

## *Emma*, Cher, and the Maze of Unknowing

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When the movie *Clueless* first appeared audiences seemed at once to know that it was a free contemporary adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma*. Yet at a time when cinema was cashing in on its up-market connections – with Francis Ford Coppola insisting he was filming *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Branagh that he was producing *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, and with Jane Austen herself as sure a thing at the box office as Schwarzenegger – Amy Heckerling chose not to mention the fact anywhere in her film.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps she felt that *Clueless* was indebted to many sources and didn't feel the need to mention any one in particular. Certainly it owed a debt to popular film genres like teen comedy and family satire such as *European Vacation*, Heckerling's own wickedly satirical picture of the American family abroad, or *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, her brilliantly anarchic teen comedy from the early eighties. But her reticence to credit Austen in any way becomes mischievous when we notice in the endtitles that the featured song "All By Myself" is credited to both Eric Carmen and Serge Rachmaninov. Carmen's maudlin anthem to the fear of solitude was not trumpeted on its release as being the product of a creative partnership, no doubt because acknowledged creative borrowing was not a part of the seventies pop aesthetic, imbued as it was with a kind of vulgar romanticism that disdained the "derivative" and yet, in retrospect, seemed to churn out much the same sound year by year.<sup>2</sup> Calling Rachmaninov to account for something he may well have wished to disavow, in any case, suggests a somewhat fussy deference to authority and propriety, especially when set against the film's silence on the Austen connection, but, as I suggested, perhaps this was a piece of mischief on Heckerling's part, designed to set this text in ironic play between two opposing principles: on the one hand, an awareness of and attribution of authority, and on the other hand an ignorance of and indifference to it.

By the mid-nineties, when *Clueless* was released, the pop aesthetic had shifted dramatically since the purloined melodies of Rachmaninov had raised the tenor of Eric Carmen's musings. These shifts mirrored more complex, albeit often more turgid, movements in postmodern aesthetic theory which are reflected in this film in questions of authority and authenticity such as those raised by the issues of adaptation and attribution to which I have just referred. From retread to retro, it seems to ask, where does one cross the line from imitation to creation, from plagiarism to playfulness, and thence productivity? And where do we, as audience, take our pleasure in this? Is it significant that the title song, The Muffs' "Kids in America", is a "retread", a cover of Kim Wilde's hit from the seventies, or that Ms Wilde was herself a second-generation pop princess who had the song written for her by her first-generation pop star and British one-hit wonder father, Marty Wilde, whose sole hit, "Abergavenny", enthused about the splendours of the Welsh countryside, casting suspicion on his daughter's melodic claim a decade later to represent "the kids in America"? Even if that doesn't signify, knowing it seems to be a part of the pleasure of this text, because this film appears to explore the gap between the knowing and the unknowing, the clued in and the clueless, and the different pleasures they might provide. So just as there is a pleasure to be taken in making ironic connections between the title song and the themes of this film, so too is there a pleasure to be had from not knowing any of that, a pleasure taken in the sheer vivacity of the song itself, unconnected from and unburdened with any scholarly, or mock-scholarly, itinerary it may entail. (Indeed, some readers may feel it a little sad that I was able to make those connections at all.)

In a sense this idea is figured in Cher's regular morning dilemma as she stands before her wardrobe, wondering what to make of herself for that day. Will she simply be the passive clotheshorse for the fashions that spill out, and so will she be no more than the attractive but empty effect of celebrity clothes designers? Or will she shape her own persona, fashion herself imaginatively, and so take part in her world on her terms? Fashion is all about re-using the old in new and creative contexts, a point underscored by much of the retro ambience of

the film. Cher's knee-high socks, her plaid skirts, her berets all come from different cultural pasts where they have their own significance, but here they are stripped of that original meaning while being invested with a new sense, invented by Cher, which establishes and projects for her a public persona of glamour and individuality. Cher isn't a victim to fashion; she is an agent who actively makes use of it. Her name reflects this too, for she is called by one of the most distinctive and individualised names of the sixties, belonging to a woman who chose to be known only by that single name, Cher (itself a creative variant of Cheryl – the original Cher's real name). But like the names Dionne (from Dionne Warwick) and Elton (from Elton John, and, happily enough, from Mr Elton himself), within a generation the distinctive name enters into the population and multiplies, so it is up to the bearers of those names to establish new individualities within them.

