

The Displacement of Parody in Six Adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I discuss the influence of the contemporary cultural climate on six *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations. Specifically, I look at how the parody present in Austen's novel is displaced and applied to new targets so as to be better understood by modern audiences.

Before considering the adaptations, I analyse Austen's parodic methods starting with a selection of her juvenilia and ending with her last obviously parodic novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen's technique can be considered adaptations of contemporary authors whose works she relished reading. As *Pride and Prejudice* adapts and modifies a variety of cultural sources, so the subsequent adaptations of the novel derive from multiple sources beyond the novel alone. Indeed, the adaptors of the six works I am discussing draw from many contemporary works in addition to Austen's novel to create unique and culturally relevant parodies.

Starting with the oldest of the six adaptations, I begin by looking at the 1935 play *Pride and Prejudice* written by Helen Jerome and the 1940 film of the same name directed by Robert Z. Leonard. The contemporary popularity of the new genre of romantic comedy influences both adaptations, resulting in works which capitalize on slapstick comedy and double entendres to entertain the audiences.

The next chapter looks at two adaptations that strive to translate Austen's text and achieve fidelity to her novel. The 1995 miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* cuts little from Austen's novel and uses much of the original dialogue to remain faithful to Austen's parody. Though *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* may seem an unlikely faithful adaptation since it adds an entire plot about a zombie plague, the author maintains Austen's parodic targets, using different methods to mock the same aspects of Regency England that Austen satirised and moves beyond to mock the fans of zombie fiction.

Finally, I finish by looking at two of the most modern *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, the 2005 film, *Pride & Prejudice* and the 2009 comic book, *Pride & Prejudice*. These two works most clearly show the influence of the existing canon of Austen adaptations on new adaptations. Both adaptations purposely nod to previous works and then build upon them and contemporary pop culture to create their own interpretation of Austen's parody.

After considering these adaptations of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, I argue that adaptations never use a single source and are created from the contemporary cultural climate and all the relevant works that came before. Austen's novel and her parody cannot be replicated in an adaptation, nor should it be since adaptations cannot be measured by their fidelity to the source. The concept of fidelity must change to include the necessity of alterations when translating between media and cultural periods.

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## CHAPTER ONE: Jane Austen as a Contemporary Adaptor

To see an example of Jane Austen's place in modern pop culture, look to Bridget Jones, the heroine of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, who lives out a modernised version of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. While Bridget experiences the challenges of being an aging singleton in London, she takes part in the fervour surrounding the 1995 miniseries version of *Pride and Prejudice*. As Fielding's novel nears its conclusion, the reader is treated to Bridget watching the finale of the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* miniseries:

8:55 a.m. Just nipped out for fags prior to getting changed ready for BBC *Pride and Prejudice*. Hard to believe there are so many cars out on the roads. Shouldn't they be at home getting ready? Love the nation being so addicted. (246)

Bridget labels the nation obsessed, assuming everyone shares her passion, but as history has shown she is not exaggerating: "40 percent of the United Kingdom's total viewing audience tuned in to witness its happy ending" (Harman 207). Though an entire nation was not addicted, the miniseries' ratings indicate the scale of Austen's popularity. *Bridget Jones's Diary* is an obvious parody of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and a parody of the ecstatic tenor that surrounds her beloved novels with Bridget representing the enthusiastic Austen fanatic. Though *Bridget Jones's Diary* is a modern adaptation that moves Austen's text to a contemporary setting and translates much of the plot and characters into the language of romantic comedy, other adaptations, which attempt authentically to recreate the Regency detail in Austen's novel, can also be viewed as parodies since the adaptors must change Austen's humour to appeal to the modern audience.

Austen adaptations require a thorough study to fully understand their parody since her works parody the literature with which she was familiar and, in turn, the adaptations translate

this parody while producing new targets to mock. *Pride and Prejudice* may not seem the obvious novel to study when looking at parody since Austen wrote *Northanger Abbey* as a marked satire of Gothic novels and *Sense and Sensibility* as a satire of novels of sensibility, but it too mocks novels and other literature popular in Regency England. Fay Weldon calls these novels of sensibility “kitch-lit” because they were seen as only being fit for kitchen maids (forward ix). This name recalls the modern term “chick-lit” which is used to define female-centred novels such as *Bridget Jones’s Diary*.

The definition of a parody is a contentious issue with theories divided on the whether derision is necessary to the process. In this thesis, I will be using an amalgamated definition of parody based on Linda Hutcheon’s and Seymour Chatman’s definitions of the term. Hutcheon defines parody as “repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity” (6) and distinguishes it from the related terms satire and irony. Hutcheon does not see ridicule as part of parody, instead suggesting that parody can also pay homage to the original work: “parody... is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text” (6). Chatman disagrees, arguing that Hutcheon’s definition is potentially reductive, allowing one to label anything a parody (33-34). His definition characterizes “parody as a kind of twitting or rallying of the original, such that even the target, the *parodee*, can admire the accomplishment” (33). Though Chatman’s requirement that a “parodee” should be able to admire the parody could be deemed problematic, I find his use of “twitting or rallying,” which involves gentle mocking to define better the critical approach of a parody. Without requiring broad comedy, Chatman distinguishes parody from satire, which calls for obvious ridicule, and pastiche, which does not necessarily take a critical stance (28). I



combine these views to define parody as a new text that criticizes an existing work by mocking the work's distinguishing characteristics to entertain a knowing audience.

The context of an adapted text provides the main impetus for change between the original source text and an adaptation. As understanding of the original text changes for the reader when it is read outside of its contemporary period, so must the newly produced adaptation also undergo a change of meaning. Even the most faithful adaptation cannot precisely translate *Pride and Prejudice* because the audience's understanding of the text will change the work's reception. Adaptations conform to the new wants of their contemporary audience, and these changes affect every aspect of a text, including characters, plot, setting, and rhetorical devices. Aspects of a novel that significantly rely on context, such as satire, face greater changes when being adapted since the objects of satire and the parody used to form the satire, must shift to find current targets. When considering adaptations of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, one needs to understand Austen's parody, so the objects of satire that shift in the new versions of the novel can be identified. To understand Austen's use of parody, one must look to the development of her writing style throughout her body of work.

Austen's reception as a novelist has changed drastically over the years since her death. Because she began publishing when novels began to achieve respectability as tools to educate the masses, early reviews tended to focus on the moral teachings gleaned from her works. As Mary Waldron notes, critics were slow to acknowledge the artistic value of novels:

More than sixty years after Johnson's authoritative statement in *Rambler* 4 there still lingered a necessity for fiction to appear to preach a direct and unequivocal moral lesson in order to be saved from condemnation as, at best, trivial escapism, at worst, moral depravity. ("Critical" 83)

Response to her first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, illustrates the caution displayed by fellow writers: “Individual readers, as is evinced by a mass of informal comment in letters and diaries, were often intrigued and enthusiastic, but more public commentators, though they invariably wrote anonymously, felt it incumbent upon them to be cautious” (84). This caution led reviewers to focus on the moral worth of Austen’s novels. Waldron criticises one reviewer of *Sense and Sensibility* for “simplify[ing] the novel into a straightforward warning against cads like Willoughby, missing or ignoring the complexity of his character and motivation and the subtleties of the interaction between the two sisters” (84). Accustomed to the more villainous figures seen in courtship novels and novels of sensibility, reviewers seemed willing to ignore sections that show the book’s scoundrel trying to be redeemed. Sir Walter Scott brought attention to Austen’s refusal to succumb to the contrivances of novels from the period in his review of *Emma*:

We, therefore, bestow no mean compliment upon the author of *Emma*, when we say that, keeping close to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of such spirit and originality, that we never miss the excitation which depends upon a narrative of uncommon events, arising from the consideration of minds, manners, and sentiments greatly above our own. (Scott appendix 418)

Scott saw genius in Austen’s style, but it took until the twentieth century for critics to define her works as more than “a refuge for the sensitive when the contemporary world grew too much for them” (Harding 5). Twentieth-century critics D.W. Harding and Marvin Mudrick brought critical focus onto Austen’s ironic voice. In Harding’s article, “Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen,” he asserts Austen used her satire covertly to attack the people and societal

conventions she hated. Her satiric tone allowed her to criticise many social norms. Indeed, Harding argues her writing is ironically “a literary classic of the society which attitudes like hers, held widely enough, would undermine” (6). He examines her critique of a dinner party in *Emma*, noting Austen’s last comment, “nothing worse than everyday remarks, dull repetitions, old news, and heavy jokes,” could be interpreted less as casual sarcasm and more as “a disintegrating attack upon the sort of social intercourse they have established for themselves” (11). His criticism moves to dispel the already established image of Austen as a nostalgic raconteur. Adding to this interpretation of Austen as an acerbic wit, Mudrick, aims to dispel the image “of the author as the gentle-hearted chronicler of Regency order” (vii). He sums up her approach as such:

She was interested in a person, an object, an event, only as she might observe and recreate them free of consequences, as performance, as tableau: her frame was comedy, her defining artistic impulse was irony. (Mudrick 3)

This description hints at Austen’s ever-present instinct to judge the world around her. Mudrick’s frank definition of her writing methods indicates an author concentrating on exposing the hypocrisies of her social world. Harding and Mudrick affirm that Austen’s brilliance could be credited to her observant nature and an unrestrained judgmental impulse she exercised by mocking society.

Influenced by the literary context of the period, Austen began her writing career with clear intentions to satirise the ridiculous and foolish elements in texts both modern and classic. As Mudrick notes, “At fourteen, Jane Austen saw her target—the books and their audience—clearly” (4). Her juvenilia includes a mock history of England and several short stories that satirise sentimental fiction. Though Austen did not directly engage with historical events in her

novels, her early satire shows a keen interest and understanding of English history. In *The History of England from the reign of Henry the 4<sup>th</sup> to the death of Charles the 1st*, Austen lampoons dry English history texts by offering wry commentary on various historical figures. Lest someone were to mistakenly read her writing as sincere, she signs the work, “By a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian” (Austen *Complete Works* 138). In the section devoted to Queen Elizabeth I, Austen recounts the injustices suffered by Mary and aims to “[do] away every Suspicion & every doubt which might have arisen in the Reader’s mind, from what other Historians have written of her” (Austen *Complete Works* 146). Austen focuses her sarcasm on beloved English historical figures fawned over in contemporary texts. Another of Austen’s pieces of short fiction, an epistolary story titled “Love and Friendship,” finds its satiric targets in the courtship novels of the time. The hero and heroine, young lovers on the run, face an unbelievable number of hardships before the tragic demise of the young man and the reputation of the young woman almost being ruined. Austen especially enjoys mocking the delicate heroine, Laura, who is overcome by news of any kind:

But no Edward appeared. In vain did we count the tedious moments of his absence – in vain did we weep – in vain even did we sigh – no Edward returned. – This was too cruel, too unexpected a blow to our gentle sensibility – we could not support it – we could only faint. (Austen *Complete Works* 89)

Her satire is peppered with puns (“we could not support it – we could only faint”) to add to the broad comedy. The narrators of her juvenilia are more openly sarcastic and comedic than those of her novels, illustrating her initial writing interests laid in satire. Austen’s satiric talent continues to be present in her first novels, *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Though Austen's ironic narrator is present in all her novels, the obvious satire lessened as she developed her writing style. Indeed, *Pride and Prejudice* tends to seem more a romance than a parody compared with Austen's earlier, more satirical novels, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*. The reception of Austen's second published novel was met with mostly warm praise upon its issuance. Critics applauded *Pride and Prejudice* "which rises very superior to any novel we have lately met with in the delineation of domestic scenes" (qtd in Morrison 56). Reader Annabella Milbanke<sup>1</sup> shared in the positive opinion of Austen's domestic scenes and familiar characters, calling *Pride and Prejudice* "a very superior work" and "the most *probable* fiction [she has] ever read" (56 emphasis mine). Robinson agreed, praising "the perfectly colloquial style of the dialogue" (57). Even the criticism noted the authentic domestic scenes Austen created: "however natural the picture of vulgar minds and manners is there given, it is unrelieved by the agreeable contrast of more dignified and refined characters" (Davy 57). These contemporary critics read *Pride and Prejudice* as a variation, not a parody, of the domestic novels being produced in the early nineteenth century. Modern critic, Robert Irvine agrees, considering *Pride and Prejudice* the novel that shows Austen's break with her earlier, more obviously parodic, novels:

*Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* in particular are often understood as early experiments, starting from a negative movement of parody or satire of other types of writing (the Gothic novel and the cult of sensibility) while also reaching towards the more positive achievement of the later novels. *Pride and Prejudice*, on the other hand, though begun very early in Austen's career, seems a perfectly realized work in its own

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<sup>1</sup> Annabella Milkbanke was the wife of Lord Byron. Known for her intelligence and charitable interests, she had a great interest in the literature of the time (Pierson).

right; yet it is often seen as lacking in the high moral seriousness of vision that begins with *Mansfield Park*. (39)

Though *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* are singled out in the consideration of Austen's parody, *Pride and Prejudice* still contains a significant amount of satire on other genres of writing, such as sentimental novels, courtship novels, and the conduct literature of her time.

Austen often found her satiric targets in the popular literature of Regency England. She borrows plot conventions from sentimental novels, such as Frances Burney's *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, but moves them into a familiar world and lets them progress with realistic problems and solutions. Looking at Austen's approach in different terms, one sees she was an adaptor, borrowing material from literature of her time and transforming it by repositioning it into familiar situations. Every adaptor who has used her material as a source has repeated this process: recognising the satire present in her novel and creating new and relevant targets of satire fit for contemporary audiences. Far from misrepresenting Austen's work, adaptations can be seen as fitting tributes to her artistic process.

Austen's reading preferences naturally influenced her own work, and provided objects of parody for her writing. She read and, more important, enjoyed<sup>2</sup> the popular fiction of her time, but she overcomes her affection for authors such as Charlotte Smith and Frances Burney,

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<sup>2</sup> In one of Austen's letters to her niece, Anna, a budding novelist, Austen facetiously comments on her own taste in novels:

Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones. -- It is not fair. -- He has Fame & Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths. -- I do not like him, & do not mean to like Waverley if I can help it -- but fear I must. -- I am quite determined however not to be pleased with M<sup>rs</sup> West's Alicia de Lacy, should I ever meet with it, which I hope I may not. -- I think I *can* be stout against any thing written by M<sup>rs</sup> West. -- I have made up my mind to like no Novels really, but Miss Edgeworth's, Yours & my own. (Austen *Complete Works* 277)

mocking the sentimental tropes of their novels. Loraine Fletcher, in her introduction to Smith's *Celestina*, lists characteristics of sentimental and courtship novels:

The courtship novel, which centres on a young girl's entrance into adult society and her choice among competing suitors, was the most popular narrative pattern for fiction of its day, and allowed great flexibility. Its tone is often satiric: the narrator and the heroine use their wit to discriminate among varied characters and customs. Often the heroine is herself the object of narrative irony, only at the end learning to judge like the narrator. (9)

Although there are similarities between these novels and Austen's works, Austen distinguishes her works by setting them in familiar, plausible situations. While courtship novels, including *Celestina*, rely on a "Cinderella" story line where the young, virtuous, and poor heroine is found to be a rich aristocrat (9-10), Austen grounds *Pride and Prejudice* in a less unequal scenario where the hero and heroine represent two parts of a larger social class. Elizabeth is not as wealthy or noble as Darcy, yet as she informs Lady Catherine, "He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal" (357). Much as later adaptors of her works change settings and time periods when adapting her novels, Austen transplanted qualities from her favourite novels into more likely settings and plots.

By limiting time spent on sentimental moments, Austen provides romance without the pathos associated with courtship novels or novels of sentiment. Austen eviscerates her society with specific emphasis on the expected docility of females. Fletcher's discussion of the satire in *Sense and Sensibility* describes Austen's technique:

This is a critique of the cult of sensibility, though of much else besides. The lines of demarcation and balance of sympathy between self-control and impulse in Austen's first published novel will always be matters of debate. But in general, as noted, novels of

sensibility privileged feeling over reason and restraint, rejecting the rules and customs of an older generation. And in general, Austen's novel is understood to reassert reason and a traditional Christian self-control. (38)

To achieve this satire of the overly emotional popular fiction of her time, Austen polishes the parodic methods she developed in her juvenilia. Her targets had long been found in the fiction and non-fiction that was read by her family. Mark Schorer delves into Austen's reading history, highlighting areas of influence on the developing writer:

Jane Austen's reading appears to have been moderately wide but chiefly it was in the literature of her own century and in the writing of her contemporaries. Her favorites seem to have been Cowper and Crabbe among the poets, Dr. Johnson, above all, among the essayists (and her mind was in some ways not unlike his), perhaps Richardson among the novelists, although there she read indiscriminately the best and the worst as well. This was, indeed, a family that delighted in novels. (72)

Austen's reading background provided her with influences as well as many targets for her own fiction. She scavenged what she read for her own writings, and as Isobel Grundy notes, "she looked for what she could use – not by quietly absorbing and reflecting on it, but by actively engaging, rewriting and often mocking it" (190). Janet Todd's definition of sentimental literature helps to illuminate the traits Austen would eventually mock in her own works:

The arousal of pathos through conventional situations, stock familial characters and rhetorical devices is the mark of sentimental literature. Such literature buttonholes the reader and demands an emotional, even physical response. (2)

Though she read sentimental fiction at its height in the late eighteenth century, she chose to write her novels in a different style. Schorer identifies sentimental literature as the target of Austen's



earliest writing:

She chose first of all the path of literary burlesque, burlesque of that popular and sentimental fiction with which her whole family was familiar, of literary stereotypes and of irrational but possibly powerful clichés of feeling, of the whole emphasis on the importance of feeling unfettered by reason which was so much the substance of the sentimental novel at the end of the century. (73)

Her early burlesques were direct parodies of the sentimental novels, but also served to train her ironic and often comic style of writing, which is present in her later satiric novels.

