

**“I AM EXCESSIVELY DIVERTED”: RECENT ADAPTATIONS OF *PRIDE AND  
PREJUDICE* ON TELEVISION, FILM, AND DIGITAL MEDIA**

by

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## Abstract

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen is the proverbial choice for adaptation, especially her most famous novel *Pride and Prejudice*, published in 1813. Remarkably, this two hundred-year-old novel written by a lady who never married, always lived at home, and died at the age of forty-one, is one of the most timeless stories in English literature. Adapters are drawn to the story of Elizabeth and Darcy, both to pay reverence to the original, and to impart their own vision of the classic tale of first impressions. In the past two decades, the most creative, popular, and financially successful adaptations have emerged: the 1995 BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* directed by Simon Langton, the 2005 feature film *Pride & Prejudice* directed by Joe Wright, and the 2012 transmedia storytelling experience *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* directed by Bernie Su. This thesis utilizes the three components of Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) to discuss these works at length. After a preliminary chapter outlining the major adaptations theories, in Chapter Two I examine the 1995 BBC miniseries as *a formal entity or product*; in Chapter Three I discuss the 2005 film as *a process of creation*; and in Chapter Four I analyze the 2012 transmedia experience as *a process of reception*. This thesis argues that each of these adaptations does something remarkably different to set itself apart from the novel and the adaptations before it. I claim that adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* from the 1990s onward respond back to the most recent adaptation just as much as they do the original novel, affirming the increasing popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* as an adaptive source text.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Whitney Cant.

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## Introduction: A Truth Universally Acknowledged

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” – Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

It is said that “other books are read; Austen’s are devoured. [...] Other novels can be read through once and soon forgotten, but our favourite Austen novels haunt us our entire lives” (Carson xi-xii). Adaptations of Jane Austen’s novels, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, equally haunt our lives, and haunt future adaptations as well. Written during the Regency period of England, Austen’s novel about first impressions is unique to her time period and its social rules and expectations, but it is anything but dated. The love story of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy traverses time periods and cultures, and as of March 31, 2014, it is the most popular of her novels to be adapted, with nineteen *P&P* works listed with Jane Austen as author on the Internet Movie Database (“Jane Austen,” web). This is not a comprehensive list, nor is the inventory in Deborah Cartmell’s book *Screen Adaptations: Pride and Prejudice: The Relationship Between Text and Film*,<sup>1</sup> as both omit adaptations the other lists, and neither includes *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. But the IMDb list is the best source currently available to tally these, as it is an electronic resource and is frequently updated. Linda Hutcheon, the adaptation theorist who guides my analyses in this thesis, argues that as humans we desire the same story over and over again, much like we desire the same bedtime story every night as children, but we also need that story to change each time (Hutcheon 176). Every adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is the same, yet different, satisfying our desire for sameness and giving us

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<sup>1</sup> This book offers the most comprehensive list of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations in print as it is one of the newest publications, in 2010. Other less comprehensive lists can be found in *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (Troost and Greenfield, eds. 1998) and *Jane Austen on Screen* (Macdonald and Macdonald, eds. 2003), see Bibliography for both.

something new to experience with each adaptation; Hutcheon calls this “repetition without replication” (Hutcheon 7).

Looking at the history of adaptations of her novels, Jane Austen is conspicuously absent from before the sound era, according to Deborah Cartmell, a foremost scholar on adaptations of Austen’s work. She argues,

While filmmakers in the silent period produced plenty of adaptations of the plays of Shakespeare and the novels of Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, and Tolstoy, it seems that no cinematic value or potential was detected in Austen’s novels. It’s easy to understand why: stripped of their words, the novels would appear quite absurd; [...] nothing much happens in Austen’s stories, the pleasure being in the choice of words and in the verbal subtleties (Cartmell 4).

However, since sound began to be used in filmmaking in the late 1920s, Austen’s novels have graced the screens of movie theatres and the televisions of living rooms around the world, most notably in the Western, English-speaking world. Given the length of her novels, Austen was more appropriately adapted to television more than feature films up until the 1990s. At this point in time, more creative and liberal adaptations, usually headed by women, began to grace the silver screen, and this movement began to be categorized as “Austenmania” (Hudelet 148). Rachel Brownstein argues, “Why adapt *Pride and Prejudice* for the screen? Better to ask, why not? [...] Hollywood was always looking for plots, and certainly variants on that reliable plot in which a charming young lady and a handsome young man find true love in spite of impediments. Austen’s name recognition would not hurt sales [either]” (Brownstein 15). These new predominately female-driven Austen adaptations delved deeper into their source texts than the adaptations of the decades before them and, as a result, they find more connections between the novels and the contemporary world than any others.

What is most telling about adaptations coming out of Austenmania in the 90s, is that they adapt more than just Austen's novels, they also respond back to previous adaptations and establish themselves as completely different from them. But, this intent differentiation does not entail complete separation. Adaptations are not separate entities in and of themselves, but rather are all connected, referring back to the original source text and to all other adaptations of that source text in existence. Unlike the earliest streamlined adaptations that only turned novels into films, these days adaptations are more ambitious. Examples include: a novel into another novel, such as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*; a novel into a graphic novel, *Pride and Prejudice: The Graphic Novel*; a movement into a television miniseries, with *Lost in Austen* as a critique on Austenmania and Darcymania (resulting from the release of the 1995 BBC miniseries); and even a transmedia storytelling experience rewritten as a novel, *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet*, an expansion of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, which will be released in July 2014. These *Pride and Prejudice* examples suggest an intertextuality between source texts and adaptations, and prove the fluidity and interchangeability of that intertextuality. Thanks to 21<sup>st</sup> century adaptation theorists such as Kamilla Elliot, Thomas Leitch, and Linda Hutcheon, we now have the theoretical tools to analyze these adaptations and categorize them as two-way works, and address adaptations that use new storytelling media platforms heretofore unheard of.

After surveying Elliott, Leitch, Hutcheon, and their precursors from the 1940s until the present, the theories and arguments of Linda Hutcheon in her book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) stood out as containing the best tools for this thesis. Her three forms of adaptation—a formal entity or product, a process of creation, and a process of



reception—perfectly align with the three *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations I analyze in the forthcoming chapters, as each form aids in understanding where these adaptations stand in the canon. This theoretical trio works as a chain of modes of engagement: telling, showing, and experiencing (Hutcheon 10), aligning with my perceptions and arguments of the modalities of the three *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations: television, film, and digital media. Each adaptation, like each mode, builds itself off the medium and success of the previous, resulting in a more intertextual experience with each adaptation. This thread begins with the 1995 BBC miniseries, which builds off Austen’s original novel, not a previous adaptation. It does, however, act *as a response* to the 1980 BBC miniseries directed by Cyril Coke, a faithful television miniseries that follows the trend of the previous Austen miniseries adaptations and does not attempt a new interpretive angle. The reason Hutcheon’s theories are best suited for this path of argumentation is because she defends, if not promotes, newer and newer media platforms for adaptation, and inverts the stereotypical hierarchy of source text over adaptation. Though 21<sup>st</sup> century adaptation theorists deny judgment between originary and secondary works, Hutcheon goes above and beyond this style of thinking and preferences secondary, and even tertiary, works compared to source texts. By this, I mean that Hutcheon is most interested in adaptations that adapt a source text *and* its already existing adaptations, because such works involve the highest amount of intertextuality and the most complex examples of what an adaptation can achieve. In addition, she is the first adaptation theorist to discuss video game and virtual reality adaptations, her arguments of which I apply to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the first successful transmedia adaptation. Lastly, Hutcheon argues a side of adaptation theory not usually identified at all: desire for change. Most theorists focus

their works on fidelity with an original text, or at least prioritize fidelity, whereas Hutcheon embraces lack of fidelity and the creativity it entails.

In Chapter One, I give an in-depth analysis and categorization of the ten most prominent adaptation theorists since the 1940s, arranging them chronologically and identifying the main ideas of each and how they build off their precursors. This literature review is meant to provide a solid foundation of adaptation theory to best represent to my readers how I arrived at Linda Hutcheon's theories and why she is the best choice. In this chapter, I also provide my own definition of adaptation and give context for adaptation as a genre inclusive of more than just literary adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Chapter Two begins my odyssey of analyses of my three chosen *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I address the immensely popular and financially successful 1995 BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* directed by Simon Langton, screenplay by Andrew Davies, and starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth. I argue in this chapter that this adaptation has become even more popular than Austen's novel. This has been most strongly accomplished through the endorsement of Darcymania, created by Colin Firth and his infamous wet shirt scene, which has since been replicated in dozens of Austen adaptations, including the other two *Pride and Prejudice* works addressed in this thesis. Though its popularity has eclipsed that of the original novel, both are adapted as source texts in post-1995 adaptations, as Austen's original characters and events remain constant, but some adjustments have been made in light of this *P&P*. *Pride and Prejudice*

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<sup>2</sup> Note: I arrived at the three *P&P* adaptations through a process of limitation and do not discuss the following adaptations for various reasons: the BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* (Coke, 1980), *Pride and Prejudice: a Latter Day Comedy* (Black, 2003), *Bride and Prejudice* (Chadha, 2004), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Maguire, 2001), and *Lost in Austen* (Zeff, 2008). These were not included because none of these adaptations involve the same amount of intertextuality as those I have chosen, and would require discussions of their individual merits instead of their connectivity with others in the canon.

adaptations post-1995, and even adaptations of Austen's other novels, comment on, or respond back to, the 1995 BBC miniseries in large or small ways, as well as reference or homage it. As an indication of its popularity, forthcoming adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* are measured against this adaptation, not the original novel.

Chapter Three is where I discuss Joe Wright's controversial 2005 feature film *Pride & Prejudice*, screenplay by Deborah Moggach, and starring Keira Knightley and Matthew MacFadyen, which is most often compared and contrasted with the 1995 BBC miniseries, often resulting in unfavourable opinions. However, in keeping with my claim that adaptations cannot be judged against other adaptations or the source text, there is so much to be found in this adaptation that merits discussion and analysis when judgment is forgotten. This is the second of only two feature film adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, excluding the loose adaptations listed in the footnote on page five, the other adaptation being Robert Z. Leonard's abysmal 1940 *Pride and Prejudice*, a strange mélange of *P&P* and *Gone With the Wind*, that does not do much for either. Because of its position in the *P&P* feature film canon, and because of its large advertising campaign, Wright's 2005 film was the most talked-about Austen adaptation since the 1995 BBC miniseries. With more than three times the budget, it differentiated itself through its cinematic qualities, such as gratuitous exterior scenes, big-name actors, and a distinct, intentional gritty appearance.

This brings me to Chapter Four and my final adaptation: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* 2012 transmedia adaptation directed by Bernie Su, story written by Bernie Su and Margaret Dunlap among others,<sup>3</sup> series created by Hank Green, and starring Ashley

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<sup>3</sup> Full writing credits are given to: Jay Bushman, Margaret Dunlap, Hank Green, Rachel Kiley, Kate Rorick, Daryn Strauss, Bernie Su, and Anne Toole.

Clements and Daniel Vincent Gordh. This is the only updated *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation I am analyzing in my thesis because of what it does with that updating, which is different than those listed in the footnote on page five. First of all, transmedia storytelling is unlike any other form of storytelling that has existed before the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, because it is inherently dependent on digital and social media. Transmedia storytelling is, in effect, a story told across multiple media, requiring the audience to craft the full story using all elements, not just the primary one, in this case Lizzie's video blog on YouTube. The series also makes use of Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr social media sites. In an added level of intertextuality, Lizzie's vlogs are her Masters thesis project for her degree in Mass Communications. As such, they are purposely biased, creating an angle of storytelling to *Pride and Prejudice* that has not been executed to this extent before. This adaptation is also extremely fluid with reality, as "a lot of people in the beginning didn't actually know she was a fictional character" (Jenni Powell in Klima, web), and for those who did recognize its true roots, the project blended the story world with the real world. The characters of the vlog each had their own Twitter handles, Facebook pages, and were the subject of many Tumblr feeds. As an adaptation that transposes Austen's novel into today's digital landscape, *LBD* showcases the universality of the classic novel and positions itself within the framework of the social rules and expectations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The project addresses all the problems facing young men and women growing up with digital and social media, and touches on the hopes, fears, concerns, and ambitions of the audience through Austen's classic characters.

To end my thesis, I come to terms with what adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* do for Jane Austen's novel and identify the timelessness of the story and its unwavering

popularity. I also discuss Jane Austen as a cultural icon and cultural commodity, giving examples of what I call ‘Austen-inspired products.’ These are typically loose adaptations that adapt the figurehead of Austen more than they do a specific novel of hers, and approach Austen with admiration and reverence, proving the lasting impression she has made on Western culture and society.

## Chapter One – The Politics of Adaptation Theory

“You find great enjoyment in occasionally professing opinions which in fact are not your own.”  
 – Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are surrounded by adaptations. According to statistics from 1992, 85% of all Academy Award Best Picture winners and 70% of all Emmy Award-winning made for television films are adaptations, not to mention upwards of 95% of television miniseries Emmy winners (Hutcheon 4). Twenty years later, these percentages are still correct or have risen: statistics from 2011 (about twenty years after those above) declare that adaptations average about 57% of all widely released films (playing in 600 theatres or more), and were highest in 2007 at 72% of all widely released films; adaptations also prove more financially and critically successful than originals (Dietz, web). Furthermore, a quick survey of the Academy Awards website indicates that since 1990, adaptations have won twice as many Best Picture awards as originals, sixteen to eight (“Oscar History”). A look back into the other sixty-five Academy Awards will produce similar results.

Within these twenty-plus years, our eyes have been opened to different forms of adaptations and new media of transformation. Films are being adapted into stage shows and operas (*Lord of the Rings*), classic novels are getting renewed lives in new novels (*Pride and Prejudice* into *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*), novellas are becoming songs (Paulo Coelho’s *Veronika Decides to Die* into Billy Talent’s song “Saint Veronika”), books are reaching out to new (read: younger) audiences through graphic novels (*Outlander*, *Twilight*, *Pride and Prejudice*), and new mediums are extending the limits of how a story can be adapted (*Pride and Prejudice* into *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* transmedia storytelling experience). The limitations that define an adaptation are changing

and it is more important than ever to create a new, more inclusive framework for understanding and analyzing these new adaptations. The old limitations that constituted adaptations are out of date because they were based solely on literature to stage or literature to film adaptations. It is necessary for these to be adjusted to fit the new forms of adaptation cropping up. In essence, the old framework of adaptation must be adapted to apply to the new.

In order to push and pull the classic rules of adaptation to fit new media, I must first explain the basics of adaptation and outline the historical progression of popular theories. One of the most interesting and frustrating things about adaptation and its theories is the fluidity and fluctuation of what an adaptation is and what it is not. There are many definitions, and even more rules of limitation, set down by established theorists, but I will outline my own criteria of defining and recognizing adaptations. Adaptation is both a process and a product, and while theorists unanimously agree on the process, they rarely agree on what constitutes a product (Hutcheon 7). But what *is* adaptation as a process and as a product? Adaptation as a process is the transformation of an original story from one specific medium into a different story in either the same medium or in a different medium; adaptation as a product is that resulting story in the same or different medium. According to this definition, my criterion for recognizing an adaptation is simply that the origin of a story comes from a source other than itself; this source can be from a different medium or the same medium. Furthermore, to be called an adaptation, the new story can be as similar or as different from the original as possible, but it must retain the basic story elements present in the original, by this I mean the core of the original. My definition and criteria expand the traditional limitations of what an

adaptation is and is not, and include examples which have up until now been intentionally left out by adaptation scholars or have not existed until now. Under the umbrella of my definition and my criteria, examples such as books into songs, films into operas, paintings into poems, books into graphic novels, films and television series into video blogs, and even books into different books, are all considered adaptations.

I do not approach these new forms of adaptation alone. My definition and criteria that enable me to call these works adaptations stems from a thorough reading of well-established adaptation theories. During the course of my research, I read ten major theorists who have greatly contributed to the study of adaptation theory and have guided me to my own theories about adaptation. Of these ten theorists, I interacted with six of them in-depth and have chosen one to guide the progression of my *Pride and Prejudice* case studies and what I will argue about them. One of the great, yet irritating, things about adaptation theory is how well the ideas of different scholars resemble and build off the ideas of others, sometimes with very little difference. Like all theories, adaptation theory has certain fundamental cornerstones that always remain present in each scholar's work, and act as the foundation for every new theory, as different or as similar as it is to already existing ones. Interestingly, when it comes to adaptation theory, there are two fundamental, but opposite, cornerstones, and they shifted drastically when adaptation theory itself changed. The first cornerstone is the hierarchy of different cultural media, which was the basis of all adaptation theories from its beginning to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; the second is the equality of different cultural media, which has been the foundation of all adaptation theories since then.



