

**PROFIT AND PRODUCTION:
JANE AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* ON FILM**

by

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Abstract

Adaptation from literature to film has always been a much criticized enterprise, with fidelity criticism, or an attempt to discredit fidelity criticism, often driving the critical discussion. However, this type of thinking is somewhat limited, becoming circular and going nowhere productive. Instead, taking into account what has come before, this thesis attempts to settle on a method of examination that moves away from fidelity criticism and towards an approach that aligns itself with cultural studies. Adaptations, then, can be seen as products of the historical, cultural, political and general socio-economic framework out of which they emerge, owing perhaps more to their context of production than to their source material. In order to provide a case study that reflects this idea, this paper looks to an author who has been adapted on multiple occasions, Jane Austen, and examines her as a cultural construct. Looking at Austen's most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, and using Robert Z. Leonard's *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), Cyril Coke's *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* (1980), Simon Langton's *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), Andrew Black's *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (2003), Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and Joe Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* (2005), the thesis argues that the appeal of Austen is a result of her cult status and economic viability, and also the malleability of her text, which allows filmmakers to use it in a number of different contexts, while still embodying the source material.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“Great literature must spring from an upheaval in the author’s soul. If that upheaval is not present then it must come from the works of any other author which happens to be handy and easily adapted.”

- Robert Benchley, *Chips off the Old Benchley*

Adaptation is certainly prevalent in our current era of mass intertextuality. Video games become films, films become novels, novels become musicals, and the list goes on. Anything and everything can, and likely will, be adapted. However, this is hardly a new phenomenon. According to Marshall McLuhan, “the content of a new medium is always an old medium. Therefore, written narratives appropriate oral tales just as the movies borrow from books and television from film” (qtd. in Ray 42). Stories have constantly been adapted, even literary greats such as Shakespeare, for example, relentlessly adapted the source material for his plays from the stories of others. As far back as ancient Greece, stories were adapted to suit the particularities of the teller. Homer and Virgil are the names we know today because they wrote the stories down; but, the stories of Odysseus and Aeneas had been told by many different people, and in many different ways. The Bible, too, is a compilation of oral stories that were written down and anthologized, stories that had been recounted orally and, likely, with a certain amount of variation.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that adaptation has remained of the utmost importance in contemporary times. This trend of using past stories and re-shaping them for new needs has not disappeared with the advent of film; it has only become more prevalent. According to George Bluestone, D.W. Griffith, who is considered one of the foremost innovators of the silent era, owes much of his inspiration to Charles Dickens and “particular passages are cited to illustrate the dissolve, the superimposed shot, the close-up, the pan” (2). The oral tradition, then, produced stories that were eventually written down, which ultimately

developed into literature. Literature, then, has provided the inspiration for cinema, allowing words on a page to be embodied visually.

Yet, this process of adaptation has not been without controversy. Scholars are divided over the issue of fidelity and many feel that straying from the letter of the novel is unacceptable. Often, these types of criticisms become emotionally motivated.¹ Understandably, readers become invested in novels, commonly creating their own visuals to accompany the prose. In a film, the way characters are portrayed is left to the discretion of the filmmaker, often not matching up with our own ideas. So, fidelity frequently has more to do with our own unique vision than with the text itself. However, for this study, these emotional responses need to be placed at the sidelines, to a certain extent, because in a lot of early adaptation theory these issues of fidelity dominated the discourse, and they were often motivated by an emotional rather than an intellectual response to the film. Certainly, there are some adaptations that I prefer over others, for some reason or another, but my personal preferences do not have a place in an academic argument. These kinds of preferential arguments are ones that I want to move away from, and instead move towards an historical and cultural approach to the adaptations.

The issue of fidelity obviously stems from the nature of the source material. As Dudley Andrew says, “the distinctive feature of adaptation is the matching of the cinematic sign system to a prior achievement in some other system. Every representational film adapts a prior conception but adaptation delimits representation by insisting on the cultural status of the model” (9). Andrew stresses that all filmmaking is a kind of adaptation, whether it has a source text or not. This is an important point, as people are constantly influenced by what they have seen and heard previously, whether they are aware of it or not. Even the process of turning a screenplay into a finished film becomes an adaptation of sorts, as things are bound

to shift and change. The issue with novel to film adaptation is, just as Andrew says, to be found in the cultural status of the model. The film hopes to capture the cultural appeal of this model but often, in so doing, creates animosity in those who feel that the text has been altered.

Is fidelity to the source of the utmost importance? Is it necessary at all? Due to the differing nature of the mediums, scholars even question whether adaptations can occur at all. In the first chapter, "Adaptation and its Issues," I address these questions and engage with the relevant scholarship in the area, mapping what has been done, but also what has not, to show that the discussion of fidelity ends up hindering a truly profitable examination of the practice of adaptation. It is not so much fidelity to the source that is important, but the reasoning behind choosing that particular source and the way that the context of production shapes the source. In this study, it is historical, political, economical and cultural concerns that become of the utmost importance.

We certainly cannot discount that, in our own time, choosing to adapt is still an economically motivated choice. Production companies have realized that success in one form can lead to success in another. Adaptation is certainly not limited to books. While I am mostly concerned with adaptations from literature to film, I think it is useful, from an economic stand point, to look at how far beyond the novel adaptations have spread. Anything can be adapted, if it is deemed profitable enough. Theme park rides, video games, 'true stories' and popular TV shows have all found places on the big screen. This process works both ways and, in turn, popular films are now often adapted into books, plays, and even toys or games. One need not look beyond the rather odd phenomenon that is *Legally Blonde: The Musical* (which premiered on Broadway in April 2007), to see that this is the case.² This is a time of intertextuality. Re-makes and covers are commonplace in the film and music

industries and, perhaps more than ever, the popular arts are motivated by economics. Nothing is off limits and the issue of adaptation remains a prevalent concern. Cross promotion and merchandising are obviously all motivated by the potential for financial gain. Taking something that is already popular in one medium and adapting it into another is much safer than taking a chance on something that is unproven.

Cross promotion and new forms of adaptation have become a modern form of vertical integration, with studios owning the rights to produce toys, games, novels, theme park rides, etc., all of which can be based around the film and its characters and then marketed on studio owned television stations (Thompson 82). The new goal is to have the target audience “watching a batman video while wearing a batman cape, eating a fast food meal with a batman promotional wrapper and playing with a batman toy” (Bolter qtd. in Hutcheon 88). This is integrated advertising in its most developed form. While cross-promotional strategies have brought an added dimension to the adaptation debate, the adaptation of novels to film remains economically stable and it continues to be done largely because of the potential for economic gain. As Donald Larsson notes, “novel rights are bought by producers not from love of literature, but because a successful and prestigious book can assure a good return, and if the work in question is in the public domain, so much the better” (Larsson 76). This is not to say that the process of adaptation should be condemned because of its economic goals, but we must bear this in mind when studying adaptations and realize that they are not simply an artistic pursuit.

Hence, the choice to adapt a novel is often connected to the popularity of the author, as well as the subject matter of the story. Linda Hutcheon asks, “are some kinds of stories and their words more easily adaptable than others?” (15). *Pride and Prejudice*, with its many film and television adaptations (not to mention countless stage adaptations, etc.) certainly

appears to be one of those stories. Charles Dickens, author of over twenty novels, as well as a number of short stories and plays, is the most adapted fiction author to date, but Jane Austen isn't far behind him, and she is definitely the most adapted female author. This is especially impressive when one considers the fact that she only wrote six novels in her lifetime. Both authors have been described as writing in a theatrical manner, which would seem to make them easier choices for adaptation as they are already so focused on dialogue and strong characterizations, two of the most important elements of a play or a screenplay. Jane Austen's novels have been adapted for film and television on at least thirty-three separate occasions, not to mention being adapted for the stage multiple times as well. While they have been predominantly well received, they are not immune to fidelity criticism. Responses to these films only further prove that fidelity is very much a subjective category. As Kathryn Sutherland notes, "the fact that one writer finds boringly faithful a film which another sees as having only a tenuous relation to the original while yet another finds it too faithful, suggests that there is no clear consensus about what faithful means in this discourse" (340). Fidelity criticism becomes more about possession, fidelity to an individual's reading of the text, rather than to the text itself. Regardless, that does not seem to stop it being discussed over and over again. Moving away from fidelity, I am concerned with why Austen is adapted and how these adaptations come to be more reflective of the needs of the societies and cultures out of which they emerge than of the actual source material.

In the second chapter, "The Appeal of the Past and the Cult of Jane Austen," I look at the marketability of the past in contemporary culture and the way that we re-create and consume that past. I then move on to establish the cult of Jane Austen, and the American re-claiming of British culture, examining Austen's posthumous position as a celebrity. Looking at her most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, which has been adapted for the screen on ten

occasions, it becomes evident that our fascination with the past, as well as with our obsession with all things Austen combine to make the adaptations of this text economically viable.

Beyond this, a study of the novel itself reveals how open it is to multiple readings, meaning that it can easily be re-shaped to reflect the needs and desires of the filmmaker, and the time and place in which they are working. Austen's work becomes a perfect choice in this respect because it is so accessible. It is, in the words of Brian McFarlane, "a novel about money and marriage, and about why people marry each other, and the factors, frequently economic, which complicate progress toward marriage and make for difficulty within it" (2005: 8). These are themes that have remained relevant into the twenty first century.

It is also a text that lends itself to multiple interpretations, as the hundreds of different critical works can attest. Both the adaptations and the novel itself are evocative of, in the words of Rachel M. Brownstein, "the differences between ways of seeing" (57). Elizabeth and Darcy, for example, often see the same situation in different ways, the prime instance being their thoughts on Jane's attachment to Bingley. Similarly, adaptors will have different ways of seeing the novel as a whole, leading to different finished products. As Tara Ghoshal Wallace states, *Pride and Prejudice*, "in spite of its seamless surface, is neither coherent nor comprehensive" (58). There is no correct reading of this text since, according to Darryl Jones, "paradigms of reading and of criticism are not themselves absolute" (2). It has been, and continues to be, reinterpreted, which is why there can be so many adaptations, each choosing to privilege a different aspect of the novel. However, *Pride and Prejudice* is not an undiscovered text by any means. Being Austen's most popular novel means that, in the words of Jan Fergus, "the text is likely to be over-familiar, making a fresh or even attentive response difficult" (Fergus 87), but perhaps this challenge is part of the appeal. Regardless, this issue is one that adaptors must address when deciding how they want to tell the story.

In the third chapter, “Six Adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*,” I look at the film adaptations specifically, examining how the interpretive nature of Austen’s text allows filmmakers with different goals, and coming out of different historical and cultural contexts, to produce films that are exceedingly diverse, but that are still reflective of Austen’s text. While there have been ten adaptations, not all are available for viewing. On January 23rd, 1949, NBC’s *Philco Television Playhouse* released a one hour adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* as episode seventeen of the first season. The series would continue to run until early 1956, and it became known for its live productions of original stories and adaptations of novels and plays. Unfortunately, through my correspondence with NBC,³ I have learned that much of this material has been lost, and what remains has not been released to the public, for purchase, or general viewing. As well, the BBC’s 1952/58 versions, and the 1967 BBC version, are virtually impossible to locate. In fact, according to the BBC, it is unlikely that copies of the 1952 and 1958 adaptations are even in existence.⁴ The 1958 version is actually a re-staging of the 1952 version, using the same sets and identical scripts, but with different actors and a different director. It would have been interesting to see how two such closely related productions differed; however, regrettably, this simply was not possible.

As a result of availability, I concentrate on the six remaining adaptations: Robert Z. Leonard’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), Cyril Coke’s *Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice* (1980), Simon Langton’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), Andrew Black’s *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (2003), Gurinder Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and Joe Wright’s *Pride & Prejudice* (2005). Breaking them down into three sub-sections, I examine the films in the context of television adaptations, star powered adaptations and contemporary adaptations, linking each production to the time period and culture out of which it came and looking at discrepancies between the films and the text as culturally motivated.

Adaptations, then, say more about the culture in which they are produced than they do about the source material. In the words of Ellen Belton, “the adaptation offers an opportunity for filmmakers to reread a narrative from another age through the lens of their own time and to project onto that narrative their own sense of the world” (195). Because it is so open to interpretation, Jane Austen’s work becomes a perfect choice, malleable, easily yielding to the adaptors’ desires, but always recognizably Austenian. Obviously, filmic adaptations are first and foremost economic pursuits. Austen’s story has proven to be economically viable and this is largely due to Austen’s own cult status as well as the focus on economics within the novel, the character based narrative, the flexibility of the text, and the easily accessible themes, such as love, wealth and class, that translate to any time and any place and remain relevant in present time.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Louise Flavin's take on Austen adaptations on film.

² For those that are unfamiliar, *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic) was a surprisingly successful 2001 film that tells the story of Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon), a sorority girl who decides to go to Harvard law school.

³ Email to Author from Mr. Ben Silverman, 20 June 2007.

⁴ Email to Author from Ms. Kate Harwood, 29 May 2007.

Chapter Two: Adaptation and its Issues

“A list of words making a poem and a set of apparently equivalent pictures forming a photoplay may have entirely different outcomes. It may be like trying to see a perfume or listen to a taste.”

- Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture*

The Oxford English Dictionary states that to adapt is to “make suitable for a new use or purpose, to alter or modify, adjust one thing to another or, to become adjusted to new conditions.” This seems to be a simple enough definition, straightforward and clear.

Adaptation involves the alteration of one entity into another, and change is inherent in this process. However, issues surrounding adaptations in our contemporary society are rarely viewed in such uncomplicated terms. Can this literal definition really do justice to such a complicated pursuit? I would argue that it can, but that many are unwilling to look at it this way, or to accept the adaptation as a creature that has a place and importance outside of its source material. Thinking of adaptation in the more scientific sense of the word would allow us to not only become more emotionally distanced from the source material, but also to see the process as a phenomenon that is deeply imbedded in cultural studies, one that is growing and changing, literally adapting to different times and places.

Adaptation in film has the potential to be doubly appealing to producers because it can attract regular filmgoers, as well as those who are curious about the way in which the source has been transformed. Who will play our favorite character? How will they show visually what the author has only been able to do with words? Adaptation, in this respect, seems as if it might be a freeing medium as it allows for the creation of a visual representation of the text. Yet, we are rarely truly happy with adaptations. One needs only to survey an audience leaving a screening of an adaptation to find a number of critical opinions. Even those who liked the film will often have a few nitpicks, be they with regards to casting or cutting, among other things. Perhaps the director’s vision didn’t match our own, or we feel

that something of the utmost importance was left out. It's certainly true that stories are often altered when they move from the word to the screen. According to George Bluestone, in a sample of twenty four adaptations, forty percent altered the story in order to achieve a happy ending (42). These kinds of alterations are what enrage those invested in fidelity criticism. I do agree that dramatic story changes should be avoided, because changing the story in its entirety defeats the whole purpose of adaptation. Why adapt if you aren't planning on using the outline of the source material to shape your text? However, this is not to say that the source has to be followed to the letter as certain changes cannot be helped and things cannot always be represented the same way on film as they are in literature. The task of literature, in the oft quoted words of Joseph Conrad is, "by the powers of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – before all, is to make you see" (Conrad qtd. in Bluestone 1). In this sense, film seems to be the perfect way to put pictures to words. However, as Christian Metz points out in *The Imaginary Signifier*, this can lead to a certain amount of discontent on the part of the viewer as he "will not always find his film, since what he has before him in the actual film is now somebody else's fantasy" (12).

This idea is a prevalent issue in adaptation studies, as reading requires us to create our own images and our own concepts of characters and scenes. So, as Joyce Boyum notes, a preference for the novel over the film may have less to do with the novel itself and more to do with the film not matching perfectly with our own imagination of it (60). It is not necessarily the words of the text that move us; indeed, according to James Griffith, "we are moved by things that the words stand for" (Griffith 37). Perhaps then, the perfect spectator would be one who had not read the book at all. They will see the film like any other film and not like an adaptation. I would argue that, while these viewers may have fewer issues with the film, they are not truly experiencing it as it was meant to be experienced. The adaptation

chooses to promote its source material for a reason and it relies on references to that source. This is not to say that someone who hasn't read the book cannot enjoy the film, far from it, only that in order to experience the film as an adaptation you must have some degree of familiarity with the source material. However, it is something of a catch twenty-two, because the closer people are to the source text, the more fully formed their version of that text will be. As a result, these spectators will likely be less open to other interpretations. No matter how informed or well thought out a film is, our specific vision is not likely to match perfectly with someone else's and the film adaptation forces us to see things in a fixed and very specific way. As Bluestone states, "if the history of aesthetics proves anything, it is that a given set of myths, symbols, conventions is unable to satisfy all spectators at all times in all places" (31).

Something that holds such a high position in society, like a classic novel, is going to be more plagued by issues of fidelity, as the adaptation becomes a representation of this cherished text. People seem to be much more inclined to accept an adaptation of a novel that exists within popular culture, as there is a pervasive thought that "great literature seldom makes great movies. But very good pulp makes very good movies" (Levy qtd. in Griffith 17). While what makes a good novel or a good film is somewhat subjective, one could concede that, generally, something like serialized detective fiction can be adapted without fail. You rarely hear the fidelity question raised with regard to the BBC television adaptations of the Ruth Rendell Mysteries or the Inspector Morse series. In fact, they are rarely even described as adaptations. Even the high profile James Bond series usually appears to avoid this kind of criticism. It seems that it is, generally, adaptations of high profile literature that are expected to remain faithful to the letter.

This idea raises a lot of questions that Bluestone addresses in his seminal work, *Novels into Film* (1966). While much of Bluestone's work centers on a study of each individual medium, he does make some interesting observations, especially the idea that once a film has become a critical and economic success, issues of fidelity are often placed on the back burner (114). Bluestone also asks some important questions like: should a film be faithful, and to what exactly? Or, can the way the novel is narrated (such as first person) be adequately conveyed in a film? Certainly, the voice-over is an oft used technique, but it is frequently distracting, providing a quick fix to narrative issues that the film cannot find a way to deal with visually. Though Bluestone does not find definitive answers to his questions, and eventually seems to come to the conclusion that film cannot recreate the intricacies of the novel, engaging with the subject at all did raise awareness about adaptation and the issues of fidelity that usually surround it. As a result, his work holds an important place in adaptation theory.¹ Adaptation theory, though, continues to occupy a place at the margins partially because, in the words of Cartmell and Whelehan, "literature on screen was too literary for film studies and too film-based for literary studies" (2007a: 1).

Concentrating on adaptations from novel to film, one constantly encounters the fidelity argument. When one takes a classic piece of literature, or a well loved book, and adapts it for the screen there is rarely unanimous praise. Instead, adaptations are criticized for straying from the book, being different or not being as 'good.' This idea of inherent 'goodness' is almost impossible to measure and we might wonder why the novel is constantly praised as a superior art form, as there is nothing to say that the stories found therein are entirely original. In the words of Walter Benjamin, "storytelling is always the art of repeating stories" (90). The way we experience these two mediums can also never be entirely united. In general, film-going (and filmmaking as well) is a collective experience.²

We sit in seats in a theatre surrounded by other people and, while we each have our own individual experience, it is done in a communal setting. A novel, on the other hand, we rarely experience collectively. It is a much more solitary experience. We can choose how slowly the story is revealed simply by closing the book. People can discuss novels in book clubs or with friends, but we rarely experience a novel in a group setting in the same way that we see a film.

Clearly, film is also a visual medium, and it must show its story to the audience. The inner monologue or perspective of a character cannot be written in; it must be shown visually, or else the character must literally speak what they are feeling. For these reasons alone, a film cannot be exactly like the novel from which it was adapted. While Morris Beja insists that film and literature are two modes of the same art form, he is one of the few who argues this and he fails to adequately account for the differences between the two mediums. Certainly, film and literature are both narrative mediums but they are also, as I have mentioned, vastly different. So, bearing in mind the difference between story and plot, while novel and film adaptations can share the “same story, the same ‘raw materials,’ [they] are distinguished by means of different plot strategies which alter sequence, highlight different emphases, which – in a word – defamiliarize the story. In this respect, of course, the use of two separate systems of signification will play a crucial distinguishing role” (McFarlane 2007b: 23). While a metaphor cannot possibly be the same in a film as it is in a novel, the idea of metaphor can be conveyed through camera work and, more importantly, through editing. In some sense, film style becomes the prose. In this case, in the words of Andre Bazin, “the style is in service of the narrative: it is a reflection of it, so to speak. And it is not impossible for the artistic soul to manifest itself through another incarnation” (23). It is these kinds of alterations and attempts to achieve a similar effect through different means that

make the study of adaptation interesting, and they should not be used to damn the whole process. As Brian McFarlane says, “literature and film might be seen, if not as siblings, at least as first cousins, sometimes bickering but at heart having a good deal of common heritage” (2007b: 28). Unlike most representational arts, film and the novel both take time to unfold. While the time involved is different, neither medium gives us all of the information all at once. This sets film and literature apart from something like painting or photography, where all the information is available right away. Film can also be aligned with the novel in that both can be seen as a means of escape for the viewer or reader. As Joyce Boyum states, we read and watch films for the same reasons, “for the opportunity to identify with – even to transform ourselves into – other human beings for awhile and vicariously participate in their lives” (39). So, film and literature can have a similar effect and a similar narrative structure, but they present their material in different ways and through a somewhat different language.

According to Bluestone, states of mind, memory, imagination and dreams “cannot be as adequately represented by film as by language” (47). I would argue that adequate is the wrong word to use. Film can be used to represent all kinds of states of mind and the way that this is accomplished demonstrates the artistry of the filmmaker. However, I would agree that the way these states of mind are depicted is extremely different from the way they are depicted in a novel. These differences are, in my mind, a good thing as they allow for creativity and artistry to exist in two different mediums. Bluestone states that, film “can lead us to infer thought, but it cannot show us thought directly. It can show us characters thinking, feeling, and speaking, but it cannot show us their thoughts and feelings. A film is not thought; it is perceived” (48). For Bluestone, this fact is to the detriment of film, making adaptations an impossibility. But, film can show thoughts and feelings. Showing is exactly what film does, as opposed to the novel, which tells. For my purposes, as someone looking at

multiple adaptations of the same source, different choices with regards to showing what can seemingly not be shown are of the utmost importance, and reflective of the filmmaker's context of production as well as their own creative inklings. Film truly is a different medium; so, the expectation that the film will perfectly resemble the book is an impossibility that can cause nothing but harm. Film may have its own language, but it is vastly different than the written word. As Boyum notes, "it has no permanent vocabulary; it has no fixed grammar; and though its syntax is characterized by certain rules of usage, it can't, in the manner of verbal language, be referred back to any pre-existent code" (21). Perhaps this is a good thing, as film becomes much freer and can then represent what the novel cannot, or at least represent it in new and different ways. Film is able to bring us images, as well as sounds and music, something the novel could never do. Before print culture, stories were told by the human voice. So film, with its ability to represent the human voice, can be seen as a way to take us back to the earliest form of storytelling. As James Griffith says, "the issue of film adaptations from novels becomes a very simple matter: the adaptation cannot be the same thing" (30), but that does not mean that it has less value from a critical standpoint.