This theme is refracted also through the motif of idiomatic language that plays such a large part in the style of the teenage elite. Slang may be seen as a kind of inventive departure from orthodoxy<sup>3</sup> and here is consciously employed in this way – a point made explicitly by Murray. He, too, is fashioning a persona for himself, as all the young people are, but he has chosen a street-smart style and lingo that seems grossly inauthentic and comically out of place in a mouth gleaming with the exorbitant workmanship of a Beverley Hills orthodontist. But Murray is not taken in by his own image-making – he is as conscious of what he is doing as Cher is with her computer-enhanced fashion sense, as he shows when challenged by Dionne for calling her by the slang epithet “woman”:

*Dionne:* I told you not to call me “woman”.

*Murray:* Excuse me Miss Dionne...but street slang is an increasingly valid form of expression. Most of the feminine pronouns do have mocking, but not necessarily misogynistic, undertones. (My transcription.)

Street slang, says Murray, is an increasingly valid form of expression – plastic, adaptable, it may be picked up and used for the moment. It doesn't matter that it is taken out of its

original context in the slums of East L.A; what matters is that it functions effectively in new contexts, like here, for him, in Beverley Hills.

If an older set of cultural and aesthetic values held that originality is paramount and anything that comes after is merely secondary – a copy or replica – this movie seems to be challenging that in its characters, in its story, in its whole textual style. Just as it replicates but creatively transforms Jane Austen's *Emma*, so too its characters replicate, but creatively transform, previous characters, real and fictional, as they adopt and adapt whatever style suits their purpose. This implies that the original is no more valid than the copy, the authentic no more valid than the inauthentic – in this situation neither takes precedence: what counts is the vivacity, the liveliness and creativity of it all. Implicit in this too is a sense of liberation from any sense of authority and priority: liberated by her cluelessness, Cher represents the creativity of unknowing. For her, history and essence are immaterial in a material world that may be made over at any time, in any way, as Dionne observes: "Cher's main thrill in life is a makeover, okay; it gives her a sense of control in a world full of chaos." And her transforming and creative powers work – the covert makeover she and Dionne perform on Miss Geist, for example, changes her world, and theirs, for the better. But the world can only be "made over" so far to your vision of it; and that vision is constricted by the grasp you have of the world at large. Cher, however, understands the world only as something she fashions, like her social persona, or her report card ("these grades are just a jumping off point to start negotiations," she tells her father), or the romances of others, which she tries to engineer for her own pleasure. As its egoistic centre, she doesn't realise how small this world is, but we do as we watch her attempts at fashioning a world in which she is totally clued in, colliding with another world in which she hasn't got a clue.

For it must be remembered that the joys of cluelessness are always balanced by the satisfactions of being clued in, and the comic poise of the film arises from the balance it achieves between its keen sense of the pleasures of each. Take, for

example, the film's simultaneous invocations and dismissals of Shakespeare, which act as salient points of intersection for these sorts of issues. If the film's failure to gesture towards the prior authority of Austen is read as a postmodern gesture of "death of the author" defiance<sup>4</sup> then implicitly the weight of canonical authority and the hierarchies this subtends are subverted: culture is where you find it, not something prescribed by institutional orthodoxy. Thus Heckerling includes a scene in which Cher, a Mel Gibson fan, is able to show up Josh's pompous college girlfriend, Heather. Ironically this takes place in a discussion in which Heather herself is questioning institutional authority:

*Heather:* The man is ridiculous. He doesn't have one unique thought in his little, puny brain.

*Josh:* I think there's some merit in learning the form straight off.

*Heather:* Oh, Josh, please. He's taken our minds at their most fecund point, and restrained them before they've wandered through the garden of ideas. It's just like Hamlet said, "To thine own self, be true."

*Cher:* Ah, no, uh, Hamlet didn't say that.

*Heather:* I think that I remember Hamlet accurately.

*Cher:* Well, I remember Mel Gibson accurately, and he didn't say that. That Polonius guy did.

Thus Mel Gibson supplants Shakespeare in the popular imagination, and if Mel can do Will, Heckerling can do Austen, and the benefit of this postmodern mixing of highbrow and lowbrow is seen in Cher's victory in Josh's car, which we approve of since it is a victory for honesty and ingenuousness over pomposity and intellectual arrogance. But if culture is where you find it, it still has to be found, and it would not be possible to discover the subtextual layers of this film without a prior knowledge of such things as Shakespeare, among others, to say nothing of Jane Austen. That's why, if we admire Cher for showing up the boorish Heather, we think she is a bit of a dill in this next scene which acts as a balance to the one in the car:

(Cher is writing a note outside Miss Giest's pigeonhole)

*Dionne*: “Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade.” Phat! Did you write  
that?

