

Hey everyone. Before we begin today, we want to thank our newest patron, Emily. Welcome to the team. And as always, if you want access to bonus content like our super fun Discord community watch parties, check out our Patreon at patreon.com/podandprejudice. And now enjoy this week's episode talking about Austen and the queer community with our guest, Leigh Douglas.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

Becca: This is Becca.

Molly: This is Molly.

Becca: We are here to talk about Jane Austen.

Molly: We are here specifically [00:02:00] to talk about gay.

Becca: Jane Austen.

Molly: Jane Austen, but Gay.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: And we are joined today by, maybe the queen of gay Jane Austen, Leigh Douglas.

Leigh: [giggles]

Molly: Hello, Leigh. Welcome.

Leigh: Hello. How are you?

Molly: So excited to have you here.

Becca: Yes. This is I feel like a meeting of the likeminded on this podcast today. Wanted to tell our listeners a little bit about your connections to the Jane Austen community, specifically, the content you produce for us, so necessarily on the internet.

Leigh: Yeah. So, I'm a standup comedian and a bit of a Jane Austen nerd. I've been making some videos recently about the gay readings of Jane Austen, which I think are very important. They have been upsetting some people, but [giggles] we move. We move. [laughter]

Molly: Are people upset because they're homophobes or are they upset about your take specifically?

Leigh: I think it's a combination of, obviously [00:03:00] like-- Because I personally am a lesbian, I just see everyone as a lesbian.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: [laughs]

Leigh: And so, I'm always like, "I don't want to deny any other readings. I can't speak to other experiences that are not my own." And then also, obviously, yes, the homophobes. Yeah, they do come out, yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. Well, we've been really lucky in the Jane Austen community. I think it's probably because we have a podcast for most of our content that our community is so excited to hear all about our queer Jane Austen takes. And we always couch our opinions in, these are subjective readings of the book, but all queer readings of Jane Austen are valid.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: So, starting with that, as our listeners can hear today, we are here to talk a little bit about Jane Austen and the queer community, which is very on brand for our podcast, but a kind of fun little foray into a new format for us for an episode. I know we told you were doing *Emma* next week. Sorry. Surprise, we're being gay instead.

Molly: The surprise.

Leigh: [00:04:00] Yeah. But are those two things really so different at the end of the day? I'm not sure they are.

Molly: Actually, they are one and the same.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. We'll go far into this, but specifically, *Emma* as a whole novel has so much to offer on that front. But before we jump into all the different ways one could read *Emma* into a lot of different queer communities, let's ask Leigh, a couple questions about herself for the purposes of our podcast. As you are a guest on our podcast, we always ask our guests a few questions about their relationship to Jane Austen, starting with, what is your relationship to Jane Austen?

Leigh: Yes, I'm a big Jane obsess-er. Yes. No, I read all the Jane Austen books, like far too young. Had absolutely no idea that I was an Irish peasant descended from Irish peasants,

very much had ideas above my station as a child [Becca laughs] as a result of Jane Austen. But I [00:05:00] was completely obsessed with the BBC *Pride and Prejudice*. I had it on a double VHS. So, I would literally have to swap over the VHS tapes halfway through. I think there are entire parts of my personality that are based off of various performances in that miniseries. There's a big part of me that just is Alison Steadman's performance as Mrs. Bennet. It's just ingrained on my soul, because I watched it so many times. I actually got cast as Lady Catherine de Bourgh in drama school, which is obviously that would only ever happen in drama school. You get a 21-year-old cast as Lady Catherine de Bourgh. But I went into the first day of rehearsals and the director was like, "Leigh, I'm sorry. I don't think there's anywhere for this performance to go. You've already hit 100% on day one.

[laughter]

Leigh: So, I don't think you have anything to learn, so I'm going to change your role."

[laughter]

Becca: Oh, my goodness. As someone who also was 21 years [00:06:00] getting cast as the Catherine de Bourgh character in every single play that spoke to me so spiritually, when you're like, "Yeah, she gives off a powerful energy for a child. Let's have her play a middle-aged woman and see if she can capture that energy." [laughs]

Leigh: I just came out of the womb middle aged, apparently.

Becca: Ah, same. So, question number two. I think you actually answered this, but which Jane Austen content speaks to you the most? It can be adaptation, tweet, book, song lyric.

Leigh: Yeah, I think 100%, the BBC *Pride and Prejudice* was very much my entry point. And then I read all of the books when I was far too young to really fully grasp them. But I think my favorite book has always been *Persuasion*. So, I'm very excited that you're doing *Persuasion* next.

Becca: Oh, we're very excited. This one's actually new to both of us. It will not be new to me in a few weeks, but for now, I'm really excited, [00:07:00] because without giving too much away, I have read *Mansfield Park*, and we have yet to read *Mansfield Park* yet. But everyone's so excited for us to read *Persuasion* that were like, "We'll take a break before we get into *Mansfield Park* to do something that people really, really love." [giggles]

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. Very, very good choices. Also, I will say the 1995 BBC Colin Firth *Pride and Prejudice* is chef's kiss perfection.

Leigh: Also, Jennifer Ehle, I think an awakening for a generation of queer women.

Molly: Yeah. Me already being queer watched her and was like, "Oh, yes, confirmed."

Becca: [laughs]

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: For Molly, it's really just a race to the finish line between Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle

Molly: Yeah. That whole series is really for my bisexual heart is just like, "What am I doing?" So, I have to watch all six at a time.

Becca: To really know. [giggles]

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: [00:08:00] Question number three. Which Jane Austen character do you relate to the most?

Leigh: I always would have said Anne Elliot from *Persuasion*. But I think as I've gone through my [unintelligible [00:08:11] return, I've really had to be more honest with myself and be more self-aware. And I think I am a Marianne Dashwood.

