Pride & Prejudice Adapted

Three Interpretations of Jane Austen’s Novel

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Introduction

‘It is a truth universally acknowledged that a good novel in possession of a good love story must be in want of a screen adaptation.’

Sue Parrill, Jane Austen on Film and Television

With these words, Sue Parrill undertook to catalogue all of the adaptations made of Jane Austen’s novels in her book Jane Austen on Film and Television (2002). Rephrasing the famous first line of Austen’s Pride & Prejudice, Parrill implies that an adaptation follows naturally, if a novel is well written. She looks at the works of Jane Austen and discusses every adaptation of an Austen novel that was made up until the time she finished her research. When looking at the numbers of Sue Parrill’s study, it is evident that two of Austen’s novels have been the most popular for adaptations. Both Pride & Prejudice and Emma have been adapted seven times whereas Sense and Sensibility has been adapted four times, Persuasion and Mansfield Park two times and Northanger Abbey only once, according to IMDB.com. After the publication of Parrill’s book, another five adaptations of Pride & Prejudice have been made and there is another one in production, again according to IMDB.com. The other novels have all been adapted once more. It appears that when it comes to Austen’s work, Parrill’s statement is true. Another interpretation of Parrill’s statement is that a good novel seems to need an adaptation, in order for it to be complete. When looking at the top 250 films on the Internet Movie Database, 40% of the films are based on a novel or graphic novel. Of the top 500 novels featured in the book The Top Ten, in which contemporary authors have picked their ten favourite novels, over 75% of these novels has been adapted to the screen. The phenomenon of adapting a popular novel for the screen is by no means a new one. In David Cook’s A History of Narrative Film, the chronological index of the earliest films show that after short clips and documentaries, the first films were adaptations of novels. The Birth of a Nation, the first feature length film by director D.W. Griffith, who is described in Cook’s book as ‘the father of film technique’ and ‘the man who invented Hollywood’ (p. 51), was based on the novel by the same name by Thomas F. Dixon Jr. This trend has continued to this day and proved to be a successful one; over seventy-five percent of all the films which have won the Best Film Oscar are adaptations. But why, other than this obvious record of success, adapt a novel into a film? And why adapt a novel several times, like Jane Austen’s Pride & Prejudice?
The tradition of adapting written texts, like novels or short stories, into film has been present every since film became a narrative phenomenon and the discussion about adaptation has been around just as long. One of the first topics adaptation theorists discussed was whether or not an adaptation was faithful to the source text. This notion of fidelity meant that early adaptation theory mainly focussed on comparing and contrasting; the fewer alterations made, the more faithful an adaptation was. In order to achieve fidelity to the source text, early adaptations were quite faithful adaptations; filmmakers tried to stay as close to the source text as possible, within the limits of film. This is especially clear in that earlier films made use of an omniscient narrator more often than modern films. In books, there is often a third person narrator, who will tell the story as though it as already happened. In earlier films, a male voice would often provide the film with narration, keeping in line with the literary tradition. Furthermore, the earlier films rarely strayed from the novel they were based on, as fidelity to the original text was vital.

Adaptations never escape the comparison to the original text and the trend has always been to favour the novel, because the novel came first. Thomas Leitch wrote about this phenomenon in his article ‘Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory’. In the article, Leitch refutes twelve opinions about adaptations, and one of these opinions, or fallacies, as Leitch dubs them, is that books are better than films. Leitch validates films, especially adaptations, as being works of art in their own right. He also discusses the notion that an adaptation is inherently different from the original text, as it has been interpreted by the screenwriter, the director and to some extent the actors. This notion ties in with reader response criticism. Reader response criticism identifies the reader of a text as the one who finishes the story as it has ‘a focus on the process of reading a literary text’ (Abrams, p. 265). The author writes a story, but only when it is read and interpreted by a reader, is the story complete. And what is an adaptation if not the interpretation of the original text by the filmmakers? An adaptation can be viewed as a critical reading of the original text; directors and scriptwriters will have changed, deleted or added to the storyline. Some of these alterations are linked solely to the fact that film and a novel are two different media, but even that difference is arguable. Leitch argues that a film and a novel stimulate different senses; the novel evokes thought, whereas a film stimulates the audio and visual sense, but they both serve the imagination. A passage about someone’s feelings when a friend has died will inspire the reader to imagine their facial reactions, whereas a sad face during a funeral will inspire the viewer to imagine their feelings. Combining reader response criticism from literary theory
with adaptation theory from film theory will lead to the question: what does an adaptation actually say about the original text?

