

Research Article

Women as a Commodity: An Intersectional Look at the Bridgerton Series

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Abstract

Television shows play a significant role in exposing the realities and societal conditions prevalent in our time. Bridgerton is a Netflix series that spans two seasons. It is a story of love, passion, fashion, and family affairs set during the competitive Regency era in London, where marriageable youth and gentry are introduced into society. This philosophical paper employed an intersectional feminist film and television textual analysis to examine the representation of women in the Netflix series Bridgerton. Additionally, the paper integrates critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis as complementary methods. It also employed Bell Hooks' theory of representation that examined how the issue of gender oppression is prevalent in Bridgerton. The content was organized and analyzed through a set of thematic categories. Hence, one noticeable aspect of the show is the way women are groomed and trained to fit into the social strata, so that they can be pleasing in the eyes of the Queen, who approves them. Another is the way women are viewed as a means to save the family's wealth once they are partnered with a noble husband-to-be, disregarding their agency. Applying hooks' views, this paper underscores that women are not mere commodities. They are persons of dignity whose rights and privileges must be given due recognition equal to those of others. This is true not only among women but also to all. Equality builds justice. Justice diminishes oppression. For it is only when we start doing injustice towards others that oppression rises once again.

Keywords

Women, Commodity, Bridgerton, Intersectionality, Feminist Perspective, Bell Hooks, Theory of Representation

1. Introduction

Television (TV) shows play a significant role in unmasking the realities that exist in society. These television shows portray various societal conditions prevalent in our time. The storyline, although mostly fictional, closely resembles the way we live and the way society works and functions in the present. The plot of the story can reveal significant issues that highlight

the struggles of the people. Other matters like societal inequality, injustice, poverty, the controversial issues regarding women's rights, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual+ (LGBTQIA) may also be part of the storylines being portrayed in these television shows.

Further, the casting can also reveal much of what society appears to be today. Many television shows cater to a diverse

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range of actors and actresses, representing various ethnicities and races. For some, this is a welcome scene that brings to the viewers' consciousness a strong emphasis and call for equality in society and the world in general. Emphasizing who is to be part of the cast can bring consciousness to broaden the narratives and stories being told. In this sense, the typical stereotyping that dehumanizes and marginalizes others can be avoided.

The Netflix show *Bridgerton*, produced by Shondaland, received significant and positive feedback. Viewers eagerly await the show's two seasons. In fact, the viewership reached as high as 82 million households and was considered the second most-watched series on the platform [1]. *Bridgerton*, set during the Regency era, was praised for its diverse representation of casts and incorporates varied topics, including gender, race, and sexuality, among others. The series highlights that it is not only about fantasy and an escape from reality, but the show purposely includes meaningful conversations and impactful insights that the viewers can learn from [2].

This paper will use an intersectional look into the *Bridgerton* Series to judge the feminist perspectives therein. According to Creamer, intersectional feminism is an "advocacy that desires equality across the gender spectrum with acknowledgment of social categorizations that lead to varying experiences for individuals [2]." Intersectionality can also be understood as a method used to expand one's understanding from a certain point of view towards considering other factors.

From a feminist perspective, it is understood that when examining gender, it is also critical to expand the analysis by considering other factors, such as race and sexuality [3]. It will also employ Bell Hooks' theory of representation, which will examine how the issue of gender oppression is prevalent in *Bridgerton*. Being a cultural critic, Hook focuses her attention on criticizing personal woes related to the portrayal of the media. Hooks asserted that the media is a typical site that mainly portrays the prevalence of social and political struggle because it is where people can easily learn.

2. Methodology

This philosophical paper employed an intersectional feminist film and television textual analysis as employed in the study by Sutherland and Feltey [18] to examine the representation of women in film. The *Bridgerton* series is treated as a cultural text through which meanings about gender, class, race, and power are produced and normalized.

2.1. Selection of Data

Selected episodes, scenes, dialogues, and character narratives were purposively chosen based on their relevance to

themes of marriage, social mobility, and women's positioning within patriarchal structures. These materials constitute the primary data of the study and serve as the basis for analyzing how women are depicted within a marriage-centered social order.