It would be easy to pick apart every adaptation because while picture and word can convey the same things they must do so in different ways. Film obviously cannot directly say, "it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen 51). True, the sentence could be uttered in voice over, but a heavy reliance on voice over is usually a device that filmmakers try to avoid because it is often distracting, taking away from a medium that was designed to be visual. However, through creativity, this exact message can be conveyed. The filmmaker, then, "becomes not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right" (Bluestone 62). Adaptation by its very definition involves a change, so if we long for a

process that will replicate a novel perhaps we should refer to it as translation. Like translators, adaptors have a double task. They must show faithfulness to the source, or, as Boyum states, “why bother using it at all?” (70). At the same time, they must create something new in a new language. In the adaptor’s case, this new language is that of the cinema. However, translation also has its share of problems and issues, as a translation can never be entirely accurate and the translator often falls victim to the same types of criticism as the adaptor. This is because certain things simply cannot be translated accurately. As Robert Stam states, perhaps a more productive way to look at adaptation is “to see it as a matter of a source novel’s hypotext being transformed by a complex series of operations: selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, analogization, popularization and reculturalization” (68). Adaptation then becomes a very complex process that cannot be reduced to faithful or unfaithful as, with each adaptation, the emphasis placed on each of these different operations will shift slightly. Regardless, adaptation is always something of an alteration process, taking a text and engaging with it in new and different ways.

So, if adaptation implies change, why does it create such controversy? Perhaps there is a fear that the film will replace the book in some way. The fact that these are two vastly different mediums makes that an unlikely idea and, often, film adaptations end up boosting the sales of the source novel. Indeed, novels are often re-released when they’ve been adapted for the screen with new covers that feature stills from the film. This is done in the hopes that, after seeing the film, you will return to the source material and read (or re-read) the book. In fact, after the 1939 film release of *Wuthering Heights* (William Wyler), more copies of the novel were sold than in the entire time since its initial publication (Boyum 16). Despite all this, there still remains a fear that film will replace the novel as the foremost narrative

medium. While novels continue to be published and the written word remains part of our everyday lives (the fact that I'm writing this is proof of that fact), I do not think these fears are entirely unfounded. I think it's fairly obvious that, in modern societies, at any one moment, more of the population is watching television or going to the movies than reading a book. That being said, I do not think you can argue that adaptation is the cause of this fact. According to studies done by the IBA Research department in 1985, 46% of a group of 3000 respondents stated that they purchased the book as a direct result of seeing the adaptation (Giddings, Selby and Wensley 22). As Hutcheon argues, adaptation can breathe new life into a book. It does not "leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep the prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise" (176). It is cross promotion at its best.

Yet, regardless of these cross promotional tendencies, the novel is almost always seen as the higher art form. It is the original that should be altered as little as possible and, as a result, cuts to or changes from the book are rarely viewed favorably. Some, like Robert B. Ray, even go so far as to refer to film adaptations as "citations grafted into a new context" (Ray 45). Why is the novel privileged, one might ask, since it is not a more superior medium when it comes to representing reality. According to Bluestone, "language cannot convey non-verbal experience...reality cannot be conveyed – only the illusion of it" (12), perhaps creating a new reality of its own. According to Robert Stam, the novel remains the privileged source because of a hierarchical approach that exists in our society, "the assumption is, that the older arts are necessarily better arts" (4), and that the novel contains some sort of superior essence that is impossible to transcribe. Stam also rightly questions how filmmakers could ever possibly be faithful to this essence, or to the intentions that the author may not even have been aware of. Yet, according to Thomas Leitch, it is only by doing exactly this, that the

fidelity critics can be appeased (16), although, he does not necessarily agree with those critics. For Leitch, “fidelity makes sense as a criterion of value only when we can be certain that the model is more valuable than the copy” (19). This is a virtually impossible task, so we end up going around in circles and the debate in adaptation theory continues without actually going anywhere. We cannot move away from fidelity because we keep engaging with it. Obviously, I too am guilty of this because it has become out of the question to discuss adaptation theory’s past (or even the act of adaptation in general) without evoking it. Yet, scholars are not the only ones who bring up issues of fidelity. While the scholars who I have discussed engage with these ideas from a critical perspective, and while McFarlane insists that those with a literary background are more likely to be sticklers for fidelity (2007a: 4), it is often the general public who are the most fidelity conscious, desiring that their favorite novel be perfectly represented on the screen. One has only to go to a movie theatre on any given night to hear statements like ‘I liked the book better’ or ‘she was supposed to have brown hair.’

Yet, the question that continues to emerge with regards to fidelity is what does the film need to be faithful to? And, how does it go about this? Many argue that absolute fidelity is impossible because of the differences between the two mediums and, for some, this is an indication that adaptation should not occur,³ while for others (myself included) it is merely a statement of fact that does not detract from the cultural value of these films. Certainly, there are different degrees of faithfulness and different intentions with regards to this. Dudley Andrew points to three different methods of adaptation and calls them borrowing, intersection and transforming (98-104). Each of these, according to Andrew has a different goal in mind. Borrowing seeks to take only the shell of the original and to place it in a new context in an attempt to create something entirely new out of the source material. In terms of

Pride and Prejudice, something like *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire 2001) would fit into this category. Even something like *Bride and Prejudice* (Gurinder Chadha 2001) or *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (Andrew Black 2003) could be said to occupy this place. Andrew defines intersection as coming from a desire to preserve the unique nature of the source material, mixing modern techniques with period aesthetics. Finally, transformation embodies a desire for the utmost fidelity, a literal attempt to transform the novel from page to screen and this is clearly where we would place the BBC adaptations of classic novels. While Andrew's categories are far too simplistic and general, it is useful to break down adaptation and to examine the motivations behind them. Still, one must be careful not to allow these classifications to turn into value judgments. We should avoid, for example, seeing 'borrowing' as better, or worse, than 'intersection' or 'transformation;' they are merely different. While all adaptations draw from a source, they each have different intentions for that source, as I hope my later analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* will reveal.

However, intentions are rarely privileged, and we often choose to pan a film because it did not perfectly recreate our perception of the book. As a result, adaptations will never be able to avoid comparison with their source material as they openly state their relationship with the novels from which they are adapted. The source material is obviously a huge part of an adaptation, but it is not profitable to think of them solely as products of the novels from which they were derived because then they are reduced to nothing more than duplications, and it is this mode of thinking that allows adaptations to be (often unfairly) scrutinized. Some, like David L. Kranz, argue that "literary source and cinematic adaptation should be measured not in terms of each other but in comparison to similar works in the medium of each" (85). Sarah Cardwell, too, champions "a non-comparative approach to adaptations, rejecting comparison with source books" (2007a: 52). Eliminating comparison entirely,

however, is going too far. Adaptations are adaptations and for this reason they remain forever connected with their source material, whether we choose to see it or not. If we do not acknowledge the source text, what is to set an adaptation apart from any other film?

Certainly, all films have elements of adaptation in them and we are constantly borrowing from what we have previously seen and heard, both consciously and subconsciously. Yet, if we see all films as adaptations of previous sources, then adaptations themselves become non-existent, and they lose their identity. These films are different because they make a conscious choice to adapt a specific source. Placing them in the same context as all other films is like, in the words of David L. Kranz, “saying that because most feature films include music on the soundtrack that all films are musicals” (98). Privileging the source above all else can do little more than damn the whole process of adaptation. Nevertheless, the source remains an important part of the finished film as there was obviously a reason why the filmmaker chose to adapt that novel, at that time. Studies of adaptations need to find a balance between a comparison of source material and film and an examination of the cultural and socio-economic environment that existed at the time of the film’s production. We need to look for external factors that may have shaped the final product, as well as the decision to adapt in the first place. In the words of Beja, “what a film takes from a book matters; but so does what it brings to a book” (88).

So, if adaptations fall under such critical scrutiny, why does the practice continue to be so popular? And, why do these films market themselves as having been based on a book when, as Bertolt Brecht insists, the process of adaptation puts writers in “the position of a man who lets his laundry be washed in a dirty gutter” (qtd. in Giddings, Selby and Wensley 3). The answer to this question undoubtedly lies in economics. Adaptations of admired texts consistently perform well and taking a popular novel and adapting it into a film is usually a

'safe bet.' It eliminates the element of risk, as much as that is possible. As a result, one might find an increase in the number of adaptations that are produced "at times of economic downturn" (Hutcheon 5), as these are times when safe choices are privileged. Financial gain is clearly the goal here and, as Hutcheon points out, "a bestselling book may reach one million readers...but a movie or television adaptation will find an audience of many million more" (5). True, a film will likely reach a large audience, but there is also added pressure because of this. So, in the words of Donald Larsson, adaptation is the product of multiple factors, such as "the aesthetic intent of the adaptor in conjunction with market pressures to produce a saleable commodity" (71). It may not be a wholly economic pursuit, but nor is it an entirely aesthetic one, and this fact needs to be acknowledged when adaptations are studied.

Adaptation Theory is a field that has been well traversed, especially since film has virtually replaced the novel as our "society's most popular narrative form" (Elliott 13). Indeed, if we are concentrating on most of the developed world, films are much more heavily promoted than most books, and film culture has a strong and firmly established position in our society. According to Boyum, film has become, "not only the dominant narrative medium of our century, but its dominant artistic form" (31). Yet, many films continue to draw upon the novel for source material, which, depending on the novel chosen, sets up certain expectations on the part of the viewer. Is this phenomenon a "representation of crass commercialism or high minded respect for literary works?" (McFarlane 7). More than likely, it is motivated by a mixture of both. Regardless, the issue of adaptation raises a number of questions. How is a novel adapted into a film? Can it be done at all? According to many, including Vachel Lindsay with whose words I opened this chapter, it cannot. For him, the process of adaptation undermines film as a unique medium. For others, like Virginia Woolf, the process is "unnatural and disastrous" (qtd. in Boyum 6). Jonathan Miller is in agreement,

stating that “most novels are irreversibly damaged by being dramatized” (qtd. in Hutcheon 36). Others go so far as to damn the process of adaptation for showing what the novel cannot, as for them “to visualize the character, destroys the very subtlety with which the novel creates this particular character in the first place” (Giddings, Selby and Wensley 81).⁴ It is clear that a tension exists between novel and film, perhaps similar to one that exists between painting and photography. In both cases, the newer art appears to lack the respectability of the former. Though it is important to address this material, as it has its place in the evolution of adaptation theory, it seems to be something of a moot point. Arguing that a film cannot adapt a novel, or that it destroys the novel in the process, takes us nowhere productive. Adaptations have been a part of cinema since its inception, and it is unlikely that scholars or critics will be able to convince the powers that be to stop adapting for the good of the novel. This line of criticism, then, becomes woefully unproductive. Instead, we should be focusing on what we can learn from these adaptations.

Questions of fidelity pervade almost every text that deals with issues of adaptation. In fact, every text that I consulted mentioned it in some degree of detail. However, what seems to be missing from the field is a more in-depth look at the issue of multiple adaptations of the same source. This would allow us to see how adaptations change, depending on their context of production and to examine why culturally diverse groups might choose to work with the same source material. Many adaptation studies examine films and look at them in relation to the novel form. Often, however, issues of fidelity take precedence and, while this can be fruitful in some cases, it tends to place the film in a box and does not look beyond the novel to examine the context of production. In these sorts of studies, the film usually emerges as lacking originality or as having ruined the book, which remains the authority. It becomes a ‘dammed if you do, damned if you don’t’ scenario. Even those who discount the fidelity

argument still engage with it in order to prove its unimportance.⁵ The fidelity argument, then, becomes a circular one, going nowhere and offering nothing more than evaluative, and often subjective, judgments. All this being said, what do we focus on if not fidelity? For me, the answer lies in the economic, cultural and societal motivations that surround the decision to adapt, a decision that is rarely based on fidelity to a novel.

Erwin Panofsky states that, “films are a product of a genuine folk art” (qtd. in Bluestone 6). What he means here is that those who originally created film technology did not consider themselves to be artists; instead, they were inventors and observers, deeply imbedded in their own cultural history. Early films like *La Sortie des usines Lumière* or *Repas de bébé* (Louis Lumière 1895) were hardly motivated by any sort of artistic desire. They were films that showed people in their own specific cultural contexts. I would argue that film has not strayed all that far from these origins. Granted, artistry has found a place in film but, in order for a film to succeed in front of a mass audience, it has to possess something that is attractive to that particular group of people. Culture grows and changes and what is popular at one time will not necessarily be popular ten years (or even two years) later. So, the successful films tell us a lot about the context of their production and the general preferences of the audiences. In this respect, film is still very much about culture.

Adaptations are no exception. In fact, a story that is so popular in one medium that it finds a place in another should give us an idea of the kind of narratives that speak to a particular society. In the words of Walter Benjamin, an adaptation has its own “presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (qtd. in Hutcheon 6). It is clearly connected to the culture out of which it emerges. Hutcheon perfectly sums up this idea when she notes that:

We engage in time and in space, within a particular society and a general culture. The

contexts of creation and reception are material, public, and economic as much as they are cultural, personal and aesthetic. This explains why, even in today's globalized world, major shifts in a story's context – that is, for example, in a national setting or time period – can change radically how the transposed story is interpreted, ideologically and literally (28).

It is these cultural contexts that prove to be the most fascinating. One is able to examine what in the core of that story speaks to those people at that time, as we will all have differing responses to an adaptation because of our own cultural conditioning. When something is adapted on multiple occasions, and in many different contexts, there must be something inherently appealing about that story to a variety of cultures. Determining what exactly that is, is predominantly where my own interests lie as these multiple adaptations prove the age old adage that the more things change, the more they remain the same. We cannot argue that our experiences do not change our perception of the world. So, it makes sense that historical or cultural experiences will have an effect on the adapter and the overall production of an adapted screenplay. Thus I argue for an approach to adaptation that views it in more scientific terms, something that changes to suit a particular environment. In biology, it is the organisms that adapt to their surroundings who survive. I would argue that, with regards to filmic adaptations, it is the adjustments to the culture and history out of which they emerge that allows films to become economically successful within their target demographic. After all, the majority of people look for material that is going to resonate with their own lives, at least in some way.

Fidelity criticism sees the novel as holding the meaning that must be transcribed in film. We need to look at the relationship between the film and the novel, but this does not necessarily need to be done in evaluative terms. The novel is a resource and it does not need to be followed to the letter. Certainly, if something is drastically altered we may want to

investigate why this is the case. If Lizzie Bennett runs off with Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy declares his love for Mr. Collins then we probably need to figure out a way to adequately account for this change. However, this kind of dramatic re-writing rarely occurs. It is usually slight departures from the novel that reveal the most about the context of production, as will hopefully become evident in my subsequent analysis of the various adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. No one today upholds the lifestyle and values of 19th Century England; yet, *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations do not suffer as a result. The novel continues to take on many differing shapes and forms and remains a popular choice for adaptation. These adaptations are not continuations of the story of Elizabeth Bennet (although those do exist); they are retellings of the same story over and over again, a story that continues to have mass appeal. What is it about this novel, these characters and these themes that speak to so many, almost two hundred years after its initial publication? Obviously, filmic adaptations of this story have proven to be economically viable and this is largely due to the focus on economics within the novel, the character based narrative and the easily accessible themes, such as wealth and class, that translate to any time and any place. This story has been shifted and altered and its retellings helps to remind us that, in Hutcheon's words, adaptations show us that "there is no such thing as an autonomous text or an original genius that can transcend history, either public or private" (111). I, too, am reading these films from within my own cultural positioning, which will admittedly color my perception of them in a different way than someone viewing the MGM film in 1940, but these sorts of factors cannot be helped and I do not think they make a study of these films any less revealing.

What we must not forget though is that, in general, adaptation is an economic pursuit and the intertextuality of adaptation would indicate that people are well aware of its potential to be financially lucrative. Film adaptations are well placed within the economic framework.

In the early days of cinema, adaptations were used as a means of legitimizing cinema and bringing artistic credo to the medium by borrowing the cultural capital of a previously established work. While we are less explicit today, I would argue that many adaptations of classic novels are still attempting to use the status of the source material to elevate the position of the film. It is clearly a practice that works, which becomes apparent if one looks at the sheer number of Academy Award winning films that were adapted from so-called 'novels of quality.' Adapting novels and short stories also creates material for films and produces a product that can be distributed in the hopes of making a profit. According to Larson, "once it was discovered that stories on film drew audiences, there arose a need for more and more stories to consume" (76). For the most part, early adaptations were generally greeted with praise and did not encounter the hostility of fidelity criticism. Primarily aimed at the lower classes, adaptations of classic novels were seen almost as educational. In the words of a 1911 critic, "the word classic has some meaning. It implies the approval of the best people in the most enlightened times. The merits of a classic subject are nonetheless certain because known and appreciated by comparatively few men. It is the business of the moving picture to make them known to all" (Bush qtd. in Boyum 4). These adaptations only increased with the coming of sound because, with the new technology, dialogue could be recreated (Corrigan 36). Technology has been an important aspect of adaptations, as changes in the medium mean that the films themselves will become very different products. For example, the 1940s version of *Pride and Prejudice* will be startlingly different from the 2005 version; both because of changes in culture, but also for the simple fact that location shooting, widescreen, surround sound and color film have all been perfected in the time between the two productions.

Adaptations of novels were also often chosen because of their ability to attract a widespread audience, consisting of both readers of the book and curious spectators. However, in terms of economics, literary fiction and film are vastly different. Because of the costs of production and promotion (among other things) there is much more at stake in a film and, according to Bluestone, while “a novel can sell 20000 volumes and make a substantial profit, the film must reach millions” (Bluestone 33). Bluestone wrote these words in 1957 and the figures have obviously increased, but the idea still remains the same. Film is a mass medium, and requires a mass audience to sustain its costs. As a result, filmmakers who adapt tend to privilege materials that constantly put people in the seats. In general, mainstream films are too expensive to allow for a great deal of experimentation. Unlike authors, who have the freedom to write what they want, filmmakers are much more restricted by studios’ desires to stick with the tried and true storylines that have worked in the past. 19th Century adaptations usually fit into this category, especially because of the ‘quality programming’ label that is consistently attached to them. As James Naremore states, “19th century classics have always been the best sources for prestige movies” (11). Film historians have seen early adaptations of classic literature and drama as a way of justifying cinema as an art form and making it more legitimate. As Hutcheon observes, “today’s television adaptations of British 18th and 19th century novels may also want to benefit from their adapted works’ cultural cachet” (Hutcheon 91). If, as McFarlane argues, “film early embraced the representational realism of the nineteenth century novel” (2007b: 23), then adapting these novels for the screen would seem like an easy task, a perfect fit.

It is clear that Jane Austen’s stories fit this tried and true mold, as she has been a popular commodity since the 1900s. All of her novels, *Pride and Prejudice* being no exception, are texts motivated by character, making them well suited for a film adaptation.

Characters “are crucial to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects of both narrative and performance texts because they engage the receiver’s imagination through recognition, alignment, and allegiance” (Murry Smith qtd. in Hutcheon 11). Strongly developed characters can be easily transferred from literature to film, making up for the differences between the mediums and allowing viewers to see beyond the simple act of showing as opposed to telling. According to Bazin, cinema adopts characters from literature and “brings them into play; according to the talents of the screenwriter and the director, the characters are integrated as much as possible into their new aesthetic context. If they are not so integrated, we naturally get these mediocre films that one is right to condemn, provided one does not confuse this mediocrity with the very principle of cinematic adaptation” (24). So, for Bazin, it is the way characters are used that determines the quality of the adaptation. Certainly, in the many adaptations, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet have been shaped in different ways, but they remain essentially the same characters, as it is character that is the fundamental focus of Austen’s novel. Economically, Austen is also a clear choice as she has been dead for long enough that her work is now in the public domain and the studio adapting her work will not have to pay the same kind of royalties as they would if they were adapting a best seller by a living author. All this, combined with her continually resonant themes and fully developed characters, helps to explain why Austen’s work has been adapted for film and television on more than thirty three different occasions.

Notes

¹ The fact the Bluestone's work remains the most oft-quoted text with regard to adaptation studies indicates how little progress has been made in the field since the late 1950s.

² Although, DVD and home theatre culture are changing this to a certain extent.

³ For example, both Virginia Woolf and Vachel Lindsay, among others, were vehemently opposed to the practice of adaptation.

⁴ Giddings, Selby and Wensley do not feel this way. In the above quotation, they are merely referring to others who do.

⁵ Kamilla Elliott and Brian McFarlane are just two examples among many.

Chapter Three: The Appeal of the Past and the Cult of Jane Austen

“It’s a very select Society, an’ you’ve got to be a Janeite in your ‘eart, or you won’t have any success.”
- Rudyard Kipling, *The Janeites*

We cannot discount the place of the past in the present. Our own apprehensions about the present often result in a turn to the past, examining past events, perhaps in an attempt to determine where we went wrong. Returning to past classics, and the nostalgia that often accompanies them, is not a new discovery and it is not limited to the Victorian era (although adaptations of Victorian novels do make up a large part of the BBC classic serials). Even as early as 1662, people were looking to the past for inspiration. For example, in 1662 Thomas Fuller wrote *The Worthies of England*, which attempted to preserve and describe the English past for the benefit of contemporary readers (Giddings, Selby and Wensley 34). Later, in the mid 1800s, it became a trend to set operas in medieval times. In more contemporary times, we appear to have turned to the Victorian era for inspiration, and to the idea of heritage. However, this is not the only time period that has received nostalgic attention. We have also seen 50s nostalgia run rampant in America during the final years (and beyond) of the Vietnam War, with movies like *American Graffiti* (George Lucas 1973) and television shows like *Happy Days* (Garry Marshall 1974-1984). Even fashion trends reflect a look back, with 80s styles creeping back into contemporary culture.

Fashion is a good way of illustrating the return to the past because, while we may sport those 1980s legwarmers, they are given a modern twist. In short, they are not exactly as they were during their initial existence. The same can be said of period adaptations. While there is an overwhelming desire to be true to the times (which is a staple of BBC adaptations), it seems impossible to avoid some modernization. As Giddings, Selby and Wensley point out, “the past shared neither our obsession with the crisp cleanliness of

clothes, nor the chemistry and technology to daily indulge in such mania. Yet our classic serials show people all dressed in (seemingly) their Sunday best” (x). They also address the fact that people likely would have worn old clothes that were out of fashion, despite the fact that period adaptations always clothe their characters in perfectly contemporary styles, rarely having them wear the same gown on more than one occasion. While this may seem like something of a straying point, it serves to emphasize how much our own cultural preferences creep in, even when we do not want them to.

We are constantly “projecting onto the past the assumptions of the present” (Giddings xi). The past, then, has more in common with the present than we might at first acknowledge. So, the constant adaptations of period dramas can be seen as embodying nostalgia for a simpler time, but we must be aware that the past holds a mirror up to the present. As Giddings, Selby and Wensley note, “the past can never be transcribed, it always has to be reinvented. And it is never innocently reinvented but will always bear the fingerprints and distortions of the time which reinvented it” (50). Stories about the past remain popular and will likely continue to do so. Perhaps this is because, in our complex world often made impersonal by our continual reliance on technology for communication, a return to the past becomes something of a safe-haven, an escape to a time where human interaction seemed to occur more frequently. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the delights and uses of the past are often economic in nature. As Robert Hewison notes, “instead of manufacturing goods, we are manufacturing heritage, a commodity which nobody seems able to define but which everybody is eager to sell” (9). In this respect, the heritage industry becomes an economic superpower, a veritable signpost for capitalism, telling viewers that history is whatever we want it to have been. According to Eckart Voigts-Virchow, these “heritage industries re-establish the past as a property or possession which...by right of birth, belongs

to the present, or, to be more precise, to certain interests or concerns active in the present” (123). We have found a modern day use for the past, as a way to make money.

The nineteenth century novel has been, and still remains, a favorite among adaptors in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. These novels are immensely popular because of their rich stories that contain narrative devices that seem to fit perfectly with cinematic adaptation. The films that they inspire “emotionalize space and time by constructing a cultural memory” (Voigts-Virchow 128); in other words, they forge a connection to the past through the present. The novels are also famous in their own right, and filmmakers do not hesitate to capitalize on this. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they are out of copyright. So, these adaptations are financially lucrative, but what is the appeal for the spectator? Why do we watch these types of films over and over again? What makes these films so popular is their ability to appeal to a wide cross section of the population. For some, in the words of Linda Troost, “historical films and serials provide entertainment, allowing a temporary escape from a modern world of care, predictability, or dullness. For others, they provide fare more intellectual than the blockbuster films that dominate the multiplex cinema” (75).