Becca: Oh.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: We love a Marianne Dashwood on this podcast.

Molly: As a Marianne Dashwood, yes.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Agree.

Leigh: Yeah. I can't get away from the Zoey Deschanel fringe that I once had, and the amount of times that I listened to all of the Adele albums.

Becca: Anyone who repeated Adele-- Actually, you know what though? I was going to say, anyone who repeated Adele is a big Marianne Dashwood, but also Elinor Dashwood. The

vibe is very much the noise canceller Adele album on repeat. Well, you sit stone faced and pretend everything is fine.

Molly: Or, like, heavy metal.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: It's like, what people think I'm listening to versus what I'm actually listening to.

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: I feel like Marianne's also a big Fiona [00:09:00] apple vibe.

Molly: Just like any sad girl music, really.

Becca: Yeah. Last question before we get into some of our discussion for today. What's your hottest Austen take?

Leigh: I believe that Jane Austen herself was playing for my team. I think she was a queer woman. I just feel that you can't write the character of Charlotte Lucas without knowing what's up. Do you know what I mean?

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Leigh: In order to be able to queer code characters, you have to understand that queerness exists.

Molly: Yes. You actually posted a reel about this yesterday, I think. I was watching it today and I was like, "Oh, yeah. She is sitting in the corner with her bonnet and sipping her tea and being like, 'Mm-hmm.'"

Leigh: Straight people.

Becca: I love this take, because for me, when it comes to thinking about Jane Austen and who her equals are, who really fits her vibe the best, I think it's [00:10:00] Oscar Wilde. Because with both of them, it's just outrageously funny content about high class people in England written from the perspective of someone who has a bit of a self-awareness and a tongue in cheek, like an outsider looking in, almost.

Leigh: Mm.

Becca: It takes a certain brain to really pull out from what you're experiencing and see it. Obviously, Oscar Wilde, being Irish, has a very specific perspective as well. But a lot of that comes from the fact that he was a gay man. And so, to look at Jane Austen and say, you pulled out and you critiqued something really intensely, and that is a perspective that denotes an outsider status in this society. I love that take. I think that's a really cool take.

Molly: Yeah, and she was perpetually single.

Becca: Yes. [laughs]

Leigh: Exactly. And I think also, it's [00:11:00] like a perfect marriage of Oscar Wilde with a smattering of Emily Dickinson. It's just like, it's all coming together. [giggles] I think it makes sense that if Oscar Wilde is a queer man, I think queer men have always been more visible in society. So, it makes sense that it would, to me, in my mind, that it would be more of an open secret that Oscar Wilde was queer, whereas people just didn't see it with Jane Austen.

Becca: The fact that the Emily Dickinson is queer narrative came out 10 years ago is insane, if you read her letters.

Molly: Well, I just actually watched a new musical called *Show Me Eternity* that was all about Emily Dickinson's queerness. And it was, first of all, my favorite thing that I saw in 2023. Happy 2024, everyone. But second of all, it was stunning. A lot of the text is taken from the letters and her poetry as well. And it's all written through Susan's perspective [00:12:00] with flashbacks to her relationship with Emily, and just sobbing and also the fact that there are so many—

I know that we talk a lot about like, "Okay, well, they're best friends." {Leigh laughs} They are like, "What history will call best friends?" It's so devastating that that is not only happening back then when people are forced to have the narrative that they're best friends, but that's still happening to celebrities with their best friends. So, it's crazy to think that in 50 years, maybe we'll be reading, I don't know, Taylor Swift's letters with-- What's her face? But I won't get to find out.

Becca: Are we going to dive into Gaylor on the podcast?

[laughter]

Molly: Not too deeply, but yeah.

Becca: [laughs] A touch. A touch.

Leigh: If that musical is still running or has another run, I'm going to have to take my

girlfriend because she's obsessed with Emily Dickinson.

Molly: Oh, my God, then she would love [00:13:00] it. We were weeping. I hope that it goes to Broadway. I honestly could see it. It was so good.

Leigh: I will fly to America to see that, 100%.

Molly: Amazing.

Becca: Listen, if it comes on Broadway, you can come hang out with us. We're both New York based, so you can come see it. We'll get dinner and we'll watch Emily Dickinson sing our heart out to Susan Dickinson. Really quick side tangent. I actually played Susan Dickinson once in a play.

Leigh: Incredible.

Becca: I was in high school, and I was in some really hoity-toity theater program, and the play we did was called *Wild Nights with Emily*, and it was about Emily Dickinson's queer identity and her love story with Susan Dickinson. And I certainly sure did play Susan Dickinson in that play.

Leigh: Was that high school appropriate, wild nights Emily Dickinson?

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: Well, no, it was actually pretty appropriate. It did not get past, like, forehead kisses and weeping over letters to each other. [00:14:00] It was just called *Wild Nights*, because it was based on that poem by Emily Dickinson, *Wild Nights - Wild Nights - Where I would be?*

Molly: Right. So, in *Show Me Eternity*, the musical that I was just talking about, when they're talking about wild nights, it is definitely about banging.

Becca: Hey.

Molly: And she's reading it directly to her face.

Leigh: Although what you just described does also sound extremely gay. Forehead kisses and--

Becca: Yeah, it was back in 2010. I want to say 2010, and it was a bunch of 16-year-olds who were told for the first time that Emily Dickinson was a lesbian, and they're like, "Oh, that makes sense." And then we're all just going ham on our most romantic performance ever. So, yeah, that was my experience back in high school playing Susan Dickinson in wild nights with Emily. It was a fun production back in the day. [giggles] [00:15:00]

Molly: Wow. Well, speaking of things being gay--

Becca: It's time.