Film is a relatively new medium and adaptation theories are older than its invention. Therefore, the earliest adaptation theories came out of other media, primarily literature and art. Because the already existing theories about literature and art are embedded with classist bourgeois concepts, the early adaptation theorists followed suit, and created hierarchical systems of classification to apply to adaptations, and their main concern was to determine which medium had the highest cultural value (see Kamilla Elliott 2003). Naturally, this created a chasm between those who thought literature had the highest cultural value, and those who thought visual art did. This spawned numerous works in support of both sides of the argument and created theoretical camps of advocates of the word and advocates of the image. What these early theorists did not realize, however, is that words and images are two sides of the same coin. As Kamilla Elliott explains: “the mental image begins in the central nervous system and travels to the peripheral nervous system; the perceptual image originates in the peripheral nervous system and courses to the central nervous system” (Elliott 222). Both words and images are experienced through the same bodily system (the brain), but they travel to it through different receptors: the word starts in our brains and manifests something for our eyes through our imaginations, and the image starts in our eyes and manifests something for our brains through our sensorial capacities. Therefore, early theorists were arguing two sides of the same argument without knowing it: words and images are not hierarchical, but equal.

The invention of film and the adaptation of literature into film complicated the argument of high cultural value among media. Film is undoubtedly an image, but it also contains words, written on intertitles (visual) or spoken in dialogue (aural), and it

represents both sides of the cultural value argument. Although subtitles are still a visual element, after the technical development of sound in films in 1927, they were replaced by dialogue, an aural element, thus making film a medium that is both aural and visual, equating the two sensory experiences. How can one argue whether words or images have higher cultural value than the other, when they are simultaneously represented in one art form? The adaptation of written works further complicated this because art that had up until now only been expressed through words, was now being expressed through images, or words *and* images. For better or worse, the invention of film destroyed the legitimacy of hierarchical cultural value scales. But until new theories could be developed, a hierarchical scale continued to be used to discuss film adaptations, mainly declaring the original written text to be of higher cultural value than the “reduced” images of the film (Elliott 215).

This type of criticism continued until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when adaptation theories equating the film versions with their original texts began to surface, and a new trend began in adaptation theory: the demolition of the hierarchical arguments. Perhaps it is more than coincidental that the rise of these types of theories runs parallel with the rise of film criticism as a legitimate form of cultural criticism. As film itself was gaining legitimacy and respect as a cultural medium, the hierarchical classifications of film versus literature were breaking down; film was no longer below literature and art, but all three mediums shared an equal cultural value. This is where film-centric adaptation theories began and where adaptation theories really started to become interesting, as theorists negotiated this new territory of nonhierarchical cultural value. A new way of theorizing, understanding, and analyzing adaptations had to emerge.

One of the very first film adaptation theorists to do this was André Bazin, an already established film theorist, and contributor to the incredibly influential *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Published in 1948, Bazin's article "Adaptation, or Cinema as Digest" was not translated into English until the publication of Bert Cardullo's anthology *Bazin at Work* in 1997.<sup>4</sup> Because Bazin was one of the first theorists to discuss adaptation in nonhierarchical terms, he had a responsibility to bridge the gap between the older, hierarchical adaptation theories and his own. He explains the dramatic shift in adaptation theories as follows:

The clichéd bias according to which culture is inseparable from intellectual effort springs from a bourgeois, intellectualist reflex. [...] Modern technology and modern life now more and more offer up an extended culture reduced to the lowest common denominator of the masses. [...] I would much prefer to deal with a rather modern notion for which the critics are in large part responsible: that of the untouchability of a work of art (Bazin 22).

Bazin acknowledges the old way of discussing adaptations and dismisses it, clearly announcing his preference to discuss adaptations in a more modern way and blaming critics for the hierarchical scale of cultural value, which he scorns. To Bazin, the cultural value of a work of art is determined by its exposure to the masses and a mass opinion, not by the opinion of a small elite (i.e. white, bourgeois, heterosexual, middle-aged men), a complete departure from cultural criticism at the time. But Bazin was a film theorist, and film theorists (specifically those of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*) broke the molds of previous criticism. To these critics and theorists, film was the first medium of high cultural value that was not only accessible to the masses, but directed at them.

Bazin's other responsibility to his audience was to come up with those new arguments about adaptation and equal cultural value among media, "not a novel out of

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<sup>4</sup> The version of Bazin's article I am citing is found in Naremore's collection of essays, *Film Adaptation*.

which a play and a film had been ‘made,’ but rather a single work reflected through three art forms, an artistic pyramid with three sides, all equal in the eyes of the critic” (Bazin 26). Bazin’s theory of adaptation separates the narrative from the ‘form’ (or style) in which it is presented. That is, he separates the flexible story from the corporeal medium. To Bazin, “the style is in the service of the narrative: it is a reflection of it, so to speak, the body but not the soul. And it is not impossible for the artistic soul to manifest itself through another incarnation” (Bazin 23). These incarnations do not need to be entirely faithful to the original, but fidelity of meaning is imperative: “faithfulness to a form, literary or otherwise, is illusory: what matters is the *equivalence in meaning of the forms*” (Bazin 20, original emphasis). All cultural media are equal, but it is impossible to replicate one medium by a different medium, e.g. a novel cannot be replicated by a film because it is not a novel, but the story *within* the novel can be replicated by a film. Bazin makes good arguments about the shift from hierarchical cultural value to equal cultural value among media, but his work is limited to a certain kind of adaptation: book to stage/screen. Bazin’s scope is too narrow to be useful for my thesis, but he is an excellent foundation for all the adaptation theories that followed him.

In 1984, a student of Bazin’s theories published his own work on adaptation theory (among many other things) and took Bazin’s ideas to a new level.<sup>5</sup> Dudley Andrew’s triad of modes of adaptation—“borrowing,” “intersection,” and “fidelity of transformation”—was the first new idea about adaptation since Bazin’s equality of cultural value among media. Interestingly, Andrew falls back on the hierarchical pattern

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<sup>5</sup> During the time between Bazin and the next major theorist I read in-depth, is a span of almost forty years, within which time there were other published adaptation theorists of the school of Bazin: Seymour Chatman and George Bluestone, who published adaptation theories during the 1950s and 1960s, respectively.

of discussing adaptations, but he re-appropriates it and employs it as an early scale of measuring textual fidelity among adaptations. Unfortunately for the purposes of my thesis, Andrew is biased towards textual originals, and has lingering bourgeois opinions: “the adapter hopes to win an audience for the [film] adaptation by the prestige of its borrowed title or subject. [...] This direction of study will always elevate film by demonstrating its participation in a cultural enterprise whose value is outside film” (Andrew 30).

Even the terms Andrew uses to define his theories are tinged with the notion that film is inferior to written texts: “borrowing” implies that the story will always belong to its original (read: written) medium, “intersection” implies that the medium of the original and the film medium meet, but do not combine, and “fidelity of transformation” implies that film adaptations are being judged by their fidelity with the original and that the transformation has changed the story into something the original can never have or will not want back. These presumptions turn out to be true for all three terms. Andrew explains borrowing as film adaptations using the already existing cultural value of the original to bring in larger audiences (claiming that they can enjoy everything they love about the original, while also seeing it through a new lens). Borrowing largely “seeks to gain a certain respectability, if not aesthetic value, as a dividend of the transaction” (Andrew 30). Andrew’s definition of intersection is that the adaptation is a “refraction of the original [...] the film *is* the novel as seen by cinema” and that “all such works [of high cultural value] fear or refuse to adapt” (Andrew 31). Lastly, Andrew declares fidelity of transformation to be “the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text,” but it is so easy to do it wrong because the narrative content (the letter)

of the original is much more readily adaptable than the tone, values, imagery, and rhythm (the spirit) of the original (Andrew 31).

From the mid-1980s onward, adaptation theory exploded and theoretical publications occurred almost annually. Case in point, in 1985, one year after the publication of Dudley Andrew's work, Robert Stam published his article "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," and was the first theorist to move away from arguments embedded in fidelity. According to Stam, "the notion of fidelity is highly problematic for a number of reasons. First, it is questionable whether strict fidelity is even possible. [...] An adaptation is automatically different and original due to the change of medium" (Stam 55). Furthermore, "the question of fidelity ignores the wider question: fidelity to what? Is the filmmaker to be faithful to the plot in its every detail? That might mean a thirty-hour version of *War and Peace*. [...] Or is it to be faithful to the author's intentions? But what might they be, and how are they to be inferred?" (Stam 57). While I agree with Stam that complete and utter fidelity is impossible, I think it is also impossible for there to be no fidelity whatsoever in an adaptation; indeed, the only purpose behind adaptation is to take a story already in existence and reimagine it in a different way.

As the basis of his argument, Stam puts forth a classification system for adaptations, taken from the literary theory of transtextuality by Gérard Genette and modified to apply to films. Stam uses Genette's five types of transtextual relations to analyze adaptations: "intertextuality," "paratextuality," "metatextuality," "architextuality," and "hypertextuality." Intertextuality is "the effective co-presence of two texts," and examples include quotation, plagiarism, and/or allusion (Stam 65).

Paratextuality is “the relation, within the totality of a literary work, between the text proper and its ‘paratexts,’” which are titles, prefaces, epigraphs, dedications, illustrations, etc. (Stam 65). Metatextuality is “the critical relation between one text and another, whether the commented text is explicitly cited or only silently evoked” (Stam 65). Architextuality is “the generic taxonomies suggested or refused by the titles or infratitles of a text [... that] have to do with an artist’s willingness or reluctance to characterize a text generically in its title” (generally the original title is kept to “take advantage of a preexisting market”) (Stam 65). And lastly, hypertextuality is “the relation between one text which Genette calls ‘hypertext,’ to an anterior text, or ‘hypotext,’ which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends” (Stam 66). Although these classifications are thoroughly explained, they do not correlate as easily to film adaptations as Stam proposes. They are too embedded in literary theory and are less useful to film adaptation theories.

Nearly twenty years after Stam’s work on adaptation theory, Kamilla Elliott publishes her book *The Novel/Film Debate* in 2003, which turns out to be another turning point in adaptation theory.<sup>6</sup> Elliott negates the previous beliefs that adaptation traffic is one way (from the original text to the new adaptation); rather, originals and adaptations are infinitely reflected and refracted, like two mirrors facing each other. Unlike every theorist before her, she argues that once the adaptation comes into existence, the original cannot be divorced from an association with it and the adaptation always refers back to the original, no matter how different it is from it.

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<sup>6</sup> During the interlude between Stam and Elliott, Brian McFarlane published his theories on adaptation, much in the same vein as Andrew and Stam.

This is a very uncommon statement for adaptation studies of the time, but it signals a distinct change of the types of theories to come—none of the above listed theorists discussed adaptations as having an impact on the reception of the already existing original (and, as Elliott goes on to argue, other existing adaptations of the same original). Elliott explains this:

Reciprocal looking glass analogies do not eradicate categorical differentiation. Rather, they make the otherness of categorical differentiation [...] an integral part of aesthetic and semiotic identity. Looking glass analogies maintain oppositions between the arts, but integrate these oppositions as an inextricable secondary identity. Two arts contain and invert the otherness of each other reciprocally, inversely, and inherently, rather than being divided from the other by their otherness. Thus difference is as much a part of identity as resemblance. Moreover, it is an identical difference, for each art differs from and inheres in the other *in exactly the same way* (Elliott 212, original emphasis).

Every adaptation and every original that has an adaptation are irrevocably linked to each other through their identical differences. For example, in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bingley's sister Mrs. Hurst and her husband Mr. Hurst accompany Bingley, Caroline, and Darcy to Netherfield, but in the 2005 film *Pride & Prejudice* (Wright), Mr. and Mrs. Hurst have been omitted from the story. Therefore, the film is linked to the novel because it omits Mr. and Mrs. Hurst "*in exactly the same way*" that the novel includes the couple (exact oppositions are linkages between texts).

Thomas Leitch, who is the most recently published film adaptation theorist as of April 2014, has published equally provocative theories in his book *Film Adaptation and its Discontents* (2007). Leitch's scale of ten nonevaluative modes of adaptation is the most thorough and detailed system of categorization in adaptation studies and does not omit any type of adaptation (that I can think of). Progressing from the most fidelity possible to practically none with an original text, Leitch calls it a "continuum from



adaptation to allusion” (Leitch 116) and it is easiest to present in point form because of its intense categorization:

1. Celebrations: fosters debates about the quality of different media as vessels of adaptation, includes:
  - a. **Curatorial adaptations** (“attempt to preserve their original texts as faithfully as possible”)
  - b. **Replications** (maintaining “every possible element of the original text— structure, action, character, setting, dialogue, theme, tone, and so on”)
  - c. **Homage** (“most often takes the form of a readaptation that pays tribute to an earlier film adaptation as definitive”)
  - d. **Heritage Adaptation** (“enlarging the text under adaptation from a single specific authored text to an authorless historical or cultural text,” celebrating “an idealized past typically marked by attractive people moving through attractive places, all suffused with nostalgia for bygone times and the values they are taken to represent”)
  - e. **Pictorial Realization** (“a celebration of cinema’s power to show things words can present only indirectly”)
  - f. **Liberation** (the adaptation deals with and exposit “material the original text had to suppress or repress,” especially classic novels dictated by societal standards of their time, e.g. adding scenes and/or dialogue that would have been unacceptable at the time, such as a love scene between characters of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century source text)
  - g. **Literalization** (“adaptations, which celebrate not so much cinema’s essentially visual properties as its contemporary freedom from earlier norms of censorship and decorum, [...] as the norm for all representations,” i.e. “words made flesh,” a complete dedication to turning the description of a source text into visuals for example) (Leitch 96-98)
2. Adjustment: “A promising earlier text is rendered more suitable for filming by one or more of a wide variety of strategies,” includes:
  - a. **Compression** (“systemic elision and omission,” “whittling the material down to the right size for an evening’s entertainment”)
  - b. **Expansion** (“the opposite tendency, though less often remarked, [...] a surprising number of films have been fashioned from short stories”)
  - c. **Correction** (“many films correct what they take to be the flaws of their originals”)
  - d. **Updating** (“a far more frequent strategy is to transpose the setting of a canonical classic to the present in order to show its universality while guaranteeing its relevance to the more immediate concerns of the target audience”)
  - e. **Superimposition** (“susceptibility to outside influence,” i.e. adapting a text exclusively for a specific actor to play a role or a specific director to direct) (Leitch 98-102)

3. Neoclassic Imitation (relocates the original setting to either a specific historical one or a fictional one to prove the universality of the original text, “works through historical specificity to generality”), also includes:
  - a. **Reverence** (“satiric bent with their reverence for the past,” “it never explicitly identifies itself as a [...] knockoff,” the “surprise and delight in the resemblance between two disparate cultures, a perspective that illuminates them both, is the defining pleasure of the neoclassic imitation”) (Leitch 103-106)
4. Revisions: “differ from updates to the extent that they seek to rewrite the original, not simply improve its ending or point out its contemporary relevance” (Leitch 106).
5. Colonization: “see progenitor texts as vessels to be filled with new meanings. Any new content is fair game, whether it develops meanings or goes off in another direction entirely” (Leitch 109).
6. (Meta)Commentary or Deconstruction: “not so much adaptations as films about adaptation, films whose subject is the problems involved in producing texts” (Leitch 111).
7. Analogue: not strictly an adaptation, but an analogy with or evocation of an original text, characters from that text, or the events within that text, i.e. *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (Leitch 113)
8. Parody and Pastiche: “two modes of reference: the first designed to satirize its models, the second not” (Leitch 116)
9. Secondary, Tertiary, or Quaternary Imitations: “filmed recordings of adaptations. Is a film version of an adaptation in another medium a second-order adaptation, a transcription of an adaptation, or something else?” Also includes “sequels to adaptations that are not also adaptations of sequels,” and “intersections of distinct franchises” (Leitch 120-1).
10. Allusion: “it is impossible to imagine a movie devoid of quotations from or references to any earlier text. [...] But their continuities with other modes of intertextual reference raise special problems for adaptation theory” (Leitch 121).<sup>7</sup>

To adaptation scholars and enthusiasts such as myself, this is a treasure map of adaptation categorization (and it avoids hierarchy completely), but Leitch is quick to point out that “although these ten strategies might seem to form a logical progression from faithful adaptations to allusion, they are embarrassingly fluid” (Leitch 123). Not all of these strategies can apply to every adaptation, and sometimes more than one can, but that agrees with adaptations themselves, which are also fluid and sometimes use more

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<sup>7</sup> Note: all of these terms are Leitch’s own words. The underlined terms are the main modes of his scale of allusion and the bolded terms are the sub-modes of the scale. I have re-organized Leitch’s scale for ease of reading.

than one text as their original source, creating stimulating interstices. Leitch's last word on the matter is this: "the result of this heavily overdetermined intertextual bricolage ought to be chaos or reductive irony" (Leitch 125), but it is organized chaos that is sincerely inclusive.