The key to Austen's satiric methods can be found in the realism of her novels. They depict situations familiar to her readers, and inspiration for her plots and characters could be found in the society in which she travelled. Indeed, Austen's letters are filled with descriptions of acquaintances whose words and actions seem familiar to an Austen reader. Writing to her sister, Cassandra, Austen describes a bride whose character is reminiscent of Mrs. Elton from *Emma*:

What an alarming Bride M<sup>rs</sup> Col<sup>l</sup> Tilson must have been! Such a parade is one of the most immodest peices of Modesty that one can imagine. To *attract* notice could have been her only wish. -- It augurs ill for his family -- it announces not *great* sense, & therefore ensures boundless Influence. (Austen *Complete Works* 168)

In another letter, Austen gives advice to her niece, Anna, who is writing a novel: "Henry Mellish I am afraid will be too much in the common Novel style -- a handsome, amiable, unexceptionable Young Man (such as do not much abound in real Life) desperately in Love, & all in vain" (*Works* 277). Her focus on "real Life" and disdain for the "common Novel style" becomes evident in her own novels, which use familiarity to help readers identify with her fiction. Waldron discusses why readers are unable to identify with heroines of sentimental

fiction, such as Burney's *Cecilia*: "It is a fine and gripping story, but we are compassionate witnesses rather than sharers of Cecilia's distress; her experiences are too extraordinary for the reader absolutely to identify with her" (*Jane Austen* 38). Austen provides the familiar situations needed to create empathy with the heroine and allows the readers to question the heroine's motivations and actions as they might question their own. To engage the reader of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen creates a likable, intelligent, and thoroughly modern heroine, Elizabeth, who defines a new tradition for heroines.

Elizabeth not only defies conventions for sentimental heroines, she also resists the image of the proper woman outlined in conduct literature such as Dr. Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*. As Waldron suggests, Elizabeth is a new type of heroine, who exists as an antithesis to previous heroines:

Elizabeth departs quite startlingly from the Gregory – and the Burney – ideal. She is far from silent, frequently pert (at least by contemporary fictional standards) openly challenging to accepted authority, and contemptuous of current decorums (her wild and muddy walk to Netherfield has often been commented on). (41)

Austen builds her story around this female character who is indebted to the conventional heroines and female images that predate her, but also reflects the state of contemporary women. Elizabeth becomes a tool to deliver Austen's satiric attack on the conventions of her time, and more specifically the conventions present in the publications of her time. It is not only the women of Austen's social environment that she wants to mock, but also how these women are portrayed in fiction and non-fiction.

Austen uses the contrast between sentimental fiction and realism to satirise the incredible situations and overly simplified resolutions of sentimental plots. Waldron highlights these

differences, focusing on the familiar situations of the Bennet sisters:

Because the question [of marriage] does not revolve around enormous inheritances and eccentric wills, but the ordinary prosaic decisions of the gentry families, the exploration can be much more detailed and complex than in Burney and leave the girls, particularly, with a far more convoluted set of options. (43)

Though Waldron sees Austen as removing the unbelievable aspects of the Bennet daughters' marriages, the complications the girls must deal with do not seem realistic when considered as a whole. Austen is still writing a novel and realizes the value of adventure in love. However, by creating realistic obstacles to love such as family feuds, class differences, and the situation of older siblings, rather than the "enormous inheritances and eccentric wills," Austen creates a plot that parodies these unrealistic difficulties by comparing them to their more realistic counterparts.

It is not only the women and nonsensical plots of sentimental novels that become the targets of Austen's parody, but the men as well. Though Elizabeth is considered an unconventional eighteenth-century heroine, Mr. Darcy can arguably be viewed as a traditional sentimental hero. Considering the novel's history, Kenneth Moler argues that *Pride and Prejudice* has its heritage in late eighteenth-century literature:

Jane Austen is not merely rewriting *Cecilia*, but manipulating a character-type and a situation made familiar to her audience in various novels by Richardson and Fanny Burney-and in numerous works by their imitators as well. (496)

The "character-type" Moler focuses on throughout his paper is that of the patrician hero, whom he defines as "a picture of perfection, a paragon among men-at least in the eyes of his heroine and his author. He is handsome, well-born, rich; yet he is wise and good" (496). Darcy shares some if not all of these qualities, or develops them by the end of the novel, but Austen also

includes several less admirable qualities that move Darcy from the often-ridiculous world of sentimental fiction and place him in a situation more familiar to the reader.

Yet, the purpose of Darcy's flaws is contentious. Moler goes on to suggest, that although Darcy at times comes close to an image of patrician perfection, his exaggerated conception of the importance of his advantages, his supercilious determination "to think well of myself, and meanly of others" who are not so fortunate that causes him at times to sound very much like a caricature of the Burney-Richardson hero" (499).

Darcy appears to be a patrician hero, but his flaws show him to be a parody of the patrician hero. Moler believes Darcy's imperfections reflect Austen's inability to reconcile a hero who is faithful to yet also parodies the sentimental tradition:

If we postulate an origin in parody for Darcy and assume that he was later subjected to a refining process, the early, exaggerated displays of rudeness can be explained as traces of the original purely parodic figure that Jane Austen was not able to manage with complete success. (502)

For Moler, Darcy is both a sincere patrician hero and a parody of that patrician hero. He does not find an explanation that unites these two sides of Darcy; thus, he must be an uneasy combination who changes identities throughout the novel.

The explanation for Darcy's changing behaviour that Moler does not consider is his placement as a realistic hero. Waldron attempts an explanation, which declares Darcy an "insecure hero" who must overcome his faults to become an equal match to the "confident heroine" (*Jane Austen* 51). Describing Darcy's position as a young man with a great amount of responsibility, Waldron suggests his insecurity is bred from a need for control while his values

are being shaken: “His notions of how he should behave and how people should behave to him are shown to be based on assumptions about rank and status which are under vigorous attack” (51). Though this dissection of Darcy’s character proves him to be a good man throughout who learns from the heroine to become more human, Waldron sees his presence as a target of parody when he is compared to the perfect male of conduct literature. As Waldron notes, Darcy upholds some of the male expectations listed in Chesterfield’s *Letters to his Son*, a conduct manual aimed at young men, such as a distaste for dancing, “a trifling, silly thing,” and “illiberal” laughter, but refuses to commit to the insincere flattery that Chesterfield recommends for ingratiating oneself to a crowd (53). Though Darcy may embody Chesterfield’s definition of good company, “people of considerable birth, rank and character,” he lacks many of the social graces outlined by the author (23). Chesterfield considers “Inattention to persons speaking” one of the greatest social sins:

There is nothing so brutally shocking, nor so little forgiven, as a seeming inattention to the person who is speaking to you; and I have known many a man knocked down for a much slighter provocation than that inattention which I mean. (32-33)

As Darcy concedes, “I certainly have not the talent which some people possess of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done” (Austen 199). Darcy falls below the standard of the patrician hero because he refuses to be insincere and has realistic flaws. As Austen produced a heroine who defies and parodies novelistic conventions, she also created a new type of hero who does the same.

Austen’s treatment of male conduct literature is overshadowed by her clear attack on conventions of female conduct literature, especially the advice given in Dr. Gregory’s *A Father’s*

*Legacy to His Daughters*. Gregory spends much of his book attempting to teach his daughters what to expect as they grow into adulthood and the rules that should govern them in a variety of social situations. When he speaks of love, he provides a systematic outline of how love should develop between young ladies and gentlemen:

Some agreeable qualities recommend a gentleman to your common good liking and friendship. In the course of his acquaintance, he contracts an attachment to you. When you perceive it, it excites your gratitude; this gratitude rises into a preference perhaps at last advances to some degree of attachment, especially if it meets with crosses and difficulties; for these, and a state of suspense, are very great incitements to attachment, and are the food of love in both sexes. (80-82)

Austen mocks this charting of the development of love, but at the same time Jane Bennet seems to follow this route to love with precision. Though most of Austen's characters defy these stringent expectations, she does allow that for some characters, Gregory correctly identifies the course of love.

This section of the *Legacy* also provides fodder for one of Mr. Bennet's speeches. Mr. Bennet, though most often a vehicle for the delivery of satiric barbs, becomes an object of parody when he echoes Dr. Gregory's own views on love. His statement that "next to being married, a girl likes to be crossed in love a little now and then" summarises Gregory's opinion about "crosses and difficulties" and this statement aligns him with this watchful parental figure (Austen 167). The irony, of course, is that Mr. Bennet is anything but watchful, and though, like Gregory, he may dispense fatherly advice, he does not actually follow it. Austen does not simply use Mr. Bennet to mock Gregory, she also uses the *Legacy* to stress Mr. Bennet's ineptitude as a father figure.

Similarly, Austen uses Gregory's focus on gratitude in the development of attachment to both mock his rigid description of love as well as develop the realism within her novel. It is gratitude that leads to Elizabeth's attachment to Darcy, but unlike the gratitude for attention that Gregory speaks of, Elizabeth is initially disgusted by Darcy's attention and only develops her attachment when he legitimates her sister's marriage, thus earning her sincere gratitude for his actions.

Lydia is a clear example of a female character Gregory could never admire. In his book, Gregory promotes an ideal image of women who possess "a native dignity in ingenuous modesty, ... which is [their] natural protection from the familiarities of men" (43). Lydia does not seem to possess this "native dignity" for she revels in shocking her family and friends with her wild displays and inappropriate conversation. More shocking is the description of her married existence at the end of the novel. Gregory argues that a woman who displays such indelicate behaviour will come to an unpleasant end:

The sentiment, that a woman may allow all innocent freedoms, provided her virtue is secure, is both grossly indelicate and dangerous, and has proved fatal to many of your sex. (44)

At the end of the novel, the Wickhams are far from happy: "His affection for her soon sunk into indifference; her's lasted a little longer" (Austen 384). Yet, by availing themselves of the generosity of the Bingleys and Elizabeth, they are hardly suffering for their misdeeds. Rather than punish Lydia and Wickham for their indiscretions, Austen provides a realistic ending for them, upending the idea that immoral behaviour necessitates a grisly punishment.

Gregory's words are most effectively conveyed through Austen's characters, Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins. Both give speeches that closely resemble advice from the *Legacy* and

indicate their familiarity with conventions espoused by conduct literature and conservative notions of marriage. When Charlotte warns Elizabeth that Jane must secure the connection with Bingley and fall in love later, she could be reading directly from Dr. Gregory's manual for success. Speaking of the place of love in a marriage, he states that

[a] man of taste and delicacy marries a woman because he loves her more than any other.

A woman of equal taste and delicacy marries him because she esteems him, and because he gives her that preference. (83)

This unequal relationship forces the woman into the role of the beloved who can only passively accept love. This cynical view suggests that Charlotte's opinions were perhaps coloured by her cultural context where this type of advice would more readily be given and accepted without question. Readers consider the truth of Charlotte's views and contrast them with the questioning Elizabeth.

Mr. Collins also avidly reads and consults conduct literature to steer his actions and thoughts. Though he often refers to many texts of which he is familiar, it is his continual insistence that Elizabeth's refusal of his marriage proposal reflects the "true delicacy of female behaviour" that reveals his literary background includes conduct literature (139):

I am not now to learn... that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even a third time. (Austen 138)

Mr. Collins's statements show his mean understanding of proposals in life outside of conduct literature. He cannot believe in Elizabeth's refusal because the literature did not prepare him for such an event. Austen satirizes these assumed conventions, again showing how differently Gregory's situations can occur in a more realistic situation.



In the end, Charlotte and Mr. Collins's marriage, although not outwardly happy, does seem to satisfy them and proves following conduct literature can lead to success. Austen uses this example to mock the ideas in Gregory's book as well as show that those who follow such advice may get appropriately rewarded. Readers may laugh at or pity them, but they are still content with their situation. Indeed, Austen's writing seems to argue against the *execution* of Gregory's suggestions rather than the values behind them. She mocks his vocabulary, repurposing it for humorous means, but cannot mock his intentions or deny that there is some wisdom in his words.

Austen's use of parody to satirise marriage and the sexes in her contemporary period reflects her deep understanding of the influence of cultural context. She adapts this context for use in her novels, parodying the familiar for the enjoyment of her readers. Adaptors of *Pride and Prejudice* must also be aware of the current cultural context, so they can change the parody to suit their own audiences. This displacement of parody will indicate where the important cultural issues of these various periods lie. The translation of parody becomes especially difficult when Austen's novel is adapted into a new medium, bringing with it a host of concerns.

The relationship between novels and adapted works has produced a long critical history that focuses on the challenges and advantages of translating a work from one medium to another. Critics and artists have addressed these challenges by developing the relatively new field of adaptation studies. This field has produced various schools with two of the most well-defined groups of theorists being semioticians and narratologists. Kamilla Elliot defines the two factions' philosophies in her review of the history of adaptation studies:

At the heart of the novel and film debate lies a particularly perplexing paradox: on one side, novels and films are diametrically opposed as "words" and "images," at war both

formally and culturally. ... On the other side of the paradox, novels and films are integrally related as sister arts sharing formal techniques, audiences, values, sources, archetypes, narrative strategies, and contexts (1).

George Bluestone, a notable semiotician, declared, “that changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium. ... The film becomes a different *thing* in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event which it illustrates” (5). Bluestone’s focus on the medium of language argues meaning is found in the medium. A half century later, Brian Mcfarlane paraphrases Bluestone’s theory as “the overt compatibility but secret hostility between novel and film” (4). Mcfarlane acknowledges the differences between the literary and filmic languages often lead to films being maligned when compared to their literary sources. In defense of film, he stresses the diverse nature of film gives filmmakers narrative strategies that rival and surpass literary strategies (4). Considering the uniquely filmic qualities of mise-en-scène, editing, and soundtrack, Mcfarlane calls for “the abandoning of the fidelity approach in favor of a more productive invoking of intertextuality, and the attention to what makes for such qualities as subtlety and complexity in film rather than complaining of the loss of what is peculiar to literature” (13). The move to look at adaptations as works created from and influenced by many media and sources is producing a new vein in adaptation studies, one that focuses on more than merely fidelity.

By acknowledging the influence of works other than only the text being adapted, one can move beyond the importance of fidelity in adaptation studies. Robert Stam, looking at the translation of novel to film, acknowledges the tendency to judge a film based on its fidelity to source material, but he dislikes terms such as “infidelity” and “betrayal” which often accompany a critical pan of an adaptation. Stam sees flaws in the underlying assumption that a novel has a

single meaning to which a film must be faithful since “there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can trigger a plethora of possible readings” (15). To describe what he sees as a symbiotic relationship between source material and adaptation, Stam uses the term “transtextuality” which he borrows from Gérard Genette’s discussion of intertextuality. Specifically, Stam focuses on hypertextuality, one of Genette’s types of transtextuality, which “refers to the relation between one text, which Genette calls ‘hypertext,’ to an anterior text or ‘hypotext,’ which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends” (31). The hypertext can indeed have a relationship with several hypotexts, which can be made up of the source material and previously produced adaptations of that source material (Stam 31). A novel that has been repeatedly adapted “can come to form a larger, cumulative hypotext available to the filmmaker who comes relatively ‘late’ in the series” (31). Stam emphasises there being no one hypotext for a film, but many texts that all contribute to the adaptation:

Film adaptations, then, are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin. (31)

The later adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, the 1995 miniseries, the 2005 film, the 2009 mash-up, and the 2009 comic book series, are clearly caught up in this process and are not merely adaptations of the novel. This process of new adaptations using previous adaptations as sources in addition to the original material of the novel happens more often with the growing number of adaptations from which to choose. Thus, the 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* draws from the 1940 Robert Z. Leonard adaptation of the novel, the 1995 miniseries, and other grittier BBC dramas from the early millennium such as *Bleak House*; and the 2009 comic book series in turn is

greatly influenced by the 2005 film. Both the 2005 film and the 2009 comic book draw so extensively on the cumulative hypotext of previous *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations that they parody these adaptations rather than the original text. The 1995 film and 2009 mash-up do not obviously look to previous adaptations, but both are born out of a cultural climate steeped in Austen-related media. They must hold up under the scrutiny of the Janeites<sup>3</sup>. Taken as a whole, the canon of Austen adaptations, expansions, sequels, and reimaginings showcase an endless chain of intertextual processes.