*Cher*: Duh, it's like a famous quote.

*Dionne*: From where?

*Cher*: *Cliffs Notes*.

*Dionne*: Oh.

Here we laugh at Cher, not with her, because this is unpardonably, but amusingly, ignorant. So if the film condemns intellectual arrogance in one Shakespearean moment, it equally condemns intellectual ignorance in another. Indeed, insofar as this comic moment requires an external cultural knowledge to be brought to bear, it is possible to read the film's silence on its debt to Austen in another way; for by not signalling that it is a contemporary adaptation of *Emma*, this film requires us as readers to make the imaginative connection. A significant weight is thus accorded the act of responding to – or, rather, the act of reading – this text. The film might depict a post-textual *Cliffs Notes* world of illiterate adolescence, but it simultaneously insists upon a literacy being brought to bear so that it can function fully as satire. In this way *Clueless* reminds us that to read is not simply to consume but to explore, to analyse, to find meaning. More than that, reading is a creative act where, in conjunction with the text, one makes meaning by bringing associated ideas, references, imaginings to bear on it – a point I'll return to shortly.

If Cher is a kind of figurative celebration of the liveliness of ignorance, then, the film never loses sight of the dangers, and embarrassments, such cluelessness entails. If it confers a kind of unconstrained agency upon individuals, ignorance constrains them in another way, limiting their world and threatening their creative capacity to fashion and thereby fulfil themselves. At the same time, I have just suggested that the film implies a distinction between consuming and reading that re-enacts in our engagement with the text the dilemma Cher finds herself in within her select, shallow, and yet diverting community: is she

no more than a passive consumer in this world of material wealth and conspicuous consumption, or is she an active agent, reading the signs and cluing herself in? Clueless, or clued in; passive, or active; consumer, or creator? These are the polar points between which Cher moves as the story unfolds around her, just as a reading of the film may move between the clueless, the clued in and the creative.

The first clue, of course, is provided by detecting the background presence of *Emma*, yet, at least initially, there is little to encourage the connection:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.<sup>5</sup>

Austen's opening sentence sets the tone for a narrative that will move in and out of her heroine's perceptions, apprehensions and misapprehensions, always casting an objective and satirical glance upon them. Compare this with the opening of *Clueless*:

So okay, you're probably thinking, "Is this, like, a Noxema commercial, or what?!"

Throughout *Clueless* Amy Heckerling displays wit and invention in updating Jane Austen's characters, setting and style, but she also adds something that was never there in the original: the present consciousness of her heroine. Where we get a view of Emma, in the film we get Cher's own keen sense of self, including her peculiarly alert sense of her own image, the transmission of that image, and the way in which one defines oneself through this (reflecting a general social obsession with imagery – especially the media image). This is entirely appropriate given that the world Heckerling pictures is a narcissistic one, but further, Cher's telling of her own story reflects that uneasy position referred to previously – poised between passivity and agency she exists ambiguously within her narrative: one moment a lively, observing subject, the next an unintentionally comic object. This is a rhetorical manoeuvre one associates with a temperament rather more Augustan than Realist, more Swiftian than Austenian, and it has specific

advantages here. First, the text can function satirically only by virtue of us bringing to it moral and cultural frames of reference which Cher not only does not share<sup>6</sup> but in fact is personally and socially incapable of conceiving, frames of reference with which we assess Cher and her world as comically petty and self-absorbed. In this way Heckerling's use of the persona – for that is what it amounts to – underscores the textual principle of an active and clued-in audience, one willing to participate in the processes of irony. Second, as the narrative is necessarily retrospective, Heckerling is able to dramatise not only how far Cher has travelled, morally and psychologically, in the course of her adventures, but also how far she still needs to go. That she tells us her story at all indicates that to her this was a maturing experience, worth the telling. But as the teller of her own tale everything must be from her point of view, therefore she is, in the narrational present, in the position of having seen all the clues the narrative has to offer. That is what makes the structure of clues so interesting here, for although she reflects on her own behaviour with admirable candour, admitting at one point:

Everything I think and everything I do is wrong. I was wrong about Elton, I was wrong about Christian, and now Josh hated me. It all boiled down to one inevitable conclusion, I was just totally clueless;

nevertheless she still misses many of these clues on reflection – that is, in her narration – and in this way her continuing ignorance, or cluelessness, is dramatised as persisting beyond the resolution of this narrative.