Molly: Let's talk about Jane Austen segue. Let's talk about what about Austen's work draws in, us, gays.

Leigh: The disdain. I think it's largely the disdain. It's the fact that she's looking at her society and essentially looking down on people, which I think queer people are very good at. She writes so sardonically that it just feels like it's coming from a queer gaze to me. And the way that she can just encapsulate the different kind of gender politics and personality types of different gender identities. And it's still so relevant today, I think, as a queer person looking at a heteronormative society.

Molly: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I think also queer people are very good at finding communities. We're very big into fandom, and we [00:16:00] love to obsess. So, I think that the Jane Austen fandom seems like a space where we can just be with each other. Does that make sense?

Leigh: 100%. I think also all of the books are about heroines making a time that's set up against them, work for them, and them succeeding, which I think queer people can really relate to of like, "The world's not necessarily set up for me, but I'm going to make the rules work for me and find love."

Molly: I love that.

Becca: Yeah. I was going to say-- So, I will speak from an outsider perspective on this one. But what I have also seen is the romance of the stories is also so fun in a lot of different ways for a lot of different communities. And I think that particularly romance through etiquette and adversity is something that Jane Austen wrote very well and something that a lot of queer communities still connect to. I say this from my perspective as an ally, so I don't want to tread toes.

Leigh: No, you're so right. The whole etiquette and the coding of is all something that I think the queer community still really connects with in terms of like, "I'm going to wear this color

handkerchief." Like, the handkerchief code and all of this kind of stuff, I think, is very kind of-- You can apply it so well to Jane Austen.

Molly: Absolutely. Also, the balls, the parties.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Okay. I realized it sounded like I was saying the balls.

Becca: Yeah, the balls.

Molly: I'm thinking of the ballroom culture of it all, and gay bars and going out and courting people is such a big part of the queer culture, and it's also such a big part of Jane Austen's culture.

Leigh: Yeah, 100%.

Becca: This leads into our second question, which is about the [00:18:00] plethora of gay Austen content that has started to come out in the last few years, particularly the last five years. And by some examples, I would say, friend of the podcast, Zachary Grady, and his incredible podcast *Gay Pride and Prejudice* and *Fire Island*, which came out at the same time, which is by Joel Kim Booster and starring Joel Kim Booster, both really diving into the idea of smaller portions of society, like the upper class of England or the queer community, where everyone knows everyone, there's really specific parties everyone goes to, there's really specific etiquette everyone follows. And so, using a romantic story to poke fun at the community from inside the community is something that I've seen happen quite a bit in those adaptations in particular.

Leigh: Totally. And thank you for-- I got turned on to *Gay Pride and Prejudice* from your podcast. So, thank you very much for that.

Molly: Yay. I'm so glad.

Leigh: Loved it.

Molly: [00:19:00] I saw on Spotify, a new-- First of all, there's a bunch of *Gay Pride and Prejudice* adaptations where Darcy is a woman, because Darcy is such a wonderfully gender-neutral name. But a new one that just came out called *Pride and Prejudice and Philadelphia* or something like that. I don't remember what it's called, but it looks hot. Before you come at me, this is future Molly letting you know that it is *Pride and Prejudice and Pittsburgh*, not Philadelphia. So, I was close. Back to the show.

Darcy's wearing a leather jacket. So, yeah, there's a lot of that too. And also, you've pointed this out in your videos, Leigh, and you pointed it out in the video where you were talking about Jane Austen being a lesbian. If she wasn't a lesbian, why would she write Darcy as a lesbian?

Leigh: Totally.

Molly: Mr. Darcy is such a lesbian.

Leigh: So gay. Just put him in a pair of dickies. Do you know what I mean?

Molly: Yeah.

Leigh: It's just like, he is ready to go.

Molly: [laughs]

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: This is wonderful, because when we were reading [00:20:00] *Pride and Prejudice*, you may recall, the way that Molly related to Darcy through the story was unexpected to me when we first started reading it. But that just clicked into place in a very real way.

Molly: Yeah.

Speaker 4: Glad to be of service.

[laughter]

Molly: So, that's Darcy. Let's talk about other characters, including Darcy. But first, which Austen book do you think gives off the most gay energy and which character?

Leigh: Oh, my goodness, I have to pick just one. That is so hard. I would have to say the most gay energy, I think, is potentially coming from *Sense and Sensibility*.

Molly: Interesting.

Leigh: Because I think the whole Edward Ferrars, Lucy Steele Elinor Dashwood love triangle makes sense [00:21:00] as lesbian X drama.

Molly: You're so right.

Becca: Yeah. [laughs]

Leigh: Like, just the ex-girlfriend in a lesbian relationship just being a huge issue and topic

of discussion at all times. And I think Edward Ferrars makes sense as a lesbian.

Molly: Yeah, I can see it.

Becca: I also think there's something a little underlyingly sexual about the relationship between Lucy and Elinor.

Molly: Oh, yeah.

Leigh: Yeah.

Molly: So, let's start with *Sense and Sensibility* then, since you have brought it up and talk about some of the gay characters in this book. Who do you want to start with?

Leigh: Let's start with Marianne.

Molly: Yes.

Leigh: Why not?

Molly: Yeah.

Leigh: She very much has the drama of a queer person. She's living for the drama. Also, I just feel like she's so in love with being in love that I just don't think the gender would be a barrier for her.

Molly: Totally agree.

Leigh: I just feel like it just is the person, I [00:22:00] think, for her more than anything. And it just feels like heterosexuality is her opening act. Do you know what I mean? And then she comes to explore other options. And honestly, I feel like Colonel Brandon would be fine with that.

Molly: Oh, Colonel Brandon is bisexual in my book.

Leigh: 100%. And I feel like Colonel Brandon would be like, "If you need to explore, you need to explore." Do you know what I mean?

