1994 version and Greta Gerwig's 2019 version.

3.2.1. Literary analysis of *Little Women and Good Wives*: Alcott's Theodore Laurence

Theodore Laurence, also known as "Laurie", is personified as a handsome, smart, cheeky, and free-spirited boy who is raised to be a gentleman by his grandfather Mr Laurence and his tutor, John Brooke. The difference between Mr Laurence, Brooke, Darcy, and Laurie can be summarised in the following quote "Being a man meant being in charge of one's own life, liberty and property. Being a man meant also not being a boy. A man was independent. self-controlled, responsible; a boy was dependent, irresponsible, and lacked control" (Kimmel 14). Thus, Laurie represents the early stages of inherited manhood and less mature masculinity. Whereas Darcy comes to represent Connell's authoritarian type, Laurie represents the democratic type. Although the predominant narrator is an omniscient narrator, the latter is presented by Jo as a "little gentleman" (Alcott, *LW* 22) who is tied to a very high education and standards: "My mother knows Mr Laurence but says he's very proud and doesn't like to mix with his neighbours. He keeps his grandson shut up, when he isn't riding or walking with his tutor and makes him

study very hard. . . . Mother says he's very nice, though he never speaks to us girls'' (Alcott, *LW* 22). As it was mentioned, sectarianism was normal in Victorian times, where Victorian men considered the female company impractical.

This first depiction of Mr Laurence and his grandson introduced by Jo March exposes a conflict on masculinity, mostly generational. *Little Women* and *Good Wives* are set during the mid-1800s and the American Civil War, while some men are on the frontline of the conflict like Mr March, others like Mr Laurence had to secure the education of future gentlemen. As the national identity was being crafted, the education and training for the adulthood of children became a national preoccupation. If we take into account Kimmel's identification of the three dominant ideals of American manhood at the turn of the nineteenth century, Mr Laurence combines both the Gentle Patriarch and the Self-Made Man and Laurie represents the Heroic Artisan, a character that will eventually be influenced by European standards.

Later, in a conversation between Amy March and her mother, the latter enumerates the elements that make a boy a gentleman, and assures her youngest daughter that Laurie represents the opposite of proudness:

“Is Laurie an accomplished boy?”

“Yes; he has had an excellent education, and has much talent: he will make a fine man, if not spoiled by petting,” replied her mother.

“And he isn't conceited, is he?” asked Amy.

“Not in the least; that is why he is so charming, and we all like him so much.”

“I see; it's nice to have accomplishments, and be elegant; but not to show off, or get perked up.” said Amy thoughtfully” (Alcott, *LW* 68)

This idea presented by Amy March, who is only twelve years old, shows the cultural presuppositions about masculinity. In fact, later in Chapter Twelve titled “Camp Laurence”, in a conversation between Laurie's friend called Sallie and Jo, the former asks Jo what virtues she admired in a man, to which the latter responds “Courage and honesty” (Alcott, *LW* 124). The relationship between Laurie and the March family may seem unsubstantial at first, but it is indeed symbolic. Each one of them establishes their

gender thought interaction and validation, and further, “Laurie encourages domestic behaviour and even substitutes Mrs March by being the Teddy that comforts the March sisters during her absence” (Zehren 19). In fact, Mrs March remarks that Laurie's modesty is what they like about him. He is also the one that has “the key, the skill and the money to introduce the little women into society” (Zehren 19). Like Pip in *Great Expectations*, Laurie's masculinity is built as the story advances and his character unfolds. For instance, Laurie admires Jo March's “gentlemanly demeanour” (Alcott, *LW* 28). In this respect, one can see despite all efforts everything is reduced to money and power, something that Laurie acquired through his traditional and virile grandfather. Likewise, like Pip, through the interactions with fierce female characters, Laurie reflects on gender identity and the association of physical dominance with masculine traits and passivity and weakness as feminine traits.

In respect to his physical appearance, he is described by Jo March as a young man with “Curly black hair, brown skin; big, black eyes; handsome nose; fine teeth; small hands and feet; taller than I; very polite for a boy, and altogether jolly” (Alcott, *LW* 29). Seemingly, there is a mixture of physical elements that are stereotypically associated with masculinity and femininity. Therefore, Theodore Laurence is originally described in an androgynous manner. Furthermore, he seems to have a rather feminine aura around him. The nicknames that his friends and Jo chose for him such as “The Laurence boy”, “Laurie”, “Dora” and “Teddy” denote stereotypically female-sounding letters. By doing this, Alcott breaks gender-stereotypical conjectures, and ergo, “she is removing gender expectations based on the characters' names” (Bender 141). Moreover, the fact that Laurie is not conventionally a boy's name and further, Laurie himself prefers “Laurie” over “Mr. Laurence” or his first name “Theodore”, implies that Alcott perhaps meant to bestow Laurie with feminine qualities, and he seems comfortable with them.