Period adaptations are usually lavishly presented with high production values and they typically focus on the visual, making them a perfect means of demonstrating new technologies, such as color or widescreen. Obviously, film is a visual medium, but these films tend to focus quite explicitly on cinematography, and on creating beautiful pictures. As a result of this, visual aspects are usually privileged over any real sense of historical accuracy. What looks best is what is done. This is not to say that these films are not conscious of historical inaccuracies, but that small things (such as the above costume examples) are placed by the wayside in an attempt to create a ‘prettier picture,’ an image of a time that was more pure and beautiful than our own. The grittier, dirtier side of the past is

rarely showcased. According to Kathryn Sutherland, the heritage movie “produces sumptuous affairs drenched with material significance: not just glamorous costumes but grand sets crammed indoors with priceless art objects and antique furniture, and out of doors painstaking period style tableaux” (343). It is almost as if these films are, in and of themselves, an attempt to package and brand high culture.

If any author is evocative of this fact it is Jane Austen, whose popularity has grown to overwhelming proportions in the nearly two hundred years since her death. Her six novels have been adapted for film and television on thirty three occasions,¹ and none of her novels have ever been out of print. People simply do not seem to tire of seeing these stories re-enacted again and again. According to John Wiltshire, “each generation produces its own works of art, but not entirely out of their own materials. Rewritings of Jane Austen are primary examples of this process” (5). The fact that she is a known name and that her work is in the public domain clearly has a place in the decision to adapt. But, there is obviously something more in her work that keeps audiences returning, a combination of economic viability and well-written, well-developed storylines. As Douglas McGrath (director of the 1995 production of *Emma*) jokingly states, “I thought Jane Austen would be a good collaborator because she writes, you know, superb dialogue, she creates memorable characters, she has an extremely clever skill for plotting – and she’s dead, which means, you know, there’s none of that tiresome arguing over who gets the bigger bun at coffee time” (qtd. in Parrill 3).

Austen wrote during a time of transition, occupying a position between the 18th and 19th century styles of novel writing. In the 18th century, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding presented readers with two different styles. Richardson focused on complex and individual characters, while Fielding is known for the commentary of his omniscient

narrators (Moler 3). Jane Austen is very much a part of this 18th century tradition, starting her juvenilia with *Sir Charles Grandison* (1790s), based on Richardson's historical work and then continuing on to create something distinct by blending Richardson and Fielding's styles. In doing so, she created deeply defined characters and joined them with a strong narrative voice that, in the words of Kenneth L. Moler, "opens the door to modern fiction" (4). So, in this respect, and for her use of the English language, Austen remains an important figure. Despite the fame of both Richardson and Fielding, Austen is a name that is associated with more than just 18th Century writing. Certainly, Richardson and Fielding's novels remain well known. In terms of film, *Tom Jones* has been adapted five times, *Joseph Andrews* once and Richardson's *Clarissa* and *Pamela* have also found a place on the screen. However, what these authors lack is Jane Austen's cult status, a status that ensures that, thirty three adaptations later, audiences continue to be enthralled by her texts. So much so, that the BBC has just released new adaptations of four of her six novels.² Google Jane Austen and you get 10,800,000 hits, a number that tops any other female literary figure, with the exception of JK Rowling of Harry Potter fame. Considering the years since Austen's death, this is quite an impressive feat. A search on Richardson or Fielding yields only 634,000 and 2,060,000 hits, respectively. Admittedly, Britney Spears tops both Austen and Shakespeare at 92,200,000 hits. While Google is far from an academic resource, it is indicative of mass popularity and Austen continually ranks highly.

Austen was popular in her own time and her contemporaries praised her. Just eight years after her death, Walter Scott was quoted as saying "the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth and description of the sentiment. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!" (qtd. in Jones 11). Yet Austen's work never sold on the same level as Scott's. *Pride and Prejudice* sold somewhere in the

range of 3000 copies, doing well on a limited scale. However, Walter Scott's novels were, according to Moler, "selling out in editions of 10,000 copies" (8). While Austen's novels were always popular and well received, Jane would never earn widespread and overarching acclaim until years after her death in 1817. Certainly, she had her fans, like Thomas Macaulay and George Lewes, but it was not until the late 1800s with the publication of J.E. Austen Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870) that she began to be more critically acknowledged (Johnson 211), eventually becoming a household name. Walter Stafford, the 2nd Earl of Iddesleigh, said in 1900, "it would be a delightful thing if a magazine could be started which should be devoted entirely to Miss Austen... We are never tired of talking about her; should we ever grow weary of reading or writing about her" (qtd. in Stovel 227). It seems that little has changed since Stafford's time.

In 1923, a scholarly edition of her novels was released by R.W. Chapman and interest began to grow. In this edition, Chapman includes a variety of contemporaneous additions, from almanac pages to dancing manuals, and onto copies of the original title pages. According to Claudia L. Johnson, this places "Austen safely within the national past the better to secure her there as a refuge from the present" (218). By 1923 people had already experienced the horrors of the First World War, so the idea of the past as a form of refuge was steadily becoming a prominent theme. The return to Austen could also be seen as an attempt to look back to England's pre-war torn glory days. From 1923 Austen's popularity grows exponentially, and 1939 marks both the start of the Second World War, and, according to Moler (10), the year of modern Austen scholarship, brought on by the publication of Mary Lascelles's *Jane Austen and her Art*. This was also, not coincidentally, the year that the first film adaptation of Austen's work went into production, MGM's *Pride and Prejudice*. There are now countless critical books, biographies and essays on Austen, with more continuing to

be published. One has only to look at the Austen section in any library to become overwhelmed by choice, as I myself have discovered first hand. She has become, in the words of Moler, “a veritable scholarly industry” (13). It seems that regardless of whether or not there is anything new to say about her, books continue to be published. As a result of this continued interest, Austen’s novels, and her life as well, have become marketable source material.

Austen has been embraced for being ahead of her time, and her irony and social critiques are at the forefront of academic criticism. Yet, she is also the author of generic products. I do not mean this in the derogatory sense, but one must acknowledge Austen’s use of the marriage and courtship plot to tell love stories that always end happily for the protagonists by their marriage to a good, loving, and (usually) wealthy man. This is certainly not a storyline invented by Austen and her plots are far from revolutionary. In Austen’s time, it would have been extremely difficult for a woman writer to publish anything that strayed too far from the marriage/romance plot and, while Austen did sometimes publish her novels under the moniker “by a lady,” she never attempted to disguise her gender with a pseudonym. So, within that genre, Austen shapes her material to display her own worldview, lining her texts with a grain of irony that lies just beneath the surface. In the same way that the writers of *Cahiers du Cinema* praised Hitchcock for his ability to be somewhat subversive within the tightly regulated studio system, so, too, do contemporary critics praise Austen for her ability to both embrace and undercut the romance plot that shaped her gothic predecessors. Within these romances, we often find a cynical narrator and a heavy emphasis on the economics of the time. As Darryl Jones notes, there is a “fundamental economic basis” (18) in all of Austen’s work, especially with regards to women. It is no surprise that Elizabeth Bennet only realizes that she loves Mr. Darcy after she sees Pemberley. While this statement is presented

in a humorous light during her exchange with Jane, there appears to be an underlying truth to it.

Despite the fact that she only published six novels and has been dead for almost two hundred years, Jane Austen is a veritable celebrity. While her antics may be less exciting than Lindsay Lohan or Britney Spears, she remains in the public eye. In fact, in 1995 she was listed as one of *People Magazine*'s most intriguing people and, in January 1996, *Time* published an article with the headline "Sick of Jane Austen yet?" (Looser 159). She has spawned a cult of self-proclaimed "janeites" who celebrate all things Austen. Each of her novels have been adapted for the screen on multiple occasions in the sixty eight year period from 1939 to 2007;³ the two most popular being *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, at ten and eight respectively. The adaptations tend to focus on the comforting gentility of the past, largely removing the satire and irony (with the possible exception of Amy Heckerling's *Clueless*, which was released in 1995) and remaining in keeping with the heritage tradition. Economics obviously continues to play a role in these adaptations as they tend to attempt to capitalize upon, in the words of Harriet Margolis, "people's desire for a stable, recognizable world – a cultured world – such as we associate with Austen" (23). This is a world of structure and rules, where the line between good and bad is always black and white, and where decorum and common sense are always rewarded with happiness and profitable marriage. There is never any doubt that these films will end happily, an appealing thought in uncertain times.

Economically speaking, the films have been more than successful and Jane Austen's name "seems to authorize green-lighting... and has come to function like a license to print money" (Margolis 39). *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee 1996), for example, has grossed more than \$125 million worldwide, costing only \$15.5 million to make (Kaplan 178). The success

of these films is evocative of Austen's presence in our own time, a time when we, according to Suzanne R. Pucci and James Thompson, "consume culture" (5). Now, the film adaptations have become representations of the novels. James Thompson draws attention to the fact that a 2000 edition of *Emma* "comes with a sticker that announces 'now a major motion picture'" (13). While there are those who cry out against the, so-called, commodification, or "harlequinization" (Bowles 15) of Austen, these films are largely well received. As John Wiltshire notes, "their romantic nostalgia is hard to resist" (135), so hard, in fact, that even the janeites seem to approve.

The term 'Janeite' actually entered the English language in 1896 (Johnson 224), as a way of describing enthusiastic followers of all things Jane Austen. One need only look at Rudyard Kipling's "The Janeites" (1922) to discover the widespread appeal of her novels. Through the "Janeites," the notion emerged that, in the words of Brownstein, "Austen could be therapy for people whom history has made sick, [which] has an origin in global crisis and in a profound yearning for a world still sufficient to its own forms and rituals" (217). These characters exist in a time of the First World War and Austen's novels are something that they all cling to. This was, or so the thinking goes, a time before war, before morals, rules and decorum lost their place. As Humberstall says, in "The Janeites," "there's no one to touch Jane when you're in a tight spot" (137), a sentiment that has been echoed in the film adaptations of Austen's work, especially those produced during times of war.

While Kipling's story is more than 80 years old, the obsession with Austen has not waned, by any means. In our own contemporary times, the internet has become a way for fellow janeites to communicate, chatting to each other at the extensive "Republic of Pemberley" website,⁴ which classifies itself as "your haven in a world programmed to misunderstand obsession with things Austen." Here, since 1995, one can encounter Austen

fans from The Philippines, Italy, The USA, England, China, Canada, New Zealand, Malaysia, and everything in between. The site is largely made up of discussion boards devoted to the novels, but also to fan fiction where members can create their own stories using Austen's characters. These fans then, are both consuming Austen and reproducing her at the same time. Readers are remaking Austen in the same way she remade texts which influenced her, which is evident in the gothic components of *Northanger Abbey*, among other things. Because we cannot know authorial intent, remaking and imitation become what fans, and also adaptors, have come to do. Jane Austen has transcended her six novels and has become a created cultural figure. Love her or hate her, she is somewhat unavoidable. This Austen persona, this performance, has overshadowed the real Austen, who we arguably could never have known.

Austen's work is not as far removed from performance as one might at first assume. In her own time, novels were, in the words of Moler, "written not only with an eye to the solitary reader but with an ear to the listener" (68). They were designed to be read aloud, aligning her novels with the more collective experience that one encounters in the cinema or the theatre. Despite all this, adaptations of Austen's novels do encounter the difficulties that I discussed in the first chapter. Obviously, the omniscient narrator cannot exist in an adaptation, unless a filmmaker was to rely predominantly on voice over, which is unlikely. However, the filmmakers have found ways around these sorts of difficulties. With regard to the issue of the omniscient narrator, many of the narrative statements can be translated into stage directions for the actors. Statements such as "Mr. Darcy smiled; but Elizabeth thought she could perceive that he was rather offended; and therefore checked her laughter" (Austen 95) are not be spoken; instead, they are conveyed visually through the performances of the actors. Audiences appear to have been able to see beyond these changes as Austen

adaptations have been highly successful and generally well received, with the possible exception of Patricia Rozema's politically charged *Mansfield Park* (1999). Rozema makes the background theme of slavery explicit in her adaptation, removing the film from the heritage escapism category that Austen's work usually occupies. Perhaps, this explains why it was largely rejected by viewers.

As a woman who was so concerned with money, in both her writing and her own life, it is interesting to note that Jane Austen has herself become a commodity. In fact, many of the complaints that Austen adaptations receive are centered on the fact that Austen has become a marketer of "heritage products" (Troost 80). We do not merely have books by and about Austen. There are Jane Austen dolls, mugs, tote bags, action figures, t-shirts, a *Pride and Prejudice* Board game, and a slew of other Austen related products. Some even equated the return of high-waisted regency style dresses, seen in collections from designers like John Galliano, to the proliferation of Austen adaptations in the 1990s (Troost and Greenfield 11). Even houses used as locations in the film adaptations have spawned a sizable travel/tourism industry, allowing fans to visit them. These have been so popular that film locations are now featured in the official travel guide to Britain and the official travel website devotes multiple sections to Britain on film.⁵ In fact, the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* serial spawned a 'Darcy-mania' so large that "Lyme Park, the national trust property that served as Pemberley, was jammed with hundreds of paying visitors" (Troost 84), anxious, I'm sure, to see the infamous pond where Darcy swam. This Darcy-mania reached such heights that screenwriter Andrew Davies is quoted as saying that the thing he is probably best known for in his "whole career is putting Mr. Darcy in a wet shirt" (qtd. in Cartmell and Whelehan 246). The Guardian even reported 'Darcy Parties,' where women gathered to watch that scene over and over again (Looser 160). There is very little to do with Jane Austen that has not become a marketable

commodity. It seems that Henry James was right when he said that people have found “their dear, our dear, everybody’s dear Jane so infinitely to their material purpose” (qtd. in Jones 200).

She has become a cultural presence, appealing to scholars for the complexity of her work, but also retaining mass popularity. In this respect, contemporary Austen is able to traverse two different worlds, simultaneously existing in high culture and popular culture. Not only is Austen able to move between high and low art, but she is also representative of both traditional and liberal values, depending on how you choose to read her works. On the one hand, her work is evocative of tradition, conformity and convention, glorifying the manners and decorum of 18th century England. On the other hand, Austen is a revolutionary, undercutting her own society through irony as well as strong female protagonists who appear to defy convention. There is, to use the clichéd phrase, something for everyone in her work. In the words of Wiltshire, “Jane Austen is a signifier with multiple meanings” (12). As a result of this widespread appeal, Austen is an extremely marketable commodity, as the number of films that reference her would indicate. *Jane Austen’s Mafia!* (Jim Abrahams 1998) is clearly a parody film, but its use of Austen’s name is relevant in that it demonstrates an overt awareness of her cultural and economic capital in the film industry, and beyond. To be the subject of parody is also a symbol of marketability.⁶ Certainly, with the release of multiple Austen adaptations, in the early to mid 1990s, she became more of a household name than ever. According to James M. Welsh, “Austen is a special case, appealing, on the one hand, to an academic audience for her splendid wit and irony and, on the other, to a far wider readership drawn to Austen for reasons having to do with romance, courtship and ‘heritage’ nostalgia” (xvi).

Austen's ability to 'sell' a film is evident in the number of commercially viable adaptations of her work, especially those that use her name, for example, *Jane Austen's Emma* (Diarmuid Lawrence 1996) and *Jane Austen's Persuasion* (Roger Michell 1995). However, it is also relevant to look at the number of recent films that focus on her own life. 2002's *The Real Jane Austen* (Nicky Pattison), combines documentary and fiction to provide us with an account of Jane's life as she might have lived it. *Miss Austen Regrets* (Jeremy Lovering 2008) and *Becoming Jane* (Julian Jarrold 2007) both use what are left of Austen's letters to attempt to piece together different portions of her life. Both of these films romanticize Austen, turning her life into a narrative from one of her books, admittedly without the storybook ending. Regardless of the endings, these biographical films embrace heritage and nostalgia in the same way that adaptations of her novels do, focusing on the romance and spectacle of regency England.

By burning her sister's letters, Cassandra Austen has created a creative enterprise that centers on the mystery of Jane Austen's life, a mystery that is continually being re-interpreted through biographies (of which there are so many that I could fill pages and pages with their titles alone) and films. Perhaps this element of mystery has added to her popularity, as we continue to strive to know 'the real Jane Austen,' in the same way that scholars and fans attempt to know the real Shakespeare. Both authors remain popular years after their death and very little is known about either of them. They have also both become symbols of 'Englishness,' almost becoming trademarks by their familiarity alone. While they are both familiar, neither is truly known. There is an overwhelming desire to know Austen's inner life, which prevents the novels and the author from remaining entirely separate. Biography, then, according to Wiltshire, occupies a "transitional space" (21) between fact and fiction, made up largely of speculation (and often ridiculous speculation at that). For example, Claire

Tomalin's statement that Austen would likely have enjoyed wearing trousers if she had lived in modern times (121) is both impossible to prove and largely irrelevant. Because so little is actually known of Austen's life, many of these biographies become fictionalized, as *Becoming Jane* and *Miss Austen Regrets* demonstrate. The popularity of such narratives and the desire to know as much as possible about Austen is indicative of her cult status.

There are, as well, at least three forthcoming films that incorporate elements of Austen into their narrative. *Lost in Austen* (Dan Zeff 2008) is a television film, made for Britain's ITV, which centers on a modern woman who switches places with Elizabeth Bennet, in what can only be described as a cross between *Freaky Friday* (Gary Nelson 1976) and Anne-Marie Macdonald's play, *Goodnight Desdemona, Good morning Juliet* (1988). *Sense and Sensibilidad* (Fina Torres 2008) is a modern retelling of *Sense and Sensibility* set in a Latino community in Los Angeles and *Jane Austen Handheld* (Tristram Shapeero 2008) is a modern retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* as told by a documentary film crew, which is, in itself, a nod to *Pride and Prejudice*'s overwhelming presence on film. Even something like *The Jane Austen Book Club* (Robin Swicord 2007) is evocative of Austen's place in a modern, specifically American, context, with each character living out a different aspect of one of her novels. It is evident that Austen's popularity is not declining by any means. For Sutherland, "Jane's power lies in her familiarity; whether recognized or not, she is already part of a wider cultural system with a common set of conventions" (21). In this day and age, you would be hard pressed to find an adult who had not at least heard of Jane Austen.

Sharon Maguire's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) is a useful example to illustrate 'Austen-mania.' The film was adapted from Helen Fielding's novel of the same name, which owes its basic plot to *Pride and Prejudice*.⁷ In this sense, the film becomes an adaptation of an adaptation, which complicates it, but also serves to emphasize the magnitude of the 'cult

of Jane'. Jane Austen has become such a common cultural icon that references to her turn into inside jokes that almost everyone is in on. The presence of Colin Firth (famous for his portrayal of Mr. Darcy in the 1995 BBC version) in the role of Mark Darcy is just one instance where previous adaptations are evoked. Even the infamous pond scene is recreated when Mark Darcy emerges from a fountain after fighting with Daniel (Hugh Grant) near the end of the film. Hugh Grant and Gemma Jones were also known for their roles in Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* and screenwriter Andrew Davies also wrote the screenplay for the 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Embeth Davidtz played Mary Crawford in Rozema's *Mansfield Park* and Crispin Bonham Carter played Bingley alongside Colin Firth's Darcy. Despite being 'once removed' from Austen's novel, *Bridget Jones's Diary* is indicative of the familiarity that surrounds Austen's text, and its marketability, perhaps sharing something with Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995). In this sense, *Bridget Jones's Diary* can be read as a postmodern adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, playing with notions "of pastiche and nostalgia" (Brooker 110) that Brooker evokes with regard to remakes and period films.

It is also interesting to note that Renee Zellweger (who plays Bridget) is actually an American actress, a fact that connects the film with Jennifer M. Jeffers' thoughts surrounding the Americanization of British fiction. This phenomenon is also apparent in direct Austen adaptations, like *Emma* (Douglas McGrath 1996) which starred Gwyneth Paltrow. Even adaptations that featured a cast of entirely British actors (such as Ang Lee's 1995 production of *Sense and Sensibility*, among others) have not only received distribution but been highly successful in the US. Using adaptations such as these, that were extremely popular in the States, Jeffers points to "the American film industry's invention of a tradition of British Literature for the American viewing public" (3). British fiction adaptation becomes a genre

in itself, which is something that goes back to the 1940 MGM version of *Pride and Prejudice*, and well beyond.

According to Harriet Margolis, we are now living in an age where a film's opening weekend numbers do more to draw people into the theatres than a good critical review. Culture, which was once aesthetically controlled, is now largely tied up in economics (30-31). Economics and culture have become interchangeable, making the line between high and low culture somewhat blurry. Austen, then, has become both a cultural and an economic construct. Because of the economics of filmmaking and the cost involved in production and marketing, films have to, according to Paul Willemen, attempt to appeal to an "international market, or at least a very large domestic one" (qtd. in Jeffers 13). America is still the superpower of filmmaking and film consumption. With such a large population, many of whom are living in a fairly high economic bracket, an American audience is one that filmmakers want, and often need, to recoup their costs. So, marketing a film to an American audience seems to be a wise choice, a choice which many British filmmakers make, even delving into co-productions financed by American studios. Capitalism appears to require Americanization, at least to a certain extent. Why are American audiences interested in these English literary figures and these English narratives? According to Jeffers, "Americans take voyeuristic pleasure from watching the English upper class struggle with their pure white, upper class problems in the fantasy time-capsule of the English past" (6). Although, if the element of the past is removed, one could argue that any American teen drama functions on a somewhat similar level, easily reduced to 'pretty, white, rich kids, with problems.' It is the past that acts as a differential and becomes of the utmost importance. The past is a place of British dominance, perhaps appealing to American audiences both because they have now replaced Britain as superpower, but also because of the element of escape. This is a foreign

and more simple time and, while there are differences, language commonalities prevent these stories, and these authors, from being alienating.

According to Brian McFarlane, mainstream cinema owes much of its popularity to representational tendencies that it shares with the 19th century English novel (4). While this is perhaps something of a sweeping claim, it does help to explain the prevalence of period dramas on contemporary screens. However, it does not explain why Austen herself is so popular. What is it in these novels that allows them to be so easily lent to a filmic representation? Andrew Davies, who is one of the few screenwriters to achieve celebrity status thanks, in a large part, to his penning the 1995 BBC serial of *Pride and Prejudice*, states that the writer whom he respects the most is Jane Austen. According to Davies, “you don’t notice how crappy these plots are until you try to adapt them, but you don’t ever have to worry about hers. Everything happens according to the right season and the timing is perfect, like the time it takes to get from x to y is always right” (qtd. in Cartmell and Whelehan 244). She is described as making the adaptor’s role as easy as possible with her visual language and witty dialogue. As Davies notes:

If she said the apple trees were in blossom, you would be bang in the right month, all those things work perfectly. A second reason is that her dialogue is so sharp and witty and dramatic, you can just copy it out and one does that quite a lot...and it’s so funny and also, she is so dramatic, she builds up her drama. She sets up her little jokes and time bombs and big dramatic surprises and then she pays them off at just the right moment, like great comedy writers are supposed to do (qtd. in Cartmell and Whelehan 248).

While this is clearly a statement from a casual interview, it does point to some of the areas in Austen’s writing that make her such a popular choice for adaptation.