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: The level of respect he brings to that relationship is pretty rare. So, I think that he would very much be of the idea-- What he likes the most about Marianne as a person is that she is someone who's exploring things and curious and excited about the world, and he clearly is attracted to that in a person. So, I do think it would track that he would allow her to explore all sides of herself and find safe harbor in him and comfort in him as well.

Leigh: 100%.

Becca: We love our [00:23:00] king, Brandon.

Molly: We really do.

Becca: Spoiler alerts for when we eventually release our live show. But Brandon did quite well in our hottie draft because he exhibits a lot of dreamboat behavior.

Molly: He is such a dream boat. Yeah, there's something about him and Marianne that just give off that really hot queer couple that you want to be, and you want to be friends with and they'll have you over for dinner.

Leigh: Yeah, definitely. And I feel like they would be the kind of people that if some young queer person was struggling with their journey, they'd be like, "Come stay with us. We'll make you some lovely dinners and chat about your feelings."

Molly: Yes. I just watched-- Well, not just, but I recently watched *But I'm a Cheerleader* for the first time.

Leigh: Oh, my God. Yes, a classic. A classic.

Molly: Yes, a classic.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: When they escape the summer camp and they go to stay with those like-- Well, they go out and they go find that queer couple that is like, "Oh, you're at the place. Come hang out with us," and they find the one guy that got kicked out has been living with them and going out every night. [00:24:00] I think that couple is Marianne and Brandon.

Leigh: Definitely.

Becca: Like, they have a really impressive wine cellar, and there's a lot of discussions over a bottle of wine after dinner.

Molly: Yes.

Leigh: Totally. I think I'd be really excited to see Marianne's auntie-era when she's come through her crazy phase, and she's just really here for all of the young people in her life.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Which is good, because Elinor and Edward would be very competent parents, but if

the kid emotional issues, that might be time for Aunt Marianne to step in.

Leigh: And Colonel Brandon. He's also very good in those situations.

Molly: He's such a daddy.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Yes. Oh.

Molly: We've already established that Lucy and Edward and Elinor are in a love triangle.

Lucy Steele does give off that mean lesbian energy. Like, she's Regina George, who

[00:25:00] maybe confirmed in the new adaptation is going to be a mean lesbian.

Leigh: I'm not even ready for the new adaptation with *Mean Girls*. I'm not sure I'm prepared.

I've not addressed it yet spiritually, but--

[laughter]

Molly: I've addressed it with my whole heart.

Leigh: [laughs]

Molly: My girlfriend and I the other night, literally-- I don't know.

Molly: What did you do?

Molly: Well, we didn't feel like watching a movie and didn't feel like watching a TV show. So, instead we watched Reneé Rapp on the Terrell show, which is a 30 minutes' episode. And then we watched a bunch of Reneé Rapp music videos. So, ultimately, we watched a movie of just Reneé Rapp being so hot. It's there in the original *Mean Girls* that Regina George and Janis had this energy between them, and she was like-- They were fighting and she was like, "Oh, my God, I can't have a lesbian at my party."

But **[00:26:00]** I think that they're going to lean into it in this new adaptation that, my prediction is that they were hooking up and Regina didn't want to go public with it, because she is closeted and Janis was like, "Okay. Well, bye." And then Regina outed her to a bunch of people. I don't watch this show, but in *The Sex Lives of College Girls*, like-- What's her face? Reneé Rapp plays--

Becca: Reneé Rapp.

Molly: Yeah. She plays a character who is closeted and has that kind of storyline.

Becca: Not exactly that storyline, but yeah, you're correct. Her character in *Sex Lives of College Girls* is fascinating because she's the best character in the show. She steals the show. She's amazing. I'm obsessed with her on it. But she plays a character who's like, "I live in a world where people can be queer and it's really accepted, and that's great." But my personal world, I come from, so much of womanhood is defined by dating a boy and being a girly **[00:27:00]** girl in a friendship. So, I know it's fine for me to do this, but I personally, in my own life, feel like that doesn't fit with what I'm supposed to be. It's a very interesting story.

[00:28:00]

Becca: Speaking of *Mean Girls*, to head to a different book that also gives off very queer lady energy. Let's get into *Emma* for a second.

Leigh: Let us get into *Emma*. Let us really get into *Emma*. Yeah, obsessed with a female teacher.

Molly: As we all were.

Leigh: Very gay.

Molly: Yes.

Leigh: Yeah. It's like, "Oh, my teacher is my best friend." Very gay.

Becca: [laughs]

Leigh: And then the fact that she's got this really, really intense friendship with Harriet Smith, who she has a awkward amount of power over, is very toxic first girlfriend energy, dare I say.

Becca: For me, it's the inexplicable obsession with Jane Fairfax.

Leigh: Yes. Why are you so obsessed with me, literally? Yeah.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: It's not my fault you're in love with me or something.

Leigh: Exactly. **[00:29:00]**

Becca: Yes.

Leigh: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Leigh: The one-sided competition that only Emma is aware of is just like—

Becca: Yeah. [laughs]

Leigh: It's so I'm not out to myself yet. Yeah.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: [giggles]

Molly: I think that Jane, if given the opportunity, would, one, be friends with Emma. Like, she genuinely wants that friendship. And two, would have nothing but love for her. They would be together if that were written today. Like, they would end up together. In my opinion, this book gives off the most gay energy. *Sense and Sensibility* I get, because there's a lot of characters that give the storylines feel very queer. But *Emma*, it's just like the energy. It's such a feminine energy. Like, the men are kind of-- Okay.

Becca: There.

Molly: They're there except for Mr. Knightley, who--

Leigh: [laughs]

Molly: But he's the only man.