Though Genette's terms refer to the influence of other texts on a new work, Stam also sees the consideration of the historical context of a film's production as significant when studying an adaptation:

Since adaptations engage the discursive energies of their time, they become a barometer of the ideological trends circulating during the moment of production. Each re-creation of a novel for the cinema unmasks facets not only of the novel and its period and culture of origin, but also of the time and culture of the adaptation. (45)

Linda Hutcheon also sees the extensive influence of the "time and culture of the adaptation," but she terms this type of contextual influence "reception context" (146). Hutcheon's use of the term "reception" indicates the importance of the role of the audience when creating an adaptation. The audience does not merely take in the finished product, but also molds the adaptation as it develops.

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<sup>3</sup> "Janeites" is a colloquial term used when referring to particularly avid Jane Austen fans who tend to consume anything Austen-related, be it films, novel sequels, comic books, documentaries, collectibles, books or blogs. The fanaticism extends to the thorough knowledge of Austen's works and life, which, according to Lynch, creates a righteousness specifically seen in Janeites: "Indeed, a customary method of establishing one's credentials as a reader of Austen has been to regret that others simply will insist on liking her in inappropriate ways" (7).

When approaching these six adaptations and considering what they say about the original text, and more specifically what they do with the satire present in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, I also consider the influence of previous adaptations and the cultural context in which the new adaptations are produced. These considerations show that Austen's novels are frequently adapted because their acerbic wit inspires others to attempt to create their own social satires and aspire to her legacy. Since I have outlined the parody in Austen's novel, I now look at the parody in six of these *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations. The six adaptations are Jerome's 1935-36 stage production, the 1940 Robert Z. Leonard film, the 1995 miniseries, the 2005 film, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and the 2009 comic book series. The creators of these six parodies keep, or attempt to keep, many of Austen's stylistic traits along with storyline, characters, and the Regency England setting and also attempt to interpret accurately the parody of her novel. The study of adaptations that attempt to be faithful rather than adaptations which modernize story, setting, or characters, allows for a direct comparison of the practice and use of parody between the novel and its descendents. Each chapter focuses on two adaptations. The second chapter compares Jerome's 1935 play and the 1940 Leonard film that followed. Though these two adaptations were produced in a similar time frame, the adaptors channel Austen's humour in widely different ways, one inventing, then mocking, a Regency prudishness and the other modernizing the humour to appeal to 1940 audiences. The third chapter centres on the well-known 1995 BBC/A&E miniseries and the 2009 expansion *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Though similarities between the miniseries, which took painstaking effort to recreate Austen's Regency England, and the novel, which adds zombies and ninjas to Austen's setting, may seem difficult to discern at first, the adaptors strive to adhere to Austen's language and create adaptations which retain a tight focus on the original novel's characteristics, albeit for different

purposes. The fourth chapter features the 2005 Hollywood film *Pride & Prejudice* and the 2009 comic book series also titled *Pride & Prejudice*.<sup>4</sup> These two adaptations use Austen's novel as their source material but also take inspiration from the many *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations that came before. The objects of parody in these works become more difficult to trace since they are influenced by Austen's novel and the canon of adaptations based on her works. By examining these six adaptations, I show how an informed reading of the various approaches to translating Austen's text needs to include their cultural context as well as their place in the oeuvre of Austen adaptations.

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<sup>4</sup> The variation in the adaptations' titles is not a typographical error, but rather a considered choice by the adaptors. The 1995 miniseries uses the same title as the original novel, whereas the 2005 film chooses to use an ampersand: *Pride & Prejudice*. The comic book adaptation likewise uses the ampersand, but *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* retains the formal 'and.' Jerome's play and the 1940 film do likewise. Dole suggests the use of an ampersand indicates the adaptors wish to appeal to younger audiences: "The film's title, which features an ampersand rather than Austen's "and," says it all: *Pride & Prejudice* is somewhere between an adaptation for Janeites and a teen reworking such as Baz Luhrmann's postmodern 1996 rendition of Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers, which signaled its bolder adaptation strategies through its title: *Romeo + Juliet*" (Dole).

## CHAPTER TWO: Adaptations as a Reflection of Contemporary Culture

Two of the earliest adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, Helen Jerome's 1935 play and Robert Z. Leonard's 1940 film, both titled *Pride and Prejudice*, reflect the period in which they were created rather than attempting to reproduce Austen's novel. Although the adaptations take great liberties with Austen's dialogue and plot, they do retain the comedy present in her novel. The adaptors shift the comedic targets dramatically to satirise the society of the adaptations. These two adaptations helped to found the soon-to-be crowded oeuvre of Austen adaptations, and they continue to influence additions to that vaunted group of works.

Though labeling *Pride and Prejudice* a broad comedy would not completely encompass all aspects of Austen's novel, ignoring the similarities it shares with "lower class" entertainments requires ignoring the comic aspects of her novel. Austen is funny. Her work is funny. However, Austen's methods for producing humour from class conflict and miscommunication differ greatly from methods used in adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. Helen Jerome's 1935 play, *Pride and Prejudice*, uses exaggeration and invented dialogue to mock the antiquated social rules of Regency England. Similarly, additions were needed in order to transform Austen's novel into Leonard's 1940 screwball comedy of the same name. The effect of these additions is to alter the novel's comedy since the film satirises the same gender and societal conventions as other screwball comedies of the time. Though these adaptations were created in roughly the same time period, the adaptors handle the parody in Austen's novel differently. Both adaptations change the targets of satire to serve their individual purposes. Jerome's play satirises the audiences' impression of a prudish, repressed Regency England, while Leonard's film chooses to satirise contemporary targets mocked by other screwball comedies of the period.

When finally staged, Helen Jerome's adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was well received by audiences in America, and later England. The process to get this adaptation produced was long and fraught with problems. The first producer to purchase the rights to Jerome's play, Arthur Hopkins, lost the rights because he waited too long in his attempt to secure Katherine Hepburn for the part of Elizabeth – something which was impossible because of her busy acting schedule in Hollywood (“News and Gossip of Times Square” June 23, 1935 X1). After the ownership period ended, theatre producer Max Gordon bought the rights and eventually produced the play after some continued difficulty finding actors to fill the female roles (Bell 7; “News and Gossip of Times Square” Sept 8, 1935 X1). The play opened on October 22, 1935 in Washington D.C. at the National Theater (“Play Opens in Capital” 19). Gordon was proud of his play which because of “massive settings and picturesque costuming of its players... [bore a] striking resemblance to a series of old English prints” (Bell 7). The critics agreed, and the play had a successful opening in Washington (“Play Opens in Capital” 19), followed by another short run in Philadelphia (“News of the Stage” 18) before opening in New York to acclaim (Atkinson 32). Most reviewers announced the play to be a success, describing it as “a literate, witty, and substantial drama” (Bell 7) which was “full of salty lines and... charmingly populated with spirited performers who know how to lard conversation with gleaming malice” (Atkinson 32). Brooks Atkinson addresses Jerome's methods of adapting Austen's rich source material, suggesting, “Miss Jerome's conscientious compression of a long novel into a rapid comedy has the odd effect of animating the story into roguish, witty satire” (32). Though I disagree with Atkinson's opinion that Austen's novel was not already a satire, this quotation does indicate that the audience was aware of the changes made to the novel's satire and parody. In addition to altering the plot, Jerome also alters the satire of Austen's novel, inventing a backwards social



climate of Regency England to produce a broad comedy that emphasises the progress of the early twentieth century.

Austen's novel focuses its satire on sentimental novels and conduct literature, dissecting feminine and masculine ideals and courtship procedures of the Regency era. Jerome's play also uses humour and parody to mock various subjects, but the targets of ridicule differ. Because the play is presented in a context far removed from Austen's time, Jerome's attempts to skewer these same masculine and feminine ideals, courtship rituals, and obsession with class status become attacks on Regency England's perceived prudishness and ignorance. To mock the archaic rules of Austen's time, Jerome oversimplifies and exaggerates several aspects of the novel. The play's opening synopsis plainly states the deplorable situation of the female characters: "Jane, Elizabeth and Lydia are likely-looking girls in an unlikely-looking period when a woman's one possible career is matrimony. To be a wife was a success. Anything else was failure" (Jerome 3). The play implores us to laugh at women's difficult situations in the past. Even an audience containing women who only received the right to vote federally fifteen years earlier could laugh at the idea of marriage as the "one possible career" for a woman. Jerome pointedly blames the time period for the "girls'" situation. The play that follows continues to laugh at out-dated ideas such as these.

Other changes occur by shifting the context of the story. American comedies of the time, whether on stage or screen, often featured rapid dialogue and slapstick humour. As Gerald Weales notes, what distinguishes 1930s comedies "is a kind of energy, the frenzied force that carries the characters through the intricacies of plot. They depend for laughs often on physical business rather than on lines" (65). Jerome's *Pride and Prejudice: A Sentimental Comedy* provides physical comedy, but also relies on its lines to get laughs. This emphasis on language

may be the result of its source material. Austen's novels are known for their witty dialogue and only a foolish adaptor would let her lines go to waste. Thus, Jerome's play scours Austen's plot to find ways to include physical and verbal humour. She finds willing candidates in the ridiculous characters of Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet, Miss Bingley, Mr. Bennet, and Lady Lucas.

The adversarial relationship between Mrs. Bennet and Lady Lucas hinted at in the novel and mostly indulged by Mrs. Bennet produces entertaining exchanges in Jerome's play about their favourite possessions – their daughters. Mrs. Bennet's scheming comprises most of the maternal competition in the novel. She pressures Mr. Bennet to visit the new, single, male tenant of Netherfield because she fears "Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on [their daughters'] account, for in general you know they visit no newcomers" (44). She assumes the Lucases are as desperate as she is to get their daughters married. Jerome's play exaggerates the mothers' rivalry and provides Lady Lucas with her own reprisals. The women's polite conversation quickly sours as they discuss their daughters' eligibility for Darcy's hand:

LADY LUCAS. (*Sweetly*) You forget, dear Mrs. Bennet, that since Sir William was knighted by His Majesty, Charlotte has been presented at court. (CHARLOTTE and ELIZABETH exchange looks.)

MRS. BENNET. (*Still more sweetly*) Mr. Bennet was *born* a gentleman, dear Lady Lucas. Isn't it fortunate for us? My girls don't need to be presented. (15)

The exaggerated dialogue and explicit stage directions produce the broad comedy of the scene. Subtlety is undervalued on this stage. Such an aggressive exchange between these two women is not seen in Austen's novel, but it does serve the play's need for laughs. In addition, the argument invites the audience to laugh at the specific social requirements that a woman must meet to invite

interest from a man. The degrees of noble birth and the hierarchy of Regency England would seem quaint to a 1930s American audience unfamiliar with the formality of English customs.

Another source of laughter comes from the battle of the sexes often seen in 1930s comedies. Jerome's characters argue the virtues and vices of men and women for comedic effect. Elizabeth attacks the apparent obstinacy of men, asking, "Why don't you know *yet* that men instinctively *refuse* everything we ask them to do—and end by doing it?" (16). After correctly guessing her father's actions, she proves her point gloating, "You see, one can always tell what they will do" (17). These good-natured jabs at Mr. Bennet show the comedic convention of a woman using her wits to outsmart the opposite sex. But Mr. Bennet is not the only Bennet to stand wholly for his sex; Mrs. Bennet, throughout the play, constantly provides humour by showcasing her ridiculous feminine vanity. Her family openly mocks Mrs. Bennet's sudden change of opinion about Mr. Collins once he shows interest in her daughters:

LYDIA. He sounds to me a bit of an ass.

MRS. BENNET. Now, Lydia, my love, is that a nice way to speak of a clergyman? (ALL *laugh at her sudden change of front.*)

LYDIA. I thought I heard you refer to him as an odious creature a few minutes ago, Mama?

BENNET. That, my dear, antedated his becoming a matrimonial prospect.

Mrs. Bennet proves to be vain and fickle. The comments are made jokingly, but she continues to stand for women's insincerity. Upon Mr. Collins's arrival, she accepts and matches his flattery, hoping he will not feel awkward about the state of the inheritance:

Ah, sir, 'tis a grievous affair—not that I blame *you*. Far from it! We all know who is to blame. (MRS. BENNET *looks knowingly at BENNET; he places his finger to his lips to caution her to be quiet.*) (27)

Given that the discovery of the sex-determining y chromosome came in 1905, Mrs. Bennet is likely making a gauche joke about Mr. Bennet's seed causing his fortune to be entailed away (Brush 163). Again, Mrs. Bennet's actions would be considered obnoxious in any context, but her fussing over an estate that cannot be inherited by women makes the old-fashioned laws look severe. Though Jerome's Mrs. Bennet is more brazen than Austen's original, she also appears to be less ignorant about the entailment. She confidently ridicules these antiquated rules of inheritance and shows a clear understanding of whom she can hold accountable for her lack of a son.

The 1935 play also attacks the supposed Regency Era view that women should conceal their intelligence because it detracts from their femininity. As Irvine notes in his introduction to the Broadview edition of the novel, "philosophy, history, and religion, let alone the developing natural sciences, were seen as a distinctively masculine preserve" (21). In an exchange between Elizabeth and Miss Bingley, the women ridicule each other's opinion about women's education:

ELIZABETH. (*Turns to MISS BINGLEY*) Didn't you ever learn any biology?

MISS BINGLEY. I hope I was never so unfeminine! (*CHARLOTTE and*

ELIZABETH *exchange glances. With distaste*) I'm told you are clever—and read books on subjects that only belong to gentlemen. Well, it won't get you very far. (*Looks at DARCY.*)

The exchange invites the audience to laugh at this scene, which showcases Miss Bingley's misogyny and enhances her role as a villain. Jerome inflates this Regency Era idea, so she can

satirise Austen's society. The overstatement shows Jerome is more interested in mocking Austen's era than reproducing the parody and satire of Austen's novel. In her novel, Austen also challenges the idea that women should not display their cleverness, having Elizabeth refuse to apologize after Lady Catherine De Bourgh accuses her of "[giving her] opinion very decidedly for so young a person" (191). Jerome exaggerates Austen's premise, showing Elizabeth to have a decided opinion on a contemporary issue her audience can relate to – biology. The resulting scene is anachronistic, yet emphasizes the progress of women in American society since the nineteenth century.

Jerome adds sections to the play involving characters not seen in the novel to expand upon this idea of Regency vanity and frivolity. As guests are leaving the Bennet's house after the ball, they discuss local gossip and future plans for entertainment:

YOUNG MAN. Did you hear about Mrs. Long, my dear? She came in a hack chaise!

AMANDA. Isn't it shocking? She has not kept a carriage in a twelve month.

BELINDA. Oh yes, Papa is thinking of fixing in town for the season. He is prodigiously fond of superior society.

2ND YOUNG MAN. And how you will adorn it, Miss Belinda! (45)

The shallowness of the young people's discussions and their unabashed snobbery can only serve to give the audience another example of Jerome's idea of Regency England and give the audience a chance to laugh at their pettiness.<sup>5</sup> This pettiness is particularly incisive given the play's run during the Great Depression.

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<sup>5</sup> Another possibility for the inclusion of this scene is that it is a joke inserted by Jerome for those well read enough to recognise the nod to Pope's Belinda in *Rape of the Lock*.

Mr. Collins gets the honour of becoming a clown figure in Jerome's play. His bumbling and awkwardness provide welcome slapstick and physical comedy. The stage directions introduce Mr. Collins as having "a grave, stately air and ridiculously formal manners" (26). To undermine this initially stiff description, Collins immediately "bows to MRS. BENNET and swings, bowing to include ALL in one sweeping bow" (26). The juxtaposition of these descriptions shows Mr. Collins's inconsistent and insincere character. He seems "grave" and "stately," yet has no scruples about maneuvering to please as many people as possible. Mr. Collins's clownishness creates alternate targets of parody from those seen in Austen's novel. Austen used Mr. Collins to demonstrate the ill effects of conduct literature on men and the problem of reading without careful consideration. Her Mr. Collins uses prepared flattery and precise recitation from books to show the dangers of indiscriminate education. In Jerome's play, Mr. Collins shows little sign of intellectual snobbery other than acting "shocked [and] wounded" at the idea of a novel being read. When Mr. Bennet inquires after the origins of Mr. Collins's compliments, asking "whether it comes naturally, or do you think it out?," Collins responds "No, it is quite natural with me, sir!" (28). In this adaptation, Mr. Collins shows no hubris about his education. He is merely a silly man who says silly things.