2.2. Data Analysis

To ensure analytical rigor, the study integrates critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis as complementary methods. Critical discourse analysis was applied to examine language, dialogue, and narrative framing that construct women as objects of exchange and reinforce gendered expectations, while narrative analysis was used to trace character development and plot structures that sustain or challenge commodification. The analysis was guided by intersectional feminist theory [7] and bell hooks' theory of representation [13], particularly her critique of dominant images and the politics of representation, which emphasize how media texts reproduce and legitimize systems of domination. Drawing on hooks' concept of the oppositional gaze, the study critically interrogates how women's identities and agency are mediated through intersecting structures of gender, class, and race within a patriarchal social order. This integrated approach enables a theoretically grounded and systematic interpretation of representation that moves beyond description toward a critical examination of power, ideology, and meaning in the series.

2.3. Coding and Thematic Organization of Data

All relevant literature, episodes, scenes, and dialogues were systematically coded using a thematic analytical procedure informed by intersectional feminist theory. An initial round of open coding identified recurring patterns related to commodification, marriage, agency, and power, followed by focused coding that clustered these patterns into analytically significant themes. The resulting themes served as the organizing framework for the presentation of findings, allowing the analysis to move from specific textual instances to broader theoretical interpretations. This thematic structure ensured transparency in the analytical process and facilitated a coherent presentation of how women's representations in *Bridgerton* reflect and reproduce intersecting systems of gendered and social inequality.

Figure 1 illustrates the research paradigm employed in the study. Grounded in intersectional feminist theory, the *Bridgerton* series is analyzed as a cultural text using feminist film and television textual analysis, critical discourse analysis, and narrative analysis. Data were systematically coded and organized into themes, which informed a critical philosophical interpretation of women's representation within intersecting structures of gender, class, and race.

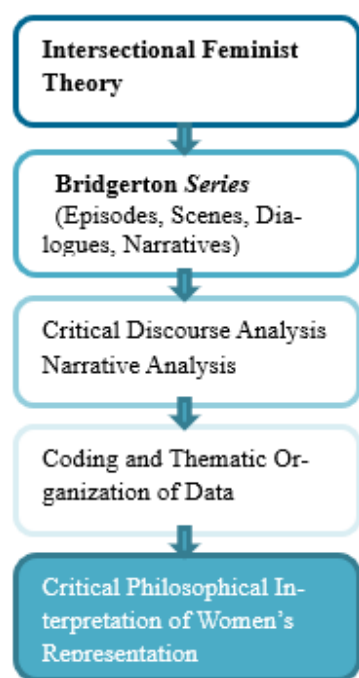


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study.

3. Overview of the Bridgerton Series

Set against the backdrop of the Regency era, *Bridgerton* tells the story of the eight close-knit Bridgerton siblings. They belong to one of the most influential and powerful families. The family of eight—Anthony, Benedict, Colin, Daphne, Eloise, Francisca, Gregory, and Hyacinth—lived in London's high society. They were children who sought love and happiness in those very competitive times, surrounded by both friends and rivals. This Television show was created by Chris Van Dusen, produced by Betsy Beers and Shonda Rhimes. It premiered its first season globally on December 25, 2020, on Netflix. The first and second seasons each have eight episodes. This show garnered 82 million views in its first month of premiere [4]. The series takes place in London around 1810 among the high society parties. The story started with the presentation of the young brides before the Queen of England. What follows is the narration and the appearance of a gossip bulletin penned by an anonymous writer known simply as Lady Whistledown [4].

Broadly speaking, the drama centered on the story of Daphne Bridgerton in the first season, played by Phoebe Dynevor, who is the eldest daughter of the Bridgertons. As a young woman from a noble family, she aspires to follow in her parents' footsteps. She wished to find true love and get married. Daphne is with her four brothers and two sisters, who also await the same fate. *Bridgerton* portrayed the practice of matchmaking among brides-to-be and their grooms-to-be in the series. At that time, matchmaking between men and women was very competitive. This competition is very prevalent, as women target wealthy and noble men as potential husbands.

4. Bell Hooks' Interlocking Web of Oppression

The author Bell Hooks, also known as Gloria Jean Watkins, is one of the leading feminist philosophers who made groundbreaking work in criticizing the prevalent feminist movements of her time. Her critique stems from her observation that many women philosophers who promote feminist movements often fail to conduct a thorough examination of women's experiences, including their own plight and that of other women. Feminist philosophers focused their attention on the way women are oppressed by virtue of their sex or simply by being women and never touched on this critical topic [5]. For Hooks, there is a new definition that is proper to feminism, that is, "one that does not simply fight for the equality of women and men (of the same class) but of a movement that fights to end sexist oppression and exploitation without neglecting other forms of oppression such as racism, classism, imperialism, and others [5]." Further, Hooks argues that all forms of oppression experienced by both men and women are interrelated and inseparable. These forms of oppression are interconnected through interlocking webs of oppression [6].