Furthermore, Chapter Thirteen called “Castles in the Air” is narrated from Laurie's point of view and presents his inner self. The chapter opens with Laurie being unable to study and displeasing his grandfather by practising half the afternoon and preferring to spend the afternoon with the March sisters. Here Laurie describes his “castle in the air” of being a famous musician and even remarks that “I'm never to be bothered about money or business, but just enjoy myself, and live from what I like” (Alcott, *LW* 134). Then, Laurie explicitly says that he does not want to become a great man like his grandfather

expects, but he aims to live his own life, far from external expectations. In Alcott's words, "[Laurie] was growing up very fast, and in spite of his indolent ways, had a young man's hatred of subjection, a young man's restless longing to try the world for himself" (Alcott, *LW* 136). Thus, Laurie does not only detach himself from any material bond as Thoreau defended, but he also detaches himself from any expectation and categorization of being a gentleman. Laurie possesses his own sense of being a Self-Made Man.

Later, *Good Wives* exposes a more masculine version of Laurie. In the first pages, the reader is told that Laurie went to college to please his grandfather. In addition, college lightly influenced him negatively, "he frolicked and flirted, grew dandified, aquatic, sentimental, or gymnastic, as college fashions ordained, hazed and was hazed, talked slang, and more than once came perilously near suspension and expulsion" (Alcott, *GW* 225). As it has been mentioned, men in the nineteenth century escaped from the anxiety of becoming effeminate and "restore" their masculinity by embracing "jolly fellowship" and attending to homosocial activities that involve physical activities such as bodybuilding, sports, and violence. However, Mr Laurence, Mrs March and "the knowledge that four innocent girls loved, admired, and believed in him with all their hearts" (Alcott, *GW* 225) is what prevented Laurie from becoming spoiled. It is worth remarking that it is also in college where he is introduced to gentlemanly attitudes, playing sports, making male friends, and wooing girls, activities that were noticeably masculine. By attending these events, Laurie familiarises himself with his contemporary masculinity.

For instance, Laurie's friend Fred Vaughn comes to represent Laurie's contemporary masculinity whereas the rest, Brooke, Bhaer and Mr Laurence, represent a more honourable masculinity. On the one hand, Fred Vaughn comes from an aristocratic British family and represents a boy that lacks virtue but is wealthy and entertaining. In fact, these are the reasons that Amy contemplated her engagement with Fred Vaughn. Moreover, Aunt March, who represents the judgmental, superficial, and austere old aristocracy of the period, prefers the youngest March to marry Mr Vaughn rather than Laurie. Nevertheless, ". . . Fred present[s] faulty (European) concepts of masculinity which are not integrated into the successful, ideal March society: men must not be shy or frail" (Zehren 12). Contrariwise, John Brooke and Friedrich Bhaer present on the hand a kind, tender and gentlemanly masculinity. According to Zehren, "Aside from Mr March, [John Brooke] is possibly the most perfect of the males presented in *Little Women*" (15). Brooke's main role is "keep the boys steady" and is presented as a "grave, silent young

man, with handsome brown eyes and a pleasant voice. Meg liked his quiet manner and considered him a walking encyclopedia of useful knowledge” (Alcott, *LW* 116). Nevertheless, his only flaw is his moodiness. In addition, Friedrich Bhaer also represents this educated yet penurious type of man. For instance, he is introduced as “very learned and good, but poor as a church mouse, . . . he hadn’t a really handsome feature in his face . . . [and] he looked like a gentleman, though two buttons were off his coat and there was a patch on one shoe” (Alcott, *GW* 314-315). With the use of different nicknames such as “Old Fritz, Lager Beer, [and] Ursa Major” (Alcott, *GW* 317), Bhaer is paralleled with Laurie (Zehren 27) as men whose nicknames illustrate their respective masculinity. Nevertheless, a difference relies on Brooke and Bhaer, and is that Brooke helps a boy (Laurie) to become a gentleman, whereas Bhaer helps a girl (Jo) to become an educated woman. Then, Alcott presents different definitions of masculinity, in the case of Fred, a man who seems to be comfortable with the ideals he has been inculcated and represents a social masculinity, Laurie who dislikes the general masculinity and follows and intertwined femininity and masculinity, and finally, Brooke and Bhaer who represent a compassionate and intellectual masculinity and demonstrate that character and intelligence matters more than riches.