To its credit, Jerome's adaptation does keep much of Austen's dialogue and upholds her ironic tone. However, using the same scenes and similar parody, Jerome satirises different targets reflecting the modern humour common to the early twentieth century. The result is a play that mocks the modern perception of "old-fashioned" Regency England and its out-dated rules and lets the audience feel progressive compared to the conservative characters of Austen's novel. It is necessary to look at contemporary culture to appreciate how Jerome adapted *Pride and Prejudice* and created an artistically and financially successful adaptation.

The adaptors of MGM's *Pride and Prejudice* find yet different targets for their satire, upholding the screwball comedy conventions from the 1930s and 1940s. Many stories are attached to the production history of this adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. One undeniable fact is that Helen Jerome's play brought Austen's novel into the minds of Hollywood. As Rachel Brownstein notes, "What gave Harpo Marx the great idea of adapting Jane Austen for the screen was 'a sentimental comedy in three acts' by an Australian named Helen Jerome, a dramatization of *Pride and Prejudice* that he saw in Philadelphia on October 28, 1935" (13). Marx did not end up producing the film, but he acknowledges the tendency to look to the theatre for new film ideas (Keefe M2). Indeed, Jerome's play was filmed by MGM to act as a guide well in advance of the screen production of *Pride and Prejudice* (Crisler X3). In addition to the theatrical influence, the central romance of the novel's plot and the ironic tone provided all the necessary qualities for the popular genre of romantic comedies (Sokol 81). Fulfilling many of Hollywood's desires, *Pride and Prejudice* was released in 1940 with a tag line that focused on the film's broadly comic aspects: "Bachelors Beware! Five Gorgeous Beauties are on a Madcap Manhunt!" (quoted in Brownstein 14). One would have a difficult time finding someone willing to describe Austen's novel in such terms. Though the novel contained the plot points necessary for a romantic comedy, the adaptors made many changes to produce a film that would appeal to audiences.

The film, in fact, could be considered a screwball comedy, created in the 1930s and 1940s. James Harvey argues screwball comedies are the foundation of all contemporary romantic comedies, but he also notes that screwball comedies found their footing in familiar tropes:

There was almost nothing in the screwball mode that wasn't familiar from long usage in theater, vaudeville, pulp fiction, or earlier films. ... Nineteen thirty-four was a turning point, the year when it first began to seem as if the Hollywood movie had *invented*

romantic comedy. Suddenly, in *The Thin Man* and *It Happened One Night* and *The Gay Divorcee*, in actors like Dunne and Lombard and Grant, Powell and Loy and Astaire—all the familiar, borrowed elements came together in combinations so new and fresh, so electric, and so intrinsically movielike that familiarity became revelation. (xi)

The birth of the romantic comedy film during this period still influences films today. As a rule, a screwball comedy has a plot centered on uniting warring lovers facing a variety of problems:

Difficulties in reconciling romantic leads' eccentricities were commonly complicated by other seemingly insurmountable obstacles to their union. Rules, customs, family obligations, romantic rivals – all needed to be circumvented, disregarded, or superseded, often with a cheery vengeance. (Byrge and Miller 3)

*Pride and Prejudice* ably provides these obstacles for the separation of the romantic leads, but what the novel arguably lacks is the over-the-top reactions against these obstacles common to the screwball comedy. The filmmakers' solutions involved taking considerable creative license with the novel and exaggerating the characters' actions to accommodate the screwball standards of behaviour. One notable example occurs at the Assembly Ball where Elizabeth with a cutting remark rejects Mr. Darcy's invitation to dance and moments later accepts Mr. Wickham's invitation, dancing away with the latter gentleman, while Darcy looks on with scorn (*Pride and Prejudice*)<sup>6</sup>. Such action would be insupportable in the novel, yet occurs in the film to produce the necessary laughs and feeling of justice for the viewer.

Additionally, *Pride and Prejudice* proves adaptable for other screwball comedy conventions such as a sudden, and often inexplicable, reversal of feeling at the end of the film. David Shumway offers an additional explanation for the obstacles, which separate the two

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<sup>6</sup> Decorum at the time would require a woman to refrain from dancing if she rejected her first offer of a partner.



lovers, and the unique resolution of screwball comedies: “[a]ll comic endings are resolutions, but the screwball comedies... typically end with a complete reversal for which no plausible explanation is offered” (408). Austen’s novel has a reversal at the end with explanation only offered to and understood by the two lovers, Elizabeth and Darcy. The scene with Lady Catherine de Bourgh that occurs prior to the accepted proposal sets up the implausibility of Elizabeth and Darcy’s engagement. Other characters, such as Jane, upon hearing news of the engagement, bluntly state that the news must be a falsehood: “‘You are joking, Lizzy. This cannot be! – engaged to Mr. Darcy! No, no, you shall not deceive me. I know it to be impossible’” (Austen 371). This impossibility represents the reader’s feeling of confusion as well. The reader and Jane hear Elizabeth’s explanation, but must recall past events to understand her changing opinion of Darcy.

The origins of the lovers’ impediments also differentiate screwball comedies from other comedies. Shumway argues,

In traditional and screwball comedy the end is achieved after obstacles are overcome.

But the obstacles that lovers in traditional comedy must overcome are externally imposed, while in most screwball comedies they are primarily a function of the couple’s own actions. (408)

Shumway’s opinion contradicts Byrge and Miller’s list of obstacles that includes the outside influence of families, social rules, and rival lovers. However, making such generalizations about “most” screwball comedies does not help to narrow the genre’s definition. Shumway’s idea is best considered an additional aspect of the definition. Considering Austen’s novel, I find both external and internal obstacles to Elizabeth and Darcy’s love. In the second proposal scene, they both admit their faults, yet one cannot discredit the influence of the other characters’ actions and

society's influence on their relationship (Austen 366-69). Much like the novel, resolutions in screwball comedies come when one or both of the characters compromise or become aware of their prejudice.

In addition to sharing types of resolutions and obstacles, screwball comedies, like Austen's novel, allow the audience to participate in the main characters' questioning of the accepted rules of society. In these comedies, "when the screwball hero and heroine took on the world, they did so not in a crusade of reform, but in a delirious spirit of self-survival, in some measure creating in the process a new and private world of their devising" (3). As the hero and heroine redefine their own social rules, the audience takes pleasure from seeing the characters do something they would not. Part of the enjoyment one gets from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* comes from Elizabeth and Darcy's unconventional courtship. Like the characters of a screwball comedy, Elizabeth and Darcy devise their own process and find a unique way to happiness. Byrge and Miller go on to suggest that the affection audiences feel for screwball heroes and heroines "[is] due in part to the marvelous independence they [display] in regard to their surroundings" (4). Again, the screwball genre exaggerates this independence seen in the novel to fulfill its own requirements, but Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* still provides the necessary theme. In the novel, Elizabeth's witty and sharp banter separates her from other female characters. She openly criticises Darcy's opinion of "poetry as the *food of love*" at the Meryton Ball:

Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Every thing nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away. (Austen 81)

Elizabeth takes pleasure arguing as Darcy's equal and silencing those around her. The Elizabeth in the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* also readily shares her quick wit at the Meryton Ball,

sarcastically calling Darcy “a charming man” and “an arrogant, detestable snob.” The film exaggerates Elizabeth’s sardonic behaviour. Later Elizabeth agrees with Wickham’s slander of Darcy, stating, “without knowing anything about it, I’m on your side” (*Pride and Prejudice*). The screenwriter does not give consequence to Austen’s careful depiction of Elizabeth as witty, but not unmannerly, and instead, has her behave rudely and celebrate her ignorance. Mocking and exaggerating Elizabeth’s character instead of showing her as having human and youthful flaws, the filmmakers create a modernised, more foolhardy version of Elizabeth.

Another characteristic shared by Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and a screwball comedy is the questioning of class conflict. The difference in the screwball hero and heroine’s social levels provides another type of obstacle for their union. By overcoming their social differences, the hero and heroine defy society. Byrge and Miller see this challenge to society accomplished through the genre’s comedy:

Screwball comedy generated part of its dramatic interest from subverting historic and contemporary class conflicts, subsuming them into the disarming dialectic of sexual attraction versus sexual tension. If one of the lovers was from a lower class than the other, their very social polarities enhanced their state of sexual differentiation; the opposites attracted in more ways than one. (4)

*Pride and Prejudice*’s main romance between Elizabeth and Darcy clearly shows the barrier of class differences can easily be overcome by sexual attraction and love. Yet the film exaggerates the class difference to accommodate this requirement. The film changes one of Austen’s most famous lines uttered by Mr. Darcy, “I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men,” to “I’m in no humour tonight to be of consequence to the middle classes at play” (Austen 51; *Pride and Prejudice*). This statement, uttered within

Elizabeth's hearing, impresses upon the viewer the class difference between the main characters and labels Darcy a snob, thus increasing the obstacles the lovers must overcome.

Despite its generic similarities to *Bringing Up Baby*, *It Happened One Night*, and *The Philadelphia Story*, all containing a battle of the sexes between two high-spirited characters, surprisingly few critics are willing to apply the label, "screwball comedy," to the 1940 film. Ronnie Sokol calls the film a romantic comedy (81), Rachel Brownstein simply names it a comedy (14), and Ellen Belton refuses to categorize it at all. One exception is Sue Parrill, who notes,

With its warring lovers, witty dialogue, class differences, opportunity for elaborate costumes, and comic minor characters, the novel lends itself to the broadly comic treatment of screwball comedies. (49)

She supports her claim by noting that one of the screenwriters, Jane Murfin, was an experienced screwball comedy writer and that the film was released in 1940 at the height of the screwball comedy's popularity (49). In addition to the contextual similarities, *Pride and Prejudice* contains the quick wit and slapstick comedy seen in quintessential screwball comedies such as *Bringing Up Baby*. Some may hesitate to call Leonard's *Pride and Prejudice* a screwball comedy because it is an adaptation of a canonical piece of literature. Such highbrow fare cannot be brought down and considered among productions of light entertainment meant solely to amuse. Adaptations of famous novels were plentiful in Hollywood at the time. Aldous Huxley adapted a version of *Jane Eyre* prior to working on the script to *Pride and Prejudice*, and Laurence Olivier's previous role was Heathcliff in an adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*. Perhaps Leonard's *Pride and Prejudice* could be labeled a comedy because Austen's novel was considered comedic, but calling it a screwball comedy would have been a degradation of the source material.

By considering Leonard's *Pride and Prejudice* a screwball comedy, we can understand precisely why the parody differs from Austen's novel, and how the targets of satire change to satisfy the contemporary 1940s audience. Screwball comedy's obsession with the battle of the sexes, the changing worldview and class hierarchies simplifies the satiric targets of Austen's novel and results in a film which satirises men, women, snobbery, ignorance and, of course, Mr. Collins.

Anachronistically, *Pride and Prejudice*'s creators depict Austen's England using Victorian clothing and settings, which were more familiar to audiences who had recently seen films such as *Gone With the Wind* set in the late nineteenth century. The film begins with a title card introducing the audience to the film's setting: "It happened in OLD ENGLAND... in the village of Meryton..." (*Pride and Prejudice*). The year remains unspecified, which is a blessing since the audience no longer has to wonder why characters from Austen's 1813 novel are wearing outfits from 1865.<sup>7</sup> Such an anachronism is explained by Rachel King, who notes "MGM's 1940 version of the novel preferred a Victorian treatment, to match public misperception of the look of Regency England" (quoted in Sokol 86). King's argument, also supported by the title card, shows that the film glorifies Americans' perception of quaint, pastoral England. The "old England" to follow must be familiar to the film's audience.

The film's depiction of women reflects the 1940s image of women as single-minded consumers. As Liora Brosh states, "[t]he novel has been re-situated within twentieth century consumer culture, a culture that began in the last part of the nineteenth century and continued into the twenties and the thirties, despite the Depression" (147). The scene's setting is technically

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<sup>7</sup> The change in costuming reflects the popularity of the hoop skirts seen in *Gone With the Wind* released in 1939. See Deborah Cartmell's "Picturing the Past and 'The Charm of Recollection': Cinematic adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, 1940, 2005."

the early nineteenth century, but the filmmakers show the Bennet women shopping to allow the audience to identify better with the characters. The scene that follows involves Mrs. Bennet and Lady Lucas racing each other in carriages to return home and force their husbands to introduce themselves to the new, single man at Netherfield. Mrs. Bennet can be heard to scream out, “Overtake them, Jennings, overtake them!” as the Bennets pass the Lucas’ carriage. Such explicit competition between families reflects Brosh’s idea of “twentieth century consumerist culture” and the one-upmanship of the middle classes. This competition is also present between Mr. Bennet and Lady Lucas in Jerome’s play, suggesting this idea of competitive consumerism was popular trope of the time.

Women’s activities are not the only things mocked in the film. Men are also ridiculed for their feelings of superiority. During the Netherfield garden party, which replaces the ball, Elizabeth is forced to flee Mr. Collins’s attentions and hide at the archery range with Mr. Darcy. The outdoor garden party scene allows for additional physical comedy. Elizabeth runs through a forest on the outdoor set, making her escape from Mr. Collins all the more thrilling, and the youngest Bennet daughters display their high spirits by shrieking as soldiers push them on swings (*Pride and Prejudice*). Additionally, Belton suggests the placement of the actors in the garden party scene highlights class distinction:

The contrast between foreground and background figures (Darcy and Miss Bingley are on the terrace, while the dancers and other “rustics” are on the lawn) and the distancing effect of back projection accentuates the isolation of the supercilious Miss Bingley, while reminding the viewer of the charm of British rural traditions. (181-82)

One of these rural traditions, archery, serves to emphasize gender distinction and again makes use of the outdoor setting. After Darcy successfully protects Elizabeth from Mr. Collins, the two

engage in some witty banter before Darcy offers to teach Elizabeth how to shoot. Elizabeth, of course, turns out to be a much better shot than Darcy, forcing him to swallow his pride and remark, “Next time I talk to a young lady about archery I won’t be so patronizing” (*Pride and Prejudice*). The scene parodies male conceit and provides the audience another opportunity to associate themselves with the film’s characters and situations. As Sokol notes, “it is an interesting scene, in many respects, especially since it suggests both that Elizabeth is equal to Darcy and that she knows—literally as well as metaphorically—what her target is” (85-86).<sup>8</sup> Equality is a screwball convention that works to overcome the differences in social status and gender.

By emphasizing class difference between the film’s characters, the filmmakers continue to parody subjects to which the audience will relate. Miss Bingley attempts to warn Elizabeth about Wickham’s character, but Elizabeth believes Miss Bingley’s criticism is based on class discrimination, and she retorts, “How clever of you, Miss Bingley to know something of which you are ignorant. Oh, Mr. Darcy, Miss Bingley is eager for her lesson. I hope you will enjoy it, Miss Bingley, and that you will learn to direct your darts with greater accuracy” (*Pride and Prejudice*). Elizabeth’s own verbal dart stings Miss Bingley and satisfies the audience’s desire to see a snob humbled. Seeing a character such as Miss Bingley mocked for her ignorance always gratifies.

The filmmakers’ attempts to associate Regency England with early twentieth-century America produces a film that complies with screwball conventions and changes the targets of satire to fit the contemporary context. Though many changes were made to Austen’s novel, the

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<sup>8</sup> Archery is again used in a battle of the sexes in the 1996 film adaptation *Emma*. In this film, Emma fails to best Mr. Knightley, and the scene emphasises Knightley correcting Emma’s faults, in archery and in her matchmaking (*Emma*).

film, like the play, maintains her biting satire even if the targets of satire are altered. The adaptors must have made popular decisions, for Leonard's film was a success and opened to many positive reviews. *The Washington Post* called it "beguiling and diverting," praising the "casting [which] achieves happy heights that aren't often reached" (Coe 19). Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* lavished praise on the film labeling it "the most crisp and crackling satire in costume that we in this corner can remember ever having seen on the screen" (19). Not all reviews, however, were quite this glowing. *Variety's* Flin unfavourably compared the film to the stage production:

In the stage version of the novel prepared by Helen Jerome... Elizabeth was properly highlighted against the restrictions of her time. In the screenplay by Aldous Huxley and Jane Murfin, she is trimmed to fit a yarn about a family, rather than about an unusual and courageous girl. (quoted in Sokol 91)

Flin's distinction between Elizabeth's treatment by the play and film supports my assertion that the focus shifts from Regency England's faults in Jerome's play to more contemporary themes in Leonard's film. *Newsweek's* John O' Hara also notes the influence of contemporary culture on the film where "the most notable departure in the script is an inevitable bow to the box office that plays some of the subtle characterizations for broad comedy" (quoted in Sokol 91). These compliances with the audiences' expectations produced a successful film, but 1940s Janeites expected more fidelity to their beloved novel.