Hooks' idea of the interlocking web of oppression precedes the concept of intersectionality. Kimberly Crenshaw in her essay, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, discusses intersectionality as the "ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender makes our experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different than that of the white women [7]." Intersectionality is further explained as "the overlap of reciprocally constructing phenomena an individual experiences because of gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, country of origin and education, age, disabilities, and other social identities to create a whole that is different from the component identities [8]." Hooks asserted that intersectionality was born out of the feminist theory, where she saw how the experience of middle-class white women did not accurately represent the feminist movement. This feminist movement failed to see the struggles of women across all classes. While they run after and proceed with the movement to attain women's equality, they did not accurately represent the feminist movement as a whole, and especially the situation for women of color, where gender was not the primary determining factor [8].

Meanwhile, this notion of intersectionality gave rise to what hooks calls the interlocking web of oppression. Patricia Hill Collins, another "black" feminist theorist, examined the works of both hooks and Crenshaw and demonstrated that the cultural patterns of oppression are bound together. These patterns of oppression are influenced mainly by race, gender, ethnicity, and class to form intersectional systems in society. This intersectional system is what is now called the "interlocking oppressions [9]." This notion has led to the understanding that these interlocking oppressions lead women to experience dif-

ferences within the same society and environment. This political division among women is colloquially referred to as "where you sit is where you stand," which identifies women as having no place outside the present sphere in which they are [8].

In her book *Shaping Feminist Theory*, Hooks asserted that the central tenet of modern feminist thought is that "all women are oppressed." This implies that women share everyday experiences of oppression brought about by different factors such as class, race, religion, sexual preference, etc. These factors actually do not create a diversity of experiences that determines the extent to which sexism will be considered as an oppressive force in the lives of women. Being considered already as a system of domination, sexism is being institutionalized, yet it has never determined in an absolute way the actual fate of women in society [10].

For hooks, oppression means the absence of choices. This is the primary point of contact between the oppressed and the oppressor. She noted that most women in society do have options, yet these choices seem inadequate compared to those enjoyed by men. These inadequacies lead to more exploitation and discrimination among women. This is particularly prevalent in the ways women are allowed to join organized resistance. In fact, in the United States, as hooks noted, women do not enjoy the privilege to join resistance groups, particularly to tackle issues of sexism, precisely because sexism has not meant an absolute lack of choices. In the same manner, hooks observed that this situation is even worse among black women. Black women are often observed to have an unusual position in society, for they are not only collectively placed at the bottom of the occupational ladder, but overall, black women are considered to belong to the lowest social status as compared to other groups within society. With the given position, hooks also pointed out that black women bear the brunt of sexist, racist, and classist oppression. Black women were not allowed to enjoy socialization, nor have they been socialized to assume the role of exploiter or oppressor. They don't have, in the slightest way, an institutionalized "other" that they can exploit or oppress, the capacity which the white women and even black men have [10].

Consequently, since white women and even black men enjoy the privilege of being socialized and having the "other" that they can oppress, then they can act as oppressors or be oppressed. As noted by hooks, black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters or oppressors of women. Likewise, white women may be victimized by sexism, but racism enables them to act as oppressors of black people. Hooks said that, "both groups have led liberation movements that favor their interests and support the continued oppression of other groups. Black male sexism has undermined struggles to eradicate racism, just as white female racism has undermined feminist struggle [10]."

Hooks sees how this oppression of women is more visible in a patriarchal context. In her book, *Ain't I a woman?* She pointed out that the oppressive relationship of imperialism,

patriarchy, and sexism has created interconnected webs of institutionalized domination and oppression not only among women but even among black men. She called this domination "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." Hooks believed that this jargon captures the reality of the suffering, oppression, and exploitation being experienced by black people, specifically women. Further, hooks argues that the stereotypes given to black women made them the lowest in rank and status. For hooks, slavery allowed white society to stereotype white women as the pure goddess virgin and move Black women to the seductive whore stereotype formerly placed on all women. This stereotyping justified the devaluation of black femininity and the rape of black women [11].