Leigh: Even the fact that Emma's there being like the only man I could possibly see myself ever loving [00:30:00] is my existing male best-

Molly: Yeah.

Leigh: -is a little suspect to me.

Molly: Yes. And she has to pick a man because of the time period in which she's living. So, of course, she's going to pick her best friend.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: I also want to give shouts here to the fact that a lot of members of the ace community have enjoyed our coverage of *Emma* and the reading of *Emma* as an ace character, where her complete disconnect with romance for most of the book can be read a couple different ways. It can be read as just an aversion to men. Her obsession with women can certainly be read as a love of women. And a lot of fans of this podcast who are ace have also seen Emma as an ace character who might have some notions of romance but doesn't have that connection with romance that a lot of non-ace people might have.

And so, I think that what's fun about Emma as a character, particularly, is that her interesting relationship with romance and marriage in her time period is not only [00:31:00] revolutionary, but also lends itself to a lot of people feeling seen by the rejection of the conventional, if that makes sense.

Leigh: 100%. And I think also important to note that obviously, asexual lesbians also exist. So, it could be that she feels more of an affinity with women but is also an asexual person.

Molly: Absolutely.

Becca: Yeah. *Emma* is really the buffet of queer readings, I think, because there's so many different ways to read her very complex relationship with her own senses of romance and sexuality. It makes her a much more fun character to talk about, frankly. [giggles]

Molly: Absolutely.

Leigh: Yeah.

Molly: Who else in *Emma* is gay?

Leigh: Who else in *Emma*? I mean, a Miss Bates, perhaps, perchance repping it for the spinster daughters of your-- Do you know what I mean?

Molly: Yeah. I mean, speaking of Spencer daughters, this might be a segue [00:32:00] into talking about Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Leigh: Oh, the icon. Yeah, the lesbian queen of the Jane Austen canon. You cannot convince me that Charlotte and Lizzie don't have history, because Lizzie-- It's like, "Why are you so upset, Hon?" Like, "Your best friend has literally just saved herself from destitution." She has feelings about it. There's history there, and you can't convince me otherwise.

Molly: Oh, 100%. I completely see that. I do see Elizabeth Bennet as kind of like-- She's definitely bi. She's got that like, "I love books," energy. And Charlotte is another one who a lot of our readers have read as being ace as well, because she's like, "You know what? I've got this man. He's going to provide for me. I'm going to not talk to him. And I'm going to [00:33:00] do what's best for me financially and just live my life." And she's not too beat up about it.

Becca: Yeah. Again, another one who the interesting relationship with marriage in her time period, I think one can read her ace, one can read her lesbian. I personally, in my own heart of hearts, just continue to love the head canon, that after she marries Mr. Collins, she and

Anne de Bourgh start an incredibly fulfilling love affair while he's out gardening.

Leigh: 100%. No. Ultimately, I think it just goes to show the fact that we can read these characters as queer or as gay or as ace, I think it just goes to show that Jane Austen, as an author, was populating her books with people who had different relationships to romance and to sexuality than strictly heterosexual. So, I think it all just goes to show that Jane Austen had an awareness of queerness and the spectrum of sexuality and gender.

Molly: Absolutely. [00:34:00]

Becca: One of the first videos I saw from you was ranking the Bennet sisters on how queer they were.

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: And that felt so profoundly correct.

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: So, do you want to give the listeners a little taste of what your ranking was?

Leigh: Yes. So, we have Kitty coming in as the most straight. Maybe not that successfully straight, but straight nonetheless.

[laughter]

Becca: From my community, I can say that successfully straight is just maybe a fiction for straight women.

[laughter]

Leigh: Then we have Lydia coming in at number two. Oh, no, sorry. I've missed Jane. How have I missed Jane? No, Jane is the straightest of them all. Jane is the straightest of them all. But obviously, a carrier for the gay gene. So, she will have queer kids. I think her and Bingley will definitely have queer kids.

Molly: And they'll be very supportive of them.

Becca: Yes. And I do want to shout this out. My head canon on this might be formed by my fiancé, but Bingley gives off bye-boy energy. [00:35:00] [crosstalk]

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: [laughs]

Leigh: There is a big part of Bingley that is a little in love with Darcy. He has a little bit of a crush. Yeah.

Molly: How could he not? First of all, Darcy's hot, but he's like his best friend and he would do anything for him.

Becca: Yeah. I come at this—So, the context of this is that my fiancé, who is bisexual, looks exactly like the 1995 Bingley actor.

Leigh: [gasps]

Becca: Yeah. We were watching the movie, he paused it and he went, "That's me."

Leigh: [laughs]

Molly: And is, in personality, very much the lanky, bisexual golden retriever, that one-- Just once you see it, it's like. "Yeah, that's Bingley." [laughs]

Leigh: Dreamy.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. So, I would say Jane's straight energy is like being a straight girl in a bi-relationship, I think.

Leigh: Yes.

Molly: Yeah.

Leigh: Obviously, then we have Lizzie coming in as like a strong hill walking bisexual.

[00:36:00] Just like she would definitely be on that rock wall today with her fellow bisexuals. [laughter]

Leigh: And then obviously, queen of the gays, Mary. Mary is just so gay.

Molly: So gay.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. I think that was the first thing I said to you about Mary, wasn't it?

Molly: Oh, yeah. We talked about Mary being gay a lot in the early days. She is just like, with her book and her judgment and the way that she doesn't want to participate in her sister's bullshit, her disdain for straight people.

Leigh: Very much like the Miranda of the group. And obviously, we know how that ended up in the reboot.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Did we talk about Lydia?

Leigh: Oh, my, God, Lydia. Yes. No. Yes. Lydia, I think she just belongs in a polycule, does Lydia. [00:37:00] I think, ultimately, and it's a tragedy that she ended up tied to such a wet blanket of a man.