Austen is, first and foremost, interested in people and their relationships and she engages her audience “both intellectually and emotionally” (Moler 7). These novels are about

people and, while it may be clichéd to say so, that makes them timeless. Human interaction, and the various difficulties and pleasures involved therein, is part of our daily lives. They are, according to Moler, “eternal elements in the human condition” (7). Austen then is able to do what Samuel Johnson encourages. She is able to “disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same... [writing] as a being superior to time and place” (qtd. in Moler 49). There is a simplicity to her work that remains relevant, despite being dated. As Austen herself said, “three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on” (qtd. in Crang 114). These are not epic novels; they deal with the ordinary and the everyday, looking at money, love, and marriage, themes which have changed remarkably little in the almost two hundred years since Austen’s death.

Adaptations, then, become reflective of these issues in our own time. As Emma Thompson argues, “people are still concerned with marriage, money, romance, finding a partner” (qtd. in Dole 58). I would also argue that the somewhat dysfunctional families present in all of Austen’s novels also resonate with contemporary readers. These are themes that every person can relate to and there is no one correct way to read Austen’s work. As Sutherland notes, “meaning never finally settles, but remains at play across a range of possibilities” (354). These novels are open to interpretation, a very attractive quality for an adaptor.

Austen was a careful observer and this is evident in her stories, which are made up of detailed character studies, perhaps helping to explain their continued popularity. It is easy to become absorbed by these characters who, according to Sutherland, “erase all signs of production” (16). Even background characters, such as Charlotte Lucas or Mr. Collins, for example, are strongly developed and given important moments in the novel. Within these character studies, Austen also provides a sense of escapism associated with heritage products. These novels do not tackle large issues or try to explain the meaning of life, nor do the

characters within them. Because she tackles themes of the everyday, it is easy to see why Virginia Woolf said, “of all great writers she is the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness” (qtd. in Stovel 231). Her novels are concerned with the characters themselves. While these characters do seek knowledge, it is self-knowledge rather than knowledge of the world in general.

Winston Churchill is quoted as saying: “what calm lives they had, those people! No worries about the French revolution, or the crashing struggle of the Napoleonic Wars. Only manners controlling passion so far as they could, together with cultured explanations of any mischances” (qtd. in Jones 29). Despite the precarious political climate in which Austen was writing, she does not directly engage with this material, instead finding escape in country life and the aristocracy. These novels take place during a time of war, *Pride and Prejudice* specifically. Here, although it is never made explicit, officers and the arrival of the militia in Meryton do indicate the theme of war that occupies the background of the novel. As Bluestone notes, Austen was aware of the realities of war, but chose more light-hearted fare as the focus of her works (144). Perhaps this, along with the sense of escapism, explains why this novel has been adapted during times of war. This escapism allows viewers to fantasize about seemingly simpler and less stressful times. In fact, according to Claudia Johnson, Austen’s novels were prescribed for shell shocked war victims as a form of therapy (217), a means of escaping the horrors of their situations and finding solace in the pleasures of the past. In our own time of desensitization and reality television shows like *Big Brother* or *The Real World* (which tend to capitalize on the drunken antics of their ‘stars’), the polish and manners of Austen’s world become a welcome and refreshing other.

Of all of Austen’s novels, *Pride and Prejudice* has been the most often adapted, and it is adaptations of this text that I choose to focus on in the coming chapter. It is, arguably,

Austen's most famous work, and it is certainly one of the most quoted. As well as the ten film and television adaptations, it has also inspired a number of plays and novels that continue the stories of the characters. Helen Halstead's novel *Mr. Darcy Presents his Bride: A Sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* is just one of a number of similar titles. Austen's novel was first begun under the title of *First Impressions* in 1796, but publishers were uninterested. It was not until 1813, after much revision, that the *Pride and Prejudice* we have come to know was published. At the time of its initial publication, the novel was well received, described in an unsigned review as being "far superior to almost all the publications of the kind...the story is well told, the characters remarkably well drawn and supported, and written with great spirit as well as vigor" (qtd. in Southam 41). This idea of well drawn characters was not limited to this one review. In general, Austen has been praised for her character development, and another unsigned 1813 review mentions that "the fair author of the present introduced us at once to a whole family, every individual of which excited the interest and very agreeably divides the attention of the reader" (qtd. in Southam 43).

This is a novel that "demonstrates the difficulty of evaluating plausible but conflicting representations of reality" (Ghoshal Wallace 15) and teaches readers the consequences of judging too quickly. Austen alternately defends and criticizes the social customs of her time; yet, she is neither too revolutionary, nor too traditional for mainstream audiences. In *Pride and Prejudice*, as in all of her novels, the final moments find the status quo maintained. Elizabeth may question society and forge her own path, to a certain extent, but she finds herself happy in a traditional (and economically beneficial) marriage at the end of the novel. As a result, this text becomes a perfect one for mainstream, or even more conservative, film and television, because it does not, ultimately, challenge ideological norms. This is also a text that relies on a blending of form and content, making it a perfect choice for the needs of

narrative cinema. According to Jan Fergus, “so well do they mesh and so perfect is the effect: absolute absorption in the world is created” (120). For those who view cinema as an escape, a trait often associated with heritage products, this absorbing power is very appealing.

Pride and Prejudice gives us multiple characters and multiple stories, leaving adaptors with a rich variety of choices. While the characters are well developed, there is little description of their looks. Other than knowing that he is handsome, we know next to nothing about Darcy’s physical features. The same is true of Elizabeth and the other characters. This leaves adaptors a lot of room for interpretation, knowing that they can cast the production without the fear of audience members complaining because Elizabeth had blonde hair in the book. Austen’s novels avoid such details completely. As the six adaptations discussed in the following chapter show, there are many different ways of seeing these characters. As Wiltshire points out, “knowledge of a man like Darcy is an interpretation and a construction, not a simple absolute” (108). I would argue that the same could be said of any of the characters. Setting, too, could be anywhere. Longbourn, Pemberley and Netherfield are certainly described in the novel, but their location is not made explicit, nor are their interiors exhaustively described. We get no account of colors, designs, furnishings or general decor (Moler 64). This is in keeping with Samuel Johnson’s idea that the job of the author is “to examine not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip...and must neglect the minuter discriminations” (qtd. in Moler 66). Despite this seeming lack of explicit details, the novel continues to, as Sue Parrill states, “appeal to readers’ and viewers’ nostalgic longing for the order and beauty of the past” (6).

Pride and Prejudice is a fairy-tale, or so argues Darryl Jones (93), and in many ways, he is correct. Austen herself described the novel as “rather too light and bright, and

sparkling” (qtd. in Wiltshire 107). Certainly, the first adaptation of the novel (the 1940 MGM production) does attempt to embody a certain fairy-tale quality, as do most of those that follow. However, in terms of genre, I would be more inclined to place this novel within the tradition of the romantic comedy, perhaps a prototype for the highly developed contemporary model. The theme of misjudgment is obviously at the core of this text, as it is in all romantic comedies and Harlequin romance novels alike. These characters are blind to each other and completely unaware of the fallacy of their own judgments. These are two intelligent characters, but they are, as Moler states, “profoundly ignorant about important aspects of themselves” (34). In the end, Elizabeth and Darcy learn and grow as they come to know themselves and each other. Elizabeth states, “till this moment, I never knew myself” (Austen 208). This is a moral that finds its way into the core of every adaptation of the novel. If one was searching for the so-called ‘essence’ of the text, this would likely be it.

It is a romantic comedy, but it is also a novel about sex and money. It is about seeing, blindness and misrecognition. Themes of self discovery, courtship and marriage, business and property, pride and prejudice (obviously), wealth and class, feminism and education, and manners and morals, all find a place in this novel (Flavin 56-60) and force adaptors to make a choice regarding what they wish to focus on. A different focus can create an entirely different film, as the following chapter will hopefully reveal in more detail. These are all themes that can have relevance in our contemporary world. Love and marriage remains an important aspect of our society. Recent campaigns (and a subsequent win) to lift the ban on gay marriage in California indicate that the institution of marriage is still relevant and important. Business, property and economy remain significant within our contemporary capitalist structure, and the ties between economics and marriage still exist. Feminism, education and morals are all still pertinent themes as well. I am not attempting to argue that nothing has

changed since the early 1800s. However, I do maintain that these themes are still relevant, and will continue to be as pertinent two hundred years from now as they were two hundred years ago.

Notes

¹ Thirty four, if one were to include a 1997 episode of the children's cartoon series *Wishbone*, entitled "Furst Impressions."

² New adaptations of *Northanger Abbey* (Jon Jones), *Sense and Sensibility* (John Alexander), *Persuasion* (Adrian Shergold) and *Mansfield Park* (Iain B. MacDonald) were all produced for a special Austen series that began airing in 2007 in Britain, and 2008 in the US and Canada. This series also included *Miss Austen Regrets* (Jeremy Lovering), a fictionalized account of Austen's life.

³ This number excludes the theatre productions based on her work, of which there are many. Unfortunately, neither time, nor space allow me to discuss the theatre adaptations, so, when I speak of the number of adaptations, I am only addressing film and television.

⁴ www.pemberley.com

⁵ Found here: <http://www.visitbritain.ca/things-to-see-and-do/interests/films/index.aspx>

⁶ Austen herself began her writing career producing parodies of famous literary works for her friends and family, so she was no stranger to the process of adaptation.

⁷ The sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (Beeban Kidron 2004), is known for its connection to *Mansfield Park*.

Chapter Four: Six Adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*

“The third requisite in our poet or maker is imitation, imitation, to be able to convert the substance or riches of another poet to his own use, not as a creature that swallows what it takes in, crude, raw or undigested; but that feeds with an appetite, and hath a stomach to concoct, divide, and turn all to nourishment”

– Ben Jonson, *Timber or Discoveries, being Observations on Men and Manners*

Some novels are clearly more difficult to adapt than others. Taking on something such as Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* is obviously going to be a far more challenging task than adapting a more linear story like *Pride and Prejudice*. But, even beyond its linearity, there is something in Austen’s work that makes it readily adaptable. All six of the following films are based on *Pride and Prejudice*, yet they are not the same film by any means.¹ It is clear that a change in genre can create a change in expectation. We do not expect a Bollywood film to resemble a BBC heritage miniseries; yet, we expect both to resemble their source material in some way. Since most are (at least to some degree) familiar with this story and because Austen has such a fan following, there is likely to be a higher expectation for fidelity than in an adaptation of a lesser known work by a lesser known author. This raises various authorial questions. Who is the author? The Director? The Screenwriter? The Editor? Jane Austen? The Cinematographer? All these are viable options, but it is impossible to truly assign that role to any individual. The film becomes a collaborative effort, a product of the time out of which it emerged.

There is also the issue of quotation here. Not quotation from the novel directly, but quotation from other adaptations. One cannot underestimate the influence of the adaptations that have come before. Colin Firth’s Darcy, for example, no doubt altered people’s perception of the character and the overwhelming popularity of his take on Darcy is sure to have influenced later adaptations. In all the adaptations, Darcy begins as an unknowable entity for Elizabeth; he is made this way by his social and economic standing, as well as his

aloof nature. However, each adaptation has a different way of constructing the characters, their conflicts and the overall story of the text, an interpretation which is directly related to their own historical or cultural moment.

Genre, too, has an effect on the adaptations and it is clear that, in the words of Sarah Cardwell, “the genre provides its framework, its ground rules, and a set of expectations for the audience. Most viewers will know this genre better than they will know the source book. They will have preconceptions about representations of the past, of gender and class in this genre” (Cardwell 2007a: 56). If the actors in a BBC miniseries suddenly broke out into a lavish, and seemingly unmotivated, song and dance number, viewers would likely be shocked and confused. However, most people wouldn’t bat an eye if they saw this in a Bollywood feature. Different adaptations will appeal to different people, that much is obvious. As Linda Hutcheon notes, “British televised versions of classic novels now generate in their viewers expectations about style. These expectations are not really dictated by the adapted literary texts, but rather by the television medium’s desire to signal artistry through specifically cinematic markers of quality” (124). Cardwell addresses a similar idea and evokes techniques such as the long take, long shots, slow tracking shots and orchestral music, all of which we see ad-nauseum in both the 1980 and 1995 BBC adaptations. However, regardless of genre, as Cardwell notes, “Austen’s novels are mostly adapted into whimsical, light-hearted, gently ironic romances” (184).

One might question how filmmakers not of British origin deal with a novel set in another country. Should they attempt to match that particular place and time? Or, should they alter the material to fit their own cultural situation? In the six screen adaptations covered here, we find examples of both. Certainly, none of these films are exactly like the novel. For example, some choose to stray from Elizabeth’s perspective and show us scenes of Darcy and

Bingley alone, scenes that Elizabeth could not have witnessed and which the narrator does not explicitly mention. The most oft mentioned of these is to be found in the 1995 BBC production wherein Darcy jumps, fully clothed, into a pond in an attempt to cool his passions. These scenes are used as a device to allow the viewer to get to know the characters in a more intimate sense, to humanize Darcy and make him into the silent, but romantic, hero that the 1995 BBC version would have him be. Whether this is true to the Darcy in the book is beside the point. Viewers at this time wanted a passionate gentleman, and this is what they received. Despite their differences, all six films remain similar in their source material, proving Hutcheon's point that through the re-telling of a story "the conservative comfort of familiarity is countered by the unpredictable pleasure in difference" (173).

4.1 Television Adaptations

According to John Caughie, “television drama is a central component of postwar British culture, and its arguments and debates are both an extension and a complication of social, political, aesthetic and cultural debates” (2). If any broadcast network is synonymous with British television drama, it is the BBC. BBC television adaptations have become linked with classic literature, and they continue to produce countless fidelity conscious serials of many 19th century works, where viewers delight in watching stories that they are usually somewhat familiar with, slowly unfold on screen. Jane Austen’s works have been a particularly favorable choice. Serials were preferred, in part, because, in Caughie’s words they “had the advantage of economies of scale” (204), meaning that the cost was less per episode than broadcasting a new piece of work each week. As a result, the classic serial has become a staple of the BBC since the end of the Second World War and was one of the few film-related products that Britain could sell on the international market, tempting viewers with, as Caughie states, “the national past captured like a butterfly on a pin in a museum of gleaming spires, tennis on the lawn, and the faded memory of empire” (209). Certainly, serials like *The Forsythe Saga* (James Cellan Jones 1967) set the stage for the wave of historical dramas that would gain popularity in the 1980s and 90s.

There is something familiar about these films, which all have a similar look and follow the same sets of conventions, such as: “high production values, authentic detailed costumes and sets; great British actors; light classical music; slow pace; steady, often symmetrical framing; an interest in landscapes, buildings and interiors as well as characters; strong, gradually developed protagonists accompanied by entertaining cameo roles; and intelligent, faithful dialogue” (Cardwell 189). They tend to be slow moving, standing in opposition to the frenetic pace of a typical, Hollywood-produced, action blockbuster. This

often makes them more theatrical in nature, and allows for the focus to remain on the visual as, for Andrew Higson, the goal is to “transform narrative space into heritage space: that is, a space for the display of heritage properties rather than for the enactment of drama” (39).

These films are filled with romance, lavish costumes, balls and grand houses. Spectacle is of the utmost importance. *Pride and Prejudice*, with its elaborate settings and cultural capital, becomes a perfect choice for this genre of films.

For Sarah Cardwell, it is the frequency of production that yields “the establishment of a more clearly defined and longstanding genre of classic-novel adaptations than one encounters in the cinema” (182). The fact that six of the ten adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* have been for television only further strengthens this statement. While the first adaptation may not have been for television, all of those that were released between 1941 and 2003 existed on the small screen alone, and few were preserved. Many of these adaptations, including the hour-long *Philco Television Playhouse* adaptation (1949) as well as the 1952, 1958 and 1967 BBC versions are virtually impossible to find today. This has partially to do with the fact that television technology was not as advanced as that of film. Television shows were not able to be recorded until 1947 (Cardwell 185) and, even beyond this, few of these recordings were kept. As a result, my focus here is on the surviving 1980 and 1995 BBC adaptations, which demonstrate the television serial’s “proclivity for British classic novels, reflecting the prevailing notion of educating and informing the public about British Cultural Heritage” (Cardwell 182). Something like *Pride and Prejudice* that deals with the everyday and domesticity seems perfectly suited to television, a medium that is consumed from within a domestic environment.

Television adaptations of the BBC bring with them a particular standard stemming from the ideals of Lord John Reith (its first director general) who wanted the BBC “to

inform, educate and entertain” (Cardwell 187). This is a corporation that is wrapped up in the idea of quality programs, programming that encourages education and cultural growth, which is a tradition of state sponsored networks. This desire to educate and to use programming for public growth, explains the more fidelity conscious productions that come out of the BBC, as these serials are expected to be more than just mere entertainment. They are designed to better their viewers, occupying the space in between mainstream and art-house, and attempting to appeal to both markets.

Both the 1980 and 1995 adaptations are made up of multiple episodes, increasing their running time and allowing for more material to be included, which will naturally place them in a more fidelity conscious position. In fact, the BBC avoids the term adaptation completely, preferring instead to refer to these serials as ‘dramatizations,’ implying that the original text has not been extensively altered. Obviously, by adapting for television and using a mini-series format, the creators have a larger amount of time to play with. It goes without saying that more detail can go into a five hour mini-series than a two hour film. By splitting the story into parts, the films will also more closely resemble the way that readers first engaged with these texts, as most literature in the 19th century (and before) was published in serial form, with the various parts being released over time. As Morris Beja notes, watching a serial adaptation will undoubtedly “be closer to reading most novels than a feature film can be; for it will be something we can come back to periodically, rather than something we complete in a single sitting” (84).

Television became a very important medium for Britain in the late 1970s (and beyond) when, in the words of Hill, “television was destined to play an increasingly significant role in the maintenance of British film production” (53). In fact, John Hill and Martin McLoone are quoted as saying that “television has more or less become the film

industry” (1). Director Mike Leigh was in agreement and claimed that in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, “all serious filmmaking was done for television” (qtd. in Giles 58). As Paul Giles points out, this is likely something of an exaggeration, but it does indicate that British television occupies a higher critical position than most North American TV. The BBC, for example, has been on the air since 1936, is government financed and has no advertising. BBC-2 was set up in 1964, and, for a long time, these were the only choices for viewers. Even by the late 1980s British cable was limited to a few stations, with none of the kind of choice that Americans would have been used to by this time. According to Giles, anywhere from three to twelve million would watch a program in an evening (59). With limited choice, the amount of people that would see a film broadcast on television was significantly higher than it would have been in North America. These programs were, in the words of Alan Bennett, “addressing the nation” (qtd. in Giles 59).

While the BBC serials are generally praised from a fidelity point of view, they have not been immune to criticism. They are very much evocative of the heritage film movement that helped to commodify Britain. Throughout these films, Britain is portrayed not only as a country with a rich and heroic past, but also as a country that was willing to put that past up for sale. These heritage adaptations, then, have often been connected with the marketing of the past. The past was, in the words of Higson, “packaged as artifacts and images that could be sold to contemporary consumers, or experiences that could be bought into by tourists” (51). Thatcher’s government saw the potential in the film industry but, for the most part, any changes that the government made to film funding during this time were commercially, and not artistically, motivated. According to Linda Troost, and many others, these serials present an unrealistic view of life in England by, “privileging the upper class, showing a monocultural society, indulging in nostalgia for an England that never existed, and espousing

conservative Thatcherite values” (80). Certainly, in 1980’s *Pride and Prejudice*, we are never allowed to forget Darcy’s aristocratic background, a fact that does not have nearly so much importance in any of the other adaptations. Britain would continue to be associated with heritage and past glories, from the 1980s until the late 1990s when the image of ‘cool Britannia’ would emerge with films like *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle 1996). In an attempt to prove that Britain could do more than just heritage, this cycle of films attempted to re-invent the British film industry, usually focusing on the decidedly unglamorous lives of urban, working class, contemporary youth. This stands in stark opposition to the heritage film, with its focus on country landscapes and the aristocracy. The 1980 *Pride and Prejudice*, then, was released at the beginning of this heritage movement, paving the way for later serials such as *Brideshead Revisited* (Charles Sturridge 1981). Premiering on January 13th, 1980, the series ran in five parts on BBC-2.

The 1980 film emerged out of a particular historical period, one of a general 1980s British Conservatism that came with the Thatcher era. So, we need to consider the film not only as an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, but also as a product of the BBC, and, as an early example of the heritage cinema that became popular in the 1980s with titles like *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson 1981). This was a prolific time for British films, with more being made than in any decade since the 1950s and many of them attracted international acclaim (Elsaesser 45). Adapted for the screen by Fay Weldon, this serial was shot on videotape and released just after the National Heritage Act was established. The Heritage Act was drafted by MP Norman St. John Stevas in order to “defend or conserve the natural environment against the encroachment of industry and big business” (Dobie 258). However, the act was lined with conservatism and Madeleine Dobie, among others, read its purpose as

“to defend the inherited property rights of the rural aristocracy against the anticipated encroachments of the urban working class” (258).

Margaret Thatcher was elected in May 1979 and dominated British politics until she was forced to resign as party leader in November 1990. Committed to reversing the decline of the British economy, Thatcher brought about change in many areas, including weakening unions by passing anti-union laws, and introducing free-market economic policies (Cooke 4) in an attempt to increase industry competition. Marketing and commodification became of the utmost importance. In general, Thatcher’s government turned to the radical conservative wing and brought about an increase in class division with an emphasis on individualism where, according to Quart, “acquisition of wealth and the consumption of goods became the prime values” (19). It makes sense, then, that in the 1980s adaptation, the importance of family is downplayed. Elizabeth is an individual with needs and goals that do not reflect the larger family unit, a choice that differs greatly from the 1940, 2005 and Bollywood adaptations. As a result, Mr. Bennet is closest to the Mr. Bennet that we encounter in the novel and is not given the redeeming qualities that he has in the three aforementioned versions. He does not need to be redeemed, because family is not stressed in this series. This is also the case in the 1995 version, which is slightly less traditional and made with a heightened sense of the sexuality of the lead characters in mind, as I will discuss later.

During the 1980s, traditional, conservative ideals were stressed in both England and America.² Thatcher herself called for a return to Victorian values (Cooke 129), and what better way to emphasize this than through adaptations of Victorian, or proto-Victorian, texts?³ Heritage films, then, presented traditionalist ideals and extreme wealth, all set against a lavishly constructed and comforting backdrop of the past. These films functioned, in the words of Dobie, as “a palliative, promoting a sense of unbroken tradition and reaffirming

national identity” (247), providing refuge and stability during times of change through a reinvented (or invented) national history. Obviously, *Pride and Prejudice* is a perfect choice for adaptation. It is a novel that can be easily serialized, it is representative of Britain’s great literary tradition, and it is ultimately quite conservative in its values. Because of this return to a privileging of traditional values, it is of no surprise that, in this version, Darcy’s aristocratic ties are constantly made apparent, and the fact that he is from a “respectable, honorable and ancient family” (Austen 356), is frequently drawn attention to.