Mr Laurence’s mansion is another example that could manifest masculinity. The mansion reflects Mr Laurence’s first appearance; intimidating yet mellow. For instance, the mansion is first described in the following manner:

On one side was an old, brown house, looking rather bare and shabby, robbed of the vines that in summer covered its walls and the flowers, which then surrounded it. On the other side was a stately stone mansion, plainly betokening every sort of comfort and luxury, from the big coach house and well-kept grounds to the conservatory and the glimpses of lovely things one caught between the rich curtains. Yet it seemed a lonely, lifeless sort of house, for no children frolicked on the lawn, no motherly face ever smiled at the windows, and few people went in and out, except the old gentleman and his grandson. (Alcott, *LW* 44-45)

Later, the narrator adds Jo’s opinion of the mansion “To Jo’s lively fancy, this fine house seemed a kind of enchanted palace, full of splendours and delights, which no one enjoyed. She had long wanted to behold these hidden glories and to know “the ‘Laurence boy’,

who looked as if he would like to be known’’ (Alcott, *LW* 45). In spite of these positive remarks, Jo adds “‘That boy is suffering for society and fun’’ (Alcott, *LW* 45). Therefore, this implies that the mansion displays traditional masculinity, the one that Jo wants Laurie to escape. Through these descriptions, Mr Laurence serves as an element to show and preserve masculinity, something that recalls what Pemberley denotes in Mr Darcy. However, Elizabeth is impressed by Pemberley and what it represents, whereas in this case, Jo wants Laurie to escape from Mr Laurence’s mansion and what it implies.

In the same line as Darcy and his famous portrait that catches Elizabeth’s attention, there is a depiction of Laurie’s mature masculinity through one of Amy March’s sketches:

. . . a sudden change swept over the young man’s face as he looked. Only a rough sketch of Laurie taming a horse. Hat and coat were off, and every line of the active figure, resolute face, and commanding attitude was full of energy and meaning. . . . In the ruffled mane, the rider’s breezy hair and erect attitude, there was a suggestion of suddenly arrested motion, of strength, courage, and youthful buoyancy . . . (Alcott, *GW* 387)

This romantic and idealised description of Laurie recalls the type of masculinity that Mr Darcy embodies. Here it is important to observe the element of the horse and its symbolism. The images that this majestic animal beholds are often associated with courage, freedom, power, heroism, and endurance. Unlike Darcy, who is often seen riding a horse, this is the first time that such a powerful image is introduced to describe Laurie. In fact, Laurie is also introduced here as an object of desire by Jo: “‘Jo knew that ‘young Laurence’ was regarded as a most eligible party by worldly mamas, was much smiled upon by their daughters, and flattered enough by ladies of all ages to make a coxcomb of him’’ (Alcott, *GW* 308). Hence, Jo March in the early pages verbalises what the reader may feel reading this description.

Finally, the scene where Laurie confesses his feelings to Jo is also regarded as one of the most emotional scenes within the novel:

Something in his resolute tone made Jo look up quickly to find him looking down at her with an expression that assured her the dreaded moment had come, and made her put out her hand with an imploring, “‘No, Teddy, Please don’t!’”

“I will, and you *must* hear me. It’s no use, Jo, we’ve got to have it out, and the sooner the better for both of us,” he answered, getting flushed and excited all at once.

“Say what you like then. I’ll listen,” said Jo, with a desperate sort of patience.