Molly: Talk about someone who gives off very straight energy.

Leigh: Yeah. No, Lydia does stress me out a little bit though, because I feel like she'd be flirting with you as a queer person, and you'd just the whole time be like, "I don't know, if this is flirting or not, because I don't know if you're queer. It's very confusing." [laughs]

Molly: She is a little bit stressful. I also think that, unfortunately, Wickham would probably love this about her and take advantage of it and would be like, "I would like to watch you with other women or with your feel polycule." She just needs to get out of that relationship. But we all know that.

Leigh: Yeah.

Molly: I can just see her having a bad time for a couple of years.

Leigh: I'm manifesting an early death for Wickham-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: We can dream.

Leigh: -so, she can just have an excellent widow era.

Becca: In the Regency Era, the widow era was [00:38:00] so beautiful for so many women.

Leigh: Yeah.

[laughter]

Becca: All right. This brings us to our next fun little game where we are going to go through a couple supporting characters and we're going to discuss their sexualities with you. You have named one already, I think, but most of them are-- I tried to pick characters that I thought would not be brought up earlier in the podcast, and I think I've been mostly successful.

Leigh: Excellent.

Becca: Here we go. Mrs. Jennings from *Sense and Sensibility*.

Leigh: Oh, my God. So, I was thinking about this earlier today, and I was just saying that I would be absolutely screaming to have a Kate McKinnon, Mrs. Jennings performance.

Molly: I need it.

Leigh: Bring the weird Barbie energy into Mrs. Jennings. That's all I ask for--.

Molly: She is weird Barbie. Mrs. Jennings is weird Barbie.

Becca: But like middle aged weird Barbie. It's perfect.

Molly: Oh, my God, I'm obsessed with that. Yeah.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Incredible.

Leigh: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Mr. Collins.

Leigh: Oh, sweet hon. [00:39:00] I think he may be gay and just have no idea.

Becca: Oh, no.

Leigh: Just not a clue.

Molly: Yeah, I was going to say, I think he gives off so much straight energy that it's intentional. I think that he is trying really hard to be like, "I like women. Women. Just women." And he's somewhere in him, it's like, "Do you? No, put it down. Put it away." Yeah.

Becca: There's definitely a world in which I can see him going through the motions of like, "This is what I must do. Lady Catherine de Bourgh told me to marry a woman. I go marry a woman.

Leigh: Literally.

Becca: That is what I will do." And that is very like, "Oh, you're not imbuing your own feelings into this whatsoever."

Leigh: No. And the way he just basically picked a Bennet sister at random. And also, the obsession with Lady Catherine de Bourgh is like, she is the kind of camp woman [00:40:00] that I could see a gay man just becoming obsessed with. She's verging on a drag queen.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Yes.

Leigh: She is.

Molly: She is.

Leigh: Oh, the level of hair volume and mean energy coming off of her does attract a certain amount of gay icon attention, I think.

Molly: Yeah. I added her to this list because I thought we would have fun with her.

Leigh: I would love to see Dan Levy's performance as Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Molly: Oh, my God.

Becca: Oh. Or, honestly, Catherine O'Hara as well.

Molly: Yes.

Leigh: Yes.

Becca: Yes. Oh, I love this. Okay. So, Catherine de Bourgh was on the list, but I think gay icon is correct for her characterization. [laughs]

Leigh: Yes.

Becca: Mrs. Bennet.

Leigh: Mrs. Bennet is exceptionally heterosexual in my mind.

Becca: I think that's true.

Leigh: Like, to the point where I don't even know that she sees women when she walks into a room. It's [00:41:00] just purely, like, what men are here, like, looking at the horizon.

Becca: [giggles] Just look a little higher up. Most of the men are slightly taller than most of the women. You heard like weed out the pack that way.

Molly: Well, she's known to have been like Lydia when she was young. But I think that if we took Lydia as being a modern day, polyamorous, pansexual person, I think that Mrs. Bennet, having existed 20 years earlier than that, didn't have that on her radar as an option. So, she was just really and truly boy crazy.

Leigh: Yeah, 100%.

Molly: Okay. Next one. And I'm very excited for this discussion. Frank Churchill.

Leigh: Ooh.

Becca: Right?

Molly: I mean, if we take *Clueless* into account, he's canonically gay.

Becca: That's true. He is the closest to being canonically gay in the entire Austen canon.

Molly: [00:42:00] But if we think about just Frank Churchill.

Becca: Yeah. Different story. Because we decided that in *Clueless*, Jane Fairfax is simply-- Like, her character is just the queer agenda.

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: So, when she is her own human being though, she does complicate the notion that Frank is just attracted to men.

Leigh: I could see Frank having bye-boy energy.

Becca: Mm-hmm. A different type than Bingley bi-boy energy, but Bingley bi-boy energy. [laughs]

Leigh: Very different type of bye-boy energy. But I could see it. But I feel like in terms of the bi spectrum, I think he's predominantly straight. And then occasionally, a man might come across his path who he's like, "Oh."

Molly: Yeah, I can see that. I do think that he does glom onto Emma as a BFF in a way that wasn't super typical at the time. They flirted so much with no intention [00:43:00] to act on it, which gives off that gay best friend energy. But with Jane Fairfax being in the mix and his seemingly genuine love for her, yeah, I think he just has to be bi.

Becca: I'm going to put in a vote for maybe pan, because I could see him being the type like, yeah, he would maybe predominantly pull his romantic partner energy from women, but when he's at a bar, ass is ass sort of vibe.

Molly: Yeah.

Leigh: Potentially like trans masc energy a little bit as well.

Molly and Becca: Ooh.

Becca: Trans mask fuck boy energy-

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: -coming off of Frank Churchill? Yes.