Leitch's work will most likely have important ramifications in shaping the future of adaptation theory, but for the purpose of this thesis, Linda Hutcheon's work is most appealing and best suited for the forthcoming chapters. Inspired by Elliott's work and anticipating Leitch's, Hutcheon was the first theorist to discuss video games as products of adaptation. This is new and significant in adaptation studies—a branch of scholarship that has fought its classist bourgeois roots for over a hundred years—because adaptation theory has always been about breaking down barriers and legitimizing 'low' cultural entertainment. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is difficult to find a culturally lower form of entertainment than video games, but this medium's low cultural value does not diminish its popularity. According to the Entertainment Software Rating Board, 67% of American households play video games, the average age of a gamer is 34 years old, the average age of the most frequent game purchaser is 39 years old, and 40% of all gamers are female; in 2010, gamers played for an average of eight hours a week, or 384 hours a year, 5% of their year ("How Much Do You Know About Video Games?"). As a growing new medium that attracts a wide audience, video games are following in the footsteps of film and turning to adaptation for 'new' gaming material, and by doing so, they are expanding the viewership of those original sources through a gaming audience. More importantly, however, video games are doing something no other product of adaptation has done before: they are providing a way of physically interacting with a text through

first-person or point of view (POV) games, and Linda Hutcheon was the first adaptation theorist to discuss this. Although I do not discuss video games in my thesis, Hutcheon's arguments transfer seamlessly to my discussion of the transmedia adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

Linda Hutcheon does not limit her work to video game adaptations, but rather gives us three perspectives from which to analyze and theorize adaptations: *a formal entity or product* (“an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works”), *a process of creation* (“always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation [...] both appropriating and salvaging, depending on your perspective”), and *a process of reception* (“a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation”) (Hutcheon 7-8, original emphasis). Hutcheon's theories regarding a formal entity or product and a process of creation are largely the same as earlier theorists (as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, theorists tend to agree on the process); it is her theories on the third perspective of adaptation that are most interesting. Under the umbrella of *process of reception*, Hutcheon outlines three modes of experiencing a narrative story in adaptations: telling (text), showing (film/TV), and interacting (video games/amusement parks). This trio of terms acts as the frame for her theories, and though all are immersive ways of experiencing adaptation, interacting is the most immersive because it requires input from its audience.

Throughout this framework, Hutcheon repeats the same phrase, almost like a motto or mantra: “repetition without replication,” as well as “second without being secondary,” although not as often as the first phrase (Hutcheon 7 and 9). These two

phrases minutely summarize Hutcheon's entire theory: we desire the original over and over again, but we desire to experience it differently, and the original is never superior to the adaptation; it is always equal. Here we begin to see deep echoes of Kamilla Elliott's theories, especially the looking glass analogy and equal cultural value among media. Indeed, Hutcheon references Elliott more than any other theorist in her work, but unlike Elliott, the focus of Hutcheon's work is the process of adaptation, specifically the process of reception (Elliott focused on the products of adaptation). As Hutcheon says, "being shown a story is not the same as being told it—and neither is it the same as participating in it or interacting with it, that is, experiencing a story directly or kinesthetically. With each mode, different things get adapted and in different ways" (Hutcheon 12). Hutcheon explores those different ways and she brings forth conclusions that speak to the popular adaptation forms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most especially interactive media.

What is most interesting about Hutcheon's discussion of process of reception is her clear defense, if not promotion, of newer and newer media; Hutcheon inverts the earlier hierarchy of literature above film in adaptation theory, and puts interactive media above film, and hence, above literature. This is radical, but as I have shown, new adaptation theories are all about being radical. Another of Hutcheon's radical discussions is the recognition that an adaptation is not always experienced *as an adaptation*. In other words, not every audience member will be aware that the book/film/video game is an adaptation, nor be aware of the original. As Hutcheon says, "adaptation *as adaptation* involves, for its knowing audience, an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing;" we have to have knowledge of the original to be able to experience the adaptation *as an adaptation*

(Hutcheon 139, original emphasis). This is a statement that is largely unmentioned in other adaptation theories, but because her theories encompass the process of reception, Hutcheon sees fit to mention it.

By the time Hutcheon comes to her conclusion, she has shaken us up enough with her radical ideas that we do not realize the important message she leaves us with:

An adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise. [...] Adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places, [...] there are precious few stories around that have not been 'lovingly ripped off' from others. In the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception (Hutcheon 176-7).

Writing in 2006, Hutcheon is completely correct: adaptation is the norm (think back to the facts I began this chapter with). Her work is a great example of how time-specific adaptation theories are and how tightly they are linked with changes in society and cultural entertainment and echo what I intend to argue about my case studies of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations. Her trio of terms outlines a framework I will mimic: I will argue that the 1995 BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* is a *formal entity or product*, Joe Wright's 2005 feature film *Pride & Prejudice* is a *process of creation*, and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012) transmedia storytelling experience is a *process of reception*. These labels seem to have been made for the three adaptations I will discuss because not only do they show the different types of adaptations being made, but they also work with my argument that the *formal entity or product*, the 1995 BBC miniseries adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, has become a source text of equal value as Austen's novel for forthcoming *P&P* adaptations, such a *process of creation*, *Pride & Prejudice* (Wright). A *process of creation*, in turn, becomes a source text for a *process of reception*, *The Lizzie*

*Bennet Diaries*, and this creates a chain of adaptations in which, the source text is still the original novel, but it is now seen through the lens of the most recent adaptation. This is because the novel, being two hundred years old, is no longer the strongest competition for popularity among audiences, but rather, the new adaptation competes with the most recent adaptation.

## Chapter Two – A Formal Entity or Product: The 1995 BBC Miniseries

“In essentials, I believe, he is very much what he ever was [...] but that from knowing him better, his disposition was better understood” – Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

When producing an adaptation, it is almost always a fifty-fifty chance that the adaptation will succeed, and “for an adaptation to be [truly] successful *in its own right*, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences” (Hutcheon 121, my emphasis). There are many factors and elements that will make or break the success of an adaptation, and someone will always be around to criticize even the most successful ones. Although they can be relied on to bring in more patrons, due to an already existing audience of the original, adaptations cannot be relied on to bring in positive reviews. This is because of expectation: an audience member of an adaptation expects to see what they have pictured in their minds reading the original text, but this can never fully be the case. The very fabric of adaptation is to absorb the original and emit a new product, and there will always be elements that are lost and gained in the osmosis process. Therefore, it is crucial to address these issues of expectation and refer back to my definition of adaptation in Chapter One: the transformation of an original text from one specific medium into a different text in either the same medium or in a different medium, and the resulting story from that process. My definition, of course, goes hand-in-hand with Linda Hutcheon’s claims of what describes an adaptation: “an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works, a creative *and* interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging, [and] an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (Hutcheon 8, original emphasis).<sup>8</sup> Adaptation always involves change.

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<sup>8</sup> I have changed the layout of these claims from their original bulleted list for ease of reading.



Adapters of the works of Jane Austen face a unique predicament: they are fortunate to be adapting a text that is no longer copyrighted, but they must deal with very loyal fans and many already existing adaptations. Robert Stam's view of this is "the greater the lapse in time, the less reverence toward the source text" (Stam 57), but Linda Hutcheon claims "the more popular and beloved the novel, the more likely the discontent" (Hutcheon 127). Yes, *Pride and Prejudice* is two hundred years old, but it is one of the most popular and beloved novels in the English language. Therefore, producers must tread carefully when adapting it. Despite some initial unfavourable reviews, the 1995 BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice*, has become the superior adaptation of Austen's most famous novel, and even of all Austen adaptations: "without a doubt, this six-part miniseries is the most successful adaptation to date" and "virtually every Austen adaptation since this has entered into some sort of comparison with this *Pride and Prejudice*, with the 1995 adaptation invariably coming out on top" (Cartmell 8 and 75).

But why is this adaptation so revered? What makes it stand out from all the rest and occupy such a high pedestal? There is plenty of evidence out there and I harness that evidence to support my own theories, all of which I divide into three categories: **textual sources** (addressing the novel and script), **character and performance** (addressing the characters and actors), and **production and reception** (addressing the filming and fandom of the adaptation). Within these categories, I also argue that the 1995 BBC miniseries has reached a point where it has usurped the popularity of the original novel *Pride and Prejudice*, and is now looked to for comparison and contrast equally as much as Austen's novel directly. Deborah Cartmell, a leading Austen adaptation scholar, observed it too:

“the 1995 series in some respects has usurped the original in the minds of many fans, often shocked to discover that the lake sequence is not in the novel” (Cartmell 76).

Released in 1995 on BBC in the UK, and on A&E in North America, this *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation is comprised of six one-hour-long episodes, directed by Simon Langton, produced by Sue Birtwistle, written by Andrew Davies, and starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth as Elizabeth and Darcy. At a glance, the miniseries is almost identical to the novel (excluding Darcy’s famous wet shirt scene), but upon closer inspection, it proves to be a rather ingenious interpretation of Austen’s novel that takes many liberties. These slight changes, additions, and exclusions are subtly hidden in the work, leading audiences to be surprised upon reading or rereading the novel and finding discrepancies. Even if audiences have never read *Pride and Prejudice*, they will at least be aware of the basic plot, which incidentally forms the foundation of almost every romantic comedy: boy meets girl, they hate each other, they grow to love each other, boy gets girl, the end. This is perhaps why *Pride and Prejudice* translates so well to film and television, and is so popular in those media. Contrary to the opinions of literary purists, “to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise to be first is not to be originary or authoritative” (Hutcheon xiii). Adapters find Jane Austen very inviting as source material because her work can be reduced to its basic structure and put into a completely different context, but the story will still be told the same way to the same effect.

### ***Textual Sources***

The wonderful illusion of the 1995 BBC miniseries is that it makes many small changes that when added up seem like a lot, but audiences do not notice them because the

outer garb remains true to the novel, i.e. it does not change time or place, or major plot events. The miniseries' producer Sue Birtwistle vehemently states: "we have tried during the production to be as accurate as possible, but we always felt it was more important to go for the spirit of the original book" (Birtwistle and Conklin viii). She also addresses critics by saying, "you have to offer an interpretation of the novel. There's this nonsense which some people say about adaptations that you've 'destroyed' the book if it's not identical scene by scene. The novel is still there for anybody to read" (Birtwistle and Conklin 3). This is an admirable statement that perfectly describes the 1995 BBC miniseries (and arguably should be a mantra for all adaptations). As Ellen Belton notes: "the BBC production creates the illusion of fidelity to the original by presenting an interpretation of Austen's narrative that is also attuned to the sensibilities of a 1995 audience" (Belton 186). In a world of multiple Austen adaptations, especially on television, it was almost essential for Birtwistle, Davies, and Langton to take small liberties to make their adaptation stand out among the crowd, beginning the chain of adaptations building off each other, as the forthcoming chapters will illuminate. The most drastic of these changes occur in Andrew Davies' script.

Davies is no stranger to adapting classic British novels, and a quick look at his dossier shows him to be behind some of the most successful BBC adaptations of the past forty years, including four of Austen's six completed novels: *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), *Emma* (1996), *Northanger Abbey* (2007), and *Sense and Sensibility* (2008) ("Andrew Davies," web). Davies' scripts are faithful to their original source material, but they also capture "a certain something in [their] air" (Austen *PP* 29)<sup>9</sup> of the audience he is adapting

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<sup>9</sup> (Austen *PP*) refers to the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, as there is more than one Austen source in my Bibliography.

the works for. As Sue Birtwistle claims: “the goal therefore was clear – to remain true to the tone and spirit of *Pride and Prejudice* but to exploit the possibilities of visual storytelling to make it as vivid and lively a drama as possible” (Birtwistle and Conklin 2). Davies has a way of introducing new generations of audiences to classic novels in the most charming way possible, making many viewers become readers as well. He does not change the story, the setting, or the pivotal plot elements, so what does he do? He pulls the wool over the audience’s eyes: “Davies does not use much of the novel’s dialogue. Instead, he writes lines that *sound* as though they came from the novel. [...] The adaptation succeeded largely because it was not an adaptation in the old style; it incorporates filmic elements and broke the obsession with fidelity that had dominated Austen serials for decades” (Troost 85, original emphasis). This is why the 1995 BBC miniseries stands out like a beacon among the vault of BBC adaptations and Austen adaptations.

Some of the most quotable lines in Davies’ script are either his own writing or an amalgamation with Austen’s original prose. Davies explains:

Jane Austen writes wonderfully dramatic dialogue, so I was reluctant to cut it, but it was necessary in places to do so. This was not just to make it fit into the allotted fifty-five minutes, but more importantly because there can be an almost musical quality in the way scenes dovetail – a kind of rhythm and pace which one strives for – which scenes that are too dialogue-intensive can disrupt. [...] I wanted to make the dialogue sound like something that could be spoken in the early nineteenth century, but also something you wouldn’t think terribly artificial if it were spoken now (Davies in Birtwistle and Conklin 12-3).

Alongside Austen’s classic quips of “a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” and “she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*” (Austen 1 and 7, original emphasis) are lines such as “I shall end an old maid and teach your ten children to embroider cushions and play their instruments very ill” and “what

does she mean scampering about the country because her sister has a cold?” (Langton, 1995). It is easy to think that Davies has tricked the audience into loving his adaptation because it *seems* faithful, but it is exactly what Linda Hutcheon has in mind: “adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication,” and as *a formal entity or product*, adaptation is “an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works” (Hutcheon 7). I agree with Linda Hutcheon that adaptations must involve change to the original text, and Davies delivers that and more.

*Pride and Prejudice* has always been Elizabeth Bennet’s story, and every adaptation tends to uphold that. The novel focuses on Elizabeth, her sisters, and their relationships, and the men disappear for large amounts of the novel. Andrew Davies addresses this in his script and offers a more balanced story. In a review of the miniseries for *The New York Review*, Louis Menand wrote: “this is, in short, a *P&P* with extra Darcy. He rides, he strides, he stares, he smolders. Rakish things are done with his hair. So that when he is finally accepted by Elizabeth, we fairly expect him to rip his own bodice before ripping hers” (Menand, web). As Menand notes, Davies offers more Darcy, and a sexier Darcy. Andrew Davies explains: “I’ve been telling it rather as if it’s a story about Mr. Darcy, whereas the book is definitely a book about Elizabeth. [...] I suppose in showing that his desire for Elizabeth is the motivation of the plot, I’ve perhaps pushed it a bit more to being a story about Elizabeth and Darcy, rather than a story about Elizabeth” (Davies in Birtwistle and Conklin 3-4). The additional scenes involving Darcy away from Elizabeth are the most radical changes Davies has made from Austen’s novel. However, it is a welcome change, as Cheryl Nixon argues:

The recent [1990s] film adaptations of Austen are successful because they, quite literally, ‘flesh out’ her male characters. It is imperative that the films reconfigure

the novels' romance heroes. [...] What was good enough for her female heroines is obviously not good enough for us; the films must add scenes to add desirability to her male protagonists (Nixon 23).

Nixon means that the adaptation audience must have more to attract them to the hero than what Austen provides in her novels, and based on the success of the 1995 BBC miniseries, she is right.

Davies' decision to add more scenes of Darcy to the 1995 BBC miniseries was brought on by two reasons: one, to add desirability to a rather stolid character; and two, to smooth Darcy's change from being proud, arrogant, and offensive to Elizabeth during his first proposal, to being kind, friendly, and generous to Elizabeth and the Gardiners at Pemberley. In the novel, Darcy's character shifts dramatically, leaving the audience to wonder how he changed so much, and how Elizabeth is attracted to him. Upon his first read of the script, even Colin Firth, not having read the novel, did not know how the story would end, and was pleasantly surprised to find that Elizabeth and Darcy get together (Birtwistle and Conklin 98). It was a practical decision on Davies' part to introduce scenes that show the audience Darcy's gradual shift from proud and arrogant to kind and friendly; given that the story is presented in episodes, it would have been quite jarring for an audience to see such a drastic change in him over one or two episodes. Lisa Hopkins notes: "it is really only with Mr. Darcy that changes have been made [to Austen's work], and as a general rule, they all tend in the same direction: to focus on his feelings, his desires, and his emotional and social development" (Hopkins 115).