Laurie was a young lover, but he was in earnest, and meant to ‘have it out’ if he died in the attempt; . . . ‘I’ve loved you ever since I’ve known you, Jo, couldn’t help it, . . . Now I’m going to make you hear, and give me an answer, for I *can’t* go on so any longer.’” (Alcott, *GW* 340)

Unlike Mr Darcy, who considered himself above anyone else and to be married to him an honour, Laurie tried to change himself to satisfy Jo’s standards: “I only loved you all the more, and I worked hard to please you, and I gave up billiards and everything you didn’t like, and waited and never complained, for I hope you’d love me, though I’m not half good enough—” (Alcott, *GW* 341). However, despite his intention to be worthy of Jo’s love, his attitude once he fails and Jo refuses his hand shows that he is not mature enough. He is driven by passion and jealousy and thus, selfishness. He begs for Jo’s love for his own sake and even attacks Friedrich Bhaer “that devilish Professor you were always writing about. If you say you love him, I know I shall do something desperate” (Alcott, *GW* 342). Last but not least, this emotional endurance that men are often told to follow can be seen in a conversation between Mr Laurence and Laurie, after Jo told Mr Laurence about this proposal.

“. . . I want to say one thing, and then there shall be an end of it,” returned Mr Laurence with unusual mildness. “You won’t care to stay at home now, perhaps?”

“I don’t intend to run away from a girl. Jo can’t prevent my seeing her, and I shall stay and do it as long as I like,” interrupted Laurie in a defiant tone.

“Not if you are the gentleman I think you. I’m disappointed but the girl can’t help it, and the only thing left for you to do is to go away for a time. Where will you go?”

“Anywhere. I don’t care what becomes of me,” and Laurie got up with a reckless laugh that grated on his grandfather’s ear.

“Take it like a man, and don’t do anything rash, for God’s sake. Why not go abroad, as you planned, and forget it?” (Alcott, *GW* 346)

Here it is important to remark expressions such as “unusual mildness” and “take it like a man”. Mr Laurence asks his grandson to be reasonable not only because the situation requires it, but because Mr Laurence wants his grandson to be a great gentleman, and passion is the main obstacle to being a reasonable gentleman. One can see that Laurie possesses an idealised conception of love and human relationships, in contrast to his grandfather who defends reason over passion. Likewise, Mr Laurence may come to represent the heroic and virile type of man that Thoreau defended. Furthermore, contrary to Austen, Alcott indeed offers private affairs between men, something that illustrates that not everything written by a woman makes the work intrinsically “feminine” by means of values, attitudes or perspectives.

In terms of the female gaze, *Little Women* and *Good Wives* are written from the female gaze but it is more complex than that. Like Alcott’s heroine Jo March, their perspectives and attitudes are not fundamentally feminine as she believes in fluctuations between masculinity and femininity. Despite these facts, what is clear is that *Little Women* and *Good Wives* are written from the female gaze, by means that the other characters are filtered through the March sisters and their different perspectives on femininity, and further, Alcott presents and develops her characters equally regardless of gender.

3.2.2. Cinematographic analysis of *Little Women* and *Good Wives*: Gillian Armstrong’s and Greta Gerwig’s Theodore Laurence

Gillian Armstrong’s Laurie is first introduced by the March sisters speculating on his education and physicality when Jo March stresses that “maybe he has a secret, a tragic European secret” (10:10). Then, here the bearers of the voyeuristic look are the March sisters, mostly Jo March. Here she has the active power of the erotic look whilst Laurie is the passive power that is observed both by the characters and spectators. In addition, in terms of identification, as the readers know, Jo’s admirable personality allows the audience to identify themselves with her. The spectator portrays their likes and personalities to Jo, which is stressed by the female star chosen to portray Jo, Winona Ryder. Therefore, this single interaction deconstructs Mulvey’s gendered clarification of the gaze as it explicitly illustrates how Jo is the active bearer of the look.

Moreover, this first conversation can be linked to the first introduction to Mr Laurence’s mansion. Like the novel, his mansion acquired a claustrophobic sense that

mirrors the masculinity that Mr Laurence wanted to impose on his grandson. This motivates a sense of curiosity in the spectator about this foreign character. In the novel, Alcott describes Laurie's high education, but in Armstrong's version, wrote by Robin Swicord, his education is lessened, as Meg March says that "he has no upbringing at all, they say. He was really in Italy among artists and vagrants", to which Jo adds, "If I were a boy, I want to look just like that [Laurie]" (Armstrong 10:16-25). In the novel, Jo also admires how Laurie "look[s] like a little gentleman" (Alcott, *LW* 22). Nevertheless, the manners that Mr Laurence wants to inculcate in his grandson are maintained. Later, in a conversation between Laurie and Jo, the former enumerates his education and virtues, saying that he was born in Italy, speaks English at home and French at school and attends a music conservatory and his grandfather insists that he must go to college. About Laurie's physical appearance, a twenty-year-old Christian Bale is chosen to portray a fifteen-year-old boy. At that time, Bale was a praised actor that rose to fame in 1987, when he was thirteen years old, and had appeared in films such as an adaptation of William Shakespeare *Henry V* (1989) directed by Kenneth Branagh, and *Treasure Island* (1990), with Fraser C. Heston adapting Robert Louis Stevenson's novel.