Idiomatically, if one is “clueless” one hasn't a thought in one's head. But originally a “clue” was a thread, and, taking the cue from the text that one ought to bring other cultural understandings to bear in the reading of this narrative, one clue that comes to mind is Ariadne's, the clue which Theseus unwound as he made his way through the labyrinth at Minos to slay the minotaur, and then escaped the labyrinth by following the thread back, retracing his steps. Metaphorically that labyrinth reappears here in such things as the maze of personal relationships in which Cher finds herself. This is especially

evident in her problematic relationship with Christian which she finds difficult to navigate, because even in your own little world, if you don't have a clue you might be led up some embarrassing blind alleys. Christian is a contemporary update on the Frank Churchill character – the apparent suitor whose true affection lies elsewhere – and Cher misreads him badly because she misreads all the clues. Just because his name is Christian doesn't mean he's interested in the missionary position, and yet this is the young man she wants to deflower her. A bad choice. The fact is, just as Cher fashions herself one way or another, so too does Christian, and, like Frank Churchill, he plays a pardonable but nevertheless duplicitous game with her. Initially his "rat pack" retro style suggests predatory heterosexuality – which is why Josh decides to discreetly chaperone Cher to the dance – yet his James Dean attire and the fact that he is actually knowledgeable about art could send other signals, but not to Cher. Similarly, on the way to the party Christian asks her if she likes Billie Holliday, to which she replies "I love him!" not realising Billie Holliday is a woman with a mannish name, introducing a motif of sexual crossover relevant to Christian; and she also doesn't know that Billie Holliday is a particular favourite of the gay community, immortalised in gay poet Frank O'Hara's elegy "The Day Lady Died" – a poem that has apparently not appeared in Cher's copy of *Cliffs Notes*. She is simply not cluey enough for this fairly devious relationship. At the dance Cher fails to notice Christian momentarily dancing with another boy, nor does she catch him chatting up the barman. Finally, and most tellingly, when Christian comes over with videos on the night Cher has determined will be her last as a virgin, her lack of cultural knowledge proves deeply embarrassing.

If anything, Christian is in fact discreetly trying to signal his homosexuality to Cher in this scene but she remains resolutely clueless. "Christian had a thing for Tony Curtis," she tells us, not realising that the connection between the two films has little to do with the main actor. The first film is *Some Like It Hot*, a transvestite comedy classic which finishes with one man proposing marriage to another, and the second is *Spartacus*.<sup>7</sup>

Just as Cher is about to make her move on Christian he alerts her to what is happening on the video:

*Christian:* Oh, watch this part, this is good.

(Cher attempts to play “footsy” with Christian and falls off the bed.)

Are you okay?

Fans of the late and great director Stanley Kubrick will recognise the scene to which Christian is drawing attention as one cut out of the original release print of *Spartacus*, in which Lawrence Olivier makes homoerotic advances to Tony Curtis. Lacking a knowledge of film extending beyond Mel Gibson, Cher doesn't take the hint and suffers the embarrassing fall that follows – metaphorically kicked off the bed she hoped would bring her a very different kind of experience. So the videos are among the most important clues which Cher fails to pick up and her cluelessness with regard to Christian reveals the smallness of the world in which she is clued in (doubly so when we consider that the video image is her semiotic province). What's more, she has gained little from her brush with the cultured but romantically removed Christian, for she still misremembers *Spartacus* as “Sporadicus”.

If the labyrinth appears here metaphorically, it is also present in a more concrete fashion, so to speak, in the great maze of the Los Angeles road and freeway system. We see this in Dionne's panicked inability to cope with the freeway when accidentally leaving the safety of the neighbourhood roads of Beverley Hills, as well as Cher's accident-prone efforts in her four-wheel drive. But we see it especially in a pivotal scene when, after seriously misreading Elton's and Tai's inclinations, Cher is abandoned at a crossroads, lost in the labyrinth, where she is mugged:

*Robber:* Hand it over. Give me the phone. okay. Bag, too. C'mon! Alright, now, uh, get down on the ground. Face down. C'mon!

*Cher:* Oh, no. You don't understand, this is an Alaiia.

*Robber:* An a-what-a?

*Cher*: It's like a totally important designer.

*Robber*: And I will totally shoot you in the head. Get down!

(*Cher* whimpers as she lies down on the pavement)

Alright, um, count to a hundred. Thank you.