The most obvious scene in which these changes are evident is Darcy's fencing match with his instructor, which works as a scene to show his gradually changing character *and* his desirability. He is clearly fighting something inside himself, but he is

outwardly vigorous, sweaty, and in a state of dress not seen by Regency female society, i.e. shirtsleeves and an exposed neck and collarbone. The audience is invited to see his physical exertion as his attempt to conquer the emotions he cannot express in society, as he says to himself, “I shall conquer this. I shall” (Langton, 1995). The common opinion of scholars is that he is referring to his attraction to, and love for, Elizabeth (see Cheryl Nixon and Lisa Hopkins), but I believe he means his other emotions. After all, it was not his attraction and love for Elizabeth that led to the rejection of his proposal and put him in this agony, it was his proud emotions and arrogant manner which came across as offensive to her. Darcy “was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit” (Austen 276), but Elizabeth straightens him out: “he learns his lesson when he falls in love with [her] and realizes that she’s at least his equal, if not his superior, in terms of wit, intellectual agility, and sense of personal dignity. He is so profoundly challenged by her that his old prejudices cannot be upheld” (Firth in Birtwistle and Conklin 105). Darcy knows that in order to get Elizabeth to love him, he must change himself and be the man who deserves her. When he proposes to her the first time, he is shocked that she rejects him and her words eat at him until their next meeting at Pemberley, but the audience does not know that without the help of connecting sequences such as the fencing scene: “while the novel leaves the reader, like Elizabeth, uncertain of Darcy’s emotions, the BBC adaptation allows no such questioning of the relationship. These added scenes of masculine physicality are easily equated with their unspoken emotional content” (Nixon 33). It does not escape irony that the most famous British novel written by a woman is enhanced for the screen by expanding the *male* character of Darcy, and its popularity as an adaptation is due to this expansion. This is one of the

reasons why new adapters look to this miniseries as inspiration for new adaptations, as much as the novel—the original story is why it is perpetually popular as a source text, but the BBC miniseries is a road map of how to make a successful adaptation of it.

### *Character and Performance*

Darcy's desirability is much easier to convey, as Andrew Davies and Colin Firth showed, with the most popular and talked about scene in any Austen adaptation to date: Darcy's wet shirt scene. This scene has reached the point of iconicity, and "in spite of being a popular novelist and screenwriter for numerous productions, [Davies] will probably be best remembered for putting Mr. Darcy in a wet shirt," (Cartmell 9).

Likewise, the shades of Colin Firth's career have been thus polluted by his role as Darcy, as Sue Parrill notes: "there is no doubt that Colin Firth is the definitive cinematic Mr. Darcy," and he has yet to escape that association (Parrill 65). As 2013 was the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Pride and Prejudice*, a temporary 12-foot statue of a white-shirted Colin Firth as Darcy was erected in the lake at London's Hyde Park, evoking this scene, and proving its continued legacy ("Giant Mr. Darcy Statue," web). Almost twenty years after he played the role, the wet shirt scene still irrevocably links Colin Firth with the character of Darcy, and has sparked many references in that time (including the 12-foot statue mentioned above). It has now become almost an expected scene in other Austen adaptations and Austen-inspired films, such as *Lost in Austen* (Zeff, 2008) in which Amanda, who has magically exchanged places with Elizabeth Bennet, has a "postmodern moment" watching her Darcy re-enact the wet shirt scene. In Joe Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* (Wright, 2005) Elizabeth watches her Darcy walking



across a misty field at dawn in an open white shirt, framed by swirling mists and the rising sun. The scene has even been recreated again by Firth himself in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (Kidron, 2004), as *Mark Darcy*, hammily fist-fights with Hugh Grant's Daniel Cleaver in "eighteen inches of water" in a fountain wearing an open navy suit and white shirt. These moments of parody, pastiche, and homage are further examples of "repetition without replication," continuing the lives of Austen's original work through omissions, additions, and changes by adaptation (Hutcheon 7).

Beyond its attractiveness for imitation, this scene provides Darcy with that desirability and sexiness that Birtwistle and Davies wanted to convey, although not as much as initially planned: "Davies originally wanted Darcy to strip off entirely before plunging himself into the lake" (Cartmell 74). If things had gone that way, the wet shirt scene would have taken a turn for the obscene and would have damaged the miniseries, putting it in the category of worst Austen adaptation instead of its current spot as best. If stiff collars and tight waistcoats and breeches are not sexy enough for an audience and complete nudity is too sexy, why is an open white shirt the perfect amount of sexiness? The answer is simple: it is not the state of undress that makes Darcy desirable, it is the action of removing layers, and what that says about his character.

Darcy is the type of character that is usually described as stiff and buttoned-up, so the very action of him removing his stiff waistcoat, untying his constricting necktie, and unbuttoning his collar, is a stripping away of his arrogant shell "to his essential self, a cleansing of social prejudices from his mind" (Nixon 25). Sue Birtwistle sums up the intention of this scene beautifully: "he heads to the lake and decides to dive in – a brief respite from duty, and from the tumult of his tormented and unhappy feelings. [...] In that

brief moment, one is reminded that Darcy, for all his responsibilities as the owner of Pemberley, is actually a young man” (Birtwistle and Conklin 5). Because of the way he conducts himself in society, the audience forgets that Darcy is a real man, and this scene works to remind—or inform—them of this: “a ‘more alive’ and ‘more active’ version of Austen’s heroes resonates with today’s moviegoers,” but “while the male character’s body is made livelier, it is more important that his emotions are made so” (Nixon 23 and 25). This ‘more alive,’ ‘more active,’ sexier Darcy portrayed by Firth set a trend for almost all of the Austen men in later adaptations: Alessandro Nivola as Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* (Rozema, 1999), Jeremy Northam as Mr. Knightley in *Emma* (McGrath, 2001), Matthew MacFadyen as Darcy in *Pride & Prejudice* (Wright, 2005), Rupert Penry-Jones as Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* (Shergold, 2007), and most recently, JJ Field as Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* (Jones, 2007) and Dan Stevens as Edward Ferrars in *Sense & Sensibility* (Alexander, 2008). Andrew Davies also wrote the screenplays for the latest two adaptations, and the 2008 *Sense & Sensibility* features a wet shirt scene very reminiscent of the 1995 miniseries—Edward chops wood in the pouring rain in a white shirt for the viewing pleasure of Elinor and the audience (Alexander, 2008).

Much like Davies will forever be known for writing the wet shirt scene, Colin Firth will forever be known as playing Darcy, even though he very nearly did not take the role: “I didn’t feel I was right for Darcy. I didn’t feel I would be able to make him what he should be. He seemed too big a figure somehow” (Firth in Birtwistle and Conklin 98). But thankfully for female (and possibly male) audiences of the beloved adaptation, Firth reconsidered: “it occurred to me that I would feel rather bereaved if I turned it down. I

realized that I had begun to appropriate the character and I now owned it. The thought of anyone else doing it made me feel rather jealous” (Firth in Birtwistle and Conklin 99).

Firth was already a well-known actor and went on to play many bigger roles, culminating in his Oscar-winning performance in *The King’s Speech* in 2011 (Hooper, 2011). In 2010, Deborah Cartmell observed that “even after fifteen years, articles pertaining to Colin Firth [...] can’t let go of Firth’s association with Darcy, the part that made the actor a household name. [...] In fact, it’s difficult to find any review of Firth’s later films without the seemingly obligatory reference to Mr. Darcy” (Cartmell 74-5). This claim remains true even now: writing for *The Telegraph* about Firth’s Oscar win in 2011, the first thing Jojo Moyes mentions was not that Firth had won an Oscar or something to do with his role in *The King’s Speech*, but rather the claim that Firth was the “progenitor of a million female fantasies in a wet white shirt and breeches,” clearly referencing his role as Darcy (Moyes, web). After almost twenty years of the shadow of Darcy hanging over his head, Firth has grown to accept, and even embrace, what the role has done for his career: “Mr. Darcy will be alive and well for the rest of my life... I would hate to see that tag leave me” (Firth in Moyes, web). It is highly unlikely that this will ever happen.

Unlike Firth, Jennifer Ehle’s career has not been defined by her role as Elizabeth Bennet; she went on to become known primarily as a stage actor, most notably with the Royal Shakespeare Company. In recent years she has made more frequent film appearances, albeit almost always as a minor character (“Jennifer Ehle,” web). She even acted alongside Firth again in *The King’s Speech*, for which Firth won his Oscar. Perhaps the reason why Ehle’s career was not taken over by her role as Elizabeth is because her

performance was drawn more from Austen's work instead of Davies': "Elizabeth is so perfectly done in the book, there isn't very much to do really, besides let her be herself" (Birtwistle and Conklin 4). Ehle herself states: "she manages to be a free spirit in a society that doesn't encourage free-spiritedness, which is something that I think appeals to young women today because they can sympathize with her. So she's quite easy to identify with. I love her wit and her intelligence. There aren't that many female role models in literature or film who are as bright as she is" (Ehle in Birtwistle and Conklin 21). In short, what the audience sees on the screen is what they also find in the book. This does not reduce Ehle's performance, but, rather, allows for more intriguing changes to the character compared to Firth's very obvious changes to Darcy. Indeed, it is a common opinion among critics, scholars, and myself that Ehle is the best Elizabeth Bennet to be found on screen; and if my experience of the November 2013 UBC production of *Pride and Prejudice* is accurate of other stage performances, on stage as well.<sup>10</sup>

The changes made to Elizabeth in the 1995 BBC miniseries are solely physical; Davies has made Elizabeth more active, and costume designer Dinah Collin has made Elizabeth more sensually dressed, both of which suggest Elizabeth's sexual attractiveness to Darcy. As Sue Parrill notes, "we do not see Jennifer Ehle wearing high-necked dresses or tuckers in or out of doors. She exhibits décolletage in most of her costumes—day or evening. It would be difficult for Mr. Darcy or the viewer to be unaware of Ms. Ehle's sexual appeal" (Parrill 63-4). There are also a few evening scenes in which Ehle is shot from slightly above and her breasts are very near bursting out of her low necklines.

Susannah Harker (Jane) and Julia Sawalha (Lydia) also wear plunging necklines,

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<sup>10</sup> Because of directing choices, the UBC production of *Pride and Prejudice* was over acted, words were wrongly pronounced, and Austen's lovely characters were brutally caricatured. In short, it was laughable for the wrong reasons.

particularly Harker's pink gown for the Netherfield Ball and Sawalha's day gown during breakfast when they discuss the militia leaving Meryton for Brighton. In this particular scene, Sawalha's breasts swell above her neckline as she says with longing, "a whole campful of soldiers," wishing to follow the militia to their new station (Langton, 1995). Nearly all the female characters have low necklines—apart from Lady Catherine and the other matrons, but none are as busty as Harker, Sawalha, and especially Ehle, and do not appear as sexualized, as a result. Ehle, Harker and Sawalha's sexualized bodies attracted attention from a wider audience than their heroes: "there was much snide press comment on the surprising prevalence of Wonderbras in Regency England" (Hopkins 117).

The purpose behind the low-cut costumes and casting women who could fill them out was more than a ploy to attract media attention and a larger audience, at least for the character of Elizabeth. As mentioned above, when Davies wrote the script, he centered it on the sexual attraction between Elizabeth and Darcy (Birtwistle and Conklin 3). Many reporters and scholars misunderstood this to mean the adaptation would turn *Pride and Prejudice* on its head, "rewriting the novel in a thickly veiled sex-romp format" (Cartmell 8). This is not the case; yes this is a 'sexy' *Pride and Prejudice*, but it is sexy in the looks that pass between Darcy and Elizabeth, in the way they verbally spat with each other, in the touch of their hands when they dance, and of course, in the way they are dressed. In many ways, this adaptation is very close to the original novel, but it also has a life of its own created by its detachments from the novel, and those detachments have brought it to the pedestal it currently resides upon, the most popular *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation.

### *Production and Reception*

However popular film and television adaptations of Austen's works are, there are always a few literary purists that will speak their piece against them, such as Kate

Bowles:

Hollywood has 'harlequinized' Jane Austen. True, adaptation from the novel form to the screen media has repackaged Austen's elegant, detailed, ironic tales, making plot more important than narrative, displacing withering authorial tone with dialogue, partially decommissioning the author's critique of eighteenth-century materialism by making a fetish of costuming and set design (Bowles 15).

It is impossible to avoid displacing authorial tone with dialogue when translating a novel to screen, and narrative does tend to take a backseat to plot in that repackaging, but as Sue Birtwistle said above, producers have to offer an interpretation of the original. In that interpretation, some things get left out, others added, and more changed, but it is done with the purpose to appeal to the expected audience of the adaptation, not the original 1813 audience. The fetishism of costuming and set design that Bowles looks down on, tends to be one of the highest selling points of adapting classic novels for film and television to a modern audience. Linda Hutcheon argues: "movie audiences expect the film to have local color and to be shot on location, with characters moving through real space. After several decades, British televised versions of classic novels now generate in their viewers expectations about style, 'sumptuous, beautiful, pictorial images, strung together smoothly, slowly and carefully'" (Hutcheon 124).

The 1995 BBC miniseries can appear to fetishize costumes and locations, but it is the mark of a strong adaptation when producers find the best locations and are as historically accurate as possible with props and costumes. This adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* delivers on all accounts. Up until this miniseries, no other television adaptation

of any of Austen's novels had been made outside a studio. Even the 1940 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was made entirely on a sound studio in Hollywood, which is why it does not have the sequence in which Elizabeth visits Pemberley. Sue Birtwistle, Andrew Davies, and Simon Langton made two crucial decisions that determined the look of their adaptation and would change the way classic novel adaptations would be done from then on: they decided to make the miniseries on film and on location. Both of these choices cost more money, but the result has allowed the adaptation to be memorable. Sue Birtwistle claims: "every author is portraying a specific world, and it's our job to recreate that world and make it accessible to an audience. Though I like to be as historically accurate as possible, I'm not prepared to be a slave to it. [...] It's much more important to grasp the spirit" (Birtwistle and Conklin 35). The spirit of Andrew Davies' script of *Pride and Prejudice* would have been crushed if the miniseries had been filmed on video in a sound studio. Therefore, the whole package was necessary to make this adaptation a success: an excellent script that reinvents the original novel, historically accurate and beautiful locations, and the artistic quality of film, all of which would give it "an energy and vitality to match the book" (Birtwistle and Conklin v).

The beauty of the 1995 BBC miniseries is that it takes the best of both worlds: it uses the above-mentioned benefits that are common in film adaptations, but it also has the benefit of the amount of time given to television adaptations. This is why it has become the best *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation: it has six hours to let Austen's novel completely unfold, and it unfolds it in the most cinematic way possible. Deborah Cartmell notes: "this adaptation not only changed the popular view of the novel, but also influenced later screen readings of *Pride and Prejudice*" (Cartmell 125). Everything from

the writing of the script, to the casting of the actors, to the preproduction, filming, and postproduction of the 1995 BBC miniseries has made this adaptation highly detailed and of high quality. And it is just as popular today as it was when it was originally released in 1995: it was “recently voted most memorable British TV drama *of all time*” by BBC viewers in the UK (“Colin Firth Statue,” web, my emphasis). Scholars and I share the opinion that it is the use of real locations that is the greatest divergence from previous Austen adaptations and a large part of why the 1995 BBC miniseries is so successful, apart from Darcy’s wet shirt scene, of course.

Elizabeth ‘sees through’ a bit more of Darcy than she bargained for when they meet by chance at Pemberley after Darcy’s swim, his wet shirt clinging to his torso. Her eyes are drawn to his visible chest beneath, and we get the impression she is ‘appreciating’ more than his ‘merit and worth.’ This is an example of why the press nicknamed the adaptation a ‘thickly veiled sex-romp;’ Ellen Belton cheekily notes, “the 1995 audience wants Elizabeth to have it all, and the BBC production is happy to oblige” (Belton 187). But there is more to why Elizabeth is at Pemberley and how the location proves its characterization (or fetishization according to some). As Belton noted above, a 1990s audience (predominately female) wants Elizabeth to have Darcy *and* Pemberley, love *and* money, and the BBC adaptation is happy to provide it. Austen says the same in her novel, but although she gives a good description of Pemberley, seeing a visual helps put Darcy’s wealth in perspective. There is an interesting double-tiered voyeurism in the Pemberley episode: Darcy and the audience are both looking at “Elizabeth as part of the landscape,” both parties convinced she looks like she belongs there and reluctant for her to leave it: “depicting Elizabeth so exclusively within the landscape makes it seem



natural for her to become mistress of what is, in the film, the most beautiful of many landscapes” (Ellington 102). Interestingly, when Elizabeth says her iconic line “of all of this I might have been mistress,” she is looking away from Pemberley, out a window to the extensive grounds, referencing her activeness and constant desire to be out of doors (Langton, 1995).

As cinematic as the episodes are, and even though they can stand alone as individual films, they are first and foremost episodes in a television miniseries and are released the same way: in a serial fashion. Jane Austen translates best onto television because of the time devoted to the material, but also because watching a television series is similar to the act of reading. Deborah Cartmell says: “like the experience of reading, television series are taken in installments, prolonging the pleasure of the text, providing lengthy pauses between each episode to reflect on what’s going to happen next” (Cartmell 60). Despite Cartmell’s connection between the two media, I heartily wish good luck to anyone who attempts to read *Pride and Prejudice* in six hours. When a novel is adapted into a visual representation, time is compressed, bent, and confuses our perception of real time. Linda Hutcheon claims:

To tell a story, as in novels, short stories, and even historical accounts, is to describe, explain, summarize, expand; the narrator has a point of view and great power to leap through time and space and sometimes to venture inside the minds of characters. To show a story, as in movies, ballets, radio and stage plays, musicals and operas, involves a direct aural and usually visual performance experienced in real time (Hutcheon 12-3).