Though it would seem adaptations of the same novel produced within a few years of each other should yield similar tones, especially since both are comedies, Jerome's 1935 play and Leonard's 1940 movie use the humour in Austen's text to very different effect. While Jerome's play is nominally set in Regency England, it has more interest in mocking the antiquated actions



of the characters than creating an analogy with contemporary satiric targets. Leonard's film is also set in quasi-Regency England, but it does not attack that society's norms. Instead, its parody focuses on contemporary targets that all screwball comedies mock. The film modernises Austen's satire without moving her setting or plot to 1940. The play consistently mocks the concerns and actions of *Pride and Prejudice's* characters, creating a travesty that mines Austen's novel for comedy.

Whereas the adaptors of the 1935 play and 1940 film take liberties with Austen's novel, and thus the novel's parody shifts to accommodate the audience of the 1930s and 1940s, later adaptors stay closer to Austen's words and plot and produce works that attempt to translate the parodic targets of her novel. The adaptors of the 1995 BBC/A&E miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* take great care to reproduce the Regency England setting and screenwriter Andrew Davies keeps more of Austen's dialogue than Huxley and Murfin. The result is a miniseries that many critics deem successful because of its fidelity, a fidelity that includes the parody found in the original *Pride and Prejudice*. Similarly, Seth Grahame-Smith, the author of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* remains faithful to Austen's language as he expands the novel's plot to include zombies. The expansion creates additional parodic targets, but Grahame-Smith retains Austen's original satire, producing an arguably faithful adaptation. These adaptations are examples of translating parody without changing the parodic targets.

### CHAPTER THREE: Adaptations and the Aspiration to Fidelity

It is difficult if not impossible to avoid the subject of fidelity when discussing adaptations. Though most theorists now acknowledge that fidelity should not be the singular consideration when evaluating an adaptation, looking at what the adaptation adopts and leaves out is necessary to consider how a work has recreated a source text in a new medium such as film or television. The two adaptations considered in this chapter both claim fidelity to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The six-hour BBC miniseries from 1995 boasts loyalty to the novel's text and accuracy to historical context, and the other, an expansion of *Pride and Prejudice* places zombies, ninjas, and juvenile humour alongside Austen's original text. These adaptations maintain the tone of Austen's novel by preserving her ironic voice and social commentary. The 1995 film includes additional dialogue and scenes to convey Austen's satiric attacks from the novel and, being a visual medium, has the added benefit of constructing the Austen universe through characters' appearances and reactions, as well as the Regency-period sets and costumes. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* uses large pieces of the original text but adds in new scenes that reinforce Austen's social critique. In addition to scenes added to help translate the novel's original parody, the filmmakers of the 1995 film and the co-author of the 2009 novel include references that target the novel and its fans as objects of parody. The 1995 film dares to show that Regency England and its novels are fit for not only an audience attracted to the nostalgic image Austen presents, but also the sexually confident audience of the late twentieth century. The 2009 expansion also openly mocks the novel's audience of Janeites who hold encyclopedic knowledge of the author and all her works, yet it also mocks the equally fervent zombie fans keen to critique any addition to their genre. While both works maintain a significant portion of

Austen's original satire through fidelity to her work, they both expand on her story to parody the Austen—and zombie—obsessed audiences that await the release of new adaptations.

Though Davies' 1995 film has a right to claim fidelity to the text because its attempts to maintain much of the novel's tone, plotline, and dialogue separate it from other adaptations where filmmakers had to excise much more, it does make additions that add sensuality to Austen's text. Many of these additional scenes focus on the unknown private life of the sullen hero, Darcy. Darcy's scenes provide insight into his character and also conveniently allow the audience to see behind the façade of propriety characters must uphold in public. Just as there are many scenes of the Bennet sisters in their nightgowns, Darcy is also often shown stripped of his public costume. The filmmakers change the setting of scenes, giving the Bennet sisters opportunity to appear in unstructured nightgowns with their hair down. After an evening at Mrs. Phillips' house, Elizabeth and Jane are seen discussing Wickham as they prepare for bed (*Pride and Prejudice*). In the novel, the discussion takes place the following day in "the shrubbery where this conversation passed" (Austen 118). In an additional scene, the filmmakers show Darcy stepping out of the bath and drying off while watching Elizabeth play outside with a dog (*Pride and Prejudice*). Since Darcy is wearing only a robe, the scene also shows a more sensual and unguarded hero as he considers the object of his desire. These additional scenes suggest a sexier side of Regency England and enhance the romantic elements of the novel by more obviously showing the characters' sexualities. It is in these supplementary scenes that the filmmakers provide an additional object of ridicule, the audience's desire for an idyllic Regency England. This nostalgia for a past that did not exist is seen in many film adaptations of classic eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels. Brosh argues the appeal of these nostalgic films comes from the historical context of the film's production:

As cinema had done during the Depression and the Second World War, in the mid-1990s film turned to the domestic novel of the previous century to construct its domestic ideals, ideals born of the perceived deficiencies, anxieties, and hopes of the moment... This nostalgic turn to the nineteenth century enabled an idealized construction of marriage between clearly gendered individuals that addressed contemporary anxieties and fears. (116-17)

These domestic novels provide marriage plots with many opportunities to showcase the idealized romantic couple meeting, quarreling, and eventually falling in love. Comparing the mid-nineties adaptations of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* to other films from the period, Brosh argues that these adaptations were appealing because they showed “female sexuality as special, treasured, corseted and more respected than it was in films such as *Basic Instinct*” (119). Though the domestic novels provided the story for these nostalgic adaptations, the visual treatment of the film was also integral to its success. Audiences at the time were familiar with historical films such as the Merchant Ivory films of the late 1980s and early 1990s, *A Room with a View* and *The Remains of the Day*, and other historical dramas such as *Dangerous Liaisons* and *Valmont*, which focused on recreating an idealized version of history with lavish sets and costumes. Amanda Collins notes that reviewers, in addition to the public, preferred “the ‘pretty’ 1995 film version of *Sense and Sensibility*” to “the ‘gritty’ 1995 film *Persuasion*” (81). She suggests this preference “seems to indicate a public privileging of the romantic over the realistic” (81). These ideals have created a version of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England on film that reflects the audiences’ desires rather than historical correctness.

The audience for classic film adaptations holds the classic texts and thus the adaptations to a high standard. Fidelity is often of great concern for fans of the texts and close attention is

paid to superfluous changes, especially changes added to appeal to modern audiences. The subject of sexuality is particularly contentious. Austen's novels infrequently allude to sex and never refer to a kiss between the romantic protagonists. Fans are accustomed to and expect the lack of explicit sexuality, so when the producer of the 1995 film, Sue Birtwistle, famously explained that she thought *Pride and Prejudice* was "the sexiest book ever written," fans did not hesitate to share their opinions writing letters to Birtwistle, sharing their discontent with the sexing up of Austen's novel (Birtwistle and Conklin vi). Further inflaming the fans' concerns was a report that Andrew Davies' screenplay would include frank sex scenes:

Andrew Davies, one of the bright lights of television screenwriting, was said to have taken Miss Austen's tale "out of the drawing room and into the bedroom." His version would include steamy sex scenes (there are none in the book) and a "full-frontal view" of Mr Darcy getting out of a bath. ("Pride and Prurience" 106)

The article also reports that "the general reaction in the 2,000-strong Jane Austen Society was horror; playing with the characters was morally wrong, said the secretary" (106). Birtwistle recalls the scandal caused by these false reports: "This new version, [the tabloids] confidently asserted, would have full frontal nudity and daring sex scenes... Jane Austen experts were consulted and quick to condemn this 'spiced-up' version" (Birtwistle and Conklin vi). Another article denounced the Jane Austen Society's reaction to the adaptation rumours: "Quite inappropriately, the novels of Jane Austen, encouraged by the ninnies of the Jane Austen Society, have become symbols of anodyne gentility" ("Pride and Priapism" 5). Davies' own views of Austen agree with this article. He explains his interpretation of Austen's intentions for Elizabeth's portrayal:

Again and again she is described as running out of the room, or rambling through the countryside, and so on. I'm not sure how far people would agree with me, but I almost think this is a coded way of Jane Austen telling us she's got lots of sexual energy. This is probably what appeals to Darcy. (Birtwistle and Conklin 4)

Since the inclusion of these scenes was ostensibly not merely to titillate the audience but educate them about incorrect historical assumptions, the audience and their ignorance, shown through their shock and protestation, become objects of mockery. Brosh suggests that the modern appreciation for Austen adaptations stems from the lack of overt sexuality: "unlike much of popular culture, these films were populated by women wearing clothes that concealed, rather than revealed bodies, as the viewer's gaze shifted from the female body to the face" (119).

Though the bodies of Austen's characters are more covered than women from other 1995 films, the assumption that the modest dresses removed sexuality is false. The filmmakers attack the audience's desire for a modest Regency England by including realistic scenes of sexuality.

Because the filmmakers challenge the nostalgic image of Austen's novels, fans worry that the film will take liberties and fail to respect the revered text. Linda Troost also suggests a more practical reason for the audience's shocked reaction to the 1995 film: "Both Darcy and Elizabeth dressed to enhance their sexuality, not something BBC viewers were accustomed to in dramatizations" (84). Her explanation demonstrates that viewers react based on their experiences with novel adaptations, not just their views of Austen's novels. The requirements for a classic novel adaptation are molded by the nostalgic image of Austen and the BBC held by the audience.

Though the 1995 film dares to include scenes of sexuality, the adaptation often adheres closely to the other elements of the novel, such as its ironic tone and parodic targets. Davies' *Pride and Prejudice* uses a good deal of Austen's dialogue, characters, and plot, so it is not

surprising that the film also translates much of the novel's parody with fidelity. Davies most often includes extra scenes and dialogue to reproduce the ironic tone of the source material. The parody of the inappropriate actions of Austen's characters seen in the novel is accurately portrayed in the film. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, and Mr. Collins receive the most chiding for their actions. One character who is not treated as satirically in the television version as she is in the novel is Charlotte Lucas. Davies' adaptation treats her decision to marry Mr. Collins as an acceptable response for a woman flirting with spinsterhood. Her speeches in the novel reveal her views on marriage both parody and support the conduct literature of the time; however, in the 1995 film, Charlotte's views show the desperate situation of a woman without marriage prospects. In the novel, the narrator refers to Charlotte's kindnesses towards Mr. Collins after Lizzy rejects him as "Miss Lucas' scheme" (151). Such unflattering terms ridicule the competitive race towards securing husbands. Charlotte's "scheme," more clearly defined, assumes a rivalry between two single women: "but Charlotte's kindness extended farther than Elizabeth had any conception of; —its object was nothing else than to secure her from any return of Mr. Collins's addresses, by engaging them towards herself" (150-51). The basis for Elizabeth and Charlotte's friendship appears problematic as secrets abound between the two. The film does not portray this scheming, instead, using Charlotte to show the limited choices women had in Regency England. In the film, Charlotte runs into Lydia and Kitty who inform her that Elizabeth refused Mr. Collins's proposal. The camera stays on Charlotte as she mulls over the situation first looking sad then determined as she walks into Longbourn. The following scene shows her being polite to Mr. Collins and readily inviting him to stay with her family (*Pride and Prejudice*). These scenes imply she is contemplating her options and reluctantly deciding to court Mr. Collins since this might be her last chance to marry. Because Charlotte looks sad and

resigned to her fate, the audience empathises with her situation. She is pitied for her choice rather than mocked for it as seen in the novel. After Charlotte accepts Mr. Collins's proposal, Austen's narrator allows a glimpse at Charlotte's reasoning:

Charlotte herself was tolerably composed. She had gained her point, and had time to consider it. Her reflections were generally satisfactory. Mr. Collins to be sure was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband. (152)

Charlotte's description of her husband to be is critical, but honest. Austen's Charlotte does not want pity; she fully understands her situation and to have a stable future is making an informed choice to marry someone she does not like or respect.

Though Charlotte is characterized more favourably in the 1995 adaptation, Mr. Collins receives much the same treatment in the film as in the novel. He retains most of his dialogue, but the adaptors also include a handful of other scenes which serve to emphasize his sycophancy, insincerity, and intellectual snobbery. Before his arrival at Longbourn, the audience first hears Mr. Bennet reciting Mr. Collins's letter with a tone of jolly anticipation. This recitation transitions into Mr. Collins's own voice as he is shown taking leave of his home and beginning his journey. Mr. Collins's voice enhances the ingratiating tone of the letter, increasing the viewers' anticipation. Once the scene concludes and Mr. Collins arrives at Longbourn, the evidence of his pomposity and sycophancy is expressed visually as well as verbally. Indeed, Mr. Collins's visual representation in the film underscores his personality. In contrast to his description in Austen's novel as "a tall, heavy looking young man of five and twenty (99)," Mr. Collins in Davies' film is shorter than Elizabeth and considerably older than any of the Bennet daughters. His appearance emphasises the smallness of his mind and his conservative, antiquated



views. Later when he attempts to curry favour with Elizabeth by paying her additional compliments and rarely leaving her side, her height contrasts comically with his short, stooping stature and decidedly unattractive looks. The film stresses they would be a poor match mentally as well as physically. Elizabeth's superiority is established in all areas. Mr. Collins's shortness is again emphasised against the height of Elizabeth's future partner, Darcy. At Netherfield Ball, Mr. Collins introduces himself to Darcy (an obvious breach of etiquette pointed out by Elizabeth and Jane). The filmmakers show him bowing to speak to Darcy while Darcy is seated at a table. As Darcy rises to receive Mr. Collins, the pastor is suddenly addressing Darcy's waistcoat, highlighting the towering figure of Darcy as well as Mr. Collins's comfort in bowing to his superiors (*Pride and Prejudice*). Using purely visual clues, the film mocks Mr. Collins's literal inferiority and associates height, and thus superiority, with the hero and heroine of the story.

Austen stresses Mr. Collins's misapplied education and intellectual snobbery in her novel, so the film includes various new and expanded scenes to mock his intellect. After Lydia interrupts his reading of Fordyce's sermons, the solemn clergyman notes "[he has] often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit" (Austen 103). This exchange shows Mr. Collins's views on the value of strict religious education. Davies' *Pride and Prejudice* recreates this scene including most of the dialogue to emphasise Mr. Collins's view on appropriate reading material. The film adds in a scene to stress how focused Mr. Collins is on his education. Though he purports to be visiting Longbourn to secure one of the Bennet sisters as a wife, he finds it difficult to tear himself away from his reading. As Elizabeth, Wickham, and Mr. Collins are walking in the garden, Jane comes out to request Mr. Collins's help because "[Mary] has found a passage in Fordyce's sermons that she cannot make out at all" (*Pride and Prejudice*). Mr. Collins initially hesitates, sensing leaving

Elizabeth alone with Wickham may threaten his role as a suitor, but he is quickly won over by Jane's appeals and heads to the house, leaving the object of his desire in the company of his rival. His tendency to focus on one Bennet daughter at a time implies Mary's academic questions motivate him more than Mary's position as possible wife. Wooing women does not hold as much charm for him as a chance to exhibit his knowledge and educate others.

The 1995 adaptation also includes scenes that show Mr. Collins's general propensity for awkward behaviour. While preparing for the Netherfield Ball, Mr. Collins has an infamous run-in on the stairs with Lydia who is in her undergarments. Mr. Collins stiffens and attempts to flee. Lydia responds by giggling and rushing back to her room. The notably disconcerted Mr. Collins continues down the stairs. This altercation does not mock any specific aspect of Mr. Collins's character, but showcases his physical awkwardness as he tries to maintain composure when faced with an unclothed young woman. The encounter demonstrates Lydia's immaturity and disregard for propriety, which foreshadow her scandalous marriage. In addition to that entirely new scene, which fills out Mr. Collins's and Lydia's characters, the filmmakers choose to exaggerate Elizabeth and Mr. Collins's "dances of mortification" (Austen 123). As Mr. Collins and Elizabeth begin to dance, Elizabeth exclaims "wrong way, Mr. Collins!" when he missteps, colliding with another dancer. This incident emphasises Mr. Collins's awkwardness in a social setting and persuades the audience to question his previous boasts about his dancing (*Pride and Prejudice*). He is shown to be a target of mockery, his overly serious nature contrasting with his foolish, oafish actions.