She quickly acquiesces when her purse and phone are taken – the one thing she balks at is the dirtying of her dress as this signifies that the world she has fashioned for herself can be brutally violated by another world beyond her ken. So bereft is Cher at this point she is obliged to call Josh for help, for he can navigate his way around these dark and puzzling streets. Like Josh's earlier switching of the TV from *Beavis and Butt-head* to CNN, this signals to Cher the narrowness of the world in which she can operate effectively, the narrowness of that social space in which she is clued in, a narrowness that is forcefully brought home to her when a peevish Tai confronts her with the truth of her situation in a phrase that connects the labyrinthine metaphors of roadways and relationships in a single confronting, confounding self-image: "You're a virgin who can't drive." In the sensual and materialistic world of Beverly Hills, how clueless can you get? Confronted by this frank assessment, Cher, the makeover artist of this world, must now fashion a self that will help her move beyond this self-absorbed maze of adolescence.

Cher's movements between cluelessness and understanding and back again form the moral structure of this story – a story that details the dangers of egocentricity but with great comic style. In this she shares much with her predecessor Emma. But unlike Austen, Heckerling affords her heroine the creative privilege of telling us her story and this is crucial. The telling of one's story is inevitably a fashioning of one's self, and because of this Cher's candid confession emphasises her creative agency in her world. Such a narrative mode also has the effect of removing Cher from direct satirical gaze, yet it also makes her vulnerable to some very potent irony. It is deeply ironic, for example, that in her cluelessness she doesn't realise her own story is recapitulating ones already told, but then she has probably never read *Cliff's Notes* on *Emma*. Yet it is arguable that where Emma simply plays in her world, Cher must learn to

navigate hers – whence the significance of the driving lessons and the metaphorical subtext of the labyrinth. It is for this reason, too, I think, that Cher tells her story: this is an index of her maturity (such as it is), the fact that she can look back and on the one hand orchestrate our responses to what is happening and thereby take us along into her own ignorance, and on the other hand candidly reveal that ignorance for us. That is something Emma never does. The implication for Emma is that she must be taken in hand, as she ultimately is by Mr Knightley – her hand taken in marriage as she accepts her place in the ordered world of Regency England.<sup>8</sup> The implication is quite different for Cher: “As if!” she squeals when we think that she too will be taken in hand by Josh. It is a moment that upsets all of the proper expectations of a knowing audience, and it is a mistake to undervalue this last example of the liberations of cluelessness. Cher is somehow knowing enough to suspect us of expecting the *Emma* conclusion but she and the text refuse it. As she says, she is only sixteen, but what’s more she is not the sort of person to be taken in hand – she likes to have a hand in things herself, and what we see throughout the film is her increasing ability to navigate her way and to shape, or take part in shaping, destiny, others and her own.

And it is this ironic rewriting of Austen’s conclusion that brings to mind a different model for this beguiling heroine. For, unlike Emma, in her unknowingness and in her irrepressible vivacity, Cher somehow emancipates herself from the stern gaze of moral judgment and becomes invested with a peculiar and yet not entirely idiosyncratic glamour. It is the kind of attraction one associates with Belinda, the heroine of Alexander Pope’s great mock-heroic vision of early eighteenth century courtly life in *The Rape of the Lock*, for like her Cher’s self-absorption is peculiarly inveigling at the same time as it is comical. Her world, too, is evoked with an Augustan irony: less Hartford than Hampton Court, its exquisite frailty, its glittering superficiality is brought to life with a fascinated yet still satirical attention to detail. Equally Augustan, though Swiftian, is the decision to employ the first-person account, while the Pismo Beach disaster has all the marks of the mock-heroic, and

like Pope, Heckerling will use classical metaphors to anchor and elaborate her narrative.

So although the video shop will place *Clueless* on the ‘teen movie’ shelf I would suggest that it can take its place comfortably and honourably in a much older tradition of satire, one that stretches back beyond the apparent but unnamed model of *Emma*, and perhaps it was this that moved Heckerling to suppress that model, thus initiating the game of knowing and unknowing in which this text and its audience seem to take much of their pleasure. True, it is fairly gentle satire, but it has its point to make, and perhaps a more acerbic one than Jane Austen’s. She wrote of a world in strict social and ideological order. The Woodhouses may have been enormously wealthy, but this was so in a system of wealth that was not under challenge. Cher’s exorbitant world is financed by the rapacious and largely unproductive system of corporate litigation, and the wealth this produces might be squandered on a generation of airheads whose social and political influence is sadly proportionate to their wealth. This would not matter except that democratic societies are threatened by such ignorance, waste and inequality, and the film raises these issues marginally – in order to accent its satiric intent – in such things as the reference to Haitian refugees, the robbery in East LA, and Josh’s idealistic hope of becoming an environmental lawyer.