Adapting a 300-page classic novel into a miniseries (and later into a film) exchanges narrative devices such as a narrator and extensive description for visual devices; and as one page of a screenplay equals one minute of screen time, a miniseries or film presents

the story in real time. Therefore, we can watch the 1995 BBC miniseries and know *Pride and Prejudice* from start to finish, but depending on one's reading speed, one could only read a portion of the novel in that same time. As a point of reference, the unabridged audiobooks of *Pride and Prejudice* on iTunes average around twelve hours, the shortest being around eleven and a half, the longest over fourteen.

I noted at the beginning of this chapter that the 1995 BBC miniseries is not the first adaptation, and Deborah Cartmell notes: “since the beginning of the television era, there's been a *Pride and Prejudice* for every generation, providing us with an opportunity to chart how the book has changed in its various readings” (Cartmell 22). Although *Pride and Prejudice* is constantly used as source material, it changes every time it is adapted. This is because it is made for the audience of the time of the adaptation, not the original audience of Jane Austen's novel in 1813. Every adaptation is an interpretation, and as Sue Birtwistle remarked above, the novel is still there for anybody to read. When it comes to a 1990s audience of young, educated, sexually aware, working women, the miniseries “endow[s] Austen's courtship romance protagonists with emotional displays emphasizing our current notions of ‘romance’ rather than late eighteenth century understandings of ‘courtship’” (Nixon 25). Because female audiences have more than Austen's heroines do (e.g. social, political, and sexual freedom) they want more for Elizabeth than Austen does, and by extension more for themselves. They want a sexy Darcy (read: Colin Firth) for Elizabeth because they are living vicariously through her: “*Pride and Prejudice*, however, is unashamed about appealing to women—and in particular about fetishizing and framing Darcy and offering him up to the female gaze” (Hopkins 112).

When it all boils down, the 1995 BBC miniseries was spectacularly different from the types of Austen adaptations that were already in existence, and it set the stage for all the adaptations that followed (as I will discuss in the next chapter when I make a case study of Joe Wright's 2005 feature film). Although it has all the appearance of fidelity at first glance, the miniseries hides its slight changes just underneath the surface, much like Darcy hides his true character beneath a veneer of pride and arrogance: "in essentials, I believe, he is very much what he ever was [...] but that from knowing him better, his disposition was better understood" (Austen 175). These slight changes and additions have endeared the miniseries to an audience whose love of it has brought it to its current position as the best *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation. This popularity has enabled it to become the main competition for *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations in the late 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, and it will likely be a point of comparison and contrast for future adaptations as well. As Deborah Kaplan says: "a film of a book will always be different from the book itself, but let us also acknowledge that film has the power to show us aspects of Jane Austen's novels in new and revitalizing ways" (Kaplan 179). These new and revitalizing ways increase with newer adaptations of Austen's most popular novel and offer new lenses through which to experience *Pride and Prejudice*. As for Joe Wright's 2005 feature film, which I will discuss in the next chapter, its new and revitalizing way of experiencing *Pride and Prejudice* is to use the 1995 BBC miniseries equally as source text just as much as Austen's novel. Its producers knew they were making the first traditional adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* after the miniseries and were very aware that it was their stiffest competition. But, by being as different as possible from the 1995 BBC miniseries (and from the novel as well), it stands on its own

in popularity just as well as the miniseries. Linda Hutcheon has one way of looking at this: “adaptations disrupt elements like priority and authority (e.g., if we experience the adapted text *after* the adaptation). But they can also destabilize both formal and cultural identity and thereby shift power relations” (Hutcheon 174). In the minds and hearts of 21<sup>st</sup> century adapters and audiences, the 1995 BBC miniseries is the most popular *Pride and Prejudice* in existence, and will always be foremost in our minds as the best *P&P* adaptation.

### Chapter Three – A Process of Creation: Joe Wright’s 2005 Film

“He is a gentleman, and I am a gentleman’s daughter. So far we are equal.” – Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

There is no lack of adaptations of Austen’s novels, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, but there are surprisingly fewer cinematic adaptations than one would expect for such a famous classic novel. The very first adaptation of any of Austen’s work made for the screen was Robert Z. Leonard’s 1940 film *Pride and Prejudice*, an ‘adaptation’ that focuses more on imitating the previous year’s most successful film *Gone With the Wind* than Austen’s novel. Around this time, other classic novels were getting the Hollywood treatment as well (*Wuthering Heights* in 1941, for example), but aside from *Pride and Prejudice* in 1940, Jane Austen’s novels were generally absent from the big screen (“Jane Austen,” web). They were, however, present on stage, and beginning in the 1960s and 70s, on television as well. But this changed in the 1990s, and for about a decade, it seemed to be the age of big screen Austen adaptations. Ariane Hudelet argues that

The function of cinema and television in providing access to literary works today cannot be ignored. Jane Austen, in this regard, occupies a very special position, since her works have always called for recreation, interpretation, performance, [...] a phenomenon that has been increased tremendously by the plethora of cinematic adaptations since the 1990s (Hudelet 149).

It was in these years that film versions of *Persuasion* (Michell, 1995), *Sense and Sensibility* (Lee, 1995), *Emma* (McGrath, 1996), and *Mansfield Park* (Rozema, 1999) all hit the big screen, and were both popular and critically successful, particularly *Sense and Sensibility*. *Pride and Prejudice* however, is absent from this list. The hugely successful 1995 BBC miniseries was constantly re-running on television for years after its initial broadcast, so there seemed no reason to produce a cinematic version to compete with it.

In the mid-2000s however, it was announced that *Pride and Prejudice* would be made for the big screen, for the first time since 1940 (and only the second traditional cinematic adaptation to date). Audiences talked about this *Pride and Prejudice* for months, if not longer, before it was released, and were divided in their opinions. Some were very open to seeing the novel on the big screen again (or for the first time if they had not seen the 1940 film), others staunchly stood behind the extremely successful 1995 BBC miniseries and flat-out refused to give this new film the time of day.

*Pride and Prejudice* is not Jane Austen's only novel, nor the only one that has been adapted, but it seems to be the only one that audiences are continually opinionated about, more than any other Austen adaptation. Linda Hutcheon says, "if we know that prior text, we always feel its presence shadowing the one we are experiencing directly" (Hutcheon 6), and by prior text, she includes previous adaptations as well. For Joe Wright's 2005 film, nothing overshadows it more than the 1995 BBC miniseries, which is why the film is as stylistically different from the miniseries as possible. Upon its release, critics attacked Wright's film as a "butchering" of Austen's most famous work (Cartmell 85). Elizabeth M. Tamny wrote a particularly scathing review for *The Chicago Reader*, in which her extensive critique boils down to this:

By the time Lizzie and Darcy have their kiss [in the final scene], the story—some of the most satisfying plotting and character development in the English language—has been hopelessly mangled. [...] Carnage is inevitable when breaking down a big novel, but the new film sends Austen's tale through a terrible mauling. [...] It's a fitfully engaging romance, it's just not *Pride and Prejudice* [...] and [there's] no living author to scream about the violation of her art (Tamny, web).

On the other side of the argument, Stephen Holden's review for the *New York Times* was positive: "in a little more than two hours, Mr. Wright and the screenwriter, Deborah

Moggach, have created as satisfyingly rich and robust a fusion of romance, historical detail and genial social satire as the time allows” (Holden, web). Holden’s review touches on the film’s limitations, but highlights its success, unlike Tamny’s unforgiving critique.

There are two things to remember about the 2005 film as an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that critics of the adaptation forget: it is a two-hour film, and it is not the 1995 BBC miniseries, both of which entail that this adaptation is going to be different. John Wiltshire goes further to say that “much of the film in fact can be understood as reacting to that earlier success: its choice of settings, its subdued Mrs. Bennet, [and] its unnerving and uncomic Mr. Collins are only some examples” (Wiltshire 98). Linda Hutcheon explains that every adaptation, particularly when looked at as *a process of creation*, is separate from the source text and other adaptations, and cannot be judged against prior works. She argues, “the rhetoric of ‘fidelity’ is less than adequate to discuss the process of adaptation. [...] Adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of *interpreting and then creating something new*” (Hutcheon 20, my emphasis). As a two-hour film going up against the six-hour BBC miniseries, this film makes some massive changes from the novel and the miniseries, predominantly the omission of some characters, events, and lengthy dialogue, but this does not make it inferior to its predecessors; it simply makes it *different*. Joe Wright’s film is a reaction to the 1995 BBC miniseries and directly contrasts with it in every way. Hutcheon’s arguments support my claim: “as *a process of creation*, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective” (Hutcheon 8, original

emphasis). My perspective on the film is that it appropriates *Pride and Prejudice*, and Joe Wright himself attests to this in his production notes:

I got excited about new ways to film the story, which I don't believe have been done before. I wanted to treat it as a piece of British realism rather than going with the picturesque tradition, which tends to depict an idealized version of English heritage as some kind of Heaven on Earth. I wanted to make *Pride & Prejudice* real and gritty—and be as honest as possible (Wright in Durgan, web).

Wright's intention of making his *Pride & Prejudice*<sup>11</sup> “as honest as possible” can be seen in three distinct ways which I will discuss in the body of this chapter: his adaptation is **gritty** (particularly with reference to the Bennets' financial standing), **sexy** (specifically more *sexual* than previous adaptations), and **filmic** (Wright constantly reinforces that this is a *film*). These three stylistic choices that I have identified coalesce to create an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that is assuredly “as honest as possible,” and different from any other adaptation of the novel.

### ***Gritty Stylistic Choices***

Screenwriter Deborah Moggach has publicly referred to her screenplay as “the muddy hem version” of *Pride and Prejudice* (Cartmell 11), by which she means the dirty, real-life depiction of the story, starkly opposing the image of perfection displayed in previous adaptations, especially the 1995 BBC miniseries. Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* shatters the glass ceiling of an idealized Regency period,<sup>12</sup> specifically in his portrayal of the Bennet family and their financial circumstances. In this adaptation, it is made clear that the Bennets live on a working estate, but in the sense that it is a true farm—dirty and

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<sup>11</sup> Note: the title of Wright's film changes “and” to “&” and though I try my best to follow *Pride & Prejudice* with (Wright), if I have already mentioned his name ahead of the title, I may not add this after it. When I say *Pride and Prejudice* I am referring to Jane Austen's novel.

<sup>12</sup> This adaptation is set in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when Austen was writing the first draft of *First Impressions*, instead of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as all other traditional adaptations have done.



muddy (among other things), with animals flocking across the yard, and no clear division between ‘upstairs’ and ‘downstairs’ (Wright, 2005). As well, all the Bennets physically contribute to the estate through necessary chores. Granted, the women’s chores extend only to drying herbs and mending their own garments, and Mr. Bennet’s to supervising the yearly pig slaughter. But, this is a strong divergence from previous adaptations where the most work done by the Bennets was adding up accounts or redecorating a bonnet.

When Mr. Collins visits Longbourn, he seeks to pay a compliment to the Bennet sisters about the well-cooked potatoes served at dinner, but Mrs. Bennet vehemently claims that the family is financially able to employ a cook for this task (Wright, 2005). Even though the Bennets are relatively financially stable, in this adaptation, it is not surprising that Mr. Collins assumes that the family has cooked their own meal given their outward appearance. This is a poorer portrayal of the Bennets: the house is smaller and less pristine than in previous adaptations (frequently dirty and messy too), and the yard is significantly reduced: the back is a square space of mud lined with a small stable, and the front is a small grassy area buttressed by two giant trees, as well as a marshy duck pond across the dusty lane (Wright, 2005). This Longbourn does not have decorative flower gardens, perfectly decorated and mess-free rooms, a “prettyish kind of a little wilderness” (Austen 264), or a large grassy knoll.

Like the outward appearance of the house, the clothing worn by the Bennets also speaks to their low financial status more than other adaptations. In Wright’s film, the Bennet sisters have only two or four different dresses apiece, depending on their age. For instance, Lydia, Kitty, and Mary each only have one or two dresses, all of which are almost identical. Jane has three dresses, which are intermingled with different accessories

to add variety, all of which are pastel colors that enhance her beauty, without much cost. Lizzie, however, has at least five dresses; as a second of five daughters to a relatively poor gentleman, this is odd, but as the protagonist of the film, it is not. Lizzie's dresses are all green and brown earth tones that speak to her connection with the outdoors and her grounded personality, and which set off her dark hair and eyes (Wright, 2005). Aside from their everyday dresses worn and re-worn throughout the film, the Bennet sisters have special dresses for the Netherfield Ball, the most auspicious event in the film, and the original novel. All of their dresses are simple, unadorned white muslin with tiny details that individualize their otherwise uniform outfits. This is a conscious choice of the filmmaker to match late 18<sup>th</sup> century fashion: the most inexpensive material of the time was muslin, and any dyes to add color always cost extra money. Therefore, ball attendees who had lower financial circumstances often wore white muslin, and used small (read: inexpensive) details to distinguish their dresses, such as the overlapped, v-shaped neckline edged with lace for Elizabeth or Jane's round neckline, ruched bodice, and pale blue satin ribbon round her waist (Wright, 2005).

Wright's depiction of the Bennets' slight poverty does not dampen their spirits, but as a result, they are a more realistic, loving, and joyful family with all the same quirks and faults as one would expect, not the collection of caricatures they are portrayed as in the novel and previous adaptations. Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* gives us a more personal and intimate look at the Bennet family: Mr. and Mrs. Bennet share a kiss, Mrs. Bennet experiences a hangover the morning after the Netherfield Ball, all the Bennets eat their meals with intensity instead of daintiness, Lizzie is sharp-tongued and headstrong—and even yells at the others a few times, Mr. Bennet is always in need of a shave and a clean

shirt, and when Kitty announces Bingley's arrival the women make a mad dash to hide their usual activities: dozing, haberdashery, lounging, etc. (Wright, 2005). This is certainly an honest portrayal of a boisterous family of five daughters in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and, if anything, it endears the Bennets to the audience, and allows those watching the film to feel like the Bennets are their own families. This is Wright's attempt to make the family in his *Pride & Prejudice* more relatable than previous adaptations, which portray the Bennets as very distant from real families due to their comical representations.

Wright's honest portrayal of *Pride and Prejudice* in his film is not limited to the Bennets and Longbourn. The first large event that takes place in the film is the Assembly Ball—a public ball attended by all of Meryton society in which Bingley, his sister Caroline, and Darcy are introduced to everyone—and there is one specific difference from previous adaptations: sweat. This is the most interesting yet forgettable aspect of this scene and it deserves attention in regards to Wright's intention of making his *Pride & Prejudice* as honest as possible. What is often, if not always, glossed over in period adaptations is the notion of hygiene in those times. Period films almost always depict their characters as devoid of natural instincts such as needing to urinate, brush their teeth, etc., and these characters are never portrayed as less than pristine. It is completely different for Wright to show the attendees of the Assembly Ball *sweating* as they dance (Wright, 2005). Regency dances are not slow and gentle; they are lively, exuberant, and great exercise, which is why it is strange that most period characters do not show outward signs of physical exertion in most adaptations. Even more interesting to note is that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the only exercises ladies undertook were gentle walks

and dancing. The Assembly Ball and the Netherfield Ball are the only social events that involve constant dancing in Austen's novel, which spans a full year. It is completely rational to expect the Bennet sisters to be sweaty, out of breath, and physically exerted when dancing, given that they attend only two balls a year. Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* is not a glossy period film that romanticizes or ignores the aspects of daily life that are less than pristine. He makes the film real, gritty, and as honest as possible, through his small adjustments to the physical appearance of the story, which in no way alters its events, but provides a fresh outlook on it.

### *Sexy Stylistic Choices*

In the ten years that passed between the 1995 BBC miniseries and Wright's 2005 film, the level of sexiness in *Pride and Prejudice* increased. As I mentioned in the preceding chapter, Colin Firth in a wet shirt was enough to send more than one generation of women into 'Darcymania,' but Wright's film turns things up a few notches. *Pride and Prejudice* will always be Elizabeth Bennet's story, but it is undoubtedly Darcy who brings audiences to the screen versions of the novel, as the target audience for its adaptations is predominantly female. Having to compete with the mass popularity of Colin Firth's rendition of Darcy, Matthew MacFadyen stepped into a very large pair of breeches. But, with MacFadyen's physical appearance and some slight tweaking to the character, a new smoldering Byronic Darcy came to life on the screen. In his article "Mr. Darcy's Smile," John Wiltshire assesses MacFadyen's performance:

In this matter of Mr. Darcy's appearance, the film reproduces, with even more emphasis, the conception of the 1995 version. In other words, it produces a reading of Mr. Darcy which concentrates, as did that earlier adaptation, on Darcy's compelling sexual attraction to Elizabeth. The early scenes of the BBC

version constantly revert to Darcy's looking at Elizabeth, but he looks at her not with a smile but with a smolder. Overwhelming desire, troubling him because it is in conflict with social position and self-image, seems to be conveyed in his look. In the 2005 version this conflict has intensified. Miserable awkwardness at the Assembly [Ball] escalates, as the film continues, into looks in which compulsion is fused with distress (Wiltshire 98).