Even the sense of black nationalism is, for hooks, unjust and oppressive for women of color. She argues that the promotion of Black nationalism was essentially a patriarchal and misogynist movement. While it seeks to eradicate racial divisions by strengthening sexist ones, it readily hooks itself onto the idea of the emasculating black matriarch, which she often criticizes. For hooks, emasculating black women is equal to devaluing their remaining worth [11]. Patriarchal power for hooks is not simply a privilege given to upper-class white men, but it is a privilege enjoyed by all men regardless of their color, race, or class. While it is good to note that hooks here is not putting men in a bad light per se as the primary source of all the oppression that the black women suffered, at the same time, she also condemns the idea of women overpowering men just for the sake of equality and justice. This, for her, is a show of sexism and discrimination if pursued [11]. Even if hooks envisions feminist masculinity as an alternative to patriarchal dominance, with masculinity to be reconstituted in terms of love, integrity, and mutuality, it is clear that she was not advocating for the reversal of roles. It is clear to hooks that to do this is to be oppressive and sexist also [12]. What hooks foresees is a society where persons, regardless of their gender, sex, class, race, and color, are treated equally and with dignity, characterized by mutual respect and understanding. Hooks believed that any form of oppression is cruel and dehumanizing, not only to the victim but even to the exploiter. In patriarchy, for instance, she said that males are forced to be domineering and act as monsters that control and rule over the weak persons, including females, into their male dominance and machismo image. This denies men the capacity to express their feelings and emotions and to be who they truly are [11].

While the feminist philosophy of Bell hooks becomes instrumental in guiding people to deal with issues of feminism and the feminist movement, author Hazel Biana has identified some aspects that hooks failed to address. For Biana, hooks, though, was representing and bringing to light the struggles of women; yet, her voice is minimal, only among the black, despite her claims that she explores multiple voices and crosses borders. Her identification of white supremacist patriarchy is more of a mindset of supremacy rather than pointing specifically to white men who are the oppressors. In this case, Biana noted that this, too, becomes a display of one person oppressing another. Biana

suggests expanding the horizon on the subject of oppression, inviting more self-reflection among parties involved, and enabling them to examine themselves to identify what becomes oppressive and what is common among them [5]. Meanwhile, hooks leads us also to expand our ways of doing cultural critique. In Biana's study of hooks' works, she directs us to pursue this process of cultural critique, especially in analyzing the presence of oppression that is not only seen among white supremacy within society, but also to examine its presence within the context of media, social media, films, and television [13]. For Biana, Hooks, as a feminist cultural critic, "criticizes values, practices, and representations in cultural texts, thereby investigating the systems of domination that reinforce sexism, racism, and classism in society [media included] [13]." What hooks desires is to eradicate these cultural biases and transform cultures, being the only way towards equality. One way to eliminate oppression is to closely examine its presence within popular culture, including media and television shows. For hooks, pop culture, including the advent of new media, represents a pedagogy where resistance begins and occurs, and so it is fitting that critical examination must be conducted within its spectrum to prevent further perpetuation of the culture of oppression. Henceforth, using this framework on oppression, as well as hooks' cultural critique on media portrayal, we will now examine the presence of a web of interlocking oppression within the Netflix series *Bridgerton*.

5. Feminist Representation in *Bridgerton* and Hooks' Interlocking Web of Oppression

The Bell Hooks study on feminism opens up a broad spectrum of investigation where the web of interlocking oppression may be present. Her study paved the way for thorough examinations of areas of concern that might be avenues for the continued expression of oppression, not only among women but also in a wide array of areas, including media, television, and social media. In this regard, we will now examine how women are represented in *Bridgerton*. Are the women's intersectional representation in *Bridgerton* portrayed as being on a more equal footing than men? Or are they still being portrayed as discriminated against or low profile? What about the men and women of color who are most of the time the objects of racism and sexism? Are they portrayed in a manner that humanizes them rather than dehumanizes them? In her article posted in *No Rules*, Leio Koga said that the representation of intersectional feminism in the show is lacking, to say the least. She observed that while women are primarily the lead characters in the show, it is noticeable that most female leads are white, especially the main character, Daphne Bridgerton. She noted that the same white lead actor is portrayed as coming from a family ranked very high in both the social and the economic ladder [14].