The filmmakers of the 1995 adaptation successfully translate much of Austen's parody from book to screen, but their inclusion of additional scenes, which display sexuality only hinted at in the novel, enlighten an audience accustomed to a sexless view of historic England and mock

those who insist upon it. The 1995 film does not subscribe to these nostalgic ideas, but rather pushes some sexual boundaries to show a different interpretation of Austen's novel. The most obvious addition of sexuality in the film is shown through moments of Darcy's private life. The audience sees him in the bath, fencing at his club (with shirt undone and jacket off) and finally swimming through one of his ponds (partially dressed, but very wet). Austen never describes such scenes in her novel, and Charles Wenz suggests, "these scenes, and others of Lydia and Wickham in London, are added to show the modern viewer that gentlemen did more than just dance, pose in drawing rooms and shoot wildlife" (qtd in Hopkins 116). The education of the audience seems to be of importance to the filmmakers who need to justify their inclusion of sexually suggestive material. The scenes of Lydia and Wickham's situation in London and the final kiss between Darcy and Elizabeth that ends the film both make explicit the existence of sex in Regency England. Though these two scenes would never be described in an Austen novel, their accuracy is supported by Austen's text. Austen of course implies that Lydia and Wickham are not sleeping in separate beds after they have run away together, and it is hardly shocking to assume the newly married Darcys will eventually kiss. The audience's concern with additional sexuality stems from their own views of what a classic film adaptation should contain, not their concerns with the fidelity to the source material.

If Austen fans thought the 1995 film adding in a few scenes of Darcy shirtless disgraced Austen's text, their shock at the addition of zombies to the beloved novel may have been too much to bear. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* can be considered a literary mash-up of two popular high and low cultural genres – the domestic novel and B-movie creatures, respectively. The mash-up's recent resurgence as a genre can possibly be accredited to musical mash-ups, which began to achieve mainstream notice in 2004 with Danger Mouse's *Grey Album*, a mash-up

of The Beatle's *The White Album* and Jay Z's *The Black Album* (Gunderson). Danger Mouse combined songs from both albums to create tracks that seemed entirely new though they contained no new material. Though The Beatles and Jay-Z may seem as artistically disparate as *Pride and Prejudice* and B-movie zombies, Philip Gunderson argues, "part of *The Grey Album*'s vibrancy comes from the way it *highlights* the culture industry's specious opposition of white 1960s Brit-Pop and twenty-first century black American hip-hop" (Gunderson). In much the same way, the fusion of the domestic novel and zombies highlights the chasm between canonical literature and pulp fiction. This division stands on generic rather than racial lines, but both works combine seemingly distinct elements into a new, cohesive production. As Gunderson notes, the artistic trespassing is implied in the name "mash-up": "indeed, the very metaphor of the "mash-up" suggests a process of destructuring, an introduction of confusion, a production of indistinction in which *this* cannot be told from *that*" (Gunderson). The audience's reaction is intrinsic to the mash-up's methods: "Our smiles and laughter signify our liberation from an excessively restrictive horizon of musical expectations. Psychic energy that had been channeled into rote pathways suddenly streams in unpredictable directions across the surface of culture" (Gunderson). Gunderson's description is reminiscent of Bakhtin's concepts of the carnivalesque and grotesque realism which subvert the existing order of things and "[offer] the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things" (Bakhtin 34). Considering several works of Molière, Swift, Voltaire, and others, Bakhtin summarises the function of the carnival-grotesque presence in their works:

In all these writings, in spite of their differences in character and tendency, the carnival-grotesque form exercises the same function: to consecrate inventive freedom, to permit

the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted. (34)

Such carnival-grotesque elements can easily be identified in mash-ups and especially in the high/low cultural mash-up *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Graham-Smith's expansion begins with a canonical work of literature beloved by many and turns it into a spectacle by supplying an absurd premise: Regency England is plagued with zombies. The audience is "liberated" from what is "universally accepted" about Jane Austen and her novels and is presented with a novel that is at once familiar and foreign.

The reviews of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* show the contrast between these two incongruous elements appeals to the reader. Reviewer Mark McGurl at first eviscerates the novel: "the mash-up plays like one dumb long joke," but he also admits "the very success of such a gimmick might be taken as a sign of continuing life in the 'carnavalesque' genre of the novel." He acknowledges that the novel is popular because of its carnivalesque qualities that contest the norm. Adam Cohen also argues that it is the contrasting elements that make zombies entertaining:

In zombie horror, the juxtaposition of the calm world of the living and the menace of the undead inspires terror. In zombie comedy, like "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies," it is played for laughs. In the book, an attack on a party leaves "a delightful array of tarts, exotic fruits, and pies, sadly soiled by blood and brains, and thus unusable."

Using Austen's especially "calm world," which focuses on social rules, creates an even greater contrast to the disorderly world of zombies. A review from the popular Austen site *Jane Austen's World* begins, "I read *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and it made me chuckle, but purists will

vomit from the moment they read the opening line: ‘It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains will be in want of more brains’” (Vic). The idea of “purists” endures and once again the Austen fans are represented as a naysaying organization out to condemn the newest Austen adaptation. The effect of combining a canonical novel and B-movie characters is absurdity. The reader does not need to contemplate what the zombies bring to Austen’s novel because the senselessness of their presence is the point.

*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is an experiment combining high and low cultural icons. Since the novel contains Austen’s original text and wholly new material from Graham-Smith, it is termed an “expansion.” The discussion of parody with respect to this new genre of literary mash-ups is unavoidable because most of the new productions mock classic novels by subjecting them to B-level movie monsters. Since the publication of *Quirk Books’ Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the publisher has released *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* and *Android Karenina* both of which follow their mandate “To enhance classic novels with pop culture phenomena” (*Quirk Classics*)<sup>9</sup>. The novels exist as parodies of both the classic novel and pop culture phenomena such as vampires and zombies.

Graham-Smith boasts his new novel comprises eighty-five percent of Austen’s original text; thus, the classic novel is modified in the expansion process, not mutilated into an unrecognizable text (Kellogg). Indeed, the inclusion of much of the original text allows Austen’s satire of certain characters to remain the same. Interestingly, these characters are the same targets that are faithfully portrayed in the 1995 film. Both Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas retain their roles as warnings against misapplied education and adherence to social conventions.

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<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the company aspires to create “Soon to be literary cult-classics” from their *bestselling* works, which shows a questionable knowledge of vocabulary and pop culture (“Quirk Classics”).

Interestingly, both receive a more gruesome end than in the original novel. Charlotte contracts the strange plague and slowly turns into a zombie (Graham-Smith 99). Later Mr. Collins hangs himself “from a branch of Charlotte’s favourite tree” after being forced to behead his wife (238). Their grisly deaths also allow for descriptions of gore to satiate the horror fans and enhance the contrast between the propriety in Austen’s novel and the zombies’ destruction of this propriety.

Mr. Collins’s lack of common sense and reliance on academic education rather than actual experience becomes a target for ridicule during his proposal to Elizabeth, which Graham-Smith includes with little expansion or tampering. After enumerating his reasons for marriage and hearing Elizabeth’s refusal, Mr. Collins states his knowledge “that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept when he first applies for their favour; ... I am therefore by no means discouraged by what you have said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long” (85). His attempt to sound like an expert at engagements emphasizes his mean understanding of the world. Graham-Smith does not need to make additions to this scene since Austen has already created an obviously comical character. He is still a self-absorbed pastor enthralled with his benefactor, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Graham-Smith’s additions to Mr. Collins’s dialogue and behaviour serve to enhance his existing character. Upon Mr. Collins’s introduction to the Bennets he not only discusses Lady Catherine’s immense wealth, property and wisdom, but also “her singular dedication to the art of killing zombies” (53). This expansion of the list of Lady Catherine’s impressive qualities provides more cause for Mr. Collins’s sycophancy. After Mr. Collins finds a consenting wife in Charlotte Lucas, his exaggerated description of marital felicity from the novel is also included. Austen’s writing hints that though Mr. Collins purports to be indescribably happy with his companion, Charlotte’s happiness is achieved by encouraging her husband to spend as much time as possible

in the garden (183). The novel shows Mr. Collins to be oblivious to his wife's schemes and content to imagine himself in a happy marriage. Graham-Smith describes Mr. Collins's naiveté about his marriage in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* similarly, but also includes his ignorance that Charlotte has been infected with the zombie plague and is "three-quarters dead" (120). Elizabeth is aware of Charlotte's condition (as she is aware of the true state of their marriage in the original novel) but keeps up the charade for the couple's sake.

Graham-Smith faithfully renders Charlotte's character as unsentimental and practical in his adaptation with the addition of new motivations behind her dubious decision to marry. At the start of the novel, Charlotte is an older, wiser figure attempting to school Elizabeth in the ways of courtship. Her speeches on marriage and happiness are included in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* to contrast Elizabeth's less conventional views, as they do in the original text. The reader is meant to see the consequence of marrying without love or respect, and being forced to live out her life with the intolerable Mr. Collins suitably punishes Charlotte. Graham-Smith complicates this scenario in his novel by giving Charlotte an extra inducement to marry Mr. Collins. Though her earlier speeches and actions indicate she would have married to avoid being a spinster, in the adaptation Charlotte's transformation into a zombie motivates her actions. She explains her decision with the same matter-of-factness of the novel: "All I ask is that my final months be happy ones, and that I be permitted a husband who will see to my proper Christian beheading and burial" (99). As Charlotte slowly becomes one of the undead, those around her dutifully ignore her worsening symptoms, allowing her to live out her life as a married woman. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, this additional reason for their marriage makes Charlotte more of a victim and punishes Mr. Collins more severely for marrying on the command of Lady Catherine. When Mr. Collins is no longer able to ignore his wife's condition, he writes Mr.



Bennet a polite letter explaining he has executed her and will promptly hang himself from her favourite tree (237-38). Graham-Smith sentences Mr. Collins to a severe end to atone for his actions. Though the addition of zombie mythology to Austen's novel changes much, Mr. Collins and Charlotte remain essentially the same characters with the same flaws that are mocked by the narrators of the original novel and the expanded adaptation.

Graham-Smith's expansions do not always add to the existing parody of the novel; they sometimes find new targets for the ironic narrator. His methods for including zombie material often involve contrasting Austen's original prose with sensational statements about the zombie plague. When one first reads *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the incorporation of zombies is often jarring. Because much of the text is left the same, readers who are familiar with the original text may feel they are reading the original text for long stretches. When zombies pop up in the novel, the scenes become even more sensational because they upend the reader's expectations. Graham-Smith purposely leaves large sections of familiar dialogue or description alone, only adding in lines about zombies near the end of a passage to emphasize the contrast between these high and low cultural figures. In the expanded version of one of *Pride and Prejudice*'s best-known scenes, Darcy adds to his extensive list of qualities required of an accomplished woman:

A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages; she must be well trained in the fighting styles of the Kyoto masters and the modern tactics and weaponry of Europe. And besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word would be but half-deserved. All this she must possess, and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading. (34)

The additional necessity of combat training extends Darcy's already unreasonable list of requirements. His pompous character is ridiculed by the reader who recognizes both Austen's intent to mock the standards set for women and Graham-Smith's additional mocking of these extensive requirements by including the additional, trifling skill of armed combat. This passage is representative of the ongoing parody of the uselessness of propriety during the zombie attacks where the ladies who are trained killers must be careful to retain their modesty as they go about slaying the unmentionables. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet highlight this mock tension at the beginning of the novel when Mr. Bennet scolds his wife for being preoccupied with marriage schemes: "I would much prefer their minds be engaged in the deadly arts than clouded with dreams of marriage and fortune, as your own so clearly is!" (8). Graham-Smith relishes including scenes where the ladies-as-deadly-warriors defy propriety to fulfill their role. For example, when a group of zombies accosts Elizabeth on her walk to Netherfield Park, the extensively detailed fight scene includes, "Elizabeth lifted her skirt, disregarding modesty, and delivered a swift kick to the creature's head, which exploded in a cloud of brittle skin and bone" (28). This sentence captions the accompanying picture, showing Elizabeth showing a daring amount of shin as she vanquishes the zombies (29). The scene successfully mocks strict Regency modesty, modesty that should not be contravened in the most perilous situations. This scene also mocks the impropriety Elizabeth shows in the original novel when she muddies her hems walking to Netherfield. Elizabeth does not acknowledge the offense caused by her hems, but Miss Bingley shows contempt for Elizabeth's actions:

To walk three miles, or four miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! what could she mean by it? It seems to me to shew an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country town indifference to decorum. (Austen 73)

Graham-Smith and Austen mock standards imposed on women. Elizabeth does muss her clothing, but in both *Pride and Prejudice* and its expansion, Miss Bingley only notes Elizabeth's neglect of manners, overlooking her good intentions. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Miss Bingley's comments seem more appropriate when she criticises Elizabeth's dress covered in zombie gore, but Graham-Smith still mocks the panic caused by dirty hems since the reason for getting dirty was unavoidable.

Graham-Smith's methods of expansion of Austen's story also involve mimicking Austen's language, which serves to make the intrusions flow with the original language and add another layer of humour to the novel. The opening line of Austen's novel is itself known to many who have not read the novel. By starting his expansion by cleverly altering the iconic first line to read, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains, must be in want of more brains," Graham-Smith shows he is clearly willing to work within the parameters of Austen's language, but only to bring out the contrast between Austen's subject matter and his own. Though one could do a close reading of this adjusted first line, and make conclusions about a rich man's need for a wife being as essential as a zombie's need for brains, Graham-Smith seems more concerned with entertainment than social satire. His alterations of the better-known sections of Austen's text attempt adherence to her style of writing to emphasise the comic aspects of the expansion. In a joke that appears throughout the novel, Graham-Smith contrasts Regency England's definition of "balls" as sought-after social engagements with the present-day more anatomically-centred definition. The humorous exchanges, which provide opportunity for double entendres, are most often between Darcy and Elizabeth:

"I should like balls infinitely better," [Miss Bingley] replied, "if they were carried on in a different manner." "You should like balls infinitely better," said Darcy, "if you knew the

first thing about them.” Elizabeth blushed and suppressed a smile—slightly shocked by his flirtation with impropriety, and slightly impressed that he should endeavor to flirt with it at all. (45)

Graham-Smith adopts Austen’s language to maintain the flow of his additions, but also uses her language as source of additional amusement. This concurrent mocking of and compliance with Austen’s eighteenth-century vocabulary enhances the satiric tone of the expanded novel.

*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* ridicules some Regency novelistic conventions, while respecting others. Part of the successful balance of the parody comes from Graham-Smith’s willingness to mock the obsessed fans of zombies and ninjas as well as Austenites. The combination of two genres with ardently devoted fans gives the novel innumerable satiric targets and sources of humour. In acknowledgment of the explicit violence of zombie films, comic books, and novels, all the human-zombie clashes described in the novel include details meant to nauseate (or titillate) the reader. On a walk to Meryton, the Bennet sisters and Mr. Collins come upon zombies feasting on the contents of an overturned carriage:

Some twenty yards below, eight or nine blood-soaked zombies crawled over a shattered wagon and its leaking barrels. Most of them were busy picking at the innards of the carriage horse but one happy dreadful was scooping the last morsels from the broken skull of the driver—a young girl the sisters recognised at once. (57)

The explicit description of this killing mocks the sensational deaths seen in zombie films. These nods to zombie fans that may read the book are plentiful. Also, included are several mentions of ninja-related gear, rituals, and fighting stances. Darcy’s gift of a piano to his sister in the original novel turns into a gift of a katana sword in the adaptation (197). These “in-jokes” provide additional laughs for the zombie and ninja aficionado. By including jokes for both the Austen

fans, and zombie and ninja fans, Graham-Smith has created an adaptation that will be read in various ways. As such, the parody one sees in the novel will also change depending on previous knowledge.

Davies' 1995 miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* and Graham-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* coexist in the canon of Austen adaptations. More than being adaptations of the classic domestic novel, these new works highlight the cults attached to the high cultural icon, Jane Austen, and low cultural icons, such as zombies. By challenging these established ideas of what a classic novel adaptation should look like, or whether zombies are a good fit with Austen's original text, the adaptors mock the audience and their presumptions. Both the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* attempt to remain faithful to Austen's text, not the audience's interpretation of the text.