In many ways, MacFadyen is Darcy 2.0. Everything about his portrayal of the character is intensified compared to previous adaptations: his looks, his costumes, his facial expressions, and especially his body language.

MacFadyen's appearance is rugged: tall, dark, and handsome, but broodingly so, as if his own beauty causes him anguish. He is less the flouncy, well-groomed *gentleman* and more the cultured, rustic *man*. MacFadyen's Darcy is an enigma: he is not like in other adaptations where Darcy is initially proud and ill tempered, and kind and mannerly later in the adaptation, but secretive about his true character throughout Wright's film. In *Pride & Prejudice* (Wright), Darcy is mysterious, and hides his character from all who are not very closely acquainted with him, such as his sister Georgiana; he even seems to hide parts of himself from Bingley and Caroline, his closest friends. His proud, disagreeable, and even shy manner is a mask he puts on to hide his true nature, which is within himself all along; he does not improve his character after Elizabeth rejects his first proposal, rather, he just lets her see the real him beneath. She gets a glimpse of his true self during his first proposal—his sweet affection and his temper—but it is not until she spies him with his sister at Pemberley that she sees him completely unmasked.

MacFadyen's Darcy displays more true affection than any other Darcy in all adaptations, when he surprises his sister and lifts her up in a sweeping embrace (Wright, 2005). This is the deepest look into Darcy's true character because it is a private moment that ideally would not have been witnessed by anyone, especially Elizabeth. He not only smiles in

this moment, but laughs too, something that other Darcys do not do at all. When Elizabeth and the Gardiners return to Pemberley for dinner the following day, Darcy is all smiles and congeniality, and does not just give Mr. Gardiner permission and equipment to fish in his lake, but asks Mr. Gardiner to *join* him for the excursion, going above and beyond what other Darcys have done.

MacFadyen's Darcy is more than other Darcys because he is more than the character in Jane Austen's novel. MacFadyen's Darcy is also a Byronic hero, possessing qualities associated with Lord Byron's poetry: unconventional beauty, self-imposed isolation from society, moodiness, hidden passion, high intellectual capacity, and self-consciousness ("Characteristics of the Byronic Hero," web). MacFadyen plays the part of Darcy with all of these additional characteristics, so he is not just Darcy, but Darcy the Byronic Hero, and he showcases all the qualities listed above. By adding these elements to Darcy, MacFadyen enriches the character and allows him to make a strong impact on audiences, specifically to stand apart from Colin Firth's extremely popular portrayal. John Wiltshire says, "Matthew MacFadyen's Darcy is not only unsmiling, embarrassed, uncomfortable, he is plainly distressed, and to present him in this guise is clearly the director's intention. Elizabeth twice derides Darcy as 'miserable'" (Wiltshire 97-8). Wiltshire views MacFadyen's performance in a negative light, but I disagree. MacFadyen brings so much extra to the role, but everything he brings is so subtle that it can be missed or misunderstood, as Wiltshire's above comment shows. To the undiscerning eye MacFadyen's Darcy does seem miserable, but when looked at with knowledge of the added Byronic hero elements, MacFadyen's Darcy is extremely self-conscious, and his intentional isolation from society is to protect himself. But underneath that cold, shy

exterior is a loving, kind, intelligent, and passionate man. At the Netherfield Ball, he does not stand in a corner with Caroline and pass judgment on the Bennets, but silently skulks in corridors and edges of rooms, as a voyeur, unnoticed until he chooses to be noticed (Wright, 2005).

The two proposal scenes are ripe examples of MacFadyen's Darcy's character and his portrayal of Darcy as a Byronic hero, both of which are done a particular way in the film that is contrary to the novel and all other adaptations. Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* is truer to the romance of Austen's novel than the specifics of it, and Darcy's two proposals show this. Both proposals are set outdoors, the first during a torrential rainstorm, and the second at dawn. Each time, Elizabeth and Darcy are completely alone, which allows sparks to fly and passions to swell, resulting in two different outcomes for the couple. Darcy's first proposal moves out of the cozy setting of Mr. Collins' home in the novel and other adaptations to a 'Temple of Apollo' stone gazebo, in an unknown location in Hunsford. Elizabeth runs across a bridge and under the awning of the gazebo to escape the torrential rainstorm, and as she is catching her breath Darcy suddenly appears, as if he has been following her (Wright, 2005). He invades her solace from the storm, and instigates a storm of emotions in her. In this scene, the rainstorm stands as a pathetic fallacy, mimicking the heightened emotions of both characters, and Dario Marianelli's score intensifies the moment with a passionate crescendo of strings and horns. Marianelli's score is peppered with Elizabeth's orgasmic gasps of breath (from running to escape the rain), which culminate in a sharp intake when she sees Darcy, imitating an achievement of climax, and adding to the pathetic fallacy (Wright, 2005). Both Elizabeth and Darcy display a palpable sexual chemistry as both their passions and their tempers

flare, intensified by the cinematography. Wright employs a hand-held camera and cross-cutting techniques to gradually frame Elizabeth and Darcy from medium shots to close-ups, and never frames them both in the same shot (Wright, 2005). This signifies that Elizabeth and Darcy have very different feelings towards one another (Elizabeth just learned from Fitzwilliam that Darcy broke up Jane and Bingley), and they are blinded by their passion and anger, which almost causes them to have a lusty kiss. The gradually closer framing suggests that over time, something will bring them closer together and they will fall in deep, lasting love with each other.

As passionate and violent as the first proposal is, the second is subdued, gentle, and caring. These two scenes are in every way opposite of each other. Where the first took place during a torrential rainstorm and used mobile framing and cross-cutting techniques, Darcy's second proposal takes place on a misty morning just before dawn, with fewer and longer cuts, and Darcy and Elizabeth are shot in the same frame. Darcy strides towards Elizabeth through the mist, the pre-dawn sky silhouetting his Byronic figure, his ground-sweeping coat open to reveal a white shirt (an homage to Colin Firth's wet shirt scene). In this scene, everything is peaceful, graceful, and loving. It can still be considered a pathetic fallacy, but a much more restrained one: the music is soft and sweet, intermittent with twittering birds, Darcy and Elizabeth speak barely above a whisper (as if to preserve the gentleness of the scene), and as the sun rises, the couple is silhouetted, just as Elizabeth accepts Darcy's proposal and kisses his hands (Wright, 2005).<sup>13</sup> This scene signifies that Elizabeth and Darcy's love for each other is strong, but will not tear them apart like their passion during the first proposal; theirs is a love based

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<sup>13</sup> Poor MacFadyen seems to be suffering from allergies in this scene, and barely avoids sneezing while saying "I love—I love—I love you" (impressive acting on his part).



on mutual affection, respect, and caring for the other. Instead of their potentially destructive anger and passion mimicked by the torrential rainstorm in the first proposal, here their love is synonymous with the rising sun, full of joy, warmth, and promise.

Like how Andrew Davies adjusted Austen's original words in the 1995 BBC miniseries, here Deborah Moggach gives MacFadyen a line that could have been written by Austen, but was not. In professing his love to Elizabeth, Darcy says, "you have bewitched me body and soul," words that speak volumes of the depth of his affection for her, and his Byronic hero attributes (Wright, 2005). This line has grown so popular that it has joined the ranks of true *Pride and Prejudice* quotations. Similar to those Austen fans who believe Colin Firth's wet shirt scene is in the novel, so too do they believe Austen penned this line. Linda Hutcheon argues that this is what declares an adaptation a success: when what is adapted becomes original in the minds of the audience. She claims, "perhaps one way to think about unsuccessful adaptations is not in terms of fidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one's own and thus autonomous" (Hutcheon 20). Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* contains ample amounts of creativity, but not all of its creative liberties were as accepted as Darcy's above line.

Depending on which version of the film one watches, the film will end prematurely with the final scene being Mr. Bennet in his study, or it will end properly with Elizabeth and Darcy sharing a kiss. If it is the first, than one is watching the British version, if the second, one is watching the North American version. Among Austen fans and film critics, the proper final scene is the most despised of all the creative scenes in the film. The kiss between Elizabeth and Darcy is not in the novel, but it is not new to Austen adaptations. In fact the very famous 1995 BBC miniseries ended with Elizabeth

and Darcy sharing a kiss, but the context of that adaptation versus Wright's film is what causes dissent among audiences. In the 1995 BBC miniseries, Elizabeth and Darcy share a chaste kiss as they drive away from their wedding. In Wright's *Pride & Prejudice*, Elizabeth and Darcy are sharing a post-coital kiss while admiring the stars in their nightclothes. Austen fans are very protective of the novel and do not like having their treasured story sexualized: they love Elizabeth meeting Darcy in a wet shirt, but they do not want to see Darcy and Elizabeth in bed together, or even the suggestion of it. Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* is not meant for those protective fans; it is intended for new fans who are open to new ways of envisioning the novel, as honestly as possible.

### *Filmic Stylistic Choices*

Television and film entail different expectations for what an adaptation will look like, so there are a variety of stylistic elements one will see in a film that one would not see on television. Aesthetically speaking, film takes more liberties than television and produces diverse results. Linda V. Troost argues who she thinks Wright imagines his audience to be for his film:

This *Pride and Prejudice* aims to attract a very different audience – teenagers – who will gravitate toward a film that looks superficially like *Pirates of the Caribbean* crossed with *Wuthering Heights*: an edgy heroine in stays (Keira Knightley) meets a broody hero in a long coat (Matthew MacFadyen) – the music swells as emotions boil and the fog thickens. [...] Its style hopes to attract the youthful audience that loved *The Princess Bride*, the audience that actually goes to the movie theatres, rather than the older audience more likely to stay at home and watch, for the hundredth time, a DVD of Colin Firth diving into the pond (Troost 87).

I definitely agree with Troost that Wright is trying to achieve a certain stylistic effect and trying to attract a certain kind of audience, one that is assuredly younger. In certain

scenes, Wright employs specific stylistic elements to cause certain results. As I mentioned above when comparing Darcy's two proposals, the cinematographic style changes in each scene. Like the two proposals scenes, the two ball scenes also have opposite cinematographic styles.

Wright opens the scene of the Assembly Ball, the first ensemble scene in the film, with a tracking shot of the room leading up to the arrival of Bingley, Caroline, and Darcy; he then employs a hand-held camera for close-ups and quick shifts in focus to highlight specific characters. The cinematography is very helter-skelter in this scene, but it suits the tone of the event: a public ball that is rowdy, crowded, and a lot of fun, with a large vibrant band in the balcony. Costume designer Jacqueline Durran and production designer Sarah Greenwood have also created a distinct color palette of woodsy browns and greens that emphasize that this is a country event, and it is relaxed and amiable. Here, everyone is at ease, talking and cajoling, and wearing comfortable clothing, not their best finery. The barmen duck and turn to avoid getting their trays of ale knocked to the floor by dancers, and children playfully weave through the couples (Wright, 2005). The Netherfield Ball is quite the opposite. It is a private ball that has been meticulously designed and organized (most likely by Caroline, as the mistress of Netherfield) and is the most ornate event the Bennets have ever been to—or anyone invited from Meryton. As a result, it looks completely aesthetically different from the Assembly Ball.

For this ball, guests must be invited, come dressed in their finest garments, and be on their absolute best behavior. The band is a much more refined string quartet with a single flutist, liveried footmen stand along the walls with silver trays of champagne, and the Bingleys have set aside salons for guests to sit and converse if they are not dancing

(Wright, 2005). There is another distinct color palette at this ball: white with hints of black and red, inspired by a London street, the complete opposite of a casual country dance. The ladies are *all* wearing white or ivory dresses (discussed earlier in this chapter), the men don dark coats (black, deep blue, or forest green), and the militia officers are dressed in their red regimentals. The cinematography is significantly different as well. When Elizabeth enters Netherfield and begins looking for the absent Wickham, her search is captured in a long take that continues until Elizabeth is accosted by Mr. Collins and must dance with him. This is a beautifully employed cinematic device because it gives the camera (read: Wright) an excuse to showcase the “breathtaking” “general splendor” without hearkening back to picturesque traditional filming of Austen adaptations (Wright, 2005). The 1995 BBC miniseries almost exclusively films the Netherfield Ball scene in long shots that show the entire ballroom and everyone in it, emphasizing its grandeur (Langton, 1995).

One of the most beautiful moments in Wright’s film (and there are many) is Darcy and Elizabeth’s dance, set to the same music used in the 1995 BBC miniseries, a baroque song called “Rondeau” from the Abdelazer Suite written by Henry Purcell, and using the same dance movements, those of “Moniek’s Maggot” (Albright, web).<sup>14</sup> This is a much more personal dance than the others during the ball, and involves much closer proximity between partners, allowing for intimate conversations, and locked eye contact. This dance shows the attraction and chemistry between Darcy and Elizabeth (even if she is yet unaware of it), but Wright’s cinematography makes it more evident. After they have discussed polite nothings and Elizabeth makes a quip about Mr. Darcy’s treatment

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<sup>14</sup> On the 2005 film’s soundtrack, this song is called “A Postcard to Henry Purcell.”

of Mr. Wickham there is a cut to a match-on-action—Elizabeth and Darcy’s dance movements continue into the new shot as if a cut never happened—only now they are completely alone in the ballroom. John Wiltshire argues that

This creates a disorienting and troubling effect, but it makes a clear point. [...] It is indicating that there is, even at this early stage, a passionate, magnetic attraction that holds the two together. Dangerous and inconvenient, not necessarily productive of pleasure—that is why the camera moves so differently from that joyous kinship with the dance which is conveyed in so many other Austen ball scenes (Wiltshire 109).

The cinematography of this moment is truly exquisite: the camera moves like another member of the dance, swaying and swooping, moving toward and away from Elizabeth and Darcy, not worrying about framing them straight-on, perfectly, or in the same shot, and Wright does not cut until the end of the dance and there is a match-on-action of Elizabeth curtseying and they are once again among all the other dancers (Wright, 2005). The purpose of this scene is to show the magnetic attraction between Elizabeth and Darcy, but it is also purely aesthetic, a gratuitous display of beauty, and it is in Wright’s *Pride & Prejudice* because this is a film, showing off that it is a film. Wiltshire adds, “in this beautifully conceived, filmed, and edited sequence, takes merge and fade into each other, and render a visual equivalent of absorbed, dreamlike contemplation” (Wiltshire 109).

Another noteworthy aesthetic moment that is gratuitously beautiful and not strictly necessary to the narrative is Elizabeth on a swing in the Bennet yard. Charlotte has just come to tell Elizabeth that she has agreed to marry Mr. Collins after Elizabeth refused him. Once she walks away, Elizabeth contemplates Charlotte’s decision and spins in circles, the camera cutting back and forth between shots of Elizabeth on the swing, and three slow pans of the yard, showing the seasons changing and time passing (Wright,

2005). In one of these pans, it is pouring rain and for an inexplicable reason, there is a small wooden sailboat in a muddy puddle in the yard. The other two pans show the yard in drier seasons and have no odd items like the boat. Even though it is not always immediately evident how these gratuitously beautiful scenes relate to the narrative, they are memorable, which is perhaps their main intention, and reveal how Wright is trying to make his *Pride & Prejudice* stand apart from the novel and other adaptations, specifically the 1995 BBC miniseries.

His intentions of standing apart from the novel and the hugely successful miniseries are announced in the opening scene of the film: Elizabeth is shown walking and reading a book at dawn, which on

Close inspection (for those patient enough to capture the image on pause) reveals the book to be *Pride and Prejudice* itself, [...] While David Roche reads this meta-adaptive moment as an announcement of the film's infidelity to Austen, that the adaptation will leave the book behind to create something different, Elizabeth's possession of the book establishes a key connection between author and heroine (Cartmell 112).

This brings to light the most important filmic stylistic choice of Wright's entire adaptation that immediately sets it apart from the 1995 BBC miniseries: Elizabeth. The film begins with Elizabeth, ends with Elizabeth, and features her in every step of the narrative; one can count on a single hand the number of shots in the film in which she is absent, and she is present in *every* scene. There are also a large number of scenes that show *only* Elizabeth, a luxury the BBC miniseries does not take. It is very clear that Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* is Elizabeth's story: it is cinematically told from her perspective and through her subjective perception. Wright does this through subtle techniques such as featuring Elizabeth more than previous adaptations, including gratuitous scenes depicting her alone in thought (in place of scenes that address events

and characters that have been omitted), and giving Elizabeth a more powerful role, rendering Mr. Bennet more passive and resigned.