Adaptations are often referred to as translations in books on film adaptation. Thus, an adaptation translates a story from one language as it were, the written word, to another language, the visual. In her book *Literature Into Film*, Linda Constanzo Cahir notes that an adaptation, ‘like any translation, is a separate entity, with a life of its own, but a life fertilely tethered to its literary parent’ (p. 97). The focus seems to be on the fact that an adaptation stands apart from the novel it is based on, but draws on it nonetheless. Cahir states that an adaptation ‘carries its own distinctive ideas about the book’ and that ‘filmmakers take on the responsibility of attempting to capture and translate those essential qualities which they perceive to be present in the literature’ (p. 97). A successful adaptation therefore translates ‘the words into images by both interpreting and exploiting the source text’ (p. 97). Cahir composed a list of points to which filmmakers who adapt novels should adhere in order for their film to be a success. What it all boils down to is that an adaptation should be a good mix between keeping the source text in mind and being, as Cahir puts it, ‘a separate entity.’ This enhances the translation comparison, as translators have to make the source text work in another language. John Wiltshire describes this in his book *Recreating Jane Austen*:

The very obvious points that films and television serials are predominantly visual media, that they must largely therefore signify emotion by symbol, by expression and action, that the interiority of their characters is represented through such signs rather than through language, that they encourage the gaze rather than the immersed reader’s imagination, are all factors that have cultural and ideological implications. (p. 4)

A novel might describe in detail how a field, a house or a room looks like, or describe someone’s thoughts or emotions, but the filmmakers, unless they make use of a voice-over, cannot use the same language as the source text. Therefore imagery, or signs, are used; the viewer will see the field, the house or the room and will see a character contemplating events, though in silence, or see them cry or laugh.

As mentioned above, *Pride & Prejudice* has been adapted many times and will be adapted again. The 1996 BBC mini-series has been dubbed the definitive adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* by many fans and critics, yet after the series, five more adaptations have been made. Leitch’s article mentions the notion that a story should be interpreted more than once. He uses the theatre as an example, as no performance of the same play, even by the same cast,
is ever the same. To distinguish between adaptations, Geoffrey Wagner’s notion of adaptations is useful. Wagner is a film theorist and in his book, *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975), he created three subcategories for novel adaptations: the transposition, the commentary and the analogy. The first, the transposition is a fairly straightforward adaptation of a novel; Wagner describes it as a film ‘in which a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference’ (p. 222). Wagner goes as far as claiming that the transposition is ‘the least satisfactory’ (p. 222) as it is basically a retelling, without any new elements. As an example, Wagner uses adaptations of William Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet* and calls them ‘comic-books’ as he feels that the play has been ‘reduced to a few wordless pages, mostly of the duel scene’ (p. 223). The 1996 BBC mini-series *Pride & Prejudice* falls into the category of the transposition. The series stays true to the plot without changing too much. Parrill has yet to describe an adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* that fall in the two other categories. She uses Wagner’s definition of the commentary to describe the 1996 TV film adaptation of *Emma*. A commentary, as Wagner describes it, takes an original and ‘either purposely or inadvertently’ alters it in some respect (p.223). Parrill adds to this that it will have ‘a new emphasis or new structure’ (p.9). It stays fairly true to the plot, but because of the change or changes, it stands apart from the novel more than a transposition. The commentary adaptation will, as it were, comment on the original text. In the case of the 1996 TV film *Emma*, the relationship and distance between social classes are given more emphasis, and therefore, Parrill dubs this film as ‘socially revisionist’ (p. 132). With this new emphasis, the film comments on the social conduct described in the novel.