If the 1995 miniseries and the expansion *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* attempt a faithful recreation of Austen's humour, the 2005 Edgar Wright film *Pride & Prejudice* and the 2009 comic book series *Pride & Prejudice* by writer, Nancy Butler, and artist, Hugo Petrus, ignore fidelity in favour of modern interpretations of Austen's humour. To differentiate themselves from the canon of Austen adaptations, the film and comic book satirise the previous adaptations and in the case of the comic book borrow from the 2005 film. The resulting adaptations offer new interpretations of Austen's satiric style, which show her writing to be malleable to modern tastes.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Adaptations of Adaptations: The Loss of a Direct Source

The 2005 film and the 2009 comic book adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* can credit the 1990s Austenmania for their inception. The adaptations would not have been created if there were not a constant cry for Austen-related material dating from this period. Coming only ten years after the famous 1995 television adaptation, Wright's 2005 film had to prove itself against what was considered one of the best Austen adaptations. Butler and Petrus's comic book did not have to compete with another adaptation in the same medium, but it would be judged against the oeuvre of existing *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations. The filmmakers, artists, and illustrators of these adaptations distinguish their creations by using them to reflect back on the established body of Austen adaptations. Both works comment on the previous adaptations to provide new interpretations of Austen's novel. The 2005 film interprets its characters differently to subscribe to the modern requirements of romantic comedies, but while doing so satirises the Regency customs of the 1995 television version. The comic book adaptation also uses contemporary culture to mark the similarities between the original novel and modern romances. The covers of the first three issues of the *Pride & Prejudice* comic book are drawn to resemble the covers of women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Seventeen* or tabloids with the main picture surrounded by enticing titles such as "BINGLEYS BRING BLING TO BRITAIN," "17 Secrets About Summer Dresses," and "ARMY BOYS: 34 Reasons We Love Them (other than the uniform)" (Butler *Pride & Prejudice* #1 and #2). These phrases acknowledge the comic book's place in the modern era of Austen adaptations, and suggest that the contemporary historical context largely influenced the adaptation. Both the film and comic book draw so extensively on established canon of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations that they parody these adaptations and contemporary culture rather than the original text.

The filmmakers of the 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* distinguish the film from the immensely successful 1995 miniseries by offering a distinctly different portrayal of Regency England and creating a new style of heritage film. Producer Paul Webster explains that the setting was moved to 1797 to provide new opportunities for this new adaptation:

This was a period of great social upheaval and made for a much more dramatic context for our story to unfold within. It also allowed us to contrast designs and styles more freely and move away from the tyranny of the Empire line dresses and the formal rigidity of the early Regency period. (*Pride & Prejudice* Producer notes)

Because of these pointed changes, the film partially defies the oeuvre of heritage films that came before it and defined expectations of eighteenth- and nineteenth- century novel to film adaptations.<sup>10</sup> Davies' 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* miniseries epitomizes the traditional heritage genre. Praised for its fidelity, the adaptation is also distinct for its visual beauty. The women are dressed in sumptuous clothing, the men likewise. One would be hard pressed to find a hair out of place in the elaborate hairstyles. The styling produces a clean and beautiful Regency England the audience can revel in for six hours. From this and other Austen adaptations from the mid nineties, such as Douglas McGrath's *Emma* with Gwyneth Paltrow and Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* with Emma Thompson, audiences came to expect this idealized, pastel version of historical England from heritage films. By contrast, Wright's 2005 adaptation chooses to portray

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<sup>10</sup> The term heritage film does not have a clear definition. Most critics note the connection between the modern audience's desires and the depiction of the past. Heritage does not necessarily denote historical accuracy, but rather it creates a version of history accepted by viewers. Voights-Virchow argues, "Heritage industries ... re-establish the past as property or possession, which ... 'belongs' to the present, or ... to certain interests or concerns active in the present" (123). For additional views on heritage films see Eckhart Voights-Virchow's "Heritage and literature on screen: *Heimat* and heritage" and Carole M. Dole's "Jane Austen and Mud: *Pride & Prejudice* (2005), British Realism, and the Heritage Film."

the filth and disorder of the same period, defying the genre models. Wright explains the reasons for creating a messier version of Austen's world:

I believe that when people do period films they are reliant on paintings from the period, because there is no photography. But in a painting, everything is formally composed; it's not real life. Then they do wide shots to show off the period detail of the sets. I think that the detail is in the small things, like crumbs on a table, or flowers in a vase. (*Pride and Prejudice*: Production Notes 6)

These details create the atmosphere that separates the 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* from previous Austen films. Dole suggests this adaptation "is a hybrid that embraces both an irreverent realism to which younger audiences are accustomed (and which reflects the director's realist aesthetic) and the classic heritage film's reverence for country houses, attractive landscapes, and authentic period detail." She comments on the dirty and dingy version of rural England, specifically noting the downgrading of Longbourn estate to a farmhouse with cattle and chickens in the courtyard and a pig sauntering through the house (Dole). The filmmakers also dirty the characters themselves. Elizabeth's hair falls around her face; she is not wearing any discernable makeup, and her dresses, made from mostly dark materials, hang loosely without pressing. These visual changes announce a change in Austen adaptations in the millennium, distancing the new, less-constrained *Pride & Prejudice* from the overly formal 1995 miniseries. Wright's film could not distinguish itself through fidelity to Austen's text due to length constraints, but it could claim authenticity by portraying a less polished, and ostensibly more realistic, version of Regency England.

The filmmakers also attempt to set the 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* apart from the iconic 1995 film by changing some of the protagonists' qualities. In the 1995 adaptation, Davies portrays



Elizabeth as a progressive woman, refusing to let her views be silenced. She is witty and opinionated, and audiences are encouraged to identify with her. Though she shares her opinions freely even before the daunting figure of Lady Catherine, this Elizabeth still adheres to Regency etiquette when challenging the status quo. Wright's Elizabeth also willingly gives her opinions, but she does so with a force and freedom wholly different from Davies' Elizabeth. Wright's adaptation adds scenes where Elizabeth not only defends herself and her family, but also openly mocks other characters in their presence. In Austen's novel, Elizabeth is slighted by Darcy at the Meryton ball, who refers to her as "tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt [him]" (51). After Darcy leaves, Austen describes Elizabeth's reaction: "She told the story... with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous" (51). *Pride & Prejudice's* screenwriter creates a scene of Elizabeth recounting the story to Jane and other scenes showing her lively disposition as she mocks the men at the ball calling them "humourless poppycocks" and "painted peacocks" (*Pride & Prejudice*). These additions exaggerate Elizabeth's "playful disposition" to further illustrate her unconventional character and differentiate her behaviour from that of her timid sister Jane. As Juliette Wells notes, however, the novel's original audience would not necessarily have applauded the actions of Austen's Elizabeth:

One of Elizabeth Bennet's most appealing qualities, to twenty-first-century readers, is her outspokenness. Accustomed to thinking of candor as powerful and admirable, we applaud Elizabeth's willingness to stand up to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, to counter Darcy's rude statements, and to ridicule Mr. Collins's cant. As scholars remind us, however, Austen's contemporaries would have viewed this aspect of Elizabeth's character with more caution.

In the novel, Elizabeth learns to control her impetuous behaviour. In the film, she does not curb

her actions, but merely learns to accept others' faults. In this way, Elizabeth is more a construct of the modern romantic comedy heroine, more Bridget Jones, than Elizabeth Bennet. It is especially interesting to note how Elizabeth's actions in the 2005 film make her seem more her mother's daughter, unable to control her emotions or avoid sharing her distaste. As she leaves Netherfield after Jane's illness, she addresses Miss Bingley, thanking her for her hospitality: "Thank you for your stimulating company. It has been most instructive" (*Pride & Prejudice*). Knightley delivers this line with sarcasm and receives an equally insincere thank you in return. This Elizabeth cannot help but address one last snide remark to Miss Bingley before leaving, even if it requires breaking decorum. Though the audience may relish Elizabeth's treatment of the unlikeable Miss Bingley, this display shows Elizabeth is unable to be in control of her disgust. In the novel, it would be Elizabeth's younger sisters and mother who would be more likely to say something rude in public. The change of character complicates the idea that Elizabeth has succeeded in life in spite of her questionable parenting, and brings her suitability for Darcy into question since his character remains critical of her family's actions.

In addition to making Elizabeth a more informal character, Wright increases her role as a comedian in the 2005 film, giving her lines that originated with Austen's comic characters, such as Mr. Collins and Mr. Bennet. During dinner, when Mr. Collins is discussing his interactions with the fairer sex, it is Elizabeth who briefly stops her barely muffled giggles and smirks to ask, "Do these pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment or are they the result of previous study?" (*Pride & Prejudice*). In the novel, it is Mr. Bennet who asks this question, delighting in the responses of a man who he believes to be "a mixture of servility and self-importance" (Austen 99). Mr. Bennet is the sarcastic wit of the novel, producing plenty of choice words about his silly daughters and relations. In the film, however, Elizabeth gets some of his

lines and his caustic humour. Elizabeth's own lines are also changed to create a more acerbic heroine. At Lady Catherine's house, Elizabeth responds to Darcy's defense of his anti-social behaviour at the Assembly ball with pointed sarcasm. Darcy confesses that he did not dance because "[he] knew nobody beyond [his] own party," but Elizabeth quickly counters with, "Oh, and nobody can be introduced in a ballroom" (*Pride & Prejudice*). Though the line is taken almost word for word from the novel, Knightley's emphasis and tone make it a pointed, sarcastic jab at Darcy. Rather than changing the subject as occurs in the novel, the film's Elizabeth lets her comment hang in the air, giving it more force and making Darcy more uncomfortable (*Pride & Prejudice*). Whereas in Davies' miniseries, Elizabeth would not dare to be as outspoken as her mother or sisters or even Miss Bingley, in Wright's film she ironically seems to be ignorant of her own ill-manners.

Like the new, more sarcastic Elizabeth, Wright distances his version of Darcy from the character's stoic 1995 counterpart. Darcy from Davies' film is the epitome of nonthreatening masculinity. Virginia Blum elucidates Darcy's appeal:

For a great part of the BBC's version of the story, he hung around in the background, not saying much.... Unlike a lot of male heroes, he was a mystery. He was in no way a feminized wimp. Late in the day, burning with passion and unfulfilled sexual desire, he jumped off his horse into a pond and emerged, his shirt dripping. (165)

Darcy may not fulfill his own desires, but he certainly fulfills the audiences' yearnings. He also shows his sensitivity when handling Lydia's scandal and displaying his unwavering devotion for Elizabeth. Wright's Darcy also readily shows the generous side of Austen's hero, but unlike Davies' Darcy, he is not sexualized for the pleasure of the audience; instead, he plays a mostly silent, Romantic hero. His novelistic ancestry seems closer to a Brontë hero than one of Austen's

protagonists. This Darcy even walks the moors like a more refined, yet still broken-hearted, Heathcliff. The filmmakers use a blue filter and dress Darcy in a partially-unbuttoned shirt and long unstructured coat that blows around him as he walks across the fields at twilight. These choices illustrate Darcy's brooding and serious nature. The viewer is shown the extent of Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth early in the film when he hands her into the carriage as she leaves Netherfield after Jane's illness (*Pride & Prejudice*). After Darcy releases her, the camera follows his hand as he walks away wordlessly. This close-up of Darcy's body, specifically his hand, shows the battle that is already raging between his reason and emotions. Roberta Grandi notes this use of hands in the film and suggests that

the film adaptation chooses to “revive” the dormant synecdoche and to exploit it extensively, not only as a substitute of the body, but also as the most effective way of expressing the erotic potential of physical contact. The director makes use of the image of the hand to underline Darcy's and Elizabeth's physical attraction and he employs it as a substitute for Darcy's admiration of Lizzy's “fine eyes” during the Netherfield sequence (47).

By placing this scene near the start of the film, the romance between Elizabeth and Darcy becomes the centre of the film. Darcy's immediate attraction, and the confirmation of that attraction, leaves the audience waiting for Elizabeth to realise her own reciprocal attraction, which still comes much later. Darcy pines for the majority of the film, whereas in the novel he must also slowly come to accept that he loves Elizabeth. Another scene which shifts the momentum of the romantic plotline is Darcy's first proposal. In Wright's adaptation, Darcy follows Elizabeth after church. Stopping her in an outdoor pavilion, he confesses his love and proposes. Unlike in the novel where Darcy's proposal is expressed in a few succinct statements,

“In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you” (Austen 210), the 2005 Darcy struggles to enunciate his wishes, eventually asking Elizabeth “to end [his] agony” because he loves her “most ardently” (*Pride & Prejudice*). Macfadyen expresses these feelings with a trembling voice and plaintive tone that contradicts Austen’s description of Darcy’s appearance: “He *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security” (211). Wright’s Darcy does not show this confidence as he nervously makes his feelings known: his eyes look close to tears and his voice falters as he professes his love. The result is a Darcy the audience pities, rather than scorns for his arrogant behaviour. Elizabeth’s refusal and immediate anger seem selfish (*Pride & Prejudice*). The overly emotional revelation again makes him seem less like a composed Austen hero than a Romantic hero, controlled by his emotions. This scene works to exaggerate Elizabeth’s independence and strengthen her character. She takes revenge for her sister’s loss of Bingley by breaking Darcy’s heart. She practically spits out her accusations, appearing keen to fight with Darcy and enjoying the pain caused by her refusal (*Pride & Prejudice*).

Darcy is not the only Romantic hero in Wright’s film; his friend Bingley also gets to display his hidden emotions. Again, the filmmakers use close-ups of hands to show Bingley’s attraction. As Bingley leaves Netherfield for town with his sister and Darcy, his hand is first shown distractedly fiddling with a strap on the carriage before the camera pans to show his sad and faraway expression (*Pride & Prejudice*). Earlier, at the Netherfield ball, Bingley is shown playing with a ribbon attached to the back of Jane’s dress as he follows her around the house. Both images use his hands to show what he cannot openly display, his love for Jane. Because Austen does not write from the male point of view in her novels, the filmmakers’ choice to show

Bingley's love allows viewers to see the novel from the male perspective. These images create two Romantic heroes who are both unlike their 1995 miniseries or novel counterparts.

Though the male figures in the film tend to be depicted as brooding Romantic figures, the film itself is often shown to be part of the romantic comedy tradition with emphasis on sparring between the two lead characters. The interactions between the Wright's Elizabeth and Darcy suggest the verbal and physical contests seen in the 1940 Robert Z. Leonard adaptation. Wright's Elizabeth aggressively challenges Darcy at the end of the assembly ball, mocking his views on love and poetry, and indicating she heard his comments about her looks. After Darcy asks what she "recommends to encourage affection," Elizabeth replies, "Dancing. Even if one's partner is barely tolerable" (*Pride & Prejudice*). This aggressive verbal sparring ends with Darcy's retreat, allowing Elizabeth the win. Like the 1940 film where Elizabeth physically bests Darcy at archery, Wright's Elizabeth forces Darcy to concede defeat and she walks away with a triumphant bravado. This kind of aggressive display is again replayed at the Netherfield ball as the pair dance. The exchange of dialogue between the two is faithful to the novel, but the actors' palpable anger changes the tone of the scene. After Elizabeth questions Darcy about the rift between him and Wickham, the couple stops dancing to argue. The filmmakers then remove the scene around them, showing the seething couple silently dancing alone in the ballroom, focused solely on each other (*Pride & Prejudice*). This fantasy scene in an otherwise realistic heritage film emphasises the fairytale aspects of the plot, and literally shows Elizabeth and Darcy's love to be singular and, thus, the main plot of the film. These competitive episodes are reminiscent of modern romantic comedies where hatred quickly turns to love, which is rapidly followed by the requisite wedding.<sup>11</sup> The website for Wright's film describes the actors "bring[ing] this classic

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<sup>11</sup> For recent examples see *27 Dresses*, *The Wedding Planner*, and *Something Borrowed*.

battle of the sexes to life” (“Cast & Crew Info”). Just as Leonard’s *Pride and Prejudice* adapted Austen’s novel to fit the popular genre of screwball comedies, Wright’s adaptation includes romantic comedy conventions to appeal to the modern audience. Austen’s novel provides the basic structure for both screwball and modern romantic comedies, which Martin Amis simply defines in his discussion of “the Austen phenomenon”: “There is a Heroine, there is a Hero, and there is an Obstacle” (1). One of the differences between early twentieth-century screwball comedies and modern romantic comedies comes from characterisation. Modern audiences tend to be less accepting of the misogyny that is found in early screwball comedies. For example, Cary Grant’s rough shove of Katherine Hepburn at the start of *The Philadelphia Story* would probably be met with raised eyebrows from a contemporary audience who might consider this scene an example of domestic violence. The structure of romantic comedies has remained the same since well before the era of screwball comedies, and Austen’s novels continue to provide sources for new films.

Though Wright’s adaptation acts as a response to previous adaptations as well as contemporary culture, it also shares visual cues with comic books, which show insights into the characters. Wright’s film is littered with tableaux of various people and objects, which focus the audience’s attention on the settings. In addition to the use of close-ups of hands, the heroine, Elizabeth, is repeatedly shown against a natural background, which associates her character with the unrestricted outdoors. For example, as the film opens, Elizabeth is shown outside finishing a book as she strolls, one of many shots of her character juxtaposed in front of natural beauty. Such a shot sets Elizabeth apart from her other sisters who are inside playing the piano, gossiping, or embroidering. Elizabeth is not an ordinary woman. Her intelligence is seen through her finished book and her physicality is displayed as she chooses to spend her time outdoors.