In this version, before Laurie confesses his feelings to Jo, the former speaks about the expectations his grandfather has on him, alleging that he will have to defy his grandfather, and Jo adds "and not the whole of society" (Armstrong 01:02:17). Then the extension of the confession is lessened in comparison to the novel, and it begins with Laurie explaining that "When I imagine myself in that life, I can think of only one thing . . . that would make me happy" (Armstrong 1:05:07-16). That "one thing" refers to Jo as Laurie caresses her hand. As Jo aims to think about it reasonably, Laurie says "Dear Jo, I swear I'll be a saint. I'll let you win every argument. I'll take care of you, and your family. I'll give you every luxury that you've ever been denied" (Armstrong 1:06:05-20). Laurie is indeed then, a boy driven by his passions. Moreover, there is no allusion to Professor Bhaer as in the original version, but a heartbroken and jealous Laurie can still be seen. It is also worth mentioning the use of a frame in the sequence. As Laurie speaks sincerely from the heart, there is a close-up, which may imply his masculine and emotional dimension. However, as Laurie leaves Jo, there is a use of a long shot, which may imply that he is still an individual male in society. Therefore, in this use of voyeurism, these frames enhances the spectators' sympathy towards Laurie.

As mentioned earlier, the sketch that Amy draws of Laurie helps to visualise Laurie's masculinity; nevertheless, in this version, there is no reference to it. However, there is a scene that can be compared to the sculpture gallery in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*; an adult Laurie sees Amy painting a bust of Julius Caesar and Amy claims that she thought that Laurie was in Greece. Similarly to Wright's version, the use of biblical and classical paintings and sculptures may imply a recall of ancient, idealised masculinity. It is this ancient, idealised masculinity that Mr Laurence wants his grandson to possess. Then, in the next scene where this pair appears, Laurie courts Amy and the latter remarks how she despises the change provoked by Jo's refusal and obviously, adulthood. Amy describes that Laurie spends his family's money and also he spends his time courting women. In addition, she adds that he does not take music seriously, to which Laurie responds that "[his compositions are] mediocre copy of another man's genius" (Armstrong 1:28:16). Then, as in the scene where Laurie courted Jo, the main topic is how Laurie does not fulfil the expectations people have of him: his grandfather expects him to be a gentleman, Jo does not expect him to be a proper husband and likewise, she does not expect herself to be a wife, and finally, Amy expects of him to be a better man.

As Rioux writes, "Armstrong's film is the adaptation of the novel for most *Little Women* fans under fifty" (103). This book was however, published five months before the release of Greta Gerwig's 2019 adaptation of *Little Women* and *Good Wives*. This latter version is still appreciated by modern audiences with a rating of 7,8/10 on IMDb. This version also relies on visuality as Wright's 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. In this adaptation, Gerwig had in mind to set the March house in the original Orchard House where Alcott wrote *Little Women* and *Good Wives* but eventually, a replica was built because the original setting did not have enough capacity. Likewise, the Laurence house is a white mansion that it is in fact located next to the replica of the Orchard House. Thus, Gerwig was attentive to the location, as most of the locations were visually similar to the original and also set in Concord.

Gerwig's version, directed and wrote by herself, does not follow a linear narrative, but it connects the ending of the plot in *Good Wives* with the beginning of the plot in *Little Women* utilising flashbacks and flash-forwards. Therefore, taking this into account, an adult Laurie is introduced by a slow-motion technique, while Amy March and Aunt March chatter about Amy's engagement with Fred Vaughn. Likewise, the end of this scene ends with Laurie walking away, again using slow motion. This technique

anticipates Amy's and Laurie's marriage, adds deeper intensity to the scene and increases expectations in the spectator around Laurie's persona. If one compares the physical description of Laurie in *Little Women*, Timothée Chalamet indeed fits more or less Alcott's physical description of Laurie "Curly black hair; . . . big, black eyes; handsome nose; fine teeth; small hands and feet; taller than I; very polite for a boy, and altogether jolly. . . ." (Alcott, *LW* 29). In addition, Chalamet also fits the original androgynous manner in what Laurie is described, as Alexandre Marain states in his article "How Timothée Chalamet is reframing masculinity in cinema" (2021), "The 25-year-old actor is paving the way for a new generation of actors, with his stunning performances and his slightly androgynous appearance". Marain also adds that "He reinvents the common image of a young man's physique on screen. . . . He restores the charm of a candid beauty and a kind of masculine sensitivity". Therefore, like Chalamet, Laurie breaks gender boundaries and demystifies masculinity and its absolute association with physical strength, attractiveness, and domination.