This film is probably the most faithful, as it rarely strays from the text, even making use of multiple voice-overs to convey Elizabeth’s thoughts as they were written by the novel’s omniscient narrator. Generally, it was well received and in keeping with BBC broadcasts of the time, even earning two BAFTA TV nominations for lighting and costume design. However, it was not the international success that the 1995 version would go on to be. In terms of location, this 1980 production made great strides and was the first adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* to utilize location shooting, allowing for the use of real historical props and properties. The seemingly ‘genuine’ look further imbeds the film within the heritage tradition. This is also true of the 1995 version, where locations were rigorously scouted and considered to be another character in the film. In these heritage films, the emphasis on landscape creates a “ruralist nostalgia” that harkens back to the picturesque tradition, while savoring the idea of “the past utopia” (Voigts-Virchow 130). However, despite several scenes shot on location, the 1980 version remains more concerned with conversations taking place in fixed interior settings, giving it a staged appearance that is not particularly exciting to watch, but is perhaps more in keeping with the traditions out of which the novel emerged. David Rintoul’s Darcy, while less engaging than Colin Firth’s, is probably more evocative of the Darcy of the novel. Because of technological limitations and

perhaps funding as well, the film looks less polished than other productions, taking on a home video quality that was typical of 1980s television productions. In general, the sets are limited and the lighting is similar to that of a contemporary television soap-opera. As well, the decision to film predominately indoors was likely motivated less by artistic choice and more by economic constraints, as location shooting is always more expensive and this series certainly did not have the budget that the 1995 production did. While I have slipped into a discussion of fidelity here (something that I advocated against in the earlier chapters), it is only to prove that this production is especially fidelity conscious, which is likely due to its cultural moment and its place within the heritage movement of the Thatcher era.

Because the film embodies a ‘nostalgic look back,’ the time period must be presented as magnificent, and representative of Britain’s past glory. So, the potentially political and satirical nature of Austen’s work is largely eliminated. The importance of Darcy’s aristocratic ties is played up in this version, instead of viewed with a certain degree of irony. As Andrew Higson notes, “in this version of history, a critical perspective is replaced by decoration and display, a fascination with surfaces, an obsessive accumulation of comfortably archival detail in which a fascination with style displaces the material dimensions of historical context” (qtd. in Jeffers 46). The past must be portrayed as a more perfect time. As a result, Longbourn becomes a perfect heritage building and any indication that the Bennets are struggling on a working farm (which the novel does mention) is removed. The building is there to be looked at and the more static camera movement, which is traditional of heritage cinema, is reflective of this. In this version, we are always given an establishing shot of a great building before moving inside. The film works from the outside in, but it never delves too far beneath the facade, preferring, instead, to concentrate on the beauty of pristine surfaces, not wanting to go too deep, or look too closely, for fear of the grime that might be revealed.

The two BBC mini-series of Austen's novel are separated by just 15 years (which is not all that long, in the grander scheme of things). The 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* (Simon Langton) was co-funded by A&E and it premiered on September 24th on BBC-1, ran 300 minutes, and was described by *The Sunday Telegraph* as "a lovely day out in some National Trust Property" (qtd. in Higson 57). It would go on to receive international acclaim, earning nominations (and often winning) for BAFTA TV awards, as well as Emmys, among other things. While the 1980 adaptation is very clearly a television adaptation in terms of aesthetics, it was also marketed to a wide audience. In the early 1980s (and before), due to the lack of choice in British television channels, filmmakers could expect a mass audience. By the 1990s British television productions had begun to utilize the resources of film and to begin to operate more in terms of the free market principles that Thatcher's government put into effect. Because of the advent of channel four, viewers now had more choice, so television programs marketed themselves more in terms of niche audiences, appealing to specific groups determined by age, gender, etc., as opposed to the general viewer. These later films, which Claire Monk dubs "post heritage" (qtd. in Dobie 248) tended to differ from their predecessors because they no longer attempted to target broad groups by appealing to their sense of national identity (among other things, of course). They were also more concerned with gender and sexual identity, which the 1995 adaption is certainly evocative of. According to Lez Cooke, there was a "post modern shift away from the idea of a producer – led culture, in which broadcasters delivered to a mass audience what, on the whole, they felt the public needed, towards a consumer – led culture where the broadcasters were forced to compete with an increasing number of competitors for a share of the audience" (162). 1995's *Pride and Prejudice* reflects this, attempting to appeal to the romantic nature of what was likely a predominantly female audience, and ultimately ending up as, in the words of Cooke, "a good

old-fashioned love story, a high culture soap opera with its romance updated for a 1990s audience” (168).

The differences between the 1980 and 1995 versions proves Malcolm Bradbury’s point that “even without any temporal updating or any alterations to national or cultural setting, it can take very little time for context to change how a story is received. Not only what is re-accentuated but more importantly how a story can be re-interpreted can alter radically” (qtd. in Hutcheon 142). So, time plays an issue as much as place and culture do. On the 22nd of November, 1990, Thatcher’s time as a leader came to a close, and her preference for ‘traditional values’ began to hold less weight. While the 1980 version functioned to re-inscribe conventional standards associated with heritage, the 1995 version had different goals, despite the fact that it still operated as a heritage text. What is it that the 1995 adaptation is trying to tell viewers? According to Brian McFarlane, it is “that sexual attraction is more potent than class or wealth” (2007a: 8). While I think that this is somewhat of an over generalization, McFarlane probably has a point, as the emphasis certainly lies on the sexuality of our hero and heroine. The focus, in this adaptation, has shifted from the Thatcherite values of the 1980 serial, to a mode of filmmaking more concerned with attracting an international audience, as well as maintaining a more specifically targeted domestic one.

Moving away from the Darcy of 1980, this Darcy’s aristocratic position is no longer what defines him; it is his passion and masculinity. This is in keeping with the trend in 1990s British cinema, which seemed, according to Claire Monk, “preoccupied with men and masculinity in crisis” (157), a preoccupation that perhaps emerged out of “growing sexual liberalism, greater female participation and achievement in the world of work and increasing fluidity of gender roles” (158). Out of this anxiety emerged a different standard of

masculinity, of which this Darcy is a prime example. He is both physically strong and emotionally sensitive. This Darcy is just steps away from becoming a character in a Harlequin romance, and he is clearly designed with a female audience in mind, much more so than Rintoul's Darcy. This shift is representative of the attempt to target niche audience markets, a shift which began in the 1990s as a result of the advent of multiple television channels.

As screenwriter Andrew Davies stated, he was "very consciously representing the books for a contemporary audience, trying to bring out the themes of the scenes and the undercurrents in the books that most speak to us today" (qtd. in Cartmell and Whelehan 244). In keeping with the many 1990s films that began to offer up the male body as the object of the gaze,⁴ *Pride and Prejudice* offers Darcy up as an object for consumption. In fact, the majority of scenes added to this film, which are not directly derived from the novel, involve Darcy. More specifically, they involve Darcy engaging in some sort of physical activity, from fencing, to billiards, to bathing. Darcy (and Elizabeth as well) is also costumed in a way that draws attention to his physique, often seen clad in tight breeches. It is no surprise that this Darcy is most known for his various physical displays and has been aptly christened "wet t-shirt Darcy" by scholars and the media alike (Jones 189). This is further illustrated in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, when Bridget is described watching the famous pond scene over and over again, swooning over Colin Firth's Darcy. This is, very much, Darcy's film, and he is far more present in the story than David Rintoul's Darcy is. Where, in the 1980 version, we get a voice over of Elizabeth reading Darcy's letter, here, we see Darcy act. While Elizabeth reads, the viewer is given flashbacks of Darcy intervening as Wickham attempts to seduce Georgiana, and of Darcy advising Bingley to leave Jane. We later see his role in Wickham's marriage to Lydia and his place at the ceremony. While, in the novel, we know Darcy is

responsible for persuading Wickham to marry Lydia, his role is not so actively described. Perhaps because this version is so Darcy-centric, Wickham's flaws are much more heavily emphasized. In most versions, we only hear of Wickham's nefarious ways; however, here, the viewer actually gets visual confirmation of these acts through the flashbacks. In Austen's work, the reader is clearly aligned with Elizabeth and the majority of the text is written with regard to her perspective. The 1980 version follows the same general trend. In this version, however, we often get Darcy's perspective; we see into his mind, and we watch as he watches Elizabeth, which he often does. In the 1940 version, viewers watch Elizabeth looking out of windows.⁵ In this production, we watch Darcy do the same, indicating a shift in emphasis. In fact, watching Darcy struggle with his repressed desires is the crux of the film.

In general, this is a production that is most concerned with physicality, and with the sexuality of its protagonists. In the words of Hutcheon, "a personal crisis is made to replace a political one" (12). For Hutcheon, the political could, for example, be represented by the sharp social commentary that one finds in Austen's work, something that is, largely, absent from this production. Here, then, the political undertones of the novel are removed and replaced with personal crises on the part of the characters. This version is less about class division and more about individual characters and their desires. As Andrew Davies remarks, "the central motor which drives the story forward is Darcy's sexual attraction to Elizabeth" (qtd. in Wiltshire 115). Darcy is much more athletic than previous Darcys, and he is seen as an active male from the very opening of the film where he and Bingley gallop up to Netherfield. This is a Darcy offered up to the female gaze and fetishized; the camera is constantly focused on him. He is representative of man as commodity, which Austen herself touches upon when she writes, "however little known the feelings or views of such a man

may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful *property* of some one or other of their daughters” (51, emphasis mine). Certainly, the 1995 version wholeheartedly adopts the idea of Darcy, through his various activities, as a product to be looked at and consumed. That being said, Elizabeth, too, is more physically active, constantly pictured walking through fields, even from the opening of the film. Not only this, but she is also an active participant in her relationship with Darcy, perhaps reflective of, in the words of Ellen Belton, “1990s preoccupation with equality in romantic attachments” (192). She is connected to nature, earthy even, in a way that Elizabeth Garvie’s Elizabeth is not. This is a film that focuses on the physical, which is made evident through its marketing strategy, advertizing itself as “a six part adaptation of simply the sexiest book ever written” (qtd. in Flavin 67). While the mini-series does not contain the sex scenes that were rumored to be included at the time of production, viewers do catch glimpses of Darcy swimming, Darcy in the bath, Darcy and Elizabeth kissing and Wickham and Lydia in bed, among other things. The costumes, too, are much less demure than in previous adaptations as we find the men in tight breeches and the women in low cut dresses, something that is never present in the 1980 production. Compared with that highly conservative adaptation, this one seems almost racy.

The focus of this film centers on the love theme, specifically on the tortured and sexually charged relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy. It is about Elizabeth and Darcy finding love and fulfillment, having it all. This is perhaps why the film seems to concentrate on their individual needs and desires, eliminating the focus on the family unit that drives the 1940 version, for example. Jane and Elizabeth are largely separate from their family, both visually and through the way the narrative is constructed.⁶ There is really no sense of family unity; instead, this is a film about individual desires. Through her connection with Darcy,

Elizabeth finds her fulfillment in a utopian relationship perhaps reflecting, in the words of Belton, “the late twentieth century assumption that the needs and desires of the individual take precedence over other values” (194).

Davies’ script conveys a sense of intense desire on Darcy’s part, a desire that is simply not present in the 1980 version. While the 1980 film gave us Darcy as an aristocrat, a man of tradition, the 1995 version gives us Darcy as a man of action and a man of passion, perhaps in keeping with changes in masculinity that were occurring in the 1990s. As Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield note, this version of Darcy “tells us more about our current decade’s obsession with physical perfection and acceptance of gratuitous nudity than it does about Austen’s Darcy, but the image carves a new facet into the text” (6). While physical features remained important, the hard-bodied, emotionless, Reaganite hero was fading away to be replaced by the man of sentiment and intellect, who still retained his inherent masculinity and a sense of mystery. Darcy is not just a body, as Cheryl L. Nixon notes, he is “a medium of emotional expression” (24) and his relationship with Elizabeth centers on romance, and not courtship (as the novel and the 1980 version do). He is evocative of the desire to have everything. As Martine Voiret puts it, “we now want men to be egalitarian, sensitive, nurturing, and expressive. We, in other words, expect men to possess two sets of somewhat irreconcilable differences...Jane Austen’s movie adaptations reflect this ambivalence. They translate contemporary desires for a type of masculinity that happily embodies those conflicting features” (238). Perhaps, for this reason, this 1995 Darcy remains something of an enigma, not entirely knowable. When Elizabeth visits Pemberley in the novel, she finds a portrait of Darcy where he is pictured as open and smiling. However, in this adaptation, Darcy’s expression in the portrait is pensive, almost mysterious. As a result, this Darcy became the perfect embodiment of the ideal man of mystery who was both active

and sensitive, a fact that is evidenced by the Darcy-mania that swept much of the western world.⁷

This adaptation is known for its grand location scenes, and the heavy reliance on outdoor locations, which perhaps explains why the characters seem more active. Regardless, these outdoor scenes are meant to capture the glory and beauty of the English countryside in the early 19th century. This, two hundred years later, is clearly an impossibility. After all, landscapes and architecture can, and do, change. However, there is a prevalent idea that location shooting somehow lends to the authenticity of the project, despite the fact that we can have no idea which houses Austen used as the inspiration for Pemberley or Longbourn, if she used any at all. Regardless, this remains a visual novel, written at a time when both landscape painting and domestic tourism were becoming increasingly popular. The English countryside was becoming a spectacle for consumption, as evidenced by the rise in the guidebook industry during the 18th century (Ellington 95-96). Clearly, the visual elements found in the novel translate well into film.

From the very opening of this series, landscape is stressed as we watch Darcy and Bingley gallop across an open field, eventually glimpsing Netherfield in a long-shot that emphasizes its grand scale. As Bingley and Darcy race away, we cut to Elizabeth who is watching them from atop a hill. We then follow her through fields to reveal the beautifully manicured Longbourn. Once again, we start with an establishing shot of the exterior, before moving inside. In this version, according to H. Elisabeth Ellington, “landscape...becomes the sign of desire” (90). Certainly, this becomes evident in Elizabeth’s visit, and subsequent reaction, to the grounds at Pemberley. She and Darcy are joined, partially, through their shared love of the outdoors. As Davies has mentioned on a number of occasions, English architecture and landscape become another character in the film, aligning the production with

the commodification of the past often associated with heritage productions. Here, we concentrate on the beautiful landscape and any social problems fade into the background. As Fay Weldon (the screenwriter of the 1980 adaptation) states, “experience tells filmmakers you can sell English heritage all over the world, and get your money back” (qtd. in Ellington 94).

However, this film is also much more humorous than its BBC predecessor, with the Bennet and Bingley sisters played much more for comic effect. The film, then, becomes reflective of fading conservative values in the wake of Thatcher’s prime-ministry and the election of more liberal leaders in both Britain and the US. This version’s intense popularity proves that it was what audiences wanted at that particular time. In fact, approximately 10.1 million watched the final episode on the BBC, and 3.7 million watched the adaptation in the United States on A&E (Parrill 61). As of 2002, this production had earned 1,620,255 pounds sterling for the BBC and, in 1995 alone, video copies of the series sold 150,000 copies (Parrill 5), to be matched only by the number of copies of the book that were sold after the serial’s release. Membership in the Jane Austen society of North America (JASNA) was also affected by this production, jumping fifty percent in 1996. With its massive success, this miniseries paved the way for, as Lisa Mullen notes, “the megabucks classical adaptation, [which] has been the definition of profitable flagship programming – gobbling up budgets, sure, but paying out big-time in overseas revenue and global prestige” (qtd. in Margolis 28).

4.2 Star Powered Adaptations

In adaptation studies, performers are rarely discussed, but we must not forget that, as Robert Stam writes, “in cinema the performer also brings along a kind of baggage, a thespian intertext formed by the totality of antecedent roles. Thus Laurence Olivier brings with him the intertextual memory of his Shakespearian performances” (60). This idea ties into star power, which remains a driving force behind big budget studio films, regardless of whether they are adaptations, or original screenplays. The 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice* might easily have been dubbed *Keira Knightley’s Pride and Prejudice*, as opposed to *Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice* (the title of the 1980 version). Similarly, although perhaps not to such a widespread extent, Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier, both established stars in their own right, were clearly the main selling points behind the 1940 studio era MGM feature.

These versions also seem wrapped up in the idea of escape, of the past as an innocent safe haven where contemporary audiences could escape from the horrors of war. In 1940, a *New York Times* reviewer described MGM’s *Pride and Prejudice* as, “a picture of a charming and mannered little English world which has long since been tucked away in ancient haircloth trunks” (Crowther qtd. in McFarlane 2007a: 5). However, there is a different side to the MGM version. Appearing at the start of the Second World War, it was likely not a coincidence that MGM chose to adapt a British novel, especially one that portrayed Brits as people with a strong and glorious past, and who had the same, day to day, dilemmas as the American people. Mrs. Bennet even briefly mentions the battle of Waterloo, a statement that is absent from the novel, and which reinforces Britain’s strong military history. This film became one, in the words of Linda Troost, “designed to strengthen the British and American alliance at a fragile moment” (76), demonstrating, according to Jennifer Jeffers, “the modern English language need for popular narratives to bind a diverse nation of people” (4). In this

particular case, the Americanization of a British text is being used to bind two diverse nations, and to create a sense of allegiance between them. In fact, the term Heritage was actually coined with regard to a number of films in the late 1930s and early 1940s (of which *Pride and Prejudice* is clearly one) that drew from aspects of English national heritage in an attempt to rally support for Britain's War effort (Jeffers 45).

MGM's *Pride and Prejudice* was certainly not an anomaly for the studio era. According to George Bluestone, in 1935 alone, one third of the feature films produced were adapted from full length novels (3). Classic literature was a safe choice, as these stories easily adhered to the content constraints of the Hollywood Production codes, which were in existence at that time. In general, the industry "showed a strong preference for films derived from novels, films which persistently rated among top quality productions" (Bluestone 3). In the studio era, fidelity criticism was not as prevalent as it is today, so films were still eager to explicitly utilize the cultural cache of the novel in an attempt to legitimize the film. *Pride and Prejudice* was no exception to this trend. These films, often based on British texts or culture, feature "grand manor houses and idyllic villages that have not been touched by the modern age" (Glancy 3). Certainly, *Pride and Prejudice* is evocative of this, but it is also evocative of the lightness and frivolity that often accompany studio era comedy films. Even the marketing campaign is in keeping with this playful quality, warning viewers, "bachelors beware! Five gorgeous beauties are on a Madcap Manhunt!" (qtd. in Parrill 49). This is not a campaign that we would ever expect to find accompanying a BBC adaptation.

Between 1930 and 1945, over 150 British-inspired movies were made in Hollywood (Glancy 1). These films celebrated British culture and history, featured British cast and crew members, and many were even shot in Britain at partner studios.⁸ MGM British, for example, shot at Denham studios. British actors were established there and then recruited to

Hollywood, when the time was right. Greer Garson is a prime example of this practice, which involved taking established foreign actors and putting them in genre films with strong foreign appeal (Glancy 69). MGM, in particular, was known for its British-inspired films in this period. Louis B. Mayer and MGM had been aiming to garner a reputation as a studio associated with prestige products. They were known for their big budget pictures, brought together by top stars and high production values (Margolis 27), and films such as *Mutiny on the Bounty* (Frank Lloyd 1935) and *David Copperfield* (George Cukor 1934) are strong examples of this. These types of films were made again and again, with increasingly bigger budgets. This fact alone is a testament to their popularity. This appears to have been a time when Americans were particularly interested in British history and culture, or at least filmic representations of it, and MGM capitalized on this.

Pride and Prejudice was a perfect film for the studio, completely in keeping with its desired image as a studio that was, in the words of Harriet Margolis, “proud of making wholesome family entertainment, films in line with conservative (US) Republican values, but entertaining – and commercially successful – nonetheless” (28). The idea behind this production is said to have come about in 1935 when Harpo Marx attended a performance of Helen Jerome’s *Pride and Prejudice: A Sentimental Comedy*. He thought the play would do well on film and set out to bring it to the screen as a light comedy with Norma Shearer (the wife of producer Irving Thalberg) and Clark Gable in the lead roles (Belton 177). Obviously, the film was always meant to be a star vehicle. However, the project fell apart because of Shearer’s initial hesitations and Thalberg’s subsequent illness and death in September of 1936. The project was shelved until 1939, when it was picked up by Robert Z. Leonard. British actors Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson were signed to the lead roles. When contracts were signed, war had already broken out in Europe (Belton 178). Choosing to hire

the highly successful British author Aldous Huxley and MGM's Jane Murfin (who was known for writing romantic comedies) as co-script writers, was certainly no co-incidence. It, in a sense, created a symbolic union between British and American ideals, in keeping with the project's goal to rally support for the British War effort. The film itself opens with a title that reads, "It happened in OLD ENGLAND, in the Village of Meryton," which stresses English heritage and the fairy-tale quality of the story. This line is followed by the cast, who are listed by house, "those living at Netherfield, those living at Longbourn," etc. This opening introduces viewers to the heritage tale that is about to unfold and replaces "it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen 51), the famous line that opens the text.⁹

One cannot ignore that these 'British' films were largely economically motivated and, at this time, the American film industry was dependent, according to H. Mark Glancy "upon foreign earnings" (7). These films had to appeal to a wide audience, one that stretched beyond the domestic market. Because of the war, and the language barriers caused by the advent of talking pictures before that, Hollywood had a more limited foreign market available to them. For this reason, making films that would seem to appeal to both American and British audiences was a choice that would allow for maximum exposure, and, one would hope, maximum profitability. The war years, when most of these 'British' films were made, actually proved to be an era of exceptional success for the film industry (Glancy 9), as these types of films proved popular in multiple markets. MGM, for example, had foreign earnings of roughly 34% on the majority of its 'British' pictures (Glancy 69). This would explain the high budgets that were continually allocated for British costume dramas. This was, however, a time of great change for Hollywood. The hiring of Will Hays (a Midwestern Republican of high standing in the protestant Church) to head the MPPDA was a conscious move to attempt

to increase Hollywood's respectability. By the mid 1930s, the production code was in full force, and high moral values were constantly stressed. As a result, a novel like *Pride and Prejudice*, which is nothing if not in keeping with moral conservatism, becomes a perfect choice for adaptation on multiple fronts. The Hays office was also in charge of, according to Glancy, "protecting the industry's collective interests abroad" (41). What better way to do this than by adapting classic British literature, producing films that were both pro-British and passed the censorship guidelines with flying colors, due to their focus on traditional and archaic aspects of British heritage, aspects that proved appealing to American audiences.

Pride and Prejudice was popular in its time; when it opened at Radio City Music Hall in August 1940, it drew the largest audience (during the month of August) that the theatre had ever seen, ultimately earning \$1,849,000 (Parrill 56). While it was not one of the largest successes for MGM, the film did well and was rewarded with an Academy Award for costume design at the 1940 ceremony. The film became a symbol for a perfect past. As Ellen Belton notes, "the fact that such a world never existed either in history or in the novels of Jane Austen only adds to the poignancy of the invented memory and to the intensity of an audience's longing to recover it" (178). Generally, the film was critically praised as well and considered to be in the spirit of the novel, using dialogue, spoken with English accents, that Austen herself might have written, despite fairly significant departures from the story as a whole.

These departures could be explained, to a certain extent, by the fact that the film is based on both Helen Jerome's more comedic stage adaptation, and the original text. As a result of this, and because of the fact that the film was marketed as a studio era comedy, comedic elements are played up. Kitty and Lydia are played more for comedy, drunkenly stumbling around the May Day garden party that replaces the Netherfield Ball. Mrs. Bennet,

while always an over the top character, is also heightened in this film, which may, again, have more to do with the acting style of the period. In terms of more significant departures, in this film Elizabeth falls in love with Darcy after her return from Rosings, but her interest begins at the May Day garden party which is, in itself, demonstrative of seemingly delightful British pastimes. As a result, there is no need for her journey to Pemberley and it, along with the Gardiners, is omitted. This also means that viewers do not see an overt example of Darcy's wealth, a display that might, according to Belton, "be unpalatable to a 1940 audience" (182), an audience that had just been through the Great Depression. The film is quite fast paced and Elizabeth takes little time to fall in love with Darcy, which is in keeping with the studio era comedies. Obviously, the film is fairly short in comparison to the miniseries, running at just under two hours and elements of the novel, such as this visit to Pemberley, had to be cut in the interest of time. Budget concerns would also have been an issue, as reproducing Pemberley in a studio would have been a daunting task.