Later, on her trip to Derbyshire with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, she is shown standing on the edge of a cliff revelling in the open landscape. The whole party is later shown lounging at the base of a large tree, a still life of contented leisure. The inclusion of these shots helps to flesh out Elizabeth's character without using additional dialogue or voiceover. Whereas Davies' miniseries often shifts the focus to Darcy, establishing his body as the passive object of the female gaze and exploiting his good looks,<sup>12</sup> Wright's adaptation centres on Elizabeth's figure. Jen Camden compares the female audience's response to this film with their response to women's magazines:

Instead of gazing at magazine covers with male bodies, women select magazines that reflect their own position as the recipient of the gaze. In a similar fashion, the Focus Features *Pride & Prejudice* encourages viewers to either identify with Elizabeth (as the passive object of the gaze) or to enjoy the scopophilic pleasure of gazing at her. Wright's film, then, is a disturbing re-writing of *Pride and Prejudice* that restricts female desire and the power of the female gaze and recenters that power in the male gaze.

Camden's suspicions are supported by the casting of a star, Keira Knightley, in Elizabeth's role and a lesser-known actor, Matthew Macfadyen, in Darcy's role. Prior to starring in *Pride & Prejudice*, Matthew Macfadyen was mostly seen in British television miniseries such as "MI-5" and small film roles ("Matthew Macfadyen" IMDB), whereas Keira Knightley had already gained attention for roles in blockbusters such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *King Arthur*, and *Love, Actually* ("Keira Knightley" IMDB). Unlike the 1995 miniseries, where Colin Firth was marginally better known than Jennifer Ehle, the unequal position of the new Elizabeth and Darcy shifts the gaze to Elizabeth. The 2005 Elizabeth is more outspoken than her 1995 counterpart, yet

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<sup>12</sup> See Lisa Hopkin's "Mr Darcy's Body: Privileging the Female Gaze" found in *Jane Austen in Hollywood* for further discussion.



also acts the passive object of the audience's gaze as Darcy did in the Davies' miniseries.

Perhaps she fulfills both roles to appease the modern audience who wants their heroine to be the centre of the film, yet still wants her to be the beautiful centre of attention.

Wright's film openly acknowledges its reliance on and response to previous adaptations. In many ways it attempts to adapt the body of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations that came before rather than adapt the novel directly. Likewise, the recent comic book adaptation of Austen's novel also looks to the previous body of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations for inspiration. Marvel Illustrated, a subsidiary of Marvel Comics, has recently released several comic book adaptations of classic novels, beginning with *The Last of the Mohicans* in 2007 ("Marvel Illustrated"). The comic book adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was released as a limited series starting in June 2009 and was such a success that Marvel Illustrated released a comic book adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* starting in May 2010 ("Marvel's Adaptation of Pride & Prejudice is a Hit"; "PREVIEW: Sense & Sensibility #1"). Touting the triumph of their newest comic book adaptation, *Marvel Comics News* gives credit to the writer and artist of the series: "Two-time Rita Award-Winner Nancy Butler and acclaimed artist Hugo Petrus present this groundbreaking love story in a way you have never seen before!" ("Marvel's Adaptation of Pride & Prejudice is a Hit"). This comic book adaptation, however, is something most Austen fans have seen before, for most of the comic book pays homage to the film adaptations of Austen's novel rather than the novel. Both the comic book's words and images owe much to the previous body of adaptations. Many of the characters are visual duplicates of their 2005 filmic counterparts and some scenes are borrowed for the comic book's dialogue and narration.

Comic books straddle the worlds of image and word, making them an obvious bridge between novels and films. David Carrier defines three characteristics that are necessary in a

comic: “the speech balloon, the closely linked narrative, and the book-size scale” (74). Of these three qualities, comics share the last two with the novel. Novels follow a narrative and by book-size scale, Carrier refers to how the comic is used by the reader. Unlike film, reading a comic is generally not a social event but a singular enterprise. Though novels and comic books share many characteristics, the comic book and film are also aesthetically related. The comic book synthesizes words and images to create the story, but unlike the novel, one does not have to imagine the detailed features of setting or characters. Henry John Pratt uses film terminology to clarify his views on comic book art. He notes that the initial panels, “like establishing shots in film, ...serve to give the reader a sense of the place in which the story will be occurring” (110). Secondly, he discusses the artist’s use of colour and style to establish a comic book’s tone: “They allow the artist to create a mood, give the emotional context of a scene or story, increase or decrease the drama of a moment, and so on” (110). He does not use explicitly filmic references here, but his use of “scene” and his reference to “a moment,” suggests a pause of moving scenes. Lastly, he notes that “a panel can inform the reader pictorially about the emotional and other mental states of the characters contained in it, without the use of words” (110). This description also easily applies to films’ performances, set decoration, lighting, costuming, makeup and many other aspects. The use of words and narrative in comic books as well as their physical structure relate them to novels, whereas their pictorial aspects align them with film. The newest adaptation of Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, a five-issue comic book<sup>13</sup> adaptation of the novel, connects the original novel, film adaptations of that novel, and comic

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<sup>13</sup> I use the term “comic book” rather than graphic novel because this adaptation was released as a series with its issues coming out over several months instead of being bound and released as a whole, which is more common to graphic novels.

book conventions to create a new experience for comic book and Austen fans as well as readers curious about how a canonical novel is rendered into the medium of comic books.

Visually, Butler and Petrus's comic book adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* adopts the artistic qualities of most Marvel comics. Petrus stays true to the conventions of exaggerated male and female forms, use of speech balloons, and illustrated sound effects. Indeed, many of the females in the comic book are voluptuous women with *loose*, flowing hair, though he does make an effort to adhere to Regency style dress. An exception to this collection of beautiful women is Mrs. Bennet who is portrayed as large grotesque woman, whose face often fills an entire frame. Gone is the Mrs. Bennet who lured Mr. Bennet with her youthful good looks. For example, after Mrs. Bennet hears Lydia has run off with Wickham, she is shown lying across her chaise longue with her arm thrown back, clutching her handkerchief in an expression of utmost grief. Mr. Gardiner and Elizabeth are smaller figures in the background, taking second place to Mrs. Bennet's distress. Petrus attempts to portray the uglier aspects of her personality visually as well as through her poor behaviour. While Mrs. Bennet's character is exaggerated, others are not changed as drastically. Mary Bennet appears much as she does in the Wright's film where she is as attractive as any of her sisters. Unlike Davies' film where Mary is portrayed as a dowdy girl with glasses, in Wright's film she is made unattractive by her personality alone. Similarly in the comic book, her much reduced role is defined by her depressing comments. Both film and comic book ignore Austen's description of Mary as "the only plain one in the family" (62). Wright's film also proves to be the illustrative muse for the comic book Bingleys (both Caroline and her brother are redheads), Mr. Collins (a small man with short, dark hair bears a striking resemblance to the film's Tom Hollander), and Wickham (who has long blond hair pulled back into a lank

ponytail). The familiarity of the physical features of these comic book characters would be apparent to anyone who has seen Wright's film.

In addition to the influence of the characters' appearances from Wright's film, several sequences also seem to have been borrowed to produce specific panels. When Mrs. Bennet and her daughters visit Jane during her illness at Netherfield, they are positioned all in row on Bingley's divan with Mary seated at the end wearing dark colours in contrast to her mother and sisters' brighter garb (Butler *Pride & Prejudice* #1). Similarly in the film, the daughters, with the exception of Elizabeth, are seated with Mary at the end in a dark dress. In the comic book Elizabeth repeatedly attempts, under her breath, to correct her mother's impertinent comments to Bingley and Darcy and her sister's demand to know when Bingley will host a ball. These panels show Elizabeth pleading with her mother and sister, and delivering admonishments such as "Mama, please" in small speak balloons to indicate her hushed tone (Butler *Pride & Prejudice* #1). In Wright's film, Elizabeth also reprimands Kitty after she excitedly shouts, "Oh, do hold a ball!" at Mr. Bingley. Both adaptations show Elizabeth curtly correcting her family's faults in front of the Bingleys and Darcy. In contrast, in Austen's novel, Elizabeth is inwardly embarrassed by her mother's behaviour but attempts to change the subject of the conversation rather than openly chastising her mother in front of others (80-82). The adaptors choose to portray Elizabeth's mortification more visually, but the result makes her appear ill mannered.

Another panel that borrows significantly from Wright's film is the introduction of Mr. Collins in *Pride & Prejudice* #2 where he is framed in a doorway carrying a package and an armful of books (Butler). This scene once again is modelled on Wright's film where Mr. Collins's introduction is framed the same way. The books provide a visual clue as to Mr. Collins's penchant for reading as well as make him appear even smaller. Another scene also

borrowed from the film is Mrs. Bennet's drunken boasting at the Netherfield ball (Butler *Pride & Prejudice* #2), which is again an exaggeration of her ill-mannered behaviour creating a character for comic effect in both adaptations. In the film, the camera pans up Mrs. Bennet's dangling legs to show her sitting on a table, drinking punch and talking loudly to the women around her about her expectations of "a most advantageous marriage" for Jane (*Pride & Prejudice*). The film also includes a scene set at breakfast the next day where Mrs. Bennet is looking rather ill and requesting that Mary stop playing the piano. It is only implied that Mrs. Bennet had a few too many in the film; in the comic book, the narration openly refers to her drunkenness: "Her mother grew giddy with wine and spoke openly about the expected betrothal of Jane to Mr. Bingley" (Butler *Pride & Prejudice* #2). Austen in no way implies Mrs. Bennet drinks in her novel. Her character may have many faults, but inebriation is not one of them.

Although Wright's film is the greatest influence, Butler and Petrus also include a scene possibly borrowed from Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. In *Pride & Prejudice* #2, Mr. Collins prefaces his reading of *Fordyce's Sermons* with a brief attack on novels:

...there seem to be very few, in the style of Novel, that you can read with safety, and yet fewer that you can read with advantage. What shall we say of certain books, which we are assured (for we have not read them) are in their nature so shameful, in their tendency so pestiferous, and contain such rank treason against the royalty of Virtue... .. such horrible violation of all decorum, that she who can bear to peruse them must in her soul be a prostitute, let her reputation in life be what it will.<sup>14</sup> (Butler)

Mr. Collins is inclined to sermonize; however, these words are too damning even for him. It is impossible to know whether this speech is to be read as a thinly veiled allegory for attacks on

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<sup>14</sup> The punctuation is reproduced as in the comic book.

comic books as a genre for “innocent” youth, or as a reference to the attack on novels delivered by John Thorpe in Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (71). Thorpe’s attack on novels is based on his ignorant belief that they “are all so full of nonsense and stuff” (Austen *NA* 71). Though Thorpe criticises novels for their supposed silliness rather than their moral corruption, both scenes show exaggerated and uninformed attacks on a new and popular fictional genre. This criticism pales compared to the more serious accusations comic books received, such as being a cause of juvenile delinquency, deteriorated reading skills, and even homosexuality (Carrier 69). With such a history of vilification, it is most likely that Butler wanted the damning of dangerous novels to be reminiscent of attacks on morally dangerous comic books.

Though the comic book adaptation references previous adaptations and comic books themselves, it also finds parody in contemporary cultural forms such as tabloids and women’s magazines. The cover artists of the first three issues of *Pride & Prejudice* attempt to make the issues look like magazine or tabloid covers complete with racy, enticing slogans. These phrases equate Austen’s novel with the modern romantic conventions and female preoccupations of today. They suggest in effect little has changed over the past 200 or so years. Women are still concerned with how to attract men, what to wear, and celebrity. The second issue features two phrases that openly mock these publications using Austen’s story. The question “DOES DARCY DEEM DAMES DETESTABLE? (don’t dare delay)” parodies sensational headlines (and their writers’ penchant for alliteration) one might find on a tabloid’s cover and “WHAT TO THINK WHEN HE THINKS YOU’RE THINKING” satirises the senseless advice given by magazines like *Cosmopolitan* (Butler *Pride & Prejudice* #2). Not to be limited to trashy periodicals, “AN OFFICER VS. A GENTLEMAN: A Lizzy Bennet Investigation” mocks 1982 romance movies. These in-jokes rely on contemporary knowledge of tabloids and women’s magazines and will

provide a laugh for those fortunate enough to recognise what the covers are parodying. Though the parody is juxtaposing canonical literature with trash magazines, the resulting laughs are not at the expense of either. Supposing what Austen's material would read like if it were presented in a modern manner relies on absurdity for laughs. The comic book writer also reveals that Austen's situations can easily be used as fodder for modern headlines, showing that romantic entanglements and the situation of women in society has not changed as much as a modern reader might suppose.

Whether filmmakers attempt to provide a new reading of Austen's novel, or comment on the canon of adaptations, their resulting works contain unique interpretations of *Pride and Prejudice*. The historical context of the adaptation's production influences and shifts many aspects of new work, including what is being parodied. Because Austen parodies her contemporary works, adaptors cannot ignore the plentiful irony, but must translate the humour into modern vernacular so audiences can take pleasure from the adaptation. Nods to adaptation and character changes in Wright's film that align it with expectations for the modern romantic comedy make these adaptations seem familiar, even to those who have not read the source material.

Wright's film adaptation and Butler and Petrus's comic book adaptation are new additions to the Jane Austen adaptation canon. The creators of both these works turned to the canon for inspiration as well as Austen's novel. Because of this awareness, the originality of the adaptations relies on their contrast with previous films. *Pride & Prejudice*, the film, attempts to differentiate itself from Davies' miniseries by using more "realistic" details and settings, but also turns the gaze upon Elizabeth by putting her in the centre of many scenes and casting a female film star to play her. Because *Pride & Prejudice* is the first comic book adaptation of an Austen

novel, Butler and Petrus take inspiration from Wright's film when creating the panels and dialogue. The resulting adaptation is in a different medium than previous adaptations, yet is familiar because of the stylistic borrowings.



## CONCLUSION

When studying a novel, play, film, television series, or comic book adaptation of one of Austen's works, the reader needs to understand that the care and consideration that went into making them will pale in comparison to the energy Janeites will put into dissecting them. Thus, creating these adaptations may seem like a thankless and stressful undertaking, yet the popularity of anything Austen-related almost guarantees the success of the adaptations. Perhaps it is Austen's venerated place among both academics and the reading public that keeps anything with her name on it in demand, or perhaps her works have the complexity needed to keep audiences rereading them and studying every minute detail.

Though the many adaptations of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* illustrate a variety of disparate interpretations of her novel, the one quality they share is that they are all comedies. Austen's ironic tone is difficult to translate, especially into another medium, but it is also impossible to ignore because it is the source of humour in her novels. Adaptors use different methods when attempting to recreate Austen's satire, from actors using a more sarcastic tone or exaggerated expression, to visually altering characters to physically suggest psychological shortcomings and even adding in martial arts to highlight class distinctions. As the satiric methods change to accommodate different media, satiric targets change to accommodate the comedic intentions of adaptors. These changes can reflect the cultural and historical context in which an adaptation is created, which includes the audience for a work, the body of previous adaptations, and popular memes. The adaptations often attempt to maintain some of Austen's satiric targets, but also include additional targets, which recognise contemporary readings of Austen's novel.

Austen herself was an adaptor. Though Austen's writing can be considered imitations of other author's styles and themes, her writing responds to the authors that she read and loved by adapting aspects of their works. Her juvenilia and early novels are clear responses to the courtship novels and novels of sensibility that were popular at the time. She imitated these forms, borrowing and parodying their conventions (romance plots, financial difficulties, and social interactions) and grounding them in realistic plots that include "three or four families in a country village" (Austen *Complete Works* 275). By rejecting the convoluted scenarios and situations of most heroes and heroines, Austen created stories which helped to usher in the realism associated with the nineteenth-century novel.

Chronicling the sources and cultural influences on an adaptation is challenging and impossible since finding once source only leads to a rabbit hole of secondary sources, tertiary sources and so on. Once this web of source material is recognised, one realizes studying adaptations by comparing the novel to the film is hardly comprehensive or meaningful.

After looking at two of the newest *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and *Pride and Prejudice* the comic book, in comparison to Austen's novel, I suggest taking a closer at these adaptations as well as other sequels to these works in terms of their place within the canon of zombie material and comic books to further the understanding of their source material. These latest adaptations have been accepted as whimsical works by most Janeites, but it would be worthwhile seeing how scholars of the genres of zombie fiction and comic books receive them.

Another arm of Austen adaptations worthwhile pursuing is the evolution of sequels to her novels. Some of the original Austen adaptations were sequels to her books, with the first official sequel being released in 1914 (Lynch 161). This trend has continued with the latest release being

*Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, the prequel to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The enduring popularity of sequels could be tied to the legitimization of unsanctioned fan fiction. A comparison of the reception of sequels and fan fiction over the years could provide an interesting look into what if anything sets these two genres apart from each other. I believe looking at the long list of influences on these adaptations would create a greater understanding of the works and contribute to broadening of the canon of Austen research.

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