In this line of physicality, Amy's sketch of Laurie does not show Laurie taming a horse and such romantic visualisation, but this voyeuristic look involves the youngest Laurence in a rather relaxed pose: his body is placed horizontally relying on his right elbow. However, in this adaptation and this sequence, in particular, Amy also shows to Laurie her sketch of Fred Vaughn, who appears standing. For this reason, this could imply a difference in the depiction of masculinity, a more active one (Fred Vaughn) and a more passive one (Laurie).

Last but not least, the proposal scene in this adaptation, despite minor alterations strictly follows Alcott's text. In Alcott's text, Laurie states that "for I hope you'd love me, though I'm not half good enough—" (Alcott, *GW* 341), but this twenty-first century Laurie adds to the interpretation "and I'm not this great man—" (Gerwig 1:37:11). This last sentence was perhaps Gerwig's attempt to mention Bhaer as in the original text. In addition, in the proposal scenes both in Armstrong's and Gerwig's, there is an emphasis on the voyeuristic look. Following Neale's and Mulvey's semiotic consideration of the gaze, the proposal scene and mostly in the films, convey a visual and emotional battle of victory and defeat. Generally, like Laurie, the audience expects a final victory and defeat where Jo and Laurie ended together. Thus, the voyeuristic look as Ellis said, is curious and demands to know. The use of an omniscient narrator in the three novels and four adaptations, and subjectively, the access to the characters' thoughts and feelings serves

to endow Laurence and Darcy with a definite ego, and readers and spectators witness these characters' true personalities. Recalling Ellis' idea of the process of identification of men with male heroes, there is always a desire, through forms of narcissism and phantasies, for the perfected images of individuals. In both instances, there is an exaltation of phantasy where men and women readers and spectators identify themselves and project their likes on the characters, and consequently seek a successful conclusion ignoring the authors' intentions and wants. This leads us to fetishistic looking, a look that is absorbed in the spectacular. The romanticization of the situation and the past is emphasised by the showcase of astounding landscapes and frames, something that characterises Gerwig's version. Also recalling John Berger's idea of the mystification of the past, when one sees a landscape, one imagines themselves placed in it, and likewise, if one "sees" the art of the past, one will place themselves in history. Thus, visuality again plays a significant role both in the romanticization of the past and our feelings.

Moreover, comparing this version to Armstrong's, in this version Mr Laurence's expectations of Laurie are not mentioned. However, in Armstrong's version, the spectator sees a wide shot of Laurie leaving the location, but in this version, the viewers see a long shot but instead of an anguished Laurie, we see a devastated Jo. Gerwig's version also changes Laurie's jealousy towards Friedrich Bhaer into interest. In the novel, Laurie envies Jo's feelings and admiration for Professor Bhaer, but in this adaptation, the only interaction between these two characters occurs when Bhaer visits the March's household and Laurie repetitively asks for Bhaer's identification. This curiosity might imply Laurie's interest in the type of masculinity Bhaer represents as the March family is likewise astonished by this man's presence. Despite obvious differences such as their age, the type of masculinity that Bhaer embodies is the one that Laurie is expected to acquire. His interest in Bhaer verbalises the audience's interest in this gentleman and can also insinuate that Bhaer is Laurie's "ideal ego", taking into account that the man that Jo March eventually marries is Bhaer.