To those who know the original novel, it is quite noticeable that many of Mr. Bennet's lines have been given to Elizabeth. Her attitude suggests that she has a position of power in the family as the most sensible of the daughters, and she takes charge of the situation when Lydia runs away, reading Mr. Bennet's letter and informing Jane that "Wickham's a fool if he accepts less than ten thousand pounds" (Wright, 2005). It is also worth mentioning that Elizabeth wears masculine style clothing on occasion. In stark contrast to her sister's feminine dresses, she is sometimes seen wearing a shirt and vest styled dress in white and light brown, as well as a dark colored great coat (floor-length) instead of a more feminine cape or shawl, or the light-colored and femininely-styled coats of other ladies (Wright, 2005). Wright uses these masculine costume choices to bring attention to Keira Knightley's delicate and beautiful feminine features, especially her lips and eyes (her eyelashes are particularly noticeable), and perhaps to disguise her slim and small-chested figure, which contrasts Jennifer Eyre's buxom appearance. All of these subtle techniques bring attention to Elizabeth, allowing her to always stand out from the scene, reminding viewers that it is always *her* story.

Linda Hutcheon argues, "part of both the pleasure and frustration of experiencing an adaptation is the familiarity bred through repetition and memory" (Hutcheon 21), so Wright makes every stylistic choice with the intention of being different from the novel and all other adaptations before his, most especially the 1995 BBC miniseries. His own admission is that he wants his *Pride & Prejudice* to be as honest as possible, but that can

be interchanged with wanting it to be as *different* as possible, and he achieves this goal. Wright took on a hefty challenge of creating a *Pride and Prejudice* that can challenge the 1995 BBC miniseries for popularity among audiences.<sup>15</sup> It was never a question of whether or not Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* could outshine Robert Z. Leonard's *Pride and Prejudice*—any film of the novel could do that—but if it could challenge the BBC miniseries. In many ways, Wright's film has done something beyond this task: it has become one of the most successful *films* of the romance genre, and was nominated for four Academy Awards, including Best Actress for Keira Knightley and Best Score for Dario Marianelli ("Pride & Prejudice Awards," web). Ariane Hudelet explains why this is: "Jane Austen's texts had already given way to rituals before the age of film, [...] but cinema has brought the phenomenon to a more significant level, by expanding the range of the audience concerned, in terms of place, gender, and social class" (Hudelet 156-7). Wright's film definitely reaches out to a new audience, but it also reaches out to a *larger* audience, expanding the reach of Jane Austen and insuring that her legacy grows. Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* is like a perfect autumn afternoon: the lush, spring foliage (the original novel) has blossomed for the long months of summer (the BBC miniseries), but comes to its end, creating the most beautiful, yet temporary season with the most vibrant colors (the two hour film), and squeezes out the last bit of beauty before winter comes (when the novel, the miniseries, and the film end). Fortunately, the end has not yet come, as Bernie Su's 2012 transmedia storytelling experience, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, is the latest, most creative, and arguably most unique adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that has ever been produced.

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<sup>15</sup> This adaptation is not more popular than the BBC miniseries, but it is certainly one of the most popular Austen *films* that has been made (of any of the novels), and is almost equally successful as the miniseries.



## Chapter Four – A Process of Reception: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* 2012 Transmedia Storytelling Experience

“She told the story, however, with great spirit among her friends, for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.” – Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

To say that the face of film and television storytelling is changing would be an understatement. As audiences change, so do ways of watching entertainment, and along with them, adaptations. In the last decade, a new form of media has appeared and become a game-changer for film, television, and adaptation. Transmedia storytelling has fundamentally changed the way audiences view visual entertainment, and is defined by Henry Jenkins as “a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins qtd. in Stein and Busse 13-4).

Transmedia storytelling takes advantage of the progress of digital media and the increasing popularity of social media to create a fusion of entertainment directed at an entirely new audience. It relies on the interconnectedness between sites like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc. to create a web of story elements that could stand alone, but the whole story is only fully experienced when all the elements come together. This is a very unconventional storytelling device, but it is steadily growing in popularity thanks to the Emmy-award winning series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (Su, 2012), the most successful transmedia story experience of this emerging medium, creating an adaptation that offers “Austen-for-the-masses” (Bowles 18). Developed by Hank Green and Bernie

Su, and inspired by the Lonelygirl15 project,<sup>16</sup> *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (LBD)*, took a story so familiar and made it new, challenging the forms of media used for adaptation (and storytelling in general), affirming the popularity of Austen and the ingenuity of transmedia storytelling.

YouTube, “the third most popular Internet site in the world” (Van Dijck 111), is the foremost website for viewing video content, as “Internet market research company comScore reported that the service accounted for 37 percent of all Internet videos watched inside the United States, with the next largest service, Fox Interactive Media, accounting for only 4.2 percent” (Burgess and Green 2). Plainly speaking, YouTube is a digital media phenomenon that is growing exponentially, and it is not likely that it will slow down in the near future. Like other social media sites, YouTube provides a service and creates a community bolstered around that service. YouTube’s community is one of amateurs and professionals who upload videos and share them with the public, inviting views, comments, and responses, which are collectively addressed as ‘participatory culture.’ This is “a term that is often used to talk about the apparent link between more accessible digital technologies, user-created content, and some kind of shift in the power relations between media industries and their consumers” (Burgess and Green 10).

YouTube is a free service for those wishing to view and post videos, blurring the boundary between industries and consumers; as well, the increasing quality of technology for affordable prices is blurring the boundary between professional and amateur. The uniqueness of “YouTube’s rapid rise, diverse range of content, and public prominence in the Western, English-speaking world make it useful for understanding the evolving

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<sup>16</sup> Originally thought to be a real girl’s video diary, Lonelygirl15 was the first attempt by a media company to tell a fictional story through the ‘authentic’ form of video blogging (vlogging) and profit from this new media (Burgess and Green 28).

relationships between new media technologies, the creative industries, and the politics of popular culture” (Burgess and Green vii). Nothing encapsulates the interstice of these three things better than *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

For a 200-year-old story, *Pride and Prejudice* continues to be remarkably fresh and consistently adaptable, even to a brand new medium that is not even a decade old. As Olivia Rosane explains:

Jane Austen’s internet success isn’t so surprising. She is, after all, one of those few authors who live on as both a pop-cultural phenomenon and a dissertation topic. In fact, given her talent for snarky dialogue, Austen and the internet seem like a perfect match. For what do we use social media, after all, but to make sport for our neighbors, and laugh at them in our turn? (Rosane, web).

The intricacies latent in *Pride and Prejudice* through the use of various narrative tools (narrator, dialogue, letters, etc.) set things up very nicely for a transposition to transmedia storytelling, as these narrative tools get translated into social media tools. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* uses YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr to illustrate the story of the Bennet sisters, but though its storytelling format is what made it unlike any other adaptation, the fact that it is *Pride and Prejudice* is “what connected with audiences. Without them, this would have just been an experiment” (McNutt, web). Telling a story across media is an amazing concept, but *LBD* succeeded because it was Jane Austen’s classic novel, beloved by millions. As the first successful transmedia storytelling experience, *LBD* blew open the doors of visual entertainment media and how audiences experience stories, setting a trend that is sure to continue, but the series “is also a well-made adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that deserves the basic distinction of being an engaging story well told” (McNutt, web).

This brings me to Linda Hutcheon's third and final theory of adaptation: *process of reception*, that which is "an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" and is experienced as a palimpsest with one's memory of the original work, indicating the most creative liberties from original to adaptation (Hutcheon 8). What is important here is that though many changes are made, "the story is the common denominator, the core of what is transposed across different media and genres, each of which deals with that story in formally different ways" (Hutcheon 10). It is important for adapters to take creative liberties, even extensive liberties, because these (sometimes drastic) changes allow one to see the original in a new light, one that highlights something one never saw in the original, but was there all along. With the case of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the audience is given a major updating of *Pride and Prejudice*, with changes to story elements, plot events, and style of presentation. Looking immediately at the stylistic presentation, *LBD* is a series of one hundred videos 'made' by Lizzie, ranging from three to seven minutes, as well as three parallel video series by Lydia, Charlotte, and Gigi (Darcy) on YouTube, which combined, total over nine hours of video. The series also employs Twitter handles for every character, Facebook pages, Tumblr accounts, and even a legitimate LLC company website for Pemberley Digital, which is now the name of Hank Green's company, currently producing more transmedia adaptations. This intricate web of story elements and stylistic presentation create an example of what Hutcheon calls interactive adaptation, in which "the interactive, physical nature of this kind of engagement entails changes both in the story and even in the importance of story itself," engaging audiences "immediately and viscerally" (Hutcheon 13). YouTube is a very immersive medium of entertainment, immediate and visceral, because it "revolutionize[s] the experience of

lean-back TV into lean-forward interactive engagement” (Van Dijck 110), offering a platform to watch videos, but also comment on them, participate in community reactions to them, and even respond back to them with videos of one’s own.

The irrefutable most common video on YouTube is the talking head, audience-directed video blog, better known as the vlog. The majority of vlogs are amateur and authentic, but very recently this authenticity has been mimicked to create assumed real amateur vlogs that are entirely scripted, most notably *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. This is the most popular form because “not only is the vlog technically easy to produce, generally requiring little more than a webcam and basic editing skills, it is a form whose persistent address to the viewer inherently invites feedback,” creating a medium of participatory culture (Burgess and Green 54). Adaptation is an innate human desire for repetition without replication, as Hutcheon argues, so participatory culture in today’s digital age is the logical next step. Transmedia storytelling fulfills the human craving for the same, coupled with the human need for change, with the added fantasy of participating in one’s favourite same story and its repetition without replication. With *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, viewers “did not possess the agency to change the events of a 200 year old story, [but] they did embrace the opportunity to interact heavily with the characters through the communication channels carved out for them in the narrative” (Anderson, web). The very basis of transmedia storytelling is to immerse the audience in the project and let the story world bleed out into reality, allowing audiences to temporarily suspend reality and live in the story world the same way they live in the real world. Through this suspension of reality, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* creates the most

immersive adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* ever made, and it could only have been done in today's digital culture.

As the camera begins to roll, Lizzie opens her vlog with the famous first line of *Pride and Prejudice*, but once this line is spoken, *LBD* appears to ricochet away from every other *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation that has come before it. Although the series is remarkably different from previous adaptations, there are little hints and nuances in Lizzie's videos that speak to the interconnectedness of adaptations, wherein previous *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations are used for source material just as much as Austen's novel. In Chapter Two I discussed how the 1995 BBC miniseries adapted the original *Pride and Prejudice* novel, and in Chapter Three how Joe Wright's 2005 film adapted the 1995 BBC miniseries; now *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* continues this chain, adapting the novel and Wright's 2005 film, and including tiny homages to the 1995 BBC miniseries. Adaptations are always responding back to the original source text, but they are also reacting to previous adaptations, specifically the most recent one before them. They are never competing with the source text for popularity, they are competing with previous adaptations; therefore, they take the most recent adaptation as their source text and build off it. This usually entails that the new adaptation is very different from the previous one(s), and that it presents itself as 'the adaptation that is or does X.' For example, the 1995 BBC miniseries is the *sexy* *Pride and Prejudice*, and Joe Wright's 2005 film is the *gritty* *Pride and Prejudice*; following this chain, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is the *Pride and Prejudice* for the *digitally literate* audience, especially the 20-something woman.

Using the tools of today, *LBD* seamlessly applies Austen's 200-year-old story to today's world of digital literacy, social media, and being a young woman in the twenty-

first century. This implies attaining post-secondary education (and then some), getting a fulfilling career (or even just a job), and finding the Darcy amid the Wickhams of today's dating pool. *LBD* proves the timelessness of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, as Rosane claims: "watching a story that has survived two centuries play out over new media is an assurance that *something of our humanity remains constant* between the world of quills and parchment and the world of styluses and screens" (Rosane, web, my emphasis). This timelessness is of course, reimagined in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in a very positive way, as Jane and Lizzie's end results are no longer falling in love and getting married, but finding themselves and their places in the world. *Pride and Prejudice* will always be the story of a woman who was never afraid to be herself, and always followed her heart and achieved her own desires, but in today's world this means more than finding a husband. Myles McNutt recognizes that "in its choice to tell the story entirely through direct-address video blogs set in the present day, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* takes a contemporary approach, weaving details and dialogue from the novel with storylines and characterization that better reflects 21<sup>st</sup> century sensibilities" (McNutt, web).

These 21<sup>st</sup> century sensibilities are portrayed side-by-side with elements of the novel, but also with dialogic aspects of Joe Wright's 2005 film, and nods to the 1995 BBC miniseries. This is apparent from the very first episode, as Lizzie explains who she is: "I'm a 24-year-old grad student with a mountain of student loans, living at home, and preparing for a career. [...] I like rain, classic novels, and any movie starring Colin Firth" (Su, 2012). To the regular vlog-watcher, this second sentence would not stand out as anything particular, but to the *Pride and Prejudice* fan—who is already knowledgeable

enough to know this is an adaptation of *P&P*—these three things are references to Joe Wright’s 2005 film (rain), Jane Austen’s novel (classic novels), and the 1995 BBC miniseries (any movie starring Colin Firth), three source texts that have created the foundation for *LBD*. The nuances accumulate as the series goes on, including original lines from the novel such as “a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman” (Austen *PP* 19) and “I was in the middle before I knew that I had begun” (Austen *PP* 285). Continuing the tradition set by Colin Firth in the 1995 BBC miniseries, there is, of course, a wet shirt scene. In the first episode where Wickham appears, he and Lizzie are chatting towards the camera, when Lydia comes in and unashamedly ‘accidentally’ pours a cup of water on Wickham’s t-shirt, forcing him to remove it, giving the audience a prolonged view of his well-defined chest and abs, which Lydia practically salivates over (Su, 2012). Since *LBD* was produced in 2012, it should come as no surprise that the *wet shirt* scene has transformed into a *shirtless* scene, but what is interesting is that it is Wickham instead of Darcy. Dialogue from Wright’s 2005 film appears as well, such as Darcy’s rebuff of Lizzie asking him if he likes dancing: “not if I can help it” (Wright, 2005), and Darcy’s first proposal scene, reworked into a declaration of love, as well as their subsequent argument, which is dialogically and physically reminiscent of Wright’s film (Wright, 2005). Truth be told, this episode is more than reminiscent; it is almost a transcription of the words and gestures of Keira Knightley and Matthew MacFadyen, though the dialogue has been updated to modern speech, and there is no ‘almost kiss,’ as Lizzie is fuming with anger and Darcy is very wary of that (Su, 2012).

A chain of adaptations of a single source text “is arguably not a postponement of pleasure; it is in itself a pleasure. [...] Like ritual, this kind of repetition brings comfort, a



fuller understanding, and the confidence that comes with the sense of knowing what is about to happen next” (Hutcheon 114). In this repetition, certain story elements are expected to occur, as “the story is the common denominator, the core of what is transposed” (Hutcheon 10), but this does not mean that the story elements have to be portrayed exactly the same. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, some *Pride and Prejudice* plot events are seamlessly adaptable to today’s society and culture, but others must be creatively adjusted to fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Though some of them are the same and others different, all of the story elements retain their original intentions, and the core of *Pride and Prejudice* remains throughout the series. Some story elements that are the same as the novel are: Jane and Bing falling in love but torn apart by Darcy (Bingley has become Bing Lee), Mr. Collins being a thickheaded annoyance, and Darcy writing Lizzie a letter to explain himself after his botched declaration of love (Su, 2012). Events that have been updated are: Charlotte accepting Mr. Collins’ offer to be partner of his digital media company, not his wife; Jane and Lizzie being guests at Netherfield for nearly a month on the pretense that their house is under renovation, not Jane’s illness (though she does get a slight cold while there); and of course Wickham still nearly destroying Lydia’s reputation by posting a sex tape of them with a countdown to its release, though of course Darcy steps in before it reaches the end (Su, 2012). It is no surprise that these events unfold as naturally as they did in Austen’s novel and in other adaptations, but the viewer’s interest remains constant, because “we keep watching not to know *what* will happen, but *how* it will” (Rosane, web, my emphasis). *Pride and Prejudice* is so well known, that for the purpose of my analysis, the medium of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* matters more than the

story, but *LBD* also proves that the popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* continues in today's digital age, two hundred years after the novel's publication.