Leigh: Yesh.

Molly: He's such a rich character in terms of what we can read into him.

Leigh: He just seems to have so much fun being a boy that I feel like--

[laughter]

Leigh: [00:44:00] Do you know what I mean?

Molly: Yesh.

Becca: Yes.

Leigh: He's just more aware of the fact that he's a boy than your average guy. I just feel like-- Yeah.

Becca: Oh, that's very true. Yes, I think this is our reading. I'm putting the stamp of Pod and Prejudice approval on this reading of Frank Churchill.

[laughter]

Becca: That brings us to our last one. And this one certainly was talked about before, but we'll bring it up one more time for good measure. Our girl, Miss Bates, spinster extraordinaire, cries after picnics, talks too much.

Leigh: Oh, I feel like she has bi girl energy to me. I think she's just never met the right guy.

Molly: Yeah.

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: Yeah. Miss Bates.

Molly: There's a song by Reneé Rapp called *Talk Too Much*. I think that Miss Bates, that's her theme song. She's just talking herself out of her own happiness.

Leigh: She just has such a gorgeous vulnerability, [00:45:00] which for some reason is very bi in my mind. Someone have a little bit beautiful--

Molly: As a vulnerable bi. Yeah.

Leigh: Vulnerability. Yeah.

Molly: I agree.

Becca: As Molly and the check ins at the beginning of every theater rehearsal can tell you--

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: -vulnerability is very beautiful.

Molly: As someone who relates to Miss Bates endlessly like, yeah.

Becca: I like to think the happy ending for Miss Bates is we're in the fanciest state that Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill now have together, and Miss Bates gets to wander around making best friends with everyone and not have to worry about where her next meal is coming from or take charity from anyone. She just gets to be her--

Molly: Big flowers.

Becca: -goddamn self. Yeah.

Leigh: But also, maybe if she doesn't have her impostor syndrome anymore. Maybe she won't do quite as much of the nervous chatter. She can maybe just feel a bit more confident and comfortable and chilled.

Molly: Yeah. Because there was a world before, and she was slightly more [00:46:00] socially well adjusted.

Leigh: Oh, my God, as that BBC *Emma* showed us, which I had not seen until your coverage of it. And when I mean to say that I sobbed, I sobbed. It's so good.

Becca: And Miss fates in particular--

Molly: So good.

Becca: -is just there to ruin you. Oh.

Leigh: But also, the ending, I kept thinking it was over. And then it kept being these extra moments on top of moments. It's just sending selfies to my girlfriend of me just like--

[laughter]

Leigh: -sobbing.

Molly: When Mrs. Bates talked, I lost it.

Becca: So good. So good. Okay, that was our minor character draft. Molly, do you want to throw in any last-minute ones?

Molly: Ooh.

Leigh: I feel like Mr. Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* just to throw in some extra energy to make my case, since *Sense and Sensibility* is the most gay. Willoughby has lesbian fuckboy [00:47:00] energy, if I ever saw.

Molly: Yeah, I guess.

Leigh: It's just the way that you're like, "I'm kind of rooting for you. But at the same time, I can't deny that you are a bit of a dick."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But there's just no-- Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. And it's going all in and then pulling all out.

Leigh: Yes.

Becca: On the turn of a page, yeah.

Leigh: I can't really see the straight boy going all the way there with feelings for what is essentially a fling.

Molly: That's so true. He full on U-hauls her, he brings her to his home, says, "All of this can be yours," and then ghosts her.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: I'm into it. I guess Molly and I can each throw in one rando then. I'll throw in Anne Steele. We've established that Lucy gives off a mean lesbian energy. We're talking about her dumbest rock sister.

Molly: [laughs] I think Anne Steele is a straight [00:48:00] woman.

[laughter]

Molly: I think that she's useless.

Leigh: Although I feel like a butch gal would definitely chat her up, and she'd have absolutely no clue.

Molly: She would be in a full-on relationship before she realized.

Leigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Molly: She'd be moving in and she'd be like, "Wait, we're not roommates?"

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: It's that moment in the movie where she's sitting at the bar and she's like, "These girls are being so nice to me. Talking about how mean men are, and we just want to say goodbye to men forever." It's like all the women around her are trying to fuck.

Molly: [laughs]

Leigh: Fully Charlotte Lucasing in that episode of *Sex and the City* where she meets the lesbians.

Becca: Oh, my God, yes. Exactly. That's the Anne energy we're talking about.

Molly: Sir John Middleton?

Leigh: Ooh.

Molly: He loves a party.

Becca: He does.

Molly: He loves hosting.

Becca: He does. But he does take so much interest in the young women's social lives, [00:49:00] but in a gossipy way.

Molly: In a way that he's like, "I want to hear about the men that you're dating."

Becca: Yes. I will maybe put in for somewhere on the Ace spectrum based on the fact that every single time someone asks him for information about someone, he's a really good dog.

Molly: Good dog. Yeah.

Becca: Really good dog.

[laughter]

Leigh: Yeah.

Molly: That's a good point.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah, I love that.

Becca: Incredible. Okay, so for time, I think maybe we should cast one full adaptation of a Jane Austen novel with queer icons, which is our final game. We have three to pick from. *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice*. Leigh is our guest. Would you like to pick which one we're casting?

Leigh: Let's go, *Pride and Prejudice*. Let's go classic.

Becca: Okay. I will list off characters, and one of you can shoutout which gay icon is going to play that character.

Leigh: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Starting with our one and only, [00:50:00] Elizabeth Bennet.

Leigh: Can I make a case for Olly Alexander?

Becca: Ooh. Yes, please.

Leigh: I feel like there's just such a stunning feistiness, but also vulnerability that I would really love to see Olly Alexander's interpretation of that role.

Molly: Yes, I'm here for it.

Leigh: With Troye Sivan as his Lydia.

Becca: Oh, my God, yes.

Molly: Yup.

Becca: So, Troye Sivan as Lydia, Olly Alexander as Lizzie, who is our Darcy?

Leigh: Elliot Page.

Molly: Oh, my God.

Becca: Yeah. Yeah, Elliot Page is Darcy, for sure.

Leigh: I think I just need an Elliot Page Darcy in my lifetime. I'm not sure that I'm going to get it, but it's what I would like more than anything.

Molly: We'll write him a letter.

Leigh: [laughs]

Molly: We'll request him.

Becca: Hey, Elliot, if you want to come on this podcast and play Mr. Darcy just for the podcast, [Leigh laughs] we would be more than **[00:51:00]** happy to--

Molly: Read a couple line.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. I'm into.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Yes. Okay. Jane Bennet.

Molly: Oh, she's just so straight of a character.

Leigh: Taylor Swift.

Molly: Sure, why not?

Becca: We'll get Gaylor in there.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And who for Charles Bingley, because I don't think that one's going to Travis Kelce.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Leigh: Who's someone who's just extremely happy.

Molly: Auli'i Cravalho?

Becca: Oh, yes. Moana herself.

Molly: Just like that bubbly energy Moana herself?

Becca: Yes. Cast Bingley as a literal Disney princess.

Leigh: Yes.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I love it. Mary. Ooh. Oh, God, what's her name from *Hacks*. Megan Statler who plays the assistant in it?

Molly: Oh, sure.

Becca: She's so fucking funny.

Leigh: [laughs] **[00:52:00]** We deserve a funny Mary Bennet, I think.

Molly: We do.

Becca: Exactly. Although I will say, shouts to *Fire Island*, because the Marianne *Fire Island* is very funny.

Leigh: [laughs]

Molly: So good.

Becca: Let's do a couple more. Let's do Caroline Bingley.

Leigh: Oh. Hailee Steinfeld?

Becca: Yes. I'm into it. She could play mean.

Leigh: I know she's done *Dickinson*, but I feel like would love to see the other side of the coin for. Like, let's bring her in as a villain and see how that feels.

Becca: She has the range.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: So, yeah.

Molly: Oh, yeah.

Becca: Our lady, Catherine de Bourgh.

Molly: I'll put my vote in for Laura Dern.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Yes.

Leigh: Or Sarah Paulson.

Molly: Oh, my God. Or Sarah Paulson. Wait. All right, we have to give it to Sarah Paulson as an actual member of the community.

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: Yes. But I was going to say then Laura Dern as Mrs. Bennet.

Molly: Absolutely. 100%.

Becca: Although, she plays Marmee in and *Little Women*, | and she's so chill in that movie.

Molly: She could also play a really good Mr. Bennet.

Leigh: Yes.

Becca: Oh. Wait, her Mr. Bennet to-- Who are we giving Mrs. Bennet to then?

Leigh: Laverne Cox.

Molly and Becca: Yes.

Molly: Oh, this is great.

Becca: I'm in love.

Leigh: I really would like Katherine Moennig to be involved in some way. I think Shane from the L word deserves a look in somehow--

Molly: Wickham?

Leigh: Yes.

Becca: Done.

Leigh: Yes.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Perfect.

Molly: Oh, wow. This cast is amazing. I'm so excited.

Becca: I'm so excited for this upcoming movie adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Leigh: Yeah.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: And we'll give it one more character. We'll make it tricky for you guys on the last one. Kitty Bennet, the straight girl herself.

Leigh: We want someone fun, but super straight.

Becca: While we're thinking about this, I have to say, they will kill us if we don't cast Charlotte Lucas before we go as well.

Molly: Oh, absolutely.

Leigh: [00:54:00] Yes.

Molly: Okay. Let's go back 20 years and cast Natasha Lyonne as Kitty, because as a straight who is beloved by the queer community, I think that if she was young, she could play that role. And she's funny.

Becca: Yes. Charlotte, I think we're giving to Janelle Monáe.

Leigh: Yes.

Molly: Yes.

Leigh: Yes. Nailed it in one.

Becca: Yes. No notes.

[laughter]

Leigh: Janelle Monáe taking Olly Alexander aside to explain why they need to marry Mr. Collins, I think would be an excellent scene that I would just love to watch.

Molly: Oh, yes.

Becca: Of the fight that would ensue there. And then, both of them up against Sarah Paulson. All five out at once.

[laughter]

Becca: Incredible.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Oh, well, if anybody who's our [00:55:00] listener wants to do a mockup of this scene, like in Photoshop, we don't know how to do any of that, but we would love to see this happen. But I do think, on that note, that wraps this incredibly gay Jane Austen discussion.

Leigh, thank you so much for joining us. This was so much fun. Do you want to tell the people where they can find you?

Leigh: Oh, my God, thank you so much for having me. This has been so much fun. This is literally like my specialist subject.

[laughter]

Leigh: No, I'm [@leighdouglascomedy](#) on Instagram and TikTok. And if you're ever in London, I do stand up all the time. I'm at the Queer Comedy club in London, alos. But yeah, I also post on my socials where I'm going to be performing. So, yeah.

Molly: Awesome. Well, we have a lot of listeners in the UK. So, check out Leigh stuff in person.

Leigh: Yeah.

Becca: Listeners, that concludes this very enjoyably queer content for your ears. And so, until next time, stay proper.

Leigh: And live your best gay life.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Did.

Molly: Be gay, do crime.

Leigh: [laughs]

Becca: Be **[00:56:00]** day goo do grime. Be day goo do grime.

Leigh: [laughs]

Molly: Be day goo grime.

[music]

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