A less obviously explainable departure is found in Lady Catherine's final exchange with Elizabeth. In this film, Lady Catherine visits Elizabeth at Longbourn, not in an attempt to dissuade her from marrying Darcy, but, instead, to try to determine her true feelings. Here, she acts on Darcy's behalf. This change could be attributed to a number of different factors, the most popular theory being that Edna May Oliver (who played Lady Catherine) wanted to remain true to the stern but good hearted characters that audiences had come to expect her to play (Bluestone 142). It also allows for the class barrier between Elizabeth and Darcy, which is created at the opening ball, to be more completely demolished. In this film, the line "I am in no humor to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (Austen 59) is replaced with "I am in no humor tonight to give consequence to the middle classes at play," emphasizing the differences in their standing. Ultimately, Darcy comes to realize that

it is his haughty treatment of others that makes him reprehensible. In this respect, Lady Catherine's final act speaks to the attempts to create a sense of allegiance between America and England. Elizabeth comes to stand in for America, and Darcy for England. In this version, in the end everyone is happy with their union, and any class barriers have been dispelled. Overall, it is a film tied up in ideals associated with the MGM label, stressing family values in a way that the novel really does not.

While Elizabeth remains independent, the importance of the family unit is stressed from the opening shot, which has all the girls and Mrs. Bennet shopping together, to the closing shot, which pictures Mrs. Bennet looking out on her girls (who are all with suitable partners) and uttering, "think of it. Three of them married, and the other two just tottering on the brink." Throughout the film, the family travels in a pack, which we see even from the carriage race early on, a scene which stresses the family as a cohesive unit, while remaining in keeping with the fast-paced excitement of studio era films. Elizabeth is much more protective of her family than she is in the BBC versions, even spoon-feeding her mother after Lydia runs away with Wickham, and defending her family to Miss Bingley at the May Day party. Despite the fact that it is Darcy overhearing Mrs. Bennet bragging about Jane and Bingley's union that hinders their blossoming romance, this Elizabeth remains very family oriented. This is not a production that is about individual fulfillment; it is about what is good for the family as a whole, and society by association, an idea that is evocative of the concept of unity in a time of war. The allies, then, become a family, banding together for the common good. Elizabeth is less independent than she is in other productions, and independence here is replaced by a certain degree of masculinization. She often wears ties and her mother chooses a blue dress for Lizzie, and a pink one for Jane. These are minimal details, but they do stand

out as a way of setting Elizabeth apart from the other members of her family, while still maintaining the more tight-knit family unit.

One of the more famous added scenes in this adaptation occurs when Darcy and Elizabeth challenge each other at the archery range, with Elizabeth ultimately bettering Darcy. Interestingly enough, this film would be quoted in the 1996 version of *Emma* (Douglas McGrath). This is indicative of the way that adaptations are often shaped by other adaptations, as opposed to the text itself. For example, it seems clear that there are echoes of Colin Firth's Darcy in Matthew MacFadyen's 2005 portrayal. The MGM film is also not immune to an allusion to other films, as we can see in the choice of costumes. The full skirts and bonnets are significantly closer to the costumes one finds in the highly successful *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming 1939). These costumes become distinctly American, further forging the connection between Britain and America, and translating a British source into an American context. This film is, in the words of Jeffers, modeled "on the American public's viewing tastes...replac[ing] cultural 'foreignness' with American citations" (13). According to Michael Klein, the women in *Pride and Prejudice* have more in common with "conventional Midwestern small town daughters and matrons" (10) than the British Aristocracy. This attempt to appeal to both sides is evocative of the British war-time films of studios like MGM, films that, according to Glancy, "found favor on both sides of the Atlantic" (96), as evidenced by their ability to recoup the high production costs. However, after the war, these types of films waned, likely because a strong alliance between America and Britain was no longer necessary, and the return of a larger overseas market meant that Hollywood was no longer entirely dependent on Britain for foreign distribution.

The 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* remains true to the tradition of American financiers producing 'British' products. The film was produced by Working Title¹⁰ by way of Focus

Features, which is owned by NBC Universal and is an example of a 'major independent' film company. In this respect, the film is evocative of the American power over the film industry, potentially leaving, according to Higson, "its British filmmakers with little control over the decision-making process, and may ensure that much of the revenue generated at the box office goes back to the USA" (7). As in the studio era, many of these studios set up production in the UK because of the clear cost advantages. According to Neil Watson, shooting in the UK "is up to thirty percent cheaper than the US" (81). These savings are further increased by various tax write-offs, which act as major incentives. Certainly, American backers profited from the widespread success of 2005's *Pride and Prejudice*,¹¹ and it is an example of what Tino Balio describes as, "expanding horizontally to tap emerging markets worldwide, by expanding vertically to form alliances with independent producers to enlarge their rosters, and by partnering with foreign investors to secure new sources of funding. English costume dramas is just one small strand to such developments in media economy" (qtd in Higson 88). While it seems like a contradiction in terms, Hollywood has now commercialized the independent sector and all of the major studios now own offshoots responsible for independent 'quality' productions. Heritage films are almost always released under these independent subsidiaries, perhaps in an attempt to appeal to those rebelling against big budget studio pictures. These films straddle the line between commercial and independent cinema, at once being financed by large studios, but appealing to the seemingly independently minded.

The film is certainly reflective of so-called 'quality' drama, and it was treated as such by critics, earning award nominations from a variety of different sources, including four Academy Award nominations for: Best Actress (for Knightley), Best Costume, Best Original Score and Best Art Direction. Director Joe Wright, who began his career in British television

drama, took home a BAFTA award for Most Promising Newcomer. The film was also nominated for two Teen Choice Awards for Choice Drama and Choice Actress (Knightley). Award nominations tend to indicate which groups of people value a certain film. So, while these Teen Choice nominations may seem to pale in comparison to Oscar nods, they do draw attention to the younger audience to which Wright's film was marketed, which explains some of the alterations made to Austen's novel. After all, period adaptations of classic literature rarely, if ever, show up on the radar of the Teen Choice Awards. The fact that this one does, is significant.

In terms of cuts, the film compresses Elizabeth's visit to Rosings and Hunsford Parsonage, as well as Pemberley. Lydia's elopement is also dealt with in a very short period of time. In the interest of time, minor characters like Maria Lucas, Louisa Hurst, Mr. Hurst, and Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, among others, are eliminated altogether. The film also alters several scenes to contribute to its image as a romantic love story. As a result, the rather ordinary interior location of Darcy's first proposal (which takes place inside Hunsford Parsonage) becomes an epic outdoor scene amidst a torrential downpour. Similarly, his final proposal takes place at daybreak on a misty moor, with Darcy emerging out of the shadows, which is certainly more epically romantic than the setting of the country path in mid-afternoon that one encounters in the novel. Darcy is pictured quite alone here, in harmony with nature, connecting him to the romantic hero who, according to Sarah Ailwood, is "solitary and socially detached" (1), and who "seeks self-fulfillment in nature" (1). Significantly, when we first see Darcy at Rosings, he is shot looking out the window next to a bird in a cage (Ailwood 2), emphasizing the fact that he is trapped, and indicating his preference for the outdoors, which further stresses his position as a romantic hero. Perhaps the most significant example of romanticism occurs at the end of the film, where viewers

watch an intimate moment between Darcy and Lizzie while they sit on the terrace at Pemberley. Here, he refers to Lizzie as Mrs. Darcy over and over, which is what he promises to call her whenever he is filled with happiness. Like the 1995 series, the final moment of the film is a freeze frame shot as the two kiss. While the shots may be similar, the effect is different, as this final shot is far more steeped in romanticism as a result of the scene that precedes it. It becomes almost like something out of a teen romance. Interestingly enough, this scene was reserved for American audiences only. It was removed from the British version after test audiences found it to be too sentimental. The theatrical British version, then, ends with Mr. Bennet saying, “let them come in, for I am quite at leisure,” which undercuts the romantic plot as a whole and leaves the final emphasis on the business-side of marriage.

The film opens with a shot of the misty English countryside as the sun rises and, as a result, the romanticism of the film is firmly established from the outset. The camera then begins to track, somewhat expectedly, with Knightley, who is reading as she walks home to Longbourn, dressed in fashions from 1797, the period when Austen first drafted the story. Here, as in most of the film, Elizabeth is dressed in earth tones, signifying her connection with nature and indicating that she is somewhat wild and unpredictable, very much a character in her youth. Tracking shots lead us into a feminine space, the messy, but once grand, Longbourn. This is not the Longbourn of the heritage adaptations, or of the MGM version. This Longbourn, like that of *Bride and Prejudice*, is messy and unkempt, and it is obviously a farm. Geese and pigs wander around outside (and inside as well, on occasion), workers tend to fields, hay is gathered, laundry hangs to dry; this is a realist take on the time period. These are certainly not sights that one would expect to find in the earlier BBC adaptations, which sought to glorify the past as a time of perfection for Britain. There is nothing glorious about the realities of life on a farm. Only after the family and the interior is

established does the camera pull back to reveal the exterior of the house, drawing attention to the way heritage films portray landscape and architecture, by doing just the opposite. Here, we work from the inside out, not the outside in. This is a grittier, although not entirely less attractive, version, and the Bennets' more rural Longbourn makes Pemberley seem all the more grand. The wealth of the Bennets' is significantly downplayed when we compare it to the 1995 and the 1980 versions (and even to the novel), allowing the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth to take on Cinderella-like, fairytale proportions.

Like the 1995 version, the film concentrates on the sexual attraction between Darcy and Elizabeth, but it does so within a realist aesthetic, while still managing to remain true to the beautiful landscapes and grand houses of the heritage adaptations. The portrayal of this sexual attraction also shifts slightly. While the 1995 series concentrated on Darcy, this version concentrates on Elizabeth. This makes sense in light of Knightley's star status and her ability to draw in a younger audience, which is what the film attempts to do. In this respect, according to Carol M. Dole, the film takes on elements of the teen reworking that one encounters in Baz Luhrmann's 1996 production, *Romeo + Juliet* (2007: 1). The title says it all, just as *Romeo and Juliet* becomes *Romeo + Juliet*, so too does *Pride and Prejudice* become *Pride & Prejudice*. It is a slight modification, to be sure, but it does indicate a shift, and a departure from the original. While this version is not modernized, and it does remain connected to heritage, there is also the sense that it is trying to be a 'young and hip' rendition of the tale. Why else would the film's advertizing campaign have used the fact that it was brought to us "by the producers of *Bridget Jones's Diary*" (qtd. in Dole 2007; 1), before even mentioning Austen? Choosing Joe Wright to direct was clearly another attempt to create a younger version of the text. Wright was just thirty-two at the time of filming, and his previous work (of which there was little) was in contemporary British TV drama. With

regard to *Pride & Prejudice*, Wright is quoted as saying, that he “wanted to make it real and gritty and be as honest as possible” (qtd. in Dole 2007; 1).

While the film does have realistic elements, it is still a romance, and one often imbued with elements borrowed from the teen genre. At the assembly ball, for example, Elizabeth overhears Darcy’s slight against her because she and Charlotte are hiding under a bleacher-like structure, reminiscent of something out of a John Hughes film, a fact that Wright himself acknowledges on the DVD commentary. There is also more of a sense of immaturity in Bingley, something that connects him to the buddy character of the teen film, the sidekick of the more confident and mysterious Darcy. Like the modern-day Bingley of *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (a film clearly marketed to a younger audience), this Bingley is slightly more simple and bumbling, not altogether confident in his pursuit of Jane. Even in the final moments, Bingley is awkward, needing Darcy to help him practice his proposal speech as they are pictured against the beautiful British landscape. This scene emphasizes both their friendship, and the grandeur of the countryside. It is just one of many instances of, in the words of Dole, “youth oriented filmmaking techniques, balanced with the visual pleasures of the heritage film” (2007: 1). The large budget, according to Jessica Durgan, allowed Wright to “interpret the novel more broadly and place greater emphasis on the grand romantic scope of the story” (1).

Elizabeth’s sexual awakening is also in keeping with the idea of youth. Unlike, for example, Jennifer Ehle’s mature womanly Elizabeth of the 1995 version, or Greer Garson’s, for that matter, Knightley’s Elizabeth is still very much a girl, and the story centers on her growth and maturation. Even from the opening, Elizabeth laughs with her sisters and joins them in listening in on her parents. She mocks them slightly, but she is still affectionate and very much a part of this world, lacking the decorum of maturity in a way that Jennifer Ehle’s

Elizabeth simply does not. This Elizabeth is often giggling, as we witness when she first sees Darcy at the Netherfield Ball, and later, when she catches a glimpse of Pemberley in the distance. There is an innocence about her and she is not yet sure of how to conduct herself. Knightley is, in fact, the first actress to actually be the correct age to play Elizabeth Bennet. Interestingly enough, in this version, instead of telling Lady Catherine her age (twenty, in Austen's novel), she skirts around the issue and, throughout the film, she seems much younger. This is likely done in an attempt to have her character resonate with a younger audience. Here, we are given an almost teenage Elizabeth, who shouts at her parents, saying, "for once in your life, leave me alone," as she struggles in her move toward independence. She is, quite literally, a younger Elizabeth and, as Catherine Stewart-Beer notes, she "has an air of contemporary tomboy about her" (2). She is often dressed in a more male manner, occasionally seen wearing a vest and collared shirt that is evocative of Greer Garson's more masculine clothed Elizabeth. As in the 1940 production, this costume choice is used as a way of setting Elizabeth apart from the rest of the family without losing a sense of family unity.

There is a focus, in this version, on the anxieties connected with moving from childhood to adulthood. As Catherine Stewart-Beer comments, "perhaps this anxiety is reflective of the times we live in – undoubtedly a circumspect, uncertain era, when compared to the past securities and smugness of the optimistic mid-1990s" (2). Ultimately, this Elizabeth does come of age, coming to terms with adulthood and all that it entails. Here, touch awakens feelings that Elizabeth was initially not aware of. When Lizzie returns to Longbourn after Jane's illness, the camera takes a close up shot of both her, and Darcy's, hands as he helps her into the carriage. The camera then cuts to a close up of Elizabeth, visibly shaken. This is the first moment of Lizzie's coming of age, awakening to her sexuality, in a reverse of the 1995 series. This is culminated in her trip to Pemberley. In this

version, when Elizabeth sees Darcy's statue (the change from painting to statue, makes it all the more tangible) she is finally able to realize her attraction to Darcy, and to understand it. She later misinterprets a hug between Darcy and Georgiana and becomes jealous at the thought of Darcy with someone else. This adaptation, then, is about Elizabeth coming to terms with her desire for Darcy, as opposed to Darcy dealing with his desire for Elizabeth, which we encountered in the 1995 series. It is also significant that the film begins and ends in sunrise, showcasing the circle of her growth, from childhood to adulthood.

In keeping with the fact that this is Elizabeth's tale, we often witness shots from her point of view, or close ups of her looking, which she is almost always doing. The sweeping tracking shots of the opening sequence align us with Elizabeth's perspective and attempt to replace the novel's prose, but they also distance us from the more static camera of the heritage adaptations. While the viewer of the heritage film looks at a distance, in this film, the viewer becomes a more active participant in the film. Joyce Goggin links this investigative perspective to the contemporary video game, where viewers are provided "with the kinesthetic illusion that they have entered a projected space and may explore and participate in this technologically mediated space" (4). Wright himself states that he "wanted a 360-degree world, where you could look around any corner...you're then able to go in and out of doors and in and out of windows and really see and feel the environment for a full 360-degrees rather than something very static and stage-bound" (qtd. in Goggin 4), which we find in heritage adaptations. This connection to the world of gaming is just another indication that this film is targeted at a younger demographic, one that would see the video game perspective as the norm.

Cinematography also functions as a way of speaking the narrative. For example, we watch the servants cover furniture at Netherfield and know that Bingley is gone without

having to be told explicitly. In this version, the camera is often moving, peaking around corners and into rooms in a behind-the-scenes style that stands in opposition to the surface of the 1995 and 1980 series. Heritage adaptations are almost photographic in their cinematography, allowing the subject to present itself with minimal distraction by using long takes and deep focus. Here, however, the camera rarely stops moving, depth perception shifts, and things are always coming in and out of focus. This is reflective of Elizabeth herself, and the alteration between her seeing things clearly and unclearly. When Lizzie discovers that Darcy is responsible for ending the relationship between Bingley and Jane, the shot focuses on Lizzie, and Darcy goes out of focus, re-enforcing Elizabeth's statement that she never wishes to see him again and indicating that she is shutting him out. According to Jessica Durgan, this more creative shooting style allows the film to distance itself from heritage adaptations, "gain its edge, and appeal to a younger and wider audience" (4). The camera does look, there is no denying this, but, for example, in the opening sequence, it focuses on the mess, rather than the grandeur of the Bennet's possessions. One would certainly find no messy quarters or scattered bonnets in the heritage adaptations. Later in the film, there is also a sequence where the camera spins about Elizabeth while she is on a swing. From her perspective we see the passing of time, and the changing of the seasons, as the camera continues to spin. This is reflective of Elizabeth's position on the swing, an act which, in the words of Durgan, "rejects the static pictorialism of the heritage genre and calls attention to the technical aspects of filmmaking" (5). Here, the art of filmmaking is tied to the art of painting and Wright often sets up shots that echo Vermeer's paintings. The opening scene with Mary at the piano forte is a prime example, and one which calls to mind 1662's, *The Music Lesson*. These shots emphasize female domesticity, while heightening the artistic merit of the cinematography.

On the other hand, the film does continue to romanticize the landscape of England and romanticism is certainly a large part of the production. It is, more often than not, landscape that is the focus, as opposed to the heritage productions which tend to focus on architecture. Cinematography remains of the utmost importance, but it is about showcasing landscape and intimacy of space, though it does still often reflect the ‘glory of England’ aesthetic of the heritage films. The very opening of the film, with sunlight slowly filling a misty moor, is deeply embedded in the romantic tradition. This is just one of many scenes that make use of dusk, or dawn, allowing the camera to showcase the beauty of light hitting buildings, or crossing landscapes, but also seeming to be reflective of Elizabeth’s growth and her movement from youth to enlightenment, from darkness to light. In the final moments, Darcy and Elizabeth embrace as the sun comes up between them and they are bathed in light together, indicating that the transformation is complete. The inclusion of scenes of Elizabeth on a cliff, looking out as her dress billows in the wind, and of Darcy, emerging from the mist on the moors, clearly employ the romantic tradition, emphasizing the sheer beauty of the landscape. Another example of this occurs as Lizzie walks to Netherfield to see Jane. She is pictured in an extreme long-shot, walking across the frame against a cloudy sky, with only a lone tree occupying the background. When Elizabeth arrives at Netherfield she is disheveled and muddy, with her hair loose and tangled from the walk. She looks wild, connected with nature in the same way that the romantic hero is. The use of overt romanticism and idealism gives the film an escapist feel, aligning it with the 1940 version, both of which emphasize the importance of unity in a time of war, and provide the means of escape from the harsh realities of the contemporary world. In the end, Durgan asserts that Working Title’s cool new exports “really just reflect old, conservative ideologies, updated and repackaged to attract a new

generation” (8). It is true that the status quo is not ultimately challenged in Austen’s text, so it is unsurprising that the film ultimately reinforces a fantasy that is somewhat conservative.

Like the MGM version, the film was made during a time of war, providing a means of escape to a seemingly simpler place, which might be necessary at such a time. The film remains true to the relationships between the characters, and in the same way that the 1940 version focused on the importance of family, so, too, does this adaptation. Lizzie and Jane bond under the covers and Lizzie laughs and plays with her sisters. Everything is done to convey the fact that she is part of a unit, not a complete individual. As is the case in Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bennet is softer and less abrasive than Austen’s Mr. Bennet, or the Mr. Bennet that we encounter in both the BBC miniseries. He is often shown tending to plants, illustrating the fact that he, like Elizabeth, is close to nature, although his is a more contained nature that comes with the maturity of age. As Barbara K. Seeber notes, these productions “downplay his parental shortcomings...and these changes to Austen’s text produce a family which serves as an image of the nation: united, affectionate, and headed by a benevolent and wise father figure” (1). This sense of family unity is in keeping with the emphasis on togetherness during the ‘war on terror,’ a togetherness that is well illustrated by Britain’s support of America, and subsequent entry into the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, as a gesture of unity. The scene of the military parade, a scene that does not exist in any of the other adaptations, is also in keeping with this theme, drawing attention to the heroism of the troops, a telling message in a time of war.

In accordance with the idea of family unity, here, Donald Sutherland, who is no stranger to playing the sympathetic father, as his role in *Ordinary People* (Robert Redford 1980) would indicate, creates a Mr. Bennet who loves his wife and his family. Added scenes show him lovingly embracing Mrs. Bennet as the camera peers through windows to

voyeuristically reveal them in bed together (significantly, with two lovebirds in a cage by their window), or comforting Mary after he asks her to stop playing at the Netherfield ball, scenes that are decidedly absent from the novel. Even in the final moments of the film, we are presented with an altogether different Mr. Bennet. When he discovers that Mr. Darcy is responsible for the marriage between Wickham and Lydia, he says, “my God, I must pay him back.” This is in stark opposition to the Mr. Bennet of the novel who delights at the thought of not having to pay Darcy back, saying, “it will save me a world of trouble and economy. Had it been your uncle’s doing, I must and would have paid him; but these violent young lovers carry everything their own way. I shall offer to pay him tomorrow; he will rant and storm about his love for you, and there will be an end of the matter” (Austen 385). Mr. Bennet is changed, so that a close-knit family dynamic can be privileged.

The film also softens its portrayal of Mrs. Bennet. Certainly, she is still meddling, but she becomes significantly less abrasive and she and Mr. Bennet are presented, for the most part, as a unit, as opposed to, in the words of Seeber, “drawing attention to the separation between them by making Mrs. Bennet the butt of jokes” (3). In the novel, Mr. Bennet marries Mrs. Bennet because he is “captivated by youth and beauty” (Austen 236), an affection that faded when he discovered his wife’s inadequacies of intellect. Here, he is anything but unaffectionate with his wife. This is a family that has come together and there is no sense that Elizabeth is ever ashamed of them as she is in the 1995 series (at the Netherfield Ball, for example), partly, because she has less reason to be. Mrs. Bennet is not consciously bragging about Jane’s marriage at the ball, as she is in earlier versions. Instead, it is presented as a slip of the tongue after having too much to drink, a fact that is re-enforced by her being visibly hung-over in the next scene.¹² Even Mr. Collins becomes his most sympathetic, as one cannot help but feel sorry for him as he awkwardly stands alone at the Netherfield ball.

Significantly, the speech wherein he tells Mrs. Bennet that, in light of the situation with Wickham, Lydia would be better off dead, is removed completely. Instead, in this moment, the importance of family is once again stressed as the viewer only sees the remaining girls comforting Mrs. Bennet. This Elizabeth is much more accepting of her family, but her family is also portrayed as a much more closely knit group. Gone is the individualism that dominated the BBC adaptations.