Karen Swallow Prior argues that “*LBD* is said to have changed the face of storytelling because of the way the multiple platforms allow fan interaction to add zigzags and layers to the old linear story [...] and the format has been called the perfect ecosystem of a story world” (Prior, web). Unlike adaptations in film and television, the characters of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* are not untouchable; they are active in social media, allowing fans to connect with them as tangibly as they do with their own friends and acquaintances. In Film Studies there is the phrase, ‘breaking down the fourth wall,’ meaning the characters are aware of, and interact with, the camera; but in transmedia storytelling, there is no fourth wall to begin with. The core of a vlog is that the character in front of the camera is speaking directly to the audience his/her videos are reaching, and Lizzie is as aware of this as any real vlogger would be. Throughout the series, Lizzie makes many off-handed comments that imply her cognizance of the fact that she is speaking to a public audience, and that she has certain responsibilities to them, the most important of which is telling the truth. She is very aware though, that she provides a version of the truth; early in the series, after Charlotte and Jane post a video addressing this, Lizzie fights back with, “of course I’m biased, it’s *my* video blog” (Su, 2012, original emphasis). Before Lizzie shares the video of Darcy professing his love to her, she opens the episode by saying this: “we’ve had some crazy things happen on camera, and there have been several moments that we didn’t include, so this was not an easy decision to make. But it seems like these videos are bigger than me now” (Su, 2012). This shows that Lizzie has come to terms with the fact she must be more objective in her

videos for the sake of her viewers, especially when Darcy expresses his unawareness of her dislike of him, and she accidentally reveals that she has a vlog, blurting out, “you were unaware? Then why don’t you watch my videos” (Su, 2012).

Lizzie’s immediate horror of having revealed her videos to Darcy is peculiar because, until she let the cat out of the bag, she assumed Darcy would not have known about them at all. Lizzie shares the events of her life through vlogs that any member of the public can see, so why has she been in a false sense of security that the people she speaks about and imitates would not see them too? Lizzie is embarrassed when she finds out that Caroline has seen them, and even more so when Gigi Darcy admits to being an avid viewer, because she openly talks about, mocks, and derides their brothers, though more Darcy than Bing of course (Su, 2012). In posting her videos, Lizzie knows that they are available for anyone to see, but she almost expects them to remain private from Darcy and Bing, as well as anyone who knows the men. Though Bing knows Lizzie films herself, and appears in a few videos, he believes that Lizzie is recording video letters to Charlotte, not video blogs for the whole world to see; he does not realize otherwise until very late in the series, and is the last to know (Su, 2012). Lizzie, however, has shifted in her opinions: early in her vlogs she never questions sharing personal information about herself, her sisters, and everyone they know, but as the series progresses, she begins to think differently, and asks permission before posting videos involving others, suggests turning off her camera multiple times, and even tries to dissuade Gigi Darcy from sharing private information (Su, 2012). The openness of digital media, and the common abuse of this openness, is a constant moral string throughout the series, and though *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* creates entertainment with this touchy subject,

The series does not shy away from raising ethical questions about the new form. [...] Over the course of the series [however], the videos are ultimately a redemptive force. [...] There isn't a problem the internet causes that it can't also resolve. Which makes it seem less like a disruption than another, newer but increasingly familiar, part of life (Rosane, web).

Although Lizzie does not regret her decision to put her life and the lives of her sisters and friends online for all to see, her vlog teaches her a moral lesson about what the internet can do when it is misused (Su, 2012). Olivia Rosane argues: "beyond smoothing away the wrinkles of the past, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* goes out of its way to make us comfortable with the technologies of the future" (Rosane, web). The internet can be a scary place, but it does not have to be if one has the tools to navigate it well.

The same can be said about life as a twenty-something woman in today's society and culture. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, young women can do so much more than just marry and have children, as Jane and Lizzie do in Austen's novel, and *LBD* takes Austen's Mrs. Bennet's serious voice of wanting her daughters married to rich men as comic fodder. Lizzie often harshly imitates her mother's outdated marriage hopes for her daughters, as Jane says of one of Lizzie's skits, "Lizzie this isn't very nice," and Lizzie asks, "is it true?" and Jane responds, "well yes, but you always make mom seem unhinged" (Su, 2012). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is not sensible for Lizzie and Jane to find husbands by the end of the series, and Lizzie's costumed portrayals of her mother's desires to have her daughters married to rich, single men are clearly comedic. Lizzie and Jane are in their mid-twenties, and though some women do marry around this age, the viewer wants something better for them than Austen's literary ending. *LBD* deals with real problems plaguing the twenty-something women of Lizzie's audience: achieving post-secondary education, the resulting debt from that, getting a job and establishing a career to pay off

those debts, and moving away from home. These issues are addressed constantly throughout the series, and by the end, every female character in the vlog has either a really good job with opportunity for advancement, or a planned career trajectory underway. Charlotte, who was the first to get a good-paying job and move away from home, has risen in the ranks of the digital media company she works for, and is now running the company's current office as Mr. Collins heads to "the cosmopolitan metropolis of Winnipeg, Manitoba" to set up a new branch of offices (Su, 2012). Jane, who began the series with an entry-level job in the fashion industry where she was overworked and underpaid, briefly works for a company in LA, and ends the series starting an amazing job in New York (Su, 2012). And Lizzie, who has spent the series finishing her Masters degree, as the vlog is her thesis project, uses what she has learned to begin developing her own digital media company, which she will establish in San Francisco (Su, 2012).

Of course, finding love is also important to Jane and Lizzie, but it is more important to find themselves and their places in the world before they decide to share their lives with others. *Pride and Prejudice* ends with the marriages of Jane and Lizzie, as do all adaptations of the novel, but *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* reimagines these proposals into creative endings to the love stories of the two couples. After Bing leaves Jane and moves to LA, viewers watch Jane transform into a stronger person, more aware of what she wants out of life and what she is prepared to give up. When Bing returns, he asks Jane if they can get back together, but Jane initially refuses because she does not want to give up her career for any man, even Bing. As a result, he 'proposes' that he move with her to NYC, which Jane accepts with a few conditions (Su, 2012). Before their breakup,

Jane might have given up her career for Bing, but certainly not now. Lizzie and Darcy follow a similar pattern: Lizzie was her own person all along, and had a strong idea of what she wanted to do, which was to work in the digital media industry. Her drawback, however, was her reluctance to move away from home, which Charlotte forced her to admit (Su, 2012). In the second-last episode, when Lizzie and Darcy are reunited and both declare their love for the other, Darcy offers Lizzie a job at his digital media company Pemberley Digital—a company instead of a mansion. Lizzie refuses, however, staying true to herself, and instead of working for Pemberley Digital or for one of Darcy’s competitors, she is “thinking of *becoming* one of your competitors” (Su, 2012, original emphasis).

Although *Pride and Prejudice* taught Regency women to follow their hearts and marry for love, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* teaches another lesson. Excitingly, “what Jane Austen did for the novel, *LBD* creators Hank Green and Bernie Su do for the vlog, and digital media generally” (Rosane, web): they bring recognition to a new medium, and encourage young women to seek out more than what society tells them they are capable of accomplishing. *LBD* teaches young women to get postsecondary education, find careers they love, and advance themselves in those careers, or create their own. More than these lessons though, *LBD* teaches young women they can have it all. As an added meta-layer to this, YouTube has recently begun airing commercials before its videos, including those of *LBD*. One of these commercials is for Cover Girl, starring Ellen DeGeneres, Queen Latifah, P!nk, Janaelle Monae, Katy Perry, Sofia Vergara, Becky G, and Olympic hockey player Natalie Wiebe—all women who have been told that they “can’t” do something and have proved those people wrong, and Covergirl is

using this ad to start the social media trend #GirlsCan, (a great message to accompany *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*). It can be argued that this is what Jane Austen has been saying all along and in fact, the moral of her novel, and every *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation made of it, can be saying the same thing: girls can.

It almost seems like fate that *Pride and Prejudice* is the first successful and popular transmedia story, as it is largely claimed to be one of the most popular novels ever written in the English language, with the most recognized first line ever written. According to The Big Read, an endeavor to find the most popular books of all time according to British readers, undertaken by the BBC in 2003, *Pride and Prejudice* is the second most popular book of all time, second only to J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* ("The Big Read," web). *Pride and Prejudice* has retained its immense popularity in this brand new medium because

Transmedia is not simply re-telling the same story through a different medium, as in adapting a book to film, [...] nor is it just franchising. [...] Rather, at the heart of transmedia storytelling is the interactive 'storyworld,' which, like *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, blurs the lines between fiction and non-fiction, creator and audience, narrative and non-narrative (Rosane, web).

Because Austen's novel is 200 years old, it has become a bit of a catalyst in the world of adaptations as a story that can be tweaked and adjusted without changing the core of the story, as Bernie Su stated of making *LBD*: "we kind of want to preserve the greatness of it" (Su in Klima, web). There is an undeniable reverence with which adapters approach *Pride and Prejudice*, attesting to its high status in today's culture, but also its versatility and adaptability. It is a very inviting source text because of the popularity of the original story and the immense amount of changes that can be made to it while still retaining what is essential. With *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Hank Green and Bernie Su show that if you

“treat the fans and the source material with the reverence they deserve [...] you will reap the benefits of that loyalty” (Klima, web).

YouTube as a medium relies entirely on loyalty of viewership, and this is how the elements of transmedia storytelling come into play. They turn a series of videos loosely based on *Pride and Prejudice* into an internet phenomenon, and inspire future endeavors of the same type of adaptation. What is truly unique about transmedia storytelling is that

The individual pieces do not stand alone. A single story is broken into pieces and spread across multiple conduits to the audience. [...] It relies on the audience to put all the pieces together to assemble the story. While this may seem like a lot of work to go through when it’s just a lot easier to press play on a video and sit back and watch, in many ways this type of transmedia merely *mimics the way we consume information in our daily life* – through email and social media, the radio and TV, and any information channel we can find. Transmedia attempts to use this already existing behavior pattern and repurpose it for telling stories (Bushman, web, my emphasis).

It is an undeniable fact that digital and social media have changed our lives and our society, so of course they would change entertainment and adaptations. Matching the high speed with which we absorb the world through social media, and the immediateness of digital media, *LBD* is not just an adaptation, it is an experiment of being in-the-moment, for, as Hank Green says: “the experience of consuming *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as it happened was so cool. [...] It] can never exist the way that it did when it was happening, it can never be as rewarding as it was right when it was occurring. [...] That real-time element in so many different facets, not just the stuff that we were doing through social media, but the stuff that the fans were doing” (Green, web). Transmedia storytelling works best in today’s digital society, creating a participatory experience where the industry and the consumer collectively add elements to the story and enrich the experience beyond the one-sided viewing of film and television entertainment. Jay



Bushman, one of the producers of *LBD* states, “there’s a demand for this kind of storytelling. I think there’s a recognition and an acceptance that digital and internet-enabled storytelling is the way of the future” (Bushman, web). I am more than inclined to agree.

## Conclusion – For the Love of Austen

“Til this moment I never knew myself.” – Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Adapters of Jane Austen share with the world what they find between her pages, what meaning can be found by those who dedicate their time and energy to discovering it, and share their findings with new generations and inspire new lovers of her novels.

Throughout this thesis I have explored what others have hypothesized about adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, and given my own views on the subject, and here comes the epiphany that has been growing during this process: adaptation is not a simple mirroring between original and adapted, or a continuous reference backwards and forwards; adaptation is a road. It is a familiar road that one has gone down before, but it has changed: there will be parts of the road that are very much the same, others that are very different, but it will lead to the same place, for a road cannot change its destination.

When it comes to our favourite stories, it is never the end; stories like *Pride and Prejudice* are so meaningful to us and so powerful throughout time that we can never close the book and be fully satisfied, for we will always want more: the same yet different, repetition but never replication.

Linda Hutcheon has guided me through this exploration of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations: first with *a formal entity or product* which I used to analyze the 1995 BBC miniseries, then with *a process of creation* for Joe Wright’s 2005 film, and lastly with *a process of reception* to examine *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* 2012 transmedia storytelling experience. Through the use of these navigational tools I have argued that no adaptation is better than another, and the purpose of creating adaptations is not to incur judgment

between the adaptation and the original or between multiple adaptations. The integral purpose of an adaptation is to extend the love of a story as far and wide as it will reach, testing its durability across modalities. Things such as “sequels and prequels are not really adaptations, nor is fan fiction. There is a difference between never wanting a story to end [...] and wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways. With adaptations, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change” (Hutcheon 9).

Adaptation is appreciation and creativity combined into one. It tests the flexibility of the original story, but also the limits of different media, as “each medium and each mode of engagement brings with it not only different possible kinds (imaginative, visual, physical) and degrees of immersion, identification, and distance but also different critical traditions that have valued one extreme or the other” (Hutcheon 134). Through adaptation, we learn which media tend to work best for which stories, such as television for *Pride and Prejudice*, but also what can be accomplished by those who dare to try something different, such as *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, which is setting the trend for tomorrow’s digital entertainment.

Through analyzing the plethora of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, I have found that there is no author more beloved by adapters than Jane Austen. She is most certainly popular, and definitely successful among viewers, but there is something else that brings producers back to her time and time again, especially to her most famous novel *Pride and Prejudice*. There is something latent in this novel that acts like a magnet, drawing those who wish to recreate it across time periods and cultures, excluding no one. Maybe it is its inclusivity, but maybe it is something else, something that cannot quite be captured by words or images or social media. It is really just a novel written by a woman who never

married, lived at home her whole life, did not move far from the area where she was born and grew up, and died at the age of forty-one; and yet everywhere you go, *Pride and Prejudice* is beloved by millions. Olivia Rosane claims with reason that, “watching a story that has survived two centuries play out over new media is an assurance that *something of our humanity remains constant* between the world of quills and parchment and the world of styluses and screens” (Rosane, web, my emphasis). How this Regency authoress wrote a story that continues to resonate 200 years later is a question that we still cannot fully answer.

But Austen’s novels are only part of her popularity in today’s society and culture, as Ariane Hudelet argues:

The cinematic Jane Austen could also be seen as a cultural phenomenon at the turn of the twenty-first century. The cinematic Austenmania (which started in 1995, and in spite of many prophecies of its demise, has continued to develop until now) has slightly altered the meaning of ‘Jane Austen’ as a public phenomenon, a cultural icon. The relationship between Austen and films has led even her texts [...] to be read differently—today, Jane Austen is cinematic also because film has changed the way we know her (Hudelet 148).

This cultural icon of Jane Austen has given rise to what I like to call ‘Austen-inspired products’: books, films, and social media sites that have appropriated Austen in the most respectable and reverential ways possible, most of the time. Author Bill Deresiewicz says:

Jane Austen is an author, uniquely, whom we all feel the need to possess—which means, to rewrite, to retell. It’s not enough for us to read her stories, we also have to turn them into our own. [...] We don’t do it with anyone except Jane Austen. Surely it’s because she has an unsurpassed ability to make us feel as if we know her characters as well as we know the people in our own lives. They’re friends of ours—no wonder we want to keep gossiping about them (Deresiewicz, web).

Examples of Austen-inspired adaptations are: the novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith, the novel and film *Austenland* by Shannon Hale and directed by

Jerusha Hess, the two part miniseries *Lost in Austen* directed by Dan Zeff, the novel and film *Bridget Jones's Diary* written by Helen Fielding and directed by Sharon Maguire, the novel *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* by Laura Viera Rigler, the novel and film *The Jane Austen Book Club* written by Karen Joy Fowler and directed by Robin Swicord, the film *Becoming Jane* directed by Julian Jarrold, the YouTube video “Jane Austen’s Fight Club,” the song “Jane Austen is My Homegirl,” and an infinite number of sequels, prequels, retellings, and nonfiction lifestyle guides inspired by Austen’s classic novels. As peripheral material to the original novels and their multiple adaptations, these Austen-inspired books, films, and videos further foster Jane Austen’s status as a cultural icon and increase her popularity beyond her novels. This popularity encourages a desire among Austen fans for more and more, rendering Jane Austen a commodity that inspires Austen-related products, and always more adaptations.

As counterintuitive as it may seem, the commodification of Austen-inspired products and more adaptations does not negatively affect the sales of her six original completed novels. In fact, it breeds new editions and new cover art like rabbits, due to the fact that her novels are in the public domain and continue to be immensely popular; according to [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com), there are 1,710 editions of *Pride and Prejudice* (“Pride and Prejudice Editions,” web). This begins the cycle anew: readers will pick up *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* or *Persuasion* or *Northanger Abbey* or *Mansfield Park*, become infatuated with the novel, taken in by the characters, and inspired to create something that homages or adapts it. Linda Hutcheon rightfully claims, “we need the ‘same’ stories over and over, then, as one of the most powerful, perhaps the most powerful, of ways to assert the basic ideology of our culture. But adaptations are not

simply repetition; there is always change. Of course, the desire for change, [...] may itself be a human universal (Hutcheon 176). So, in the end, it is a truth universally acknowledged that a reader in possession of an Austen novel, must be in want of nothing but more of the same timeless story told across any modality.

## Filmography

*Austenland*, dir. Jerusha Hess, Sony Pictures, 2013. Web. Mar. 16, 2014.

*Becoming Jane*, dir. Julian Jarrold, 2 Entertain, 2007. Mp4.

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