An analogy adaptation differs even more from the original text than a commentary. Parrill uses the example of *Clueless* (1995) to illustrate Wagner’s third adaptation category. An analogy, as described by Wagner, represents ‘a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art’ (p.227). Some examples he uses are films that set the storyline of the novel in a new time frame. Parrill narrows it down to the notion that an analogy ‘uses the novel as a point of departure’ (p. 9). *Clueless* is a modern day retelling of Jane Austen’s *Emma*. This time, the main heroine is not a rich upper class British girl, but a rich high school teenager from Beverly Hills. The main plot is still there, as this heroine, Cher, also attempts to be a matchmaker and finally, she falls in love with her stepbrother, similar to the brotherly way Mr Knightley regards Emma in the novel. However, as the setting is so radically different from the novel and many alterations have been made to fit the plot, one would have to be familiar with *Emma* to recognise *Clueless* to be an analogy of Jane Austen’s novel. Because there are different ways of adapting a novel, and because every director will probably bring
something special to the table, each adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* could be as innovative as the next. Since Sue Parrill wrote her book, three major film adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* have been released. Each of these films fall into one of Wagner’s subcategories of adaptations, and these films will be the focus of my dissertation.

In Chapter 1, I will analyse the 2005 film *Pride & Prejudice*, directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet, Matthew Macfadyen as Mr. Darcy, Brenda Blethyn as Mrs. Bennet, Donald Sutherland as Mr. Bennet and Judi Dench as Lady Catherine de Bourgh. This film is a transposition of Jane Austen’s novel; there are slight alterations and omissions, but on the whole, it stays true to the source text. I will look closely at the alterations, omissions and the shift of focus, reviews from fans and critics and I will discuss how the film reflects on the novel and the time it was made in. In Chapter 2, I will analyse the 2008 mini-series *Lost in Austen*, directed by Dan Zeff and starring Jemima Rooper as Amanda Price, Elliot Cowan as Mr. Darcy, Hugh Bonneville as Mr. Bennet, Alex Kingston as Mrs Bennet and Lindsay Duncan as Lady Catherine de Bourgh. This series is a commentary; it stays close to the source text, but introduces a shift of narrator. Amanda Price is a twenty-something year old London woman who finds a passageway into Longbourn and swaps places with Elizabeth Bennet. By changing the protagonist, by actually swapping Elizabeth Bennet with a modern-day equivalent, the story starts out the same but quickly digresses due to Elizabeth’s absence and Amanda’s modern attitude. I will discuss the inherent alterations the creators of *Lost in Austen* had to make while swapping the protagonist with a modern day girl and what that says about our modern day view of the novel. I will also discuss fan fiction briefly and the reviews of both fans and critics. In Chapter 3 I will analyse the 2004 Bollywood film *Bride & Prejudice*, directed by Gurinder Chadha and starring Aishwarya Rai as Lalita Bakshi, Martin Henderson as Will Darcy and Naveen Andrews as Balraj. This film is an analogy adaptation: it took *Pride & Prejudice* as raw material, but due to the heavy influence of Bollywood film and alterations made in order to adhere to Bollywood film standards, the film is so different from the source text that someone who has never read *Pride & Prejudice* will not recognise the fact that it is an adaptation of an eighteenth century novel. I will discuss the changes made and again the reviews of both fans and critics. I will also discuss what adapting an English Regency novel into a Bollywood film says about the timeless character and internationality of the source text.

Adaptation theory has evolved from a simple compare and contrast method to looking more closely at the alterations, omissions and added scenes or characters. Every reader will see something different in a text, according to reader response criticism, and the same
principle can be applied to filmmakers; every adaptation is a result of interpretations of
screenwriters, directors, set dressers and the actors and even the audience can add to the
interpretation. In his book *Recreating Jane Austen*, John Wiltshire discusses the phenomenon
of multiple adaptations of one source text. He states that ‘every age, of course, adapts’ and
that
every cultural creation, even a cathedral, has an afterlife, unpredictable, uncontrolled by its
original architect, when another era, another cultural configuration, turns it, adapts it, to its
own uses. Texts (however we interpret that word) only partially belong to the original author:
they are constantly being reworked, rearranged, recycled. [p. 2-3]

It is therefore no wonder that certain popular novels, such as Jane Austen’s *Pride &
Prejudice*, have been adapted several times, and almost every adaptation brings something
interesting to the table. I will look at the three most recent adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice*
with these questions in mind: how does the film interpret the novel, what does this
interpretation say about the time it was made in, and, most importantly, what does this
interpretation say about the novel? By answering these questions, I will argue that adaptations
are rightfully incorporated into literary studies, as they represent the interpretation of a group
of people of a certain moment and that they are critical readings of the source text.

A film is always a group result, as there are many people involved in the production of
the film. The director directs, the actors act, the editor edits, the screen writer writes, the
costume designers design costumes and the composer composes the soundtrack. All these
people together make a film that is as it were a snapshot of how the source material is
interpreted, as every crew member participates in roughly the same time. Therefore, an
adaptation is an interpretation linked to the time it is made in. As every crewmember in one
form or another changes, adds to or leaves out certain elements of the source text, an
adaptation is a critical reading of the source text by a group of people who represent the time
the adaptation is made in.
Chapter 1: Pride & Prejudice (2005)

Despite the popularity of adaptations of Jane Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice*, the 2005 adaptation by the same name is only the second full-length film adaptation which has been made. The first was the 1945 adaptation, starring Lawrence Olivier as Mr. Darcy and Greer Garson as Elizabeth Bennet. Since that film, only mini-series and live broadcasts have been produced, until the 2005 film. Both films fall under the first category of Wagner’s adaptation theory, that is, the transposition. Little deviation has been made from the original novel and the adaptation attempts to transpose the novel as closely as possible. A very plausible reason for choosing to adapt a novel into a mini-series rather than a film is the extra amount of time; the 1995 mini-series of *Pride & Prejudice* consists of six fifty minute-long episodes, whereas the 2005 adaptation is a little over two hours long (according to IMDB.com). A mini-series provides more room to explore the background characters, the secondary storylines and the main characters and storylines, whereas a film needs to make cuts in order to keep to the time limit. What remains in a film adaptation is usually a condensed version of the main storyline, with a focus on the main characters. Secondary characters and storylines will have been cut substantially or all together. The 2005 film was met with some doubt and hesitation, as the 1995 miniseries adaptation starring Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet and Colin Firth as Mr Darcy was perceived by many fans to be the definitive adaptation of Jane Austen’s novel. Especially Colin Firth’s portrayal of Mr Darcy has been widely praised and it was believed that a new adaptation could not touch the miniseries. The focus on Elizabeth and Darcy as individuals, with a lesser focus on the community surrounding them has also been a point of criticism, but Sarah Ailwood is of the opinion that the focus on the individual can be distilled from the novel, as it is a Romantic interpretation of the novel. Despite all the apprehension beforehand and criticism after its release, the 2005 film has some interesting features, as it reflects the reading of the story by the director and script writer and provides its audience with a new take on the beloved novel. One thing filmmakers cannot escape is a comparison to the source text and critics will criticise major changes the filmmakers made for their film. What these critics fail to do, however, is stop and wonder why these changes were made. Early adaptation theory was mainly concerned with this compare and contrast method, yet did not look beyond the changes that were made. Nowadays, adaptation theory goes further and looks at why certain elements, plotlines and characters are changed or even eliminated. With this in mind, I will discuss some of the major changes in the 2005 adaptation, look at what both critics and fans have said about these changes and how these changes can be justified as well.
as what they say about Austen’s novel, keeping in mind that the film is an interpretation of the filmmakers.

After its release, *Pride & Prejudice* received mixed reviews. A lot of fan reviews, which can be found on websites like the [Internet Movie Database](http://www.imdb.com) and the [Republic of Pemberley](http://www.pemberley.com), mainly consisted of comparisons to the 1995 miniseries and most of them were in favour of the miniseries. The miniseries was dubbed as the definitive theatrical version of the novel by these adamant fans. Particularly Colin Firth’s portrayal of Mr Darcy was what made the series so popular. His performance had such an impact, that he was later cast as Mark Darcy in *Bridget Jones’ Diary* part one and two, in which he played an updated version of Mr Darcy. A explicit casting decisions made by the filmmakers were the subject of either praise or critique. Keira Knightley’s portrayal of Elizabeth Bennet seemed to be preferable to Jennifer Ehle’s. Joan Klingel Ray, the president of the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) preferred Knightley, as she claims that Ehle was ‘a bit too heavy for the role’ (qtd in Hastings, par. 11). Stephen Holden of the *New York Times* states that Knightley is ‘in a word, a knock-out’ and when she is on screen, ‘you can barely take your eyes off her’ (Holden, par. 3). *Variety Magazine*’s film critic Derek Elley noted that Knightley, ‘more than the older Ehle in the TV series, [...] catches Elizabeth's essential skittishness and youthful braggadocio’ (Elley, par. 10). Roger Ebert from *The Sun Times* wrote that Knightley ‘makes the story almost realistic; this is not a well-mannered “Masterpiece Theatre” but a film where strong-willed young people enter life with their minds at war with their hearts’ (Ebert, par. 6). Some comments have been made about Knightley not looking the part on websites like [IMDB.com](http://www.imdb.com). However, Elizabeth Bennet is not described physically in the novel. All the reader knows is that Jane is considered to be the prettier Bennet girl, but nothing is said of Elizabeth’s appearance. Knightley has been dubbed too pretty, but as she has to attract the good opinion of Mr. Darcy, she would have to have some beauty. Matthew Macfadyen as Mr Darcy received some mixed reviews. *New York Magazine* critic Ken Tucker wrote that Macfadyen ‘looks merely peeved or perhaps hungover’ (Tucker, par. 3) and says that he would even prefer Mickey Rourke over Macfadyen to play Darcy. *Variety Magazine* however wrote that ‘Macfadyen makes Darcy a more conflicted, softer figure than Firth's indelibly etched performance, but one that fits the movie's more realistic mood’ (Elley, par. 3). The press was generally more positive about the casting of the secondary characters. Judi Dench’s portrayal of Lady Catherine is praised throughout, as is Donald Sutherland’s Mr Bennet. *Variety Magazine* praises Brenda Blethyn for ‘reining back her Mrs. Bennet into a believable mother hen’ (Elley, par. 12). The casting of certain actors will inevitable attract both critique and
praise. Certain viewers will say that the actor or actress does not live up to the physical expectations they have of the character, but this is all a matter of interpretation, as the casting director obviously felt that Keira Knightley would be a good Elizabeth Bennet. The mixed comments *Pride & Prejudice* received show that an actor or actress will never be universally deemed perfect for the role, as there will always be someone who does not think the actor or actor looks the part.

In the accompanying booklet, put together by Paul Webster, that can be found on the Working Titles website, Joe Wright says that for the part of Elizabeth Bennet, he ‘was looking for someone who was bright and slightly difficult, and did not fit the normal feminine convention’ (qtd in Webster, p. 13). Keira Knightley almost was not considered because Wright thought she was too beautiful, but because he thought that Knightley embodied a certain ‘tom-boy-ness’ he felt was right for Elizabeth, she got the part. About Macfadyen, Wright said in the DVD commentary that he was the only actor auditioning for the role who brought a certain vulnerability to the part. He explains the choice to cast Macfadyen by claiming that

Matthew is very clever and has made Darcy that complicated layered person, who is not comfortable in his own skin, although he is a really good person with a sense of honour and integrity. Also, Matthew, unlike other actors, is not vain, and was not afraid to be disliked by an audience at the beginning of the story – we have to dislike him because we are seeing him through Lizzy’s eyes. And we grow to love him as Lizzy does (qtd in Webster, p. 17)

The casting of certain actors can be explained by the gap theory by Wolfgang Iser. A reader is supposed to fill in gaps the author leaves in a text and ‘be active and creative, working things out for himself [sic]’ (Habib, p. 156). Hardly any physical description is given about either Darcy or Elizabeth and thus, the filmmakers are at liberty to interpret these characters as they see fit.

Another point of critique on the film was that it felt too rushed. Critics questioned the choice to convert the novel into a two-hour film, but there was praise