Here, we are presented with a film designed to showcase Keira Knightley and, as a result, the production is more heavily skewed towards Elizabeth and changes between the 1995 and 2005 versions emphasize the shift from a story about Darcy, to one about Elizabeth. Because of Knightley's star status in both the US and the UK, there is no doubt that the decision to cast her was, at least partly, economically motivated, as Knightley has proven that she can fill theatres. Even in the poster, Knightley is prominent in the foreground, while Darcy remains somewhat blurry in the background. The DVD cover for the 1995 series features Darcy in the foreground, with Elizabeth and Jane seated behind him. In Wright's film, Elizabeth controls the camera, not Darcy, in large part because Knightley is a star and Macfadyen is largely unknown. This is a Keira Knightley film, and while I'd guess that most people asked could tell you that she'd starred in this adaptation, you'd likely be hard-pressed to find those who could name the director and screenwriter (Joe Wright and Deborah Moggach respectively). She becomes the 'brand name' associated with the film. Certainly, as Peter Brooker states, "average film-goers probably take more notice of a film's star than of its director. Stars or actors are, after all, visible on screen for approximately two hours, whereas the director merely fronts or ends the credits" (107). Because Knightley is the driving force behind this production it becomes geared to a slightly younger audience, one who may not be familiar with the 1995 version. Since the 1995 version had such a large

following of fans who believed that it would be sacrilege to try and improve upon it, attempting to appeal to a different demographic seems to be a wise choice. However, these viewers will likely be less familiar with the novel and, as a result, “Austen’s verbal satire vanishes, to be replaced by jokey or naughty one-liners from the mouths of comic or minor characters” (Troost 87). I do not mean for this observation to be a damning one, for the film is still very clearly *Pride and Prejudice*; it is simply a different *Pride and Prejudice*, for a different audience, at a different time.

The film is also representative of the Americanization of a British text that was so predominant in the MGM version. As Higson states, one way in which “heritage films are tailored for American audiences is by inserting ‘America’ into the films themselves” (143). In this case, the presence of American actress Jena Malone, known for her roles in films like *Stepmom* (Chris Columbus 1998), as well as more independent fare like the cult favorite, *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly 2001), yields a distinctly American presence. Donald Sutherland in the role of Mr. Bennet is another non-British connection. While he was born in Canada, he is an actor who has gained an overwhelmingly large presence in Hollywood over the course of more than fifty years in the industry. Keira Knightly also fits into this category to a certain extent. She was born in the UK and got her start there, but has since achieved fame in Hollywood with films like *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Gore Verbinski 2003), making her a household name in both the US and the UK. So, the film remains British, but there is an underlying American presence.

Moving beyond the film as a star vehicle, it is important to see it as a product of its time. While it is challenging to examine something so contemporary, the fact that the film is nostalgic should come as no surprise. Like the MGM production, this film was produced at a time of war. Because this is predominantly America’s war, the desire to create allegiance

between Britain and America, that was so present in the MGM version, is less of a focus.

This version is much more centered on a sense of escapism, likely forged in “the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties or uncertainties” (Jeffers 43). Yet, the film remains economically driven. In this case, British roots are transformed by non-British funding, and success is measured by performance within the American commercial market.

4.3 Contemporary Adaptations

When looking at contemporary adaptations, we move away from the setting of the English countryside (where all the other adaptations are set). However, this shift only proves that “Englishness does not crumble, it migrates” (Voigts-Virchow 130). While *Bride and Prejudice* (Gurinder Chadha 2004) and *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (Andrew Black 2003) appear to move away from the heritage films, there are still connections to be made. Both films are startlingly different, but both are evocative of John Wiltshire’s discussion of the modification of an original text. For Wiltshire, “the end result will not be imitation or mimicking of the original, but a new independent work of art that can stand in comparison, which perhaps prompts in readers a sense of deep similitude or affinity, but which rarely resembles the original in any obvious way” (70). *Bride and Prejudice* can be placed within the small scale trend of blending Bollywood and Heritage, of which Mira Nair’s *Vanity Fair* (2004) is another prime example, while *Pride and Prejudice: Latter Day Comedy* blends Mormon filmmaking with the ‘chick-lit’ genre.

These films both come out of cultures that value the demure, so the more conservative aspects of Austen’s work would undoubtedly be appealing. There is nothing racy about her novels, and even Charlotte Bronte stated that “passions are perfectly unknown to her” (qtd. in Jones 191). While the 1995 version clearly disagrees with this idea, constantly stressing the sexual tension between Elizabeth and Darcy, it is still fairly conservative in terms of actual physical intimacy and this is something that works within the more traditionalist value system contained in both Bollywood and Mormon films. In fact, the films even share similar taglines, emphasizing that Elizabeth and Darcy are a perfect match, albeit in different ways. Andrew Black’s version is a simple and direct, “love has met its match,” while Chadha’s film says, “Bollywood meets Hollywood and it’s a perfect match,” emphasizing the cross cultural

nature of the romance. Both stress the significance of marriage, which is of the utmost importance, both in Bollywood films, and in the Mormon Church. In these taglines, it is the endpoint that is the focus, not the journey. These stand in opposition to the more somber and romanticized tagline of Wright's version which reads, "sometimes the last person on earth you want to be with, is the one person you can't be without," actually stressing the fact that Darcy and Lizzie are, seemingly anyway, an inappropriate match.

Bollywood is an adaptive vehicle, adapting everything from *Madame Bovary* to the *Godfather*, and creating an industry that produces an average of 400 films a year for a weekly audience of 35 million (Nayar 73). Like the world of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Bollywood films offer their audiences perfect stories in which all conflicts are resolved, leaving only a fairy-tale worthy happily ever after. They, like the heritage films, are also often concerned with tradition and the past. While Bollywood seems like a departure from the other films, Gurinder Chadha's Bollywood inspired *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) has a place in my argument, as it is a production that is financially connected to the US and the UK, and is artistically connected to its own cultural milieu. The film was financed by UK and US backers (including the UK film council) and it is representative of the western 'trendification' of eastern culture which emerged in the film industry in the early 2000s.¹³ The pairing of a distinctly British novel with a specific style of Indian filmmaking is interesting, as it is representative of the global nature of filmmaking culture and indicative of the way that different cultures can be blended. This film takes place across a global stage and was, in fact, filmed in both English and Hindi.¹⁴ The action is not confined to Netherfield, Longbourn and Pemberley, but to Amritsar, London and Los Angeles. The Bennets become the Bakshis, living in a city that was once colonized by the British. The film plays with the idea of a global culture, and the global film discourse that began to find importance in the

‘new millennium.’ This becomes apparent in Lalita (Elizabeth) and Darcy’s relationship. Here, the conflict between the two is largely cultural, but the more economic elements of Austen’s text remain as the Bakshis (like the Bennets) are a family of some importance, who have suffered economically. The film opens with the Bakshis’ ‘Longbourn,’ which is falling into disrepair, but was obviously once glorious. While she and her sisters¹⁵ prepare for the wedding that stands in for the assembly ball, Lalita is given Austen’s famous opening line, saying, “all mothers think that every single guy with big bucks must be shopping for a wife.” From the wedding at the very beginning of the film, the song and dance numbers of Bollywood cinema are emphasized. The film is clearly a hybrid, blending Bollywood spectacle with the conservative ideals of Austen’s regency England. However, these two ideals are not as diametrically opposed as one might imagine.

The film, then, becomes connected to Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism, and also to the ‘trendification’ of the west, or, as Ananda Mitra puts it, “the browning of the west” (14). The film was made at a time when Indian culture was extremely popular and is reflective of the romanticization of the ‘other’ that is a staple of Orientalism. More specifically, the film becomes reflective of Bollywood’s western popularity, as, according to Ruth La Ferla, many are now “embracing Bollywood style, which they might once have dismissed as kitsch” (2). La Ferla also cites the opening of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical, *Bombay Dreams*, and M.A.C. cosmetics line of Bollywood inspired make-up, as other indications of contemporary eastern popularity (2). One might also look to the popularity of pashmina scarves and henna tattoos, among other things, as examples of the prominence of elements of the east, in western culture. This trend has not lessened since the film’s release in 2004, and Bollywood stars have become more recognizable forces in the west, many even taking part in a tour of Canadian cities this summer, where tickets sold for as much as \$1000.

In the same way that British talent was coveted by Hollywood during the studio era, so, too, are Bollywood filmmakers and actors becoming desirable international commodities. In March 2006, *Newsweek*'s cover read "India Rising" and a June 2006 issue of *Time* carried the cover "India Inc." Both magazines devoted a significant amount of space to stories that dealt with the popularity of Indian culture and the economic growth of India as a country (Malik 98). Just this year, the popular American show, *So you Think you Can Dance*, featured multiple Bollywood dance numbers for the first time, and even Canadian-born Mike Myers has recently expressed a desire to be a part of a Bollywood film (Warner 1). As Adrian M. Athique observes, "Bollywood is a trend that is taking over the whole world" (304).

This is certainly not the first time that depictions of India have been popular. During the 1980s, when heritage films flourished, there was also, in the words of Hill, a "Raj revival" (99), perhaps inspired by the Merchant-Ivory productions that began to be made in the early 60s.¹⁶ This was in keeping with the idea of depicting Britain as a country that once ruled over a great and powerful empire, of which India was a part. In these films, such as *A Passage to India* (David Lean 1984), there is an emphasis on visual display and the romanticized beauty of India. This remains the case in *Bride and Prejudice*; however, this version is a blending of three different cultures and it is evocative of the more global discourse that surrounds filmmaking. While foreign films always found some screen time in America, there is more and more hybridity and cultural blending that occurs in contemporary films, producing products that are suitable for distribution in multiple markets. In fact, in 2002, the British Film Institute organized ImagineAsia, which showcased Bollywood films as part of an Indian summer festival that took place throughout the nation (Athique 301). A similar film festival is taking place within *Bride and Prejudice* when Lucky and Wickham

run off together. Darcy and Lalita discover them in the theatre and, as the characters on screen fight, so, too do Wickham and Darcy. Interestingly enough, the film that is playing in the background is *Purab Aur Pachhim* (Manoj Kumar 1970), which translates as *East and West*, an interesting commentary on the cultural divide that shapes the film.

Certainly, this Bollywood film festival does not seem out of place in contemporary Britain. In fact, the official British travel website even has a section that it devotes to “Bollywood Britain,”¹⁷ complete with a guide to the UK locations used in Bollywood films, which is similar to another guide on the site that is devoted to the locations used in heritage films. Like the heritage films of the 1980s and 90s, these Bollywood inspired festivals and attractions were designed to, in the words of Athique, promote “the consumption of Indian cultural products by the United Kingdom’s majority white population (301),” and, in doing do, they became another example of the trendification of the east. Here multiculturalism translates to capitalism. *Bride and Prejudice*, then, seemed like a perfect way to capitalize on both the popularity of Austen and heritage and the popularity of, and fascination with, all things Indian.

According to Angelique Melitta McHodgkins, “heritage films have become the new carriers of Englishness, and thus bring within them the continuance of England’s imperialist mission, selling a glorified history of England from a period when England’s empire was at its height and strength” (3). *Bride and Prejudice* mixes the heritage project with Bollywood, in an attempt to produce a film that is neither wholly one thing, nor the other. The film stars the so-called ‘Queen of Bollywood,’ Aishwarya Ray, in her first English speaking role and it also uses the dance numbers of the Bollywood tradition; yet, it remains, quite clearly, *Pride and Prejudice*. According to Chadha, she was “only interested in making a Bollywood-style Hindi movie that somehow interacted wholeheartedly with another cultural tradition, in this

case it was English literary tradition” (qtd. in McHodgkins 20). Chadha herself occupies these two worlds, as a woman of Punjabi decent who grew up in Southhall, a suburb of London.

The film was marketed as “Hollywood’s first major attempt at integrating the essence of Bollywood into a feature film” (McHodgkins 22) and, in many ways, according to McHodgkins, “*Bride and Prejudice* successfully forces Western audiences to recognize that another film tradition exists and is independent of Hollywood” (49). It is significant that Chadha chose to place the Bakshi’s home in Amritsar, rather than somewhere more recognizable for western audiences, like Mumbai. Those who are familiar with Indian history will surely know Amritsar as the site of the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, where, on April 13th, three hundred and seventy nine peaceful demonstrators were killed, and another twelve hundred were wounded. This occurred when British Indian Army officer Reginald Dyer commanded his troops to open fire on a group of unarmed civilians. More than twenty years later, in an attempt to avenge this wrong, Udham Singh assassinated Michael O’Dwyer, (who had been the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab during the massacre) whom he deemed to be largely responsible. While this may seem like a digression, it is interesting that it finds a place in Chadha’s film, as a way of implicating Britain, in its role in India’s troubled past. The Bakshis, after all, live on Udham Singh Road. This, then, becomes a *Pride and Prejudice* that is not about class, but about culture.

Initially, Darcy and his mother Catherine (who is this film’s embodiment of Lady Catherine de Bourgh), see India as a commodity and, in this respect, as McHodgkins points out, they align themselves with “the colonial occupiers of nineteenth and twentieth-century India” (23), occupiers that do not understand, or care to learn about, the traditions of India. In Darcy’s case, this is more about ignorance than anything else, but Catherine remains

unconvinced, seeing no reason to visit the real India, since America now has all the Indian things she needs. Instead, from the comfort of her Beverley Hills hotel,¹⁸ Catherine states that chai lattes and Deepak Chopra are as much India as she wants, or needs. Darcy is ultimately shown the virtues of India, but he, too, is initially prejudiced, saying that he “[doesn’t] know how business functions [there],” which is indicative of his inability to see beyond his own familiar business practices. It is Darcy’s refusal to be open to new experiences that initially frustrates Lalita. Similarly, it is British Wickham’s knowledge of India that attracts her to him. He is eager to learn and has a vast knowledge of the history of Amritsar, and Indian culture. Interestingly enough, when Lalita dreams about Wickham, the dream takes place in the English countryside, complete with a maypole in the background. She is also dressed in period costume, in an overt reference to Austen’s time, and the heritage adaptations that preceded this film. By the end of the film, Darcy has embraced Indian culture, and is pictured playing a traditional drum before he and Lalita are married.

Throughout the film, characters are painted in a poor light by their rejection of India. In the novel, Lady Catherine is a social snob and Caroline Bingley and Mr. Collins are both social climbers, longing for a place in the upper class world. In Chadha’s tale, Caroline and Mr. Collins (who becomes Mr. Kohli) are made unpleasant or ridiculous, as the case may be, by their denial of their cultural heritage, in favor of something else. Caroline sees India as dirty and valueless, preferring her stately, heritage-worthy, British home. When they visit Goa, she is pictured wearing a Burberry bathing suit and visor, which both portray her as ridiculous, and emphasizes her preference for British material goods. Kohli, on the other hand, chooses America, where he thinks anything is possible. When Kohli arrives at the Bakshi’s house, the daughters are lined up, as they are in the heritage adaptations, before they sit down to dinner. Here, instead of preaching morality, Kohli (who owns three Subway

franchises) preaches the value of America, where he believes anyone can succeed. Later, when he asks Lalita to dance, he prefaces it by saying, “I prefer American hip-hop, but, in the words of Gloria Estefan, the rhythm is going to get you.” At one point Kohli even says, “these Indians, they don’t know how to treat tourists,” to which Lalita responds, “these Indians? Are you not Indian anymore?” Kohli is made ridiculous by his rejection of his own heritage, in favor of an American one. Both Kohli and Caroline deny their roots and adopt other cultures, which is a large part of what vilifies them in the eyes of this adaptation, echoing their behavior in the novel but twisting it slightly in order to create a new context.

In North America and Britain, *Bride and Prejudice* was generally well received for an independent film, earning \$24 million worldwide¹⁹ and receiving two British Independent Film Award nominations, for achievement in costumes, and production. As in other adaptations of the text, in this Bollywood-inspired adaptation, place remains a motivator for the plot, but it is a different place. Not any less romanticized, but different all the same. In Orientalist texts, place becomes as important as character, used as a way of illustrating the ‘otherness.’ I would argue that heritage adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* function in the same way, using the local of Austen’s England as a character itself. *Pride and Prejudice*, then, is a text well versed in representing ‘otherness’ or, at the very least, alternative histories, on screen. Here, instead of the enigma of Pemberley, viewers are presented with “the enigma that India represents” (Mitra 60). There remains a fascination with the other and, in the words of John Hill, “an interest in the clash of cultures and the possibility of overcoming social and cultural barriers” (103).

For Said, Orientalism is about Western domination over ‘the other,’ allowing the westerner to have a relationship with the East, without losing “the relative upper hand” (Said 7). However, while I agree that this applies to many films that portray India, I’m not sure that

it is the case with *Bride and Prejudice*, a film that was made by a director of Indian decent, and one that features an Indian woman in the leading role. While Darcy's perspective is clearly important, Elizabeth is ultimately who the audience is aligned with, as it is her perspective that we see. Darcy sees India as an uncivilized, old fashioned country and Lalita thinks that Darcy could never understand her country, or her culture, and that he is only there to profit from it. The East is not portrayed as "a site of eroticism, decadence and sexual gratification" (Hill 105), as it often was in previous texts. Instead, Chada is attempting to use the popularity of Indian culture in the late 1990s, and early 2000s, as a way of making a film that attempts to break down stereotypes about India and its people.

Certainly, not all critics felt this way, and for many, in the words of Adrian M. Athique, it is "all about authenticity: that the real experience of Indian cinema can only be accessed by those who are steeped in its cultural context and its history" (299), and not by those who are only able to catch a glimpse of it for two hours at a time. Regardless, the film industry (in both Bollywood, and Hollywood) remains economically motivated and the Indian film industry is making more efforts to sell itself globally, while Hollywood attempts to capitalize on Eastern popularity. By using *Pride and Prejudice*, a classical British text, and placing it in a Bollywood context (that also uses both English and American spaces), the film begins to occupy a transnational space, evocative of a growing global film discourse. Anything that might inhibit international harmony, on a long term scale, is removed. For example, while Lalita and Darcy's relationship is initially filled with obstacles, they are all things that can be overcome quite easily, with a slight change of perspective. Larger issues, such as differing religious practices, that might hinder Darcy and Lalita's union, are noticeably absent from the film. However, overall the film does remain true to the more conservative ideals of Bollywood. For example, there is no kiss at the end of the film, or any

kisses at all, for that matter, as this is something that is considered taboo in Bollywood cinema. As recently as 2006, a kiss between Aishwarya Ray (who plays Lalita in this film and who was crowned Miss World in 1994) and Hrithik Roshan in the movie *Dhoom 2* (Sanjay Gadhvi 2006) caused such a stir that it was brought to court for obscenity. The on-screen kiss was considered to be derogatory towards women. Instead, the various Bollywood dance numbers become a substitute for displays of desire, in the same way that Darcy's dip in the pond (in the 1995 series) evoked his need to cool his passions, without this ever having to be explicitly referenced. Because of the nature of the novel, even the raciest adaptations ultimately remain quite decorous.

As a result, a story like *Pride and Prejudice*, that does not overtly stress a sexual relationship between any of the characters, becomes a perfect choice for a Bollywood adaptation. Because the novel is more dated, the more conservative ideals that it presents are largely in keeping with those of Bollywood. Bollywood films stress that any conflict and tension be resolved in a moral manner before the film ends. According to Sheila J. Nayar, "release and catharsis must be carefully contained, so that the collective experience can be pleasurable and – even as violence splatters or lasciviousness thrusts its way across the screen – moral at its core" (84). Certainly this is the case in *Pride and Prejudice*, where even Lydia's indiscretions, which are arguably the most scandalous aspect of the novel, are resolved morally through her marriage.²⁰ In general, anything that might cause a strong reaction on the part of the viewer is eliminated. Religion, politics, sexuality,²¹ and class, are all removed from these films (Nayar 76). This would explain why the class differences that cause tension between Darcy and Elizabeth in the novel are replaced by cultural ones in Chadha's adaptation. However, the end result remains the same. In *Pride and Prejudice*, as in all Bollywood, says Nayar, "love, the end product, the sought-after relationship in a film, is

permissible only insofar as it leads to marriage” (85). It does, of course, do just that, and the final joint wedding between Lalita and Darcy and Jaya and Balraj Bingley is evocative of a similar scene that closed the 1995 version, without the kiss, of course. The importance of marriage and family in Austen’s time translates perfectly and plays out on the Bollywood stage, ending with, in the words of Nayar, “the successful eradication of all tension between oneself and one’s immediate family, and between one’s family and one’s future spouse” (86). In this, as in all adaptations, the Bennet family’s (specifically Mrs. Bennet’s) disdain for Darcy evaporates into thin air once the two are engaged. However, in order to retain the perfect ending, the film is decidedly open ended. Darcy and Lalita appear to have moved beyond cultural prejudices, but there is no indication of what will happen after the wedding. Where they will live is a question that remains unanswered, as we cannot imagine either Darcy or Lalita completely giving up their way of life. Nonetheless, in keeping with the impossibly perfect endings of Bollywood films, *Bride and Prejudice* is able to leave us only with the image of Lalita and Darcy riding off into the sunset atop elephants.

The perfect conclusion of the novel, and the demure society of 19th century England, fits perfectly with Bollywood cinema’s strict sexual censorship and the reliance upon, usually impossibly perfect, happy endings. It seems likely that, if the novel is to be modernized, it must be done so within a more conservative or traditional framework, as the 19th century courtship practices that plague Elizabeth and Darcy, and the importance of marriage that is continually stressed throughout the text, would simply not resonate in a mainstream modern setting. In this respect, we can connect the film to *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy*, as, in both cases, the filmmakers were able to set the action in contemporary times and, because of religious and cultural restrictions, not appear dated in their depiction of the evolution of a modern relationship.

The updated Mormon version attempts to find a contemporary resonance for an age-old story. 2003's *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (Andrew Black) is directly connected to, and financed by, the Mormon Church. As a result, it is more connected to independent feature production than to Hollywood. Andrew Black's *Pride and Prejudice* is distributed by Excel Entertainment Group, which is a media conglomerate known for being a distributor of Latter Day Saints films, and the film is clearly an example of the phenomenon of LDS filmmaking. This is a surprisingly strong film industry, one which has produced many films that emphasize the core values of the Mormon faith, and provides an alternative to the mainstream Hollywood films that their religious practices would deem inappropriate.²² The LDS film industry began in the late 90s with the commercial distribution of Richard Dutcher's *God's Army* (1999), which is usually credited as the first 'official' LDS film. Nine years later, the industry is increasingly strong. In fact, this year marked the 7th annual LDS film festival, running from January 16th to 19th in Orem, Utah, which had an attendance of over 6500.²³ In terms of media, the Mormon Church is quite regulatory. Former Church president Ezra Taft Benson is quoted as saying, "don't see R-rated movies or vulgar videos or participate in any entertainment that is immoral, suggestive or pornographic" (qtd. in Stout 56). According to Daniel A. Stout, "movies, television, and the internet, for example, are often seen as threats to religious identity when they present alternative ways of expressing faith" (50).

By creating an insular film industry, the Mormon Church can produce films that reinforce the values of the faith. The idea of heritage and the past is something that plays a strong role in the Church of Latter Day Saints, and its importance makes a novel like *Pride and Prejudice*, which has so often been used as a means of producing heritage cinema, a valid choice. The more traditional aspects of Austen's fiction can also be maintained in a

modern Mormon adaptation in a way that would be impossible in a more mainstream contemporary adaptation. The traditional elements of the story combined with the fact that this is a novel that has widespread appeal likely influenced the choice to adapt it. As well, using it may have been motivated by an attempt to produce a Mormon movie that had the potential to engage a large cross section of the population that included Mormons and non-Mormons alike.

Using Austen in a religious context is not limited to the Mormon adaptation. In fact, there are a growing number of Christian Romance novels in the US that reshape Austen for their own purposes and that, in the words of Juliette Wells, “rely on the perceived universality of Austen’s primary concerns” (1). Debra White Smith, for example, rewrites Austen novels as present day Christian romances, marketed for teens and published by the Christian press, Harvest House. Penned by Smith, novels like Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* become the modern Christian teen romance, *Northpointe Chalet*. What these novels do, says Wells, is use the fact that Austen’s stories remain compelling, even when removed from their original context and placed in a Christian one, “appealing to an audience whose reading is guided by faith rather than by an academic understanding of literature” (1). I would argue that this statement applies equally to *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy*, a film which is clear in its application of Austen, choosing her story because it is so malleable and can so easily be re-shaped to reflect contemporary Mormon values and concerns.