Furthermore, Koga also noted that while the show portrays

characters of color, their contextualization and storylines are often sidelined in favor of the narrative of the white lead actor. Most of their stories are arch only to support the narrative of the white character [14]. This echoes the same struggles that hooks has observed when it comes to the way black women are treated and are profiled in society. The problem in the show is the way the portrayal of characters is being done, particularly of black women. The black women are once again being used to bolster white characters' narratives that have been at the center of most films and TV shows. Additionally, while *Bridgerton* may have sought to include more racial diversity, it is blatantly apparent that all these characters of color were portrayed only as objects of heartbreak, loss, and disappointment. Most portrayals of black or colored characters fall simply into an obvious sidelining of the story or are not given due importance [14]. One of the best examples of this issue, where black women are often set aside, is the story of Marina. In the show Marina's lover, the father of her child, Sir George, dies, and she is forced into marriage with his brother; Queen Charlotte loses her child; and Simon's mother dies in childbirth. What is noticeable among these characters is that they are all actors of color and not white. It is then pronounced that a deeper and critical analysis of the different areas of concern must be done to bring about renewal that will eradicate the issues of racism and discrimination. Hooks is proper that even media portrayal, the best venue where people can easily learn, also bears with it the culture of oppression.

6. The Position of Women and the Meaning of Chastity for Upper-Class Women

One of the most problematic themes present in the *Bridgerton* series is the objectification of the female reproductive system and function [14]. Many young girls don't know how a woman becomes pregnant, and they do not understand sexual empowerment because it is expected only of women to abstain from sex until marriage. As young women, their role is to participate in the event to secure a mate at the Queen's palace. These girls come up and dress beautifully so that men will become interested in them. Then, a man interested in one of them will come to the house by sending a letter of arrival notice beforehand. The series shows the real condition of women. Women are not free to choose the man they want because they have to go through the approval of their father or eldest brother. Even in the case of the *Bridgerton*'s female children, the authority falls not to Daphne to choose, but rather it is with Anthony, being the eldest sibling, who decides which man he feels is rich and good enough for his sisters [15]. This portrayal of subordination of character is a real show of oppression among women who also desire autonomy and freedom to decide on matters that concern their future. Despite this, the show still emphasizes white supremacy, where the white man has the power over the less powerful, especially the women.

Another issue that is prevalent in the series regarding the role of women is evident in the way the character of Marina, a woman of color, is presented. The question that we can ask regarding this character portrayal is, what happens when a woman [of color] does have sex before marriage? In the story, we learn that Marina is depicted as having a "condition," and this becomes an unnecessarily large part of her character development. Marina's pregnancy and being a woman of color make her character even more of an outcast than she already is [16]. At the same time, issues like this are not given much emphasis among white leaders, particularly in Daphne. Daphne manipulated Simon into impregnating her despite the latter's unwillingness to have children. Simon, being a man of color, is subordinated to the character of Daphne, who is white. This provides us with an overview that a white, high-class woman is raping a black man as punishment for his silence, but absolutely destroys the idea of feminism in terms of women's sexuality [14].

For Koga, the portrayal of Marina Thomson's character is a clear manifestation of how this injustice and web of interlocked oppression are prevalent within society, carried over even in the portrayal of characters in television shows [16]. Koga elucidated that:

Marina's story is the only representation of a Black woman's courting experience — and if you've seen the show, you know how it ends. If you haven't seen the show, well, I'll break it down for you in one sentence: she finds out she's pregnant, tries to terminate her pregnancy, fails, and is compelled to enter a loveless marriage to protect herself and her baby. Marina understands what will happen to her if she doesn't marry—it was one of the many oppressive standards built by patriarchy—but realizes early on in the show that if she doesn't cuff a man, she's basically doomed. Her storyline comments on double standards that have trickled down into modern-day society, namely, the way sex is viewed differently based on gender. Men in the show, and men today, are encouraged and praised for having as much sex as possible—Daphne's brother, Anthony, sleeps around to his pleasure, and no one says anything or looks down on him for doing so. And yet, the women of Bridgerton literally don't even know what sex is [14].