4. Conclusions

Wollstonecraft believes that men, in general, rely on reason to justify prejudices, a mechanism they have imbibed from their predecessors and refuse to root them out. Furthermore, she does not see reason and passion as opposites, but as complementary

virtuous traits. Like Don Juan in the original myth, Darcy is the quintessential seducer, a handsome, self-confident, and libertine man, and as Byron's Don Juan, who seems to be heroic, Darcy is in fact naive, and the adventures do not respond to his fate but occur by accident. Also, like Fielding's Tom Jones, Darcy embodies a man who is generous, virtuous, and does not easily succumb to passions. He is the true definition of gallantry and gentlemanliness. This is done by comparing him with the opposite, Wickham, because as we know without an antihero there is no hero. Similarly, Laurie is also compared in the novel with his opposite, in this case Fred Vaughn. Furthermore, like Dickens' Philip Pirrip, Laurie's masculinity is built as the story advances and his character unfolds and reflects on gender identity through the interactions with fierce women characters. In a few words, according to Connell's classification of masculinity, Darcy represents the authoritarian type, and Laurie represents the democratic type.

It is evident that to understand these characters one must attend to their respective historical context and geographical location. One takes place in England's Regency period, before and during the Napoleonic Wars, whilst the other takes place in Massachusetts during and after the American Civil War. Likewise, their age difference is another notable fact that differentiates them, and at the same time, defines their masculinity. In both cases, they inherited their predecessors' wealth and consequently, their predecessors' masculinity. Nevertheless, Darcy is comfortable with this set of values and expectations whilst Laurie wants to escape from them and unlike Darcy, Laurie lacks a sense of individualism and self-esteem. While Darcy is a man, Laurie is a boy, and his eternal youthful soul responds to Alcott's memory of her friend Ladislav Wisniewski. While Darcy represents manliness, Laurie embodies gentlemanliness. Darcy has an absent paternal figure and he is his own paternal figure, whereas Laurie has the figure of Mr Laurence and John Brooke to teach him how to be a man. In the case of Darcy, at the beginning of the novel, he embodies Burke's ideal masculinity, whilst at the end of the novel he embodies Wollstonecraft's idea of reason and sensibility as equal character traits. In the case of Laurie, he did not embody Burke's ideal masculinity, but he tries to fight it. Like Darcy, he eventually achieves Wollstonecraft's ideal masculinity. Despite these differences and although it is not certain that Austen and Alcott had access to Wollstonecraft's works, Darcy and Laurie unquestionably represent this man of sensibility that is equally passionate and reasonable. Moreover, in the process of deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity, unlike the rest of men characters, they realised

how futile is the system that tells men to endure reason rather than emotion, given the fact that they are intertwined, and they are not separate traits. Then, comparing them to the rest of the male characters in their respective novels, this deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity gives these characters more credit.

Regarding the expression “men written by women” in a psychological dimension, as it has been mentioned, Austen defined her ideal men characters with a high moral compass and Alcott with a cultivated education. Therefore, the fact that women of all ages in social media have regard for these two characters, suggests that honesty and (emotional) intelligence are two atemporal traits in the canon of an “ideal man”. The heroes in Austen’s and Alcott’s novels first respond to the needs and wants of women, and secondly, they voluntarily introspect and deconstruct their own masculinity. Both authors presented men free from any stereotyping and anterior models of masculinity inherited by her predecessors and their male characters are all likewise meticulously drafted as her heroines. This new model of masculinity promotes reason and equality both civil and emotional, rather than violence and authority.

Then, in a physical dimension, physicality is as well important. Both novels and their corresponding cinematic adaptations present an emphasis on visuality, physicality and touch. In terms of physical appearance, their textual descriptions and the casting also play a substantial role as directors chose fashionable actors esteemed by men and mostly, women audiences. Furthermore, the use of concrete editing techniques, camera movements and added scenes in these four films also reply to the female gaze. Nevertheless, unlike the male gaze which focuses on the objectification of a fragmented female body, the female gaze focuses on the objectification of the whole body. Moreover, by introducing additional scenes, the audience, who sees Darcy and Laurie as eroticised objects, also sees them as men capable of longing and desire. All of these facts result in a sensational viewing for the audience, and thus, justify the reasons these novels and films are appreciated and sometimes romanticised by the audience, mostly by women audiences, the main contributors of this canon of “men written by women” on social media.

Therefore, casting is also important in the audience’s process of scopophilia. In these four adaptations, the directors chose acclaimed male actors that are liked by the audience and especially the women audience: Colin Firth, Matthew Macfadyen, Christian Bale and Timothée Chalamet. In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, the two British actors Colin Firth

and Matthew Macfadyen were chosen to play the English gentlemen. In the case of *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, the British actor Christian Bale was chosen to play an American boy, and last but not least, Gerwig chose the sensational young actor Timothée Chalamet. Furthermore, one can see that this election is based on the actors' similar appearance to the fictional characters, but predominantly they are popular actors in their respective periods. The actors' charisma can be seen as well portrayed on screen, which adds more credibility to the success of the films. Finally, the addition of some scenes, frames, or editing techniques such as long shots and slow-motion, in these films are introduced specifically to highlight the actors' physicality.