The film had a limited theatrical run, earning \$377, 000 gross and appearing mostly in theatres in Utah. Its widest release was only 20 theatres, but it remained on those screens for 31 weeks.²⁴ Originally titled *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy*, the film dropped the latter half of the title when it was released on DVD, in an attempt to appeal to a more mainstream audience. On a similar note, the DVD version of the film was heavily edited, so

as to remove the more overtly Mormon elements of the film, such as having Collins refer to Elizabeth as Sister Bennet, among other things.²⁵ The theatrical version can be accessed on the DVD, but it isn't made obvious and viewers have to know that it's there in order to be able to find it. It becomes something of an Easter egg for the persistent viewer.

Despite its ties to the Mormon Church, the film is not without economic motivations (as the attempt to mainstream it for the DVD release would indicate) as the producers hoped that this would be a Mormon film that would reach a mainstream audience. As a result, they attempted to capitalize both on the popularity of Austen and her best loved novel (and the heritage genre by association), and the contemporary trend of chick-lit. This is not Austen's first chick-lit rewrite. In fact, Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* is often credited with launching the genre and there is definitely the sense that this film is emulating the referential quality that one finds in that text. As a result, sly references to Austen run rampant. Lydia has a pug named Austen, Elizabeth is studying Jane Austen in class, Darcy and Elizabeth dine at 'Rosings' restaurant, the girls live on Longbourn Street and Lydia and Jack Wickham go to a Vegas wedding chapel with a Scottish theme, which recalls the Bennets' fears that Lydia and Wickham have gone to Scotland to marry. The film even makes use of inter-titles with quotations from the novel that pop up occasionally, written on vibrant pastel backgrounds which further emphasize the fact that this is a chick-lit version of a classic tale. For example, we read that "Lydia and Kitty were idle, silly and vain," before we see them primping in the bathroom mirror. Later, we read, "how ashamed I should be of not being married before three and twenty," a line which speaks to the overall theme of the film. The film also quotes other film adaptations and at one moment a character says "men, run for your lives, menstruating monsters approaching," perhaps a twist on the 1940 adaptation's tagline: "bachelors beware! Five gorgeous beauties are on a madcap manhunt!"

This adaptation is structured in an attempt to capitalize on films like *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling 1995), but instead of high school, the film is set at Brigham Young University, a predominantly Mormon university in Utah. In fact, the casting call for the film asked for an “Alicia Silverstone-type” to play Lydia and a “Renee Zellweger-type” to play Elizabeth (Woolston 3), connecting the film to both *Clueless* and *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. Moving away from the more religious overtones, the film becomes representative of chick-lit, making reference to other films of this genre through casting, and even having the characters obsessed with the ‘Pink Bible,’ a guide to securing a husband. Elizabeth, then, stands in contrast to the boy obsessed Kitty and Lydia (and even Jane, to a certain extent), who think of nothing but marriage. Elizabeth obviously still believes in marriage, but a desire to establish a career sets her apart from the other characters, in the same way that reading sets Austen’s Elizabeth apart from the other women in her world. When Wickham says, “if you sink the eight ball, I’ll marry you” (while they play pool at a party that combines the Netherfield ball and the Assembly Ball), Elizabeth misses on purpose, emphasizing her disinterest in the prospect of marriage. Though, in the end, Elizabeth comes to see the importance and value of marriage.

In terms of chick-lit, the DVD producers are explicit, even releasing the DVD in a bright pink clamshell with the title written in cursive strokes, both traits that are associated with the covers of these novels (Woolston 1). In the same way that black covers signified detective fiction in France and yellow colors signified murder mysteries in Italy, so, too, have pink or pastel colors come to signify chick-lit in the US. Within the film, the mise-en-scene, as well as the plot continues to draw parallels with this genre. Bright colors (predominantly pinks) cover the girls’ house where they bide their time while they try to balance career aspirations, school and romantic prospects, all of which, according to Jennifer Mary

Woolston, are grounded in “the quintessential chick-lit framework” (2). *Pride and Prejudice* becomes a useful text because it is all about the socio-economic pressures faced by its female characters, while simultaneously stressing their desires and needs, all of which are also traits of modern chick-lit. In this respect, the novel is easy to adapt within the chick-lit framework, while still producing a film that fits in with more conservative Mormon values. In the novel, while Elizabeth is liberal and does push boundaries, she ultimately does not stray too far from traditional values. This Elizabeth is no exception. She initially rejects the thought of marriage and chooses her career. However, at the end of the film Elizabeth marries Darcy, just as she does in Austen’s story.

These are young women, but their Mormon values allow the more dated elements of Austen’s story to translate with little difficulty. For example, ancestors and heritage have an essential place in the Mormon faith, as they do in Austen’s novel. Admittedly, in Austen’s novel, ancestral ties are used to determine social positioning in a way that they are not in the Mormon Church. Regardless, when Elizabeth mentions that her ancestors are from England, it is both a reference to Austen and her text, and to Mormon culture as a whole. While the film does not try to be overt in its Mormonism, it is certainly evident. Even little things, like Bingley knowing the origin of Jane’s name points to the culture out of which this adaptation emerges. The girls are occasionally pictured driving to Church, and Collins talks extensively about his missionary work, as well as discussing the practice of giving testimony, which he later does. Overall though, these are younger, and more liberal, modern Mormons. These characters all continue to live the principle, but Collins and Mary are rendered ridiculous for all viewers, regardless of their religious affiliations, because of their old-fashioned values. Collins even utters statements like “we’ve been commanded to multiply and replenish the

earth,” which is set up as a comedic moment in the film, giving Elizabeth and the other girls an opportunity to laugh at his outdated principles.

In Black’s version, the Bennet sisters become roommates and Mr. And Mrs. Bennet are eliminated all together (as are the Gardiners and Lady Catherine). Privileging younger characters is a trait of the chick-lit genre, which often “focuses on young, single, professionals (Woolston 2), and it is also evocative of the producer’s attempts to appeal to a younger audience, in the same way that *Clueless* did. In addition, the emphasis on marriage in Mormon culture eliminates the need for a Mrs. Bennet on multiple levels. Firstly, because marriage is so significant, there does not need to be a character to stress its importance. For example, despite the fact that all the characters are supposedly in college together, only Elizabeth demonstrates any sort of career aspirations. The other four girls are all looking for husbands above all else. Secondly, the film shies away from showing bad marriages, believing that marriage should not occur at all if it is not, according to the Mormon Church, a ‘celestial union.’ In Austen’s text, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet do not have a particularly good marriage, having married hastily in their youth. It is suggested that, according to Kathleen Anderson, “his choice of lust over esteem reflects his moral weakness” (1). This is not the type of marriage that the Mormon Church would want to showcase, as it would undercut the values that are at the core of the religion. As a result, their bickering presence is eliminated all together.

In terms of characters, those that are included are presented in a way that is in keeping with Mormon values. We certainly do not have the eroticization of Darcy and Elizabeth’s relationship that one encounters in the 1995 (or even the 2005) version and neither the men, nor the women, are presented as sexual beings, which is obviously reflective of the more conservative ideals out of which the film emerged. The fact that these two modern versions

can exist and both remain recognizably *Pride and Prejudice* is demonstrative of the multiple levels of interpretation that exist in the novel. Here, in Black's film, marriage is for companionship and family. There is no sense of sexual tension between Darcy and Elizabeth, or between Bingley and Jane. There is affection and respect, to be sure, but little more. Bingley is also somewhat of a departure, though his 'new money' is emphasized in this version, as it is in Austen's novel. While good natured, this Bingley is portrayed as something of a buffoon, who made his money by marketing a series of musical tapes for dogs, a choice that I cannot even begin to explain. Darcy remains British, so the English connection is maintained, and Pemberley becomes a cottage in the woods that Elizabeth happens upon while trying to escape a storm. It is the simple pleasures of this Pemberley that entice her, not the grand house and extensive gardens of the heritage adaptations. Like the 1995 and 2005 versions, the film retains the emphasis on landscape, but it is not used with heritage connotations. The landscape becomes an American one, and the stress is on the beauty of nature as an example of God's creation, using multiple shots of woods, mountains and desert landscapes to evoke this.

The film does deviate from the novel more than any other adaptation, which one could attribute to it being set in contemporary times (although *Bride and Prejudice* is also contemporary), but, more than likely, it has to do with the fact that the film is grounded in the chick-lit genre. In Black's film, as in Chadha's, Lydia does not marry Wickham. Instead, she remains single and becomes an author of self-help books. Mary and Collins fall in love and marry and, while Charlotte Lucas does appear briefly, there is no indication that there is any sort of relationship between her and Collins. In the novel, Charlotte does not marry Collins for love; it is not fate, it is a business transaction. However, marriage without love, respect and God's command, is something that stands in opposition to the values of Mormon faith,

and the change reflects that. Also, it is likely for this reason that Lydia is rescued from marrying Wickham. Lydia's indiscretions with Wickham are played down significantly, and there is no indication that they've slept together. In fact, Darcy's issue with Wickham does not stem from his seduction of Georgiana (who is called Anna in this film). Instead, Wickham is revealed to have a gambling problem and he marries wealthy women in an attempt to support his habit. This re-write is in keeping with the de-sexualisation of the characters. In this version, Elizabeth and Darcy are able to save Lydia from a marriage to a man who does not truly love her, once again emphasizing the importance of marriage as a privileged institution, and not something that can occur if it is not built on strong values.

The Mormon faith is a family centered religion, in which marriage is considered to be a celestial union, and where husband and wife are sealed together through God. In Black's film, characters like Lydia and Kitty are made foolish because they do not see the true meaning of marriage. Wickham, too, becomes a cad, not because he seduces young girls with no plan of marrying them, but because he marries for money and without God. On a similar note, Jane and Bingley are not broken up by Darcy. Again, because marriage is supposed to be a celestial union between man and woman, written in the stars by God, breaking up a marriage to be would vilify Darcy. Instead, Bingley breaks it off because he misinterprets an exchange between Jane and Collins, and thinks that they have become engaged. Alterations like these may appear small, and, in general, the film is not overt in its Mormonism. However, if one examines the changes made, they tend to center around the issue of marriage, stressing its importance and making sure that it is represented in a positive light, and as a holy union. In the final moments of the film, we watch Elizabeth and Darcy's engagement and the word "amen" is quietly uttered as the credits begin to role.

Notes

¹ *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* (Cyril Coke 1980), *Pride and Prejudice* (Simon Langton 1995), *Pride and Prejudice* (Robert Z. Leonard 1940), *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright 2005), *Bride and Prejudice* (Gurinder Chadha 2004) and *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (Andrew Black 2003).

² Reagan and Thatcher actually shared quite a lot, including their modest upbringing in small towns as well as similar ideals with regards to economic, domestic and foreign policies (Friedman xiii).

³ Austen, while not exactly a Victorian author, did write during a transitional phase and her work represents the shift in literature that occurred between the early 1800s and the late 1830s (when Victoria came to the throne). In this respect, I think we can label her work proto-Victorian.

⁴ Such as Brad Pitt in *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott 1991).

⁵ More than likely this technique is due to the fact that the 1940 film is a studio production and exterior shots of the open countryside would not have been possible.

⁶ They are often shot apart from the rest of the family.

⁷ Interestingly enough, the emphasis on Darcy's money is significantly played down in this version, the focus being, in the words of Lisa Hopkins, not "on what he has, only on what he is" (117).

⁸ This is partially due to British quota regulations, which required that a certain percentage of films exhibited in Britain be made on British soil (Glancy 67).

⁹ This line is also used to open every other adaptation (with the exception of Joe Wright's). In all other versions, Elizabeth is given the task of sarcastically uttering some modified form of it.

¹⁰ They are known for producing mainstream films that are highly successful in the United States. *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell 1994), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire 2001) and *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis 2003) are all examples of their work.

¹¹ According to boxofficemojo.com, the film earned over \$121 million gross during its theatrical run, which is certainly respectable for a period piece. It also opened as the number one movie in Britain, earning \$4.5 million that week, and remained at number one for two additional weeks.

¹² In the same scene, we see Lydia and Kitty drunk, reflective of the 1940 adaptation.

¹³ *Bollywood/Hollywood* (Deepa Mehta 2002), *The Guru* (Daisy von Scherler Mayer 2002), *Mystic Masseur* (Ismail Merchant 2001), *Monsoon Wedding* (Mira Nair 2002), *Bend it like Beckham* (Gurinder Chada 2002) and *Moulin Rouge* (Baz Luhrmann 2001) are just a few of the films that evoke elements of Indian, specifically Bollywood, culture. 2002 also marks the first year that a Bollywood film (Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas*) was selected at Cannes (Athique 310), indicating the genre's rise in artistic credibility, or at least its more widespread appeal.

¹⁴ In India the film was released under the title *Balle Balle: Amritsar to L.A.*, eliminating the *Pride and Prejudice* reference. This version is also 11 minutes longer than the English version. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate a copy.

¹⁵ Kitty is notably absent, cut from the film entirely.

¹⁶ Merchant-Ivory is a production company started by an Indian producer, Ismail Merchant, and an American director, James Ivory. They began producing James Ivory-directed films in the early 1960s. These films often focused on foreigners in India (be they English, or American) and were usually aimed at an international market. *The Householder* (James Ivory 1963) and *Shakespeare-Wallah* (James Ivory 1965) are two early examples. Merchant-Ivory also acted as the US distributor for the, highly regarded, *Pather Panchali* (Satyajit Ray 1955), as well as many of Ray's subsequent works, in an attempt to bring an Indian film great to a wider audience. While their greatest successes can be attributed to adaptations of British novels (specifically those of E.M. Forster), like *Howards End* (James Ivory 1992), their early films forged the way for future, heritage themed, productions, involving India, America and Britain.

¹⁷ Found here: <http://www.visitbritain.ca/things-to-see-and-do/interests/films/bollywood-britain/index.aspx>

¹⁸ This is meant to represent both Pemberley and Rosings, since, in this version, Lady Catherine has become Darcy's mother, and not his aunt.

¹⁹ Source: boxofficemojo.com

²⁰ Both *Bride and Prejudice* and *A Latter Day Comedy* choose to have characters intervene, preventing Wickham from taking advantage of Lydia (or Lucky) in any way, thus eliminating the sense of scandal altogether.

²¹ The violent reaction to a film like Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996) is indicative of the fact that the majority of Indian audiences are not comfortable with seeing these kinds of themes represented on screen.

²² For example, the members of the Mormon Church are cautioned against viewing R and PG-13 rated films (Stout 55).

²³ <http://www.ldsfilmfestival.org/index.php?location=index.php>

²⁴ boxofficemojo.com

²⁵ For my purposes, I will be referring to the theatrical version, as I consider this to be the original. However, the differences between the two are generally quite minimal.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

“We must cut our coat, according to our cloth, and adapt ourselves to changing circumstances.”

- William Ralph Inge

“Finally, in conclusion, let me say just this.”

- Peter Sellers

Adaptation is a process that has occurred since the first organisms. Things are, and were, always shifting and changing, forced to modify themselves in order to keep up with changing situations. One might argue that I have not been speaking about scientific adaptation, about an organism growing and evolving to suit changing surroundings. However, to a certain extent, that is exactly what I have been doing. Adaptation, in all its forms, is done to suit the needs of an environment, whether it be biological in nature, or otherwise. Adaptations of stories have been told since language was first used. As human beings, we long to re-tell and re-create stories that we have enjoyed. Because of this, stories are passed down from generation to generation, never remaining exactly the same, changing ever so slightly, at the discretion of the storyteller. You would be hard pressed to find someone who was critical of this oral tradition, or about the adaptation of these stories into plays or novels. Why, then, does the adaptation of literature to film yield results that are so often hostile?

We do not judge organisms for adapting to suit their environment, so why should we criticize stories for doing the same thing? Admittedly, I am being somewhat facetious here, but it is only to illustrate my point. The trend of fidelity criticism that has plagued adaptation studies is one that has little to offer. Questioning the validity of adaptation, or asking whether it is a process that can ever be done ‘properly,’ are simply not questions that can be answered definitively. They are subjective. What one person considers a perfect and faithful adaptation, another might find to be completely inadequate. Judging the film by its closeness to the text

is, ultimately, ineffectual, as two such different mediums cannot possibly be used to create perfect reflections of one another. The film is different from the novel; there is no getting around this. However, if we choose to see adaptation in a more scientific sense, and look towards its literal meaning, there is much more to be discovered therein. Adaptation, by definition, involves change, so we must expect this when watching a film that attempts to take a written medium and turn it into a visual one. It is also a process that occurs when an organism needs to change in order to meet the needs of a new environment. To a certain extent, film, as a medium, is this new environment. However, it is also made up of the historical, political, regional, economical and cultural trends of a particular time period. Therefore, each adaptation is different, partially because they are adapting themselves to their own new environments, while still remaining recognizable, and reflective of their source.

Initially, the choice to tell and re-tell stories was motivated by the desire to entertain and amuse others and to keep history and customs alive; it was a social activity. However, since the advent of commerce, entertainment became a marketable commodity. Since then, providing entertainment has become a legitimate career for many people in many different capacities. Storytellers, like Shakespeare for example, made their livelihood by providing diversions for the masses to consume. These were not necessarily stories that people were unfamiliar with, but they were, nevertheless, presented in a new form. All stories are, to a certain extent, adaptations of others, changed slightly to accommodate new needs. Austen herself told stories of classic love and romance; she was not creating revolutionary content by any means and she, too, as an unmarried woman, was well aware of the economic nature of the written word.

The commodification of the story has done nothing but increase over time, indicating that the choice to adapt is first and foremost economic. Obviously it is popular stories that are

selected because they are economically viable; the two go hand in hand. Arguably, in most countries, film now dominates mass entertainment, and has done for a long time. In this era, it is no longer one writer who seeks to capitalize on re-inventing a popular tale. Producers, actors, agents, publicists, screenwriters, directors, studio executives, and a whole host of others, rely on the popularity of films to make their living. Adaptations have proved to be successful (though not without criticism, to be sure), drawing audiences who are interested in both the original tale, and its re-invention. When adapting novels in an industry where so much money is on the line, the selection process is of the utmost importance. Best sellers, popular authors, and classic novels that have been consistently well regarded, make intelligent choices economically because they have proved to be viable commodities in other mediums. Finding texts that satisfy all three of those stipulations is rare, and those that do are adapted time and again because they have proven that they can consistently fill seats from decade to decade. It is clear that Jane Austen produces such texts.

Jane Austen, while popular in her own time, has become a veritable celebrity in our own, gracing magazine covers and inspiring films based on what is known of her life. In the nearly two hundred years since her death, Austen has managed to acquire cult status. She is also the subject of countless academic texts, dating from the 1900s to the present, not to mention the fact that JASNA (The Jane Austen Society of North America) has members from all over the world, and is responsible for producing *Persuasions*, an annual journal dedicated exclusively to a study of Austen and her work. As a result, Austen occupies a unique position, finding a place in both the scholarly world, and the world of popular culture. Her ability to appeal to a wide cross section of the population means that adaptations of her works are liable to be financially lucrative, a fact the producers are likely well aware of. Austen's

work also produces so-called ‘cinema of quality,’ appealing to studios and networks (like the BBC, for example) that are typically associated with this kind of fare.

In addition to her cult status, Austen’s works lend themselves to multiple adaptations because of their easily relatable themes and the sense of escape that they provide, which only increases her value in the eyes of producers. *Pride and Prejudice* is Austen’s most popular novel, and it is a perfect example of the ‘happily-ever-after’ world that she provides for her readers. This novel is not an epic work. Despite the fact that Austen was likely writing and revising during the Napoleonic Wars, she avoids the topic of war almost altogether. Instead, she provides a safe haven in a world where the story is about the ordinary, every-day lives of her characters. For contemporary audiences, this seemingly simpler past provides a nostalgic escape from our own uncertain times. So, economically, adapting this novel (and all of her other novels) remains a relatively safe choice, a way of enticing people to see the film, both because of the popularity of the novel, and of previous adaptations. However, while economics is a large motivator in the decision to adapt, it is not the only factor. Beyond economics, filmmakers will look for texts that support their own individual vision. Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* is known for being an interpretive text, supporting multiple readings. It is, at once, a classic love story, a proto-feminist text, a novel about class, wealth, economics, marriage (and the politics associated with it), and a number of other things. Individual readings can privilege different elements, but still be representative of the novel as a whole. This is a story that is easily molded to reflect the individual wants and wishes of its reader, making it a perfect text for adaptation. Ultimately, the novel’s proven popularity (and Austen’s, by association) is used as a means of attracting audiences, and its interpretive nature allows filmmakers a great degree of creative freedom to reflect the particular needs and desires of their own time.

The source text is clearly important, and there is no doubt that a Jane Austen novel and a Ernest Hemingway novel will create altogether different films. However, the adaptations themselves, ultimately say more about the cultural and political moment and the preferences of a particular audience, than they do about the source material. This is not to say that any text can replace *Pride and Prejudice* in the hearts and minds of its readers, and viewers. Undoubtedly, it is Austen's cultural capital and her overwhelming popularity that motivate the decision to adapt in the first place. Adaptations of Austen have proved, quite consistently, to be both critically and economically successful, a veritable match-made-in-heaven for producers. However, once this text is in the hands of the filmmaker, it yields to his or her will, retaining Austen's basic framework, but becoming more about the desires and needs of its particular era and/or culture, and leaving behind those of regency England. Certainly, many of these desires remain the same, as another reason why Austen remains popular is because the themes she deals with are so eternal. However, the overall picture of the films, and the elements of Austen's text that are privileged, or left out, ultimately tells us about the historical, political, economic and cultural concerns that were important when the filmmaker was creating his or her version of *Pride and Prejudice*. When I use filmmaker here, I am being somewhat purposefully evasive, because I think that, in terms of filmmaking in general, both the director and the screenwriter have a fair amount of creative power when it comes to what we ultimately see on the screen. Obviously, editors, actors, cinematographers, etc. all play a role as well, and it is probably best to see films as collaborative entities, making them even more a product of the society in which they were created.

Certainly, the six adaptations that I have examined can all be placed, quite firmly, in the cultural tradition or historical moments out of which they emerged. Whether they reflect

desired wartime alliances with Britain, conservative heritage values, individualism and re-defined gender roles, family unity in a time of war, the culture clash between east and west, or the traditional values associated with Mormonism, these films all use Austen's text in very different ways. However, despite the fact that the films themselves are so different, it would be impossible for anyone who had read *Pride and Prejudice* to watch these films and remain unaware of the source material. In the end, each film has a different goal, but Austen's text is so malleable and enduring that it can adapt to all of these goals, while still proving to be entertaining, economically viable and recognizably Austen.

Filmography

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- Bridget Jones's Diary. Dir. Sharon Maguire. With Renee Zellweger and Colin Firth. Studio Canal, 2001.
- Emma. Dir. Douglas McGrath. With Gwyneth Paltrow and Jeremy Northam. Miramax Films, 1996.
- The Jane Austen Bookclub. Dir. Robin Swicord. With Kathy Baker, Hugh Dancy and Maria Bello. Mockingbird Pictures, 2007.
- Jane Austen's Emma. Dir. Diarmuid Lawrence. With Kate Beckinsale and Mark Strong. Meridian Broadcasting, 1996.
- Jane Austen's Persuasion. Roger Michell. With Amanda Root and Ciaran Hinds. BBC, 1995.
- Mansfield Park. Dir. Patricia Rozema. With Frances O'Conner and Jonny Lee Miller. Miramax Films, 1999.
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- Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Cyril Coke. With Elizabeth Garvie and David Rintoul. BBC, 1980.
- Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Simon Langton. With Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth. BBC, 1995.
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