It is a measure of the quality of irony at work here that Heckerling manages to keep all of these things in balance – the satiric and the comic, the subjective and the objective, the knowing and the unknowing – for the poise of this movie is one of its great achievements. For all its frippery and superficiality, Cher’s life is no less authentic than anyone else’s. With all that money life looks comically easy for her but, as she says, “You try driving in platforms”. At the end of the day while the movie happily, and comically, recognises that there are more urgent issues in this world than the Pismo Beach disaster, it asks us nevertheless to imaginatively share in a world where that might matter, and that imaginative act of amused but sympathetic understanding has always been one of the most benevolent functions of art. It is the one Jane Austen

drew on all those years ago when she offered us the challenge of reading about, and sympathising with, a heroine she described as one “whom no one but myself will much like”. The difference with Cher being that, pretty much from the start, you’ve gotta love her.

- 1 *Clueless* (1995) appeared in the midst of a number of cinematic adaptations of classic literary works in which Jane Austen featured prominently. 1995, in fact, was something of an annus mirabilis for Austen cinephiles as it included Nick Dear’s *Persuasion* (which began life as a mini-series), Simon Langton’s much-loved *Pride and Prejudice* (mini-series), and Ang Lee’s *Sense and Sensibility* (for which Emma Thompson won her well-deserved screenwriting Oscar). These followed in the wake of the classic adaptations mentioned above – Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992) and Branagh’s *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (1994) – and preceded further Austen adaptations. These included *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, 1996, and the excellent Diarmuid Lawrence miniseries of 1997 with a script from Andrew Davies who, incidentally, was also responsible for the screenplays for both the mini-series *Pride and Prejudice* and the adaptation of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, in which Colin Firth reprised the Darcy role in a modern setting), and *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, 1999). Heckerling’s *European Vacation* had appeared in 1985, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* in 1982.
- 2 This aesthetic motive was quite apart from the threat of litigation, represented throughout the seventies by the precautionary figure of George Harrison and the bleak proceedings of the “My Sweet Lord” plagiarism case. Harrison was sued for purportedly lifting the melodic hook from The Chiffons’ “He’s So Fine” for his own mantric ‘My Sweet Lord’, thus providing yet another example of the ongoing cross-fertilization between the sacred and the profane.

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- 3 For this reason the American novel has long made use of idiom and dialect for the purposes of establishing ex-centric regionalism and individuality. This is especially so in the case of adolescent idiom: from *Huckleberry Finn* to *The Catcher in the Rye*, slang functions as an instrument of non-conformity.
  - 4 For a lively discussion of “death of the author” issues in *Clueless* see Joel Gibson’s “Authoricidal Tendencies: *Emma* and less *Clueless* approaches to film adaptations of the canon”, *Sydney Studies in English*, 27 (2001), 57-73.
  - 5 Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed. Stephen Parrish (Norton Critical Editions: New York and London, 2000), p. 1.
  - 6 She rises to the implicit imperative of her name – responding to the Pismo Beach disaster – only after taking a wilful decision about her own character, but more of that anon.
  - 7 Billy Wilder’s *Some Like It Hot* (1959) featured Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon as musicians hiding out from the mob by dressing in drag. Curtis also impersonated Joe E. Brown, with an unlikely Cary Grant voice, while trying to woo Marilyn Monroe, while Brown himself fell under Lemmon’s transvestite spell, proposing to him at the conclusion of the film. Stanley Kubrick’s *Spartacus* (1960) told the story of the slave rebellion in Ancient Rome. Curtis featured as a slave in the house of the Patrician Olivier, whose tastes ran to the exotic, as he explains to Curtis in the scene in question.
  - 8 With some modifications, it is true, for Knightley is obliged to move into her domain rather than she into his. Suzanne Ferris argues that this represents Austen “tweaking” the generic ending “to give it a more feminist turn. Knightley’s agreement to move into Hartfield ... can be taken as a recognition of her power.” She goes on to argue that recent *Emma* adaptations “replicate this scene and underscore Emma’s rule. However, *Clueless* offers no comparable scene. Instead, the film ends with 16 year old Cher catching the bouquet at Mr Hall and Miss Geist’s wedding, anticipating her own”(“Emma Becomes Clueless,” in Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield, eds., *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1998), p. 127). My own view is that Cher’s “As if!” gives the answer to this.

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