Both authors are also attentive observers of affection, sexuality is inextricably connected to visuality, and both Elizabeth and Jo look without being looked at. In the treatment of romantic subjects, both Austen and Alcott present women that desire and are desired. Thus, both novels are examples of the female gaze, a gaze that does not seek to prohibit sex, desires, or phantasies, but shows that the male and female gaze can indeed coexist. This can be perfectly seen in the cinematographic adaptations that have been chosen. In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, the adaptations were directed by two men directors, and in the case of *Little Women*, by two women directors. Despite these facts, the female gaze is still preserved, and it demonstrates how it embraces the complexity of each individual regardless of sex or gender and it is responsible for creating complete characters, beings with feelings, emotions and with their own thoughts. This can be seen in their respective acquisition of the narrative voice, the instances where Darcy and Laurie acquire the narrative voice are undoubtedly meaningful scenes both in the novels and the films. In these scenes, the reader and spectator witness their true personalities. Like Davies, Wright offers Darcy's narrative voice, narrating the content of the letter. This letter is a decisive narrative element because the reader and viewers acquire a glimpse of Wickham's true personality in contrast to the honourable Darcy. Nevertheless, in *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, the reader does not obtain Laurie's narrative voice but his point of view. As it has been mentioned, chapter thirteen in *Little Women* named "Castles in the Air" is a direct manifesto of Laurie's will of being a famous musician and living his own life free from his grandfather's expectations. In these films, Laurie's voice can still be heard, and he still manifests his opposition to his grandfather's orders, thoughts, and wills.

Their respective estates are another element that emanates masculinity. Pemberley is literally and figuratively Darcy's personality. Nevertheless, in the case of *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, this gentlemanliness inspired by the estate relies on Laurie's grandfather, Mr Laurence. The youngest Laurence is physically trapped in the mansion with his grandfather, and psychologically trapped by his grandfather's virile standards. Therefore, mansion states imply a positive and a negative meaning respectively, but anyway both represent an important element in their personality and their self-consciousness. Furthermore, here the female gaze plays again a pivotal role. The estates are introduced by the main women characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Josephine March both in the novels and the films. Then, this exemplifies how Darcy's and Laurie's masculinity is filtered through the female gaze. Here it is important to mention the presence of such astonishing scenery, heritage, and costumes in the films. This significantly endows the romanticization of the past, and it can eventually lead to the romanticization of these characters and novels.

Another instance where the reader relies on the female gaze, their masculine depiction and how others perceive their masculinity can be seen in their respective portraits. The use of scopophilia and the action "to look without being looked at" is a distinctive occasion for a woman character in Austen's and Alcott's world. This is because both Austen's and Alcott's world depends on women, the plot and characters depend on and revolve around the female gaze. Moreover, the psychological and sexual development of their men characters totally depends on the female gaze. Thus, as it has been mentioned, in their literary world women and men characters coexist and are complementary to each other's psychological development. Darcy deconstructs his inherited masculine proudness and hegemonic masculinity and discovers himself along the process. For instance, Darcy is introduced by the narrator in the novel, by Mrs Bennet in Davies' version, and by Charlotte Lucas in Wright's version. And it is the same case in *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, as Laurie explicitly offers to change in order to fit Jo's standards. In the novel, Laurie is introduced by Jo as well as in Armstrong's version. In Gerwig's version, however, an adult Laurie is introduced by an adult Amy. Thus, male characters in these novels not only are filtered through women's perspectives, but they also adjust to the wants and needs of women while their respective individuality is preserved.

Although there are some changes in order to fulfil the expectations of modern audiences and their canonical and non-canonical reading of their novels, the essence is still preserved, something that can be seen in the efficient reception of the four adaptations. It shows that adaptors and the film industry acknowledge that modern audiences are significant consumers of heritage films. It also shows that these novels and adaptations, as well as their characters, can be easily romanticised as they present idyllic pictures of the past, in terms of history and human relationships. The different adaptations, rereadings and critiques of such beloved novels demonstrate the enduring reception of the novels and legitimise a blossoming female gaze on the screen.

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