Obviously, the roles of women in Bridgerton are atypical. They are made to be in the forefront, yet they don't get to decide amongst themselves. Their freedom and enjoyment are still in the control of the highly patriarchal society that has the power to decide over matters that concern the lives of others. In this sense, the series failed to help elevate the feminist desire for equality and justice; instead, it subtly continues to perpetuate the image of oppression.

7. The Subtle Presence of Patriarchy in Bridgerton

Patriarchy is everywhere in Bridgerton. Within the family

itself, it was Anthony who had the authority over matters concerning family affairs, even if the mother was still alive and present. The temporary suspension of oppression based on race only further underscores the screaming and inescapable patriarchy that dominates the lives of every woman and some men in the Bridgerton society [14]. The effects of patriarchy on the way families survive and are run are apparent. This subtle presence is noticeable in the severely limited access of girls to education, to the extreme and hypocritical double standards around sexuality [17]. Patriarchy's concepts oppress women's rights and privileges in the show. It is very conspicuous in the way men and women are treated, for instance, in the way it is very acceptable for men to frequent brothels and have sex before marriage. Still, a woman literally faced complete social ruin if she was spotted alone with a man to whom she wasn't related [14].

In this regard, if men are freer to express their sexuality, women are not. It is visible in the complete lack of sexual empowerment of upper-class women before marriage, by the absence of even any informal sex education. This denialism puts them in a position where they are unable to discuss and express such matters. In this sense, their femininity is being curtailed by being complicit in this withholding of information. For instance, even Lady Bridgerton fails to impart any material knowledge to Daphne on matters regarding sexuality before they leave for their honeymoon. In this sense, women of Bridgerton are the most oppressed and the least free. They are tied down to strict social structures and rules, and the only way to escape is to become a social pariah or to get married [17].

Despite these limitations regarding women's empowerment and the strong emphasis on patriarchy, which eventually resulted in more oppression among women, the series also allowed us to see the interaction of class and gender. That class and gender can work relatively in an unexpected way. Surprisingly, this is not an issue among upper-class women. These women, who allowed class and gender to work together, are found among those who do not belong to the aristocracy. These women are seen to be the freest. The likes of Madame Delacroix, for instance, who is an entrepreneur likely extremely successful based on her clientele, has complete social freedom and is not constrained by or beholden to anyone [14].

8. The Gossip Girl: Lady Whistledown

One of the most interesting characters in the drama series is the writer whose pen name is Lady Whistledown. Lady Whistledown is described as the gossipier whose gossips are widely anticipated among the nobility, including the Queen herself. Her works generally focus on various news, including stories about girls meeting secretly with boys, the young Duke being discussed, who is in love with whom, the disgrace of a family household, and similar topics [15].

Even if her news is exciting, the stereotyping of Lady Whistledown as the gossipier raises concerns about the portrayal of women. The stereotype that women are creatures who like to

gossip has been passed on from one generation to another for decades—this sort of discrimination results in various injustices. One form of this stereotype is derived from the concept of gender. Stereotypes about gossip are often attributed to women. By depicting women as gossipers, it is as if giving a label that women only like to gossip, which is not essential, while men do not. Although many men often gossip [15]. Azeharie et. al. noted that, "If the director is brave enough to make a breakthrough by changing the script, then he can deconstruct labeling like this, for example, by changing Lady Whistledown to turn out to be a nobleman, as the director chose multi-racial actors in this drama made by him. In the workplace for women, gossiping according to Farley et al can be used as an agent to control, assert the power they have in an organization." Gossiping being attributed to women such as Lady Whistledown will only increase a woman's coercive power. Intuitively a woman has a great need for control because a "high gossiper" will try to exercise more control at work [15].

Finally, it is notable that the director of the *Bridgerton* series has made significant breakthroughs by casting multi-racial actors as the elite of the British aristocracy in the Regency era. However, it is also notable that the director is fixated on this drama novel, which illustrates that women do not have the autonomy to determine their own lives. Primarily, women can choose their lives alone when permitted to do so by a competent authority, such as their father or brother. This often depicts the highly patriarchal structures that undermine women's rights and oppress them. In addition, the depiction of women as gossipers reinforces the ideology of misogyny; women do not like other women by gossiping through the gossip column [15].

9. Conclusion

Feminism as a movement has a great deal to offer us in understanding the current state of our society. Feminism is no longer a fight solely over gender issues; rather, it encompasses a broader array of concerns that require thorough examination to break the culture of oppression. The view of bell hooks on intersectionality, representation, and the web of interlocking oppressions provides an important guide toward a more transformed society, one that embraces individuals regardless of sex, color, race, class, and sexuality. Hooks envisions a culture of fairness and justice grounded in love and mutual recognition, a culture no longer preoccupied with hierarchies of identity or the positioning of the other against the self. Central to hooks' intersectional framework is the insistence that systems of domination such as patriarchy, racism, classism, and heteronormativity operate simultaneously rather than independently. In this light, the analysis of *Bridgerton* must be understood not as isolating gender oppression from other axes of inequality, but as illustrating how gendered commodification is entangled with class privilege, racialized visibility, and normative constructions of desire. Although this study foregrounded gender and class, it also recognizes the relative underdevelopment of sexuality and LGBTQ plus representation

in the series, a limitation that reflects both the constraints of the text itself and the need for further intersectional inquiry. Addressing these silences underscores hooks' argument that oppression often functions not only through representation, but also through strategic absence.

Hooks opens avenues for deeper self-examination in how individuals and audiences respond to cultures of oppression or, at times, impunity produced by persistent emphases on patriarchy, racism, sexism, and related structures of domination. At the same time, an intersectional reading also requires attention to moments of resistance, negotiation, and agency within oppressive systems. In *Bridgerton*, female characters are not solely passive victims of commodification; rather, they occupy contradictory positions in which conformity, resistance, and self-fashioning coexist, revealing the complexity of agency under constraint. Recognizing these tensions avoids a reductively negative reading and aligns more closely with hooks' insistence on examining both domination and the possibilities for liberation. Moreover, while this study adopts a critical stance toward the series' normalization of patriarchal and class-based logics, it also acknowledges the show's progressive aspirations, particularly in its attempts to diversify representation and reimagine historical narratives. These elements suggest that *Bridgerton* operates within an ambivalent cultural space, one that simultaneously challenges and reproduces dominant ideologies. Engaging these countercurrents allows the analysis to move beyond confirmation of oppression toward a more exploratory critique that accounts for feminist intent, character agency, and varied audience receptions.

Hooks is correct in asserting that the eradication of oppression requires a fundamental shift in perspective. Following her call, feminism must be understood not simply as a struggle for formal equality between women and men, but as a movement committed to ending sexist oppression and exploitation while simultaneously confronting racism, classism, heteronormativity, imperialism, and other interlocking systems of domination. Such a vision expands the ethical and political horizon of feminist critique and challenges audiences to interrogate what they consume, normalize, and reproduce through popular culture. In this sense, applying hooks' framework, even imperfectly, to contemporary media texts such as *Bridgerton* allows for a more reflective engagement with how cultures of oppression persist in subtle and familiar forms. Women, therefore, are not mere commodities within narratives or social structures; they are persons of dignity whose identities, desires, and agencies are shaped but not wholly determined by intersecting conditions of power. This recognition extends beyond women alone, affirming the dignity of all persons. Equality builds justice. Justice diminishes oppression. Only by confronting injustice in its multiple and intersecting forms can societies move toward the emancipatory future that hooks envision.

10. Implications

This philosophical paper contributes to media studies and

feminist scholarship by demonstrating the value of integrating intersectional feminist theory and bell hooks' theory of representation into film and television textual analysis as a sustained analytical framework rather than a supplementary lens. By treating popular media such as *Bridgerton* as a site where gender, class, race, and sexuality are simultaneously negotiated, the study advances critical media analysis beyond surface level representation toward a deeper examination of commodification, power, and audience normalization of inequality. The findings also offer practical implications for media criticism and production by highlighting the need for narratives that foreground intersectional agency rather than symbolic inclusion alone. In this sense, the study encourages scholars, critics, and content creators to adopt more reflexive approaches to representation, thereby contributing to the ongoing development of feminist media theory and expanding its applicability to contemporary popular culture.

Abbreviations

LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual
TV	Television

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Author Contributions

Eric Lumogda Legada: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Resources, Writing – original draft

Daniel Sampag Fernando: Formal Analysis, Supervision, Visualization, Writing – review & editing

Data Availability Statement

The data is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Biography



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Research Field

Eric Lumogda Legada: Philosophy, Theology, Spirituality, Education, Guidance and Counseling

Daniel Sampag Fernando: Social Science, Education, Theology, Philosophy, Religion