

Authorcidal Tendencies: *Emma* and less *Clueless* Approaches to Film Adaptations of the Canon.

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'Oh! It is only a novel!' replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference or momentary shame. - 'It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;' or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language.

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1818)

The movie, it seems, is rarely as good as the book. Such is the typical response to film adaptations of novels at all levels of literary criticism, from lay reviews to expert tomes. It is not surprising, then, to find the history of adaptation discourse beset by debates over relative aesthetic value, and over the possibility or otherwise of faithful adaptation. Nor is it a shock to find the battle lines drawn more or less between the literary and film academies as they have fought to retain or obtain cultural capital.

In defence of the novel, lovers of literature have championed the power and mystique of the written word to demonstrate the aesthetic inferiority of film adaptations. Witness, for instance, the impassioned assertions of adapted author Anthony Burgess in a New York Times article entitled "On the Hopelessness of Turning Good Books into Films"¹:

It all comes back to words. This is why literature is superior to the other arts and, indeed, why there can be a hierarchy of arts, with ballet at the bottom and sculpture a few rungs above it. Film, seeming to have all the resources, and more, of literature, still cannot produce anything as great as a great work of literature.

Also a victim of adaptation, Evelyn Waugh protested that the frequently collaborative process of screenwriting is incongruous with powerful modern notions of authorial genius and creative control. “Each book purchased for motion pictures has some individual quality, good or bad, that has made it remarkable”, he said in an interview to Kenneth McGowan, and “[i]t is the work of a great array of highly paid and incompatible writers to distinguish this quality, separate it, and obliterate it.”²

In response to the literati, film theorists such as Béla Balazs, Jean Mitry and George Bluestone developed an influential formalist approach whose implicit strategy was to distinguish cinema as an art form - and the adaptation as a work - in their own right. Given the organic connection between form and content in a work of art, claimed Bluestone, “what is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each.”³ He concluded:

What happens, therefore, when the filmist undertakes the adaptation of a novel, given the inevitable mutation, is that he does not convert the novel at all. What he adapts is a kind of *paraphrase* of the novel - the novel viewed as raw material.⁴ [My emphasis]

A deference of form to content invests the original work with a certain wholeness, but it also clears the way for untrammelled

aesthetic evaluation of the adaptation. By jettisoning the possibility of fidelity, Bluestone and his peers gave film adaptations their own stage upon which to dance.

We still hear trite comparisons between the novel and the film at the cinema exit door, and the question of fidelity occasionally rears its battered head in critical responses to adaptations, but there is a steadily growing stream of adaptation discourse that has labelled the established debates “tiresome”⁵. The critical analogue of a family after a long car trip, the fidelity debates are exhausted and bereft of new games to play.

If, alternatively, we tackle every cinematic realisation of a literary work as one reading among others, as an appropriation rather than an attempted replication, it becomes possible to study the films from new and dynamic perspectives. J. Dudley Andrew has called for an approach that exploits the “privileged locus for analysis”⁶ that is inherent in the cinematisation of a prior and respected literary work. The locus of adaptation is privileged because it presents an opportunity for textual and sociological analysis that exceeds film or literature in the general sense. Blessed with the prior model of a literary work, we can examine each cinematic rendering in juxtaposition with its acknowledged source and ask what it reveals about the historical and cultural contexts of its production. Eric Rentschler, for example, in his study of German film adaptations, has sought “to expand the field [of adaptation discourse] so as to include sociological, theoretical, and historical dimensions, to bring a livelier regard for intertextuality to the study of German film and literature.”⁷ The question has shifted from ‘where do word and image differ?’, or ‘which is better?’, to ‘what do film adaptations disclose as twentieth century discursive acts?’

Evidently, this approach has been informed by recent developments in literary and cultural theory. A model of analysis that shifts its focus from the author to the reader in adaptation discourse mirrors the flow of late twentieth century theoretical fashions. Notably, it recalls

Roland Barthes' polemical 1968 essay on the demise of literary authority:

Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on the text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing ... the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.⁸

In a Barthesian analysis, the adapted novel shifts from a literary 'Work', whose limits are inscribed and preceded by an Author-God, to the level of 'Text', where its words essentially dilatory. At the crux of Barthes' formulation of the 'Text' is language disseminating meanings in a state of evanescent and irreducible plurality. Analogically he describes his own experience of walking on the edge of a valley:

What he perceives is multiple, irreducible, coming from a disconnected, heterogeneous variety of substances and perspectives: lights, colours, vegetation, heat, air, slender explosions of noises, scant cries of birds, children's voices from over on the other side, passages, gestures, clothes of inhabitants near or far away.⁹

The cinematic adaptor, then, might be imagined as an artist attempting a portrait of this textual landscape. Ranging from a mimetic to an abstract portrayal, from charcoal to watercolours to dark oils, their representation highlights certain aspects of the Text at the expense of others, and imports intertextual techniques and ideas to formulate an understanding of the scene before them. The resulting portrait will capture a particular reading of the scene, but will also expose something of the artist's position in the market, in culture, in history and political ideology. Calling on Barthes once more, then, we might say that reader-centred theories of adaptation are giving the discourse its future: the birth of the adaptor must be at the cost

of the death of the author, and the birth of the critic must be at the cost of the death of the *auteur*.

Of particular importance are the unique possibilities that this model offers for the study of literature. Different reworkings for the silver screen can be read as constitutive of contemporary notions of 'literature' and our literary heritage, especially when the primary Text enjoys canonical status. We are more privileged still when we have at our disposal a proliferation of adaptations of a literary work, wherein we have not only the juxtaposition of novel and film, but also that of film and film to sharpen our observations.

Of course, the focal shift from author to reader occurs between the adaptor and their audience as well. Barthes' figuration of the textual landscape, shimmering with an irreducible *mélée* of visual, aural and tactile signs, might be applied even more aptly to film than to literature, as it synthesises a range of media to constitute what has been described as a sort of "pan-art"¹⁰. Joy Gould Boyum, in the only book-length treatment of a reader-centred discourse on film adaptations, points out that film is little more than "a parade of lights and shadows flickering on a screen, a mere series of noises of varying intensity, until a viewer comes onto the scene to perceive those sights and sounds, to organise and resolve them into symbolically charged patterns, to accord them sense and significance."¹¹ The processes of reading are as vital to the 'creation' of a film as the work of screenwriter and director.

Yet we habitually find it difficult to accept other readings. It seems that film adaptations have remained critically problematic largely because, as readings of literary texts, and in spite of film's commercial agenda to appeal to a wide audience, they always exist in competition with the alternative readings of a large proportion of their audience. Note the recent critical fracas that surrounded Laura Jones' and Jane Campion's adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady*, or the fuss that was made over references to slavery in Patricia Rozema's

Mansfield Park. As one reviewer of Jane Austen adaptations notes, “we all think we own Jane Austen - that is her particular seduction”¹². And Henry James. And Conrad. And Dickens.

But our general desire to control and fashion the field of a text is enhanced when viewing a film adaptation of a novel, since the characters and incidents of the source text have been already partly ‘owned’ by its readers. In a rare and disturbing moment of multi-levelled textuality, we are “interpreting on the basis of a prior interpretation the actual cinematic interpretation laid before us.”¹³ We identify with the adaptor’s vision or distance ourselves from it, and our response to the novel is crystallised in our confrontation with someone else’s reading of it. It is a moment in which we are made acutely self-conscious; we are aware simultaneously of our own readings of both novel and film, of their arbitrariness, and of the looseness of discourse generally.

So what are we to do as adaptors and viewers of adaptations? If we cannot possess a text, how should we approach it? In a film that freely adapts Jane Austen’s *Emma*, I believe we are offered a peculiarly postmodern response to this dilemma.

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In many ways, Amy Heckerling’s 1995 teen comedy *Clueless* may be read as an allegorical death of the author. In her approach to source texts and intertexts, and her creative makeover of the narrative itself, Heckerling’s film might be a self-reflexive late twentieth century statement on adaptation. One commentator has even posited the processes of adaptation as the thematic fuel that drives *Clueless*. “[I]t is the spirit and operation of remaking,” writes Lesley Stern, “that serves to generate and sustain the movie’s intricate network of relations - between different texts, different media, different cultural signs and temporalities.”¹⁴ I would go further still, to examine the

implications of *Clueless* as a post-Barthesian approach to reading *per se*; a sort of nuts-and-bolts case study in the powers and limitations of postmodern theories of discourse.

Austen's absence from the bubble-gum stylised credit sequence, despite an unveiled appropriation of most of *Emma*'s plot, is the first sign of the author's demise in this adaptation. And Austen will not suffer this fate alone: Shakespeare is also symbolically disembodied and killed off in one memorable moment, when Emma's modern alter ego (named Cher after a great singer of the past who now does infomercials) quotes parts of *Sonnet no. 18* to her friend Dionne:

Cher: Rough winds do shake the
 darling buds of May, but thy eternal
 summer shall not fade.
Dionne: Did you make that up?
Cher: Duh, that's like a famous quote!
Dionne: Where from?
Cher: *Cliff's Notes*.¹⁵

In this vein, *Clueless* habitually teases our deeply ingrained respect for literary authority.

Heckerling hints at her own *auteurial* suicide in the opening sequence. A collage of archetypal American teenagers doing typical teenage things, shot stylistically with a hand-held camera and from awkward angles, is voiced-over with Cher's first words: "So, OK, you're probably going, is this like a Noxema commercial or what?"¹⁶ The slipperiness of the screenwriter's and director's position at the head of the text is thereby foregrounded, locating the film's origins instead in a broad range of adapted intertexts. Appropriately, the commercial pastiche is over-scored by The Muffs' pop song "We're the Kids in America", whose lyrics evoke the 'newness' and historical authorlessness of modern North American culture, and whose own cultural history appropriately enacts the author's demise: The Muffs' performance is a remake, a cover version of a song first performed by Kim Wilde and 'authored'

for her by her father. Equally, the film's geographical context is indicative of a preoccupation with renewal. According to Stern:

LA comes itself to signify the modern, the contemporary, the new, the stylish, the fashionable. Simultaneously, however, the consciousness of modernity is satirized, and it is satirized precisely by invoking the spurious sense of originality that provides a basis for updating¹⁷.

In the ensuing tale of a privileged teenager living in *nouveau riche* Los Angeles, whose energies are expended orchestrating and improving the lives of others until she comes to the realisation that needs to change herself, we are bombarded with myriad intertexts from high and low culture, old and new, which are quoted, misquoted and alluded to in a glittering landscape illustrative of Barthes' analogy. In approximately one hour and a half, Austen shares textual space with Dr Seuss, Ike and Tina Turner, Shakespeare, Nietzsche, Marvin the Martian, Botticelli, Monet, the Baldwin family, *Twin Peaks*, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis Jr, *Ren and Stimpy*, Tony Curtis, Oscar Wilde and *Frankenstein*. And these are only some of *Clueless*'s more explicit intertextual and extratextual references. Add to these the film's soundtrack, its subtly veiled appropriations and its generic traits as romance and teen comedy, and it stands out as a gleaming specimen of the textual collage of postmodern culture, self-consciously devaluing concepts of authorship and originality in favour of intertextual play. It might be held up as exemplary of Jean Baudrillard's hyperreal simulacrum, a copy without an original that intersects not with the realm of the real, but primarily with its own sphere of fictionality¹⁸. Central to this attitude is a certain cultural egalitarianism. The film "actually assumes, through the heterogeneity of its references and allusions, that quotidian knowledge is informed by and woven out of a diversity of cultural practices - not distinguishable according to 'high' and 'low' markers."¹⁹ In contrast with 'straight' adaptations such as Doug McGrath's *Emma*²⁰, or Diarmuid Lawrence's *Jane Austen's Emma*²¹, *Clueless* is less concerned with its canonical origins than with

its own space and its destination. Its authors are long since dead.

Cher, as anti-heroine, embodies these authoricidal tendencies in comically ascribing Shakespeare's "darling buds of May" to *Cliff's Notes*. When she later corrects a highly literate college student who attributes "To thine own self be true" to Hamlet, once again it is not the avatar of English literature whom she recalls, but another 'reader' of Shakespeare:

College student: I think I remember *Hamlet* accurately.

Cher: Well, I remember Mel Gibson accurately, and he didn't say that. That Polonius guy did.²²

Significantly, she is correct. She hasn't the original authority of the Bard to support her readings, but she is nevertheless an effective reader/critic, who can exploit intertexts to introduce herself (as in the opening sequence), to assert herself (as here, where the college student lapses into an embarrassed silence), or to have her report card changed (as she does by successfully orchestrating a romance between two of her teachers). The sanctity of original literary authority is problematised by this girl who, for the first part of her film at least, embodies the birth of the reader/critic as artist and creative force, at the expense of the author.

Yet, it is not in perusing *Fit or Fat* and *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* that she does so. Rather, her role as reader/critic is expressly non-literary. Here it is explored in the arena of post-capitalist consumer culture. As the thick gloss on a privileged and superficial lifestyle, the fashion and beauty industries are made a site for the expression of her discursive energies. As the initial voiceover is introduced, Heckerling cuts from the Noxema parody to Cher's bedroom, as she tells us (picking up from where I left off earlier):

... But seriously, I actually have a way normal life for a teenage girl. I get up, I brush my teeth, and I pick out my school clothes.

All of which sounds normal enough, until we cut to Cher picking out her school clothes on a bespoke computer program that fits and matches images of thousands of items of clothing to a template of her in her underwear. As she presses buttons which say 'BROWSE' and 'DRESS ME' to the tune of David Bowie's 'Fashion', and selects a highly stylised outfit that double-codes the traditional and the modern ("a kilt, over-the-knee socks and backpack - all silver"²³), we discover a young woman for whom fashion is both nominal and verbal. Cher is obsessed with fashion trends and fads, but is equally implicated in the active *fashioning* of her own look. The death of the designer, and the birth of the consumer, if you like²⁴.

She translates her fashioning instincts into her dealings with other people. Teachers, peers and report cards are ready-made texts for her to re-make to her own political ends. When she plays God with the love-life of one of her teachers, part of her strategy is to creatively re-fashion her: "God", she exclaims, "this woman is screaming for a makeover!"²⁵, as the hand-held camera lights upon the shy and awkward Miss Geist.

Her father draws a telling parallel between her manipulative prowess and the art of rhetoric in the following exchange:

Father: You mean to tell me you argued your way from a 'C+' to an 'A-'?

Cher: Uh huh. Totally based on my powers of persuasion. You proud?

Father: Honey, I couldn't be happier if they were based on real grades!²⁶

He clearly sees in her the powers of persuasion revered by a litigator. Although ironically trained on matters superficial and immature, Cher's skills of reading and remaking are well developed. Like Emma, she has sense, albeit misapplied.

Cher's early exploits, nevertheless, also like her literary ancestor, are only the precursor to a grander and more involved discursive project: the refashioning of new girl Tai - the Harriet Smith figure - who has come to their L.A. school from the distant East Coast and is described by Cher on first sighting as "so adorably clueless"²⁷. She sees it as her "mission" to "adopt" Tai, to possess and remodel her for her new context, much as the artist does in painting a portrait, or the film adaptor in dramatising a novel. As the 'new girl', enjoying the advantages of mystery and anonymity, Tai presents Cher with an artist's blank canvas, just as Harriet Smith was to Emma Woodhouse. In literary theoretical terms, she is an empty signifier.

The remodelling process again begins with the adaptation of her beauty and fashion regimes: the metaphorically apt 'makeover'. Within the limits of *Clueless*, the makeover grows into a recurring motif symbolic of the synthetic nature of reading and interpreting. "Cher's main thrill in life is a makeover...", explains her best friend Dionne. "It gives her a sense of control in a world of chaos."²⁸ So, in another television commercial parody scored by Jill Sobule's satirical pop song 'I'm gonna be a supermodel', Cher and Dionne refashion Tai for 1990's Los Angeles, cutting her T-shirts to reveal her midriff, restyling her hair and coating her in make-up. Once the exterior is in order, they proceed to instruct her in the niceties of their small world, expanding her vocabulary, explaining to her the politics of school social groups, the importance of exercise videos and good dietary habits ("If you cut it this way, there's less fat"²⁹). It is clear that Cher does indeed possess "the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself."⁽³⁾

Until, that is, these disadvantages threaten alloy to her many enjoyments. When a series of events shift attention at school away from the heroine to her newly fashionable friend Tai, and the new friend develops her own designs on Cher's sensible stepbrother, our heroine reads her situation with the help of one of the most enduring intertexts in the English language. In what has become common parlance, she employs a *Frankenstein*

metaphor: "I've created a monster."³⁰ Like Victor Frankenstein, her creative powers have been naively misapplied without much consideration of the consequences. Like the worst sort of film adaptor, she has tried to possess and synthesise a text that, ultimately, has life of its own. And like a clueless reader/critic, she has met the outer limits of her discursive power.

Where, then, in *Clueless*'s allegory of reader-centred discourse, are these limits? What are the monsters of which the postmodern reader or adaptor must beware? The answer, in my opinion, is printed on the spine of the box. In the title, we are made aware of Cher's most heinous fault - as she acknowledges at the climactic moment, she herself is "totally clueless"³¹. 'Cluelessness' is a motif introduced by Cher to describe Tai, but her own cluelessness is ultimately the film's subject. Through repetition, this piece of teen argot comes to signify the gross cultural naiveté, the Emma-like 'blindness', of the Beverly Hills clique and especially of Cher herself.

From the opening 'fashion' scene discussed earlier, her cultural insularity is gently ironised for comic and didactic effect: by no means does she have "a way normal life for a teenage girl."³² Historically, she thinks her house is "classic" because "the columns date all the way back to 1972."³³ Geographically, she thinks Kuwait is in the Valley, Bosnia in the Middle East, and is puzzled why her maid, from El Salvador, objects to being called a Mexican³⁴. Politically, her solution to the debate topic 'Should all oppressed people be allowed refuge in America?' is drawn from the experience of organising her father's fiftieth birthday party: "If the government could just get to the kitchen, rearrange some things, we could certainly party with the Haitians ... it does not say RSVP on the Statue of Liberty!"³⁵. What is more, she is for a while content and secure in naiveté, an indication of which

is her repeated use of the expression “What-ever!” to redirect any conversation that is headed towards uncomfortable territory³⁶.

The motif of ‘cluelessness’ also operates laterally, though, to invoke the fictional sleuthing worlds of Sherlock Holmes and Dupin, of Philip Marlowe and Mike Hammer. Just as ‘cluelessness’ would have led to failure in Conan Doyle and Poe, and possibly death in hard-boiled American detective fiction, it makes Cher the butt of several jokes and the object of dramatic irony. Her frustrating encounter with discursive impotence suggests allegorically that to grasp in some way the intricate weave of the text, to feel its texture if not to possess it, the post-Barthesian reader must grab hold of as many threads as possible, and cling to all the clues that present themselves in the form of intertexts and contexts.

Therefore Cher’s transformation takes the form of a cultural awakening. Realising that she loves Josh, she begins a phase of charity and open-mindedness, helping with a charitable relief fund, donating her own belongings, and warming to Tai’s new boyfriend Travis, a dope-smoking skateboarder who is the Robert Martin figure in Heckerling’s reworking.

Josh himself, appropriately, is a model of cross-cultural awareness, sporting Amnesty International and Breast Cancer T-shirts, reading Nietzsche and watching CNN, and aspiring to work as an environmental lawyer. It is vital to his appeal that he still blends easily with Cher’s social circle, but he is as comfortable there as he is elsewhere; an avatar of postmodern cultural egalitarianism. He is by no means perfect in the way that George Knightley has been seen as the most perfect of Austen’s heroes - he does not dance well, as we expect him to, when he rescues Tai from ostracism at a party - but his breadth of knowledge and consciousness of his place in history, geography and political ideology single him out as the rightful hero of Heckerling’s tale. He is a George Knightley for the late twentieth century.

The lesson of *Clueless* applies as much to readers and adaptors as it does to rich Valley girls. Through its landscape of playful intertextuality and cultural egalitarianism runs a didactic stream characteristic of recent literary theory. *Clueless* belies the position of the author as owner of a text, but welcomes them back as a distinguished visitor, “figured in the carpet.”³⁷ Austen visits *Clueless* alongside a literary ‘who’s-who’ and a more contemporary contingent of popular culture icons. As Cher learns the dangers of cluelessness, her education has implications for other adaptors and reader/critics who are blind to the clues that all knowledge offers: knowledge of Austen, of Mel Gibson, of Shakespeare and of Dr Seuss. Josh’s status as the hero is made possible by his breadth of knowledge, so while the possibility of right reading might have been jettisoned, a reader can be immeasurably strengthened by the clues that knowledge provides. The perfect reading might prove elusive, but they can protect themselves from being the readerly equivalent of “a virgin who can’t drive.”³⁸

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Paradoxically, *Clueless*’s murderous tendencies were widely appreciated by Janeites. It seems that, although Amy Heckerling removed Jane Austen from her narrative, she did not threaten her in the eyes of the literary academy. Or perhaps it is *because* she distanced herself from her source that she was not subjected to the usual accusatory treatment. Since there was never any claim to rival Austen or to outdo her, since *Clueless* was only ever expected to be low entertainment and not high art, serious critics were pleasantly surprised with what they encountered. The critical response to *Clueless* far exceeds other adaptations of *Emma* in both magnitude and positivity³⁹. It has even found its way onto the New South Wales HSC English syllabus.

The death of the author is therefore not what it seems. Heckerling’s treatment of literature, although at first glance

irreverent, is probably a testament to the entrenched status of Austen as a storyteller and to the continuing adaptability of her stories after almost two hundred years. Rather than threatening the place of the canon, even this sort of adaptation acknowledges its cultural power and status.

It also promotes further discourse on Austen and *Emma*. By taking Austen out of schools and universities and placing her in cinemas and lounge rooms, film adaptations transport her to a wider audience and to a new phase in her critical and cultural history. Even where her novels are ‘dumbed down’, the precise nature of this transformation is revelatory. And ironically enough, this ‘dumbing down’ of Austen has sparked a minor revival for her in schools and universities, as syllabus architects have taken up a fresh opportunity for study.

Most crucially, though, as events in the history of her texts, film adaptations merely add to an already long list of readings whose ultimate effect is to highlight the richness of her words. Jorge Luis Borges has written of Kafka that “every writer *creates* his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future”⁴⁰, recalling the words of F. R. Leavis on Austen:

She not only makes tradition for those coming after, but her achievement has for us a retroactive effect: as we look back beyond her, we see in what goes before, and see because of her, potentialities and significances brought out in such a way that, for us, she creates the tradition we see leading down to her. Her work, like the work of all great creative writers, gives a meaning to the past.⁴¹

Adaptors and readers of Austen, great or otherwise, intersect with her in the same way. Their portraits add to the already dense gallery of impressions that she has inspired. They inform her texts while she informs theirs, and the result ought to be favourable to both parties, ending in the death not of Austen as

an author, but of the author as the sole agent in the production of textual meaning. The death of the author in the discourse of adaptation, then, paradoxically enlivens the textual landscape of *Emma* - and by implication, of other adapted literature as well. It is not a threat, but a promise.

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- ¹ *New York Times* 'Arts and Leisure' section, 20 April, 1975, p15.
- ² Evelyn Waugh, quoted in Kenneth Macgowan, *Behind the Screen* (New York: Delacorte, 1965), p383.
- ³ Bluestone (1957), p63.
- ⁴ Bluestone (1957), p61.
- ⁵ J Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p100.
- ⁶ Andrew (1984), p97.
- ⁷ Eric Rentschler ed, Introduction to *German Film and Literature: Adaptations and Transformations* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p5.
- ⁸ "The Death of the Author", in *Image, Music, Text*, p147, 148.
- ⁹ *Image Music Text*, p159.
- ¹⁰ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), p245.
- ¹¹ Joy Gould Boyum, *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film* (New York: Universe, 1985), p45.
- ¹² Jocelyn Harris, "A Review of Three Austen Adaptations" in *Eighteenth Century Fiction* Vol 8 No 3 (April 1996), p427.
- ¹³ Boyum (1985), p50.
- ¹⁴ Lesley Stern, "Emma in Los Angeles: *Clueless* as a remake of the book and the city", from a paper presented at the "Los Angeles and the Cinema" Conference, UCLA, 2-3 May, 1997, available online at the *Australian Humanities Review* website (www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-August-1997/stern.html), p3.
- ¹⁵ My transcription, at 00:11:40.
- ¹⁶ My transcription, at 00:00:50.
- ¹⁷ Stern (1997), p4.

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- ¹⁸ Baudrillard develops his theory of the universal simulacrum in *Simulacra and Simulation*, Trans. Sheila Faria Glasier (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
- ¹⁹ Stern (1997), p3.
- ²⁰ *Emma* (scr. & dir. Doug McGrath, 1996)
- ²¹ *Jane Austen's Emma* (scr. Andrew Davies, dir. Diarmuid Lawrence, 1997)
- ²² My transcription, at 00:42:00.
- ²³ Amy Heckerling, *Clueless, August 1994* (Sydney: Cinestore, 2000), p2.
- ²⁴ Note that there are parallels drawn several times in this film between the respective authority of fashion designers and authors, including a scene where Cher descends the staircase resplendent in a short white dress, to meet her date at the door, and has the following exchange with her protective father:
- Father: What the hell is that?
Cher: A dress.
Father: Says who?
Cher: Calvin Klein.
- In Heckerling (2000), p81. Invoking the designer's name as authority for her linguistic definition, Cher plays the literary critic as well as the fashion guru.
- ²⁵ My transcription, at 00:11:30.
- ²⁶ My transcription, at 00:19:00.
- ²⁷ Heckerling (2000), p36,7.
- ²⁸ Heckerling (2000), p42.
- ²⁹ My transcription, at 00:24:00.
- ³⁰ Heckerling (2000), p106.
- ³¹ My transcription, at 01:14:50.
- ³² My transcription, at 00:00:55.
- ³³ My transcription, at 00:07:00.
- ³⁴ Her stepbrother, Josh, at this point, highlights the irony of Cher's response when he says to her, "You get upset if someone thinks you live below Sunset." Heckerling (2000), p100.
- ³⁵ Heckerling (2000), p7.
- ³⁶ Perhaps ironically, also, the use of the expression, accompanied with a hand-gesture to make the shape of a large 'W', is one of several rhetorical devices in this film that have taken their place in colloquial teenspeak. *Clueless* enjoys, among teenagers and twenty-somethings, some of the cult status of, say, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (John Hughes, 1986) before it.

³⁷ *Image, Music, Text*, p161.

³⁸ Heckerling (2000), p106.

³⁹ While some critics dealt with all three films, articles aimed specifically at *Clueless* outweigh by far those directed at its peers. For example, Lesley Stern (1997), Esther Sonnet “From *Emma* to *Clueless*: Taste, pleasure and the scene of history” in Cartmell & Whelehan ed. (1999), p51 and Suzanne Ferriss, “Emma becomes *Clueless*” in Linda Troost & Sayre Greenfield ed. *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1998), p122.

⁴⁰ From “Kafka and His Precursors”, in Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates & James E. Irby (London: Penguin, 1970), p236.

⁴¹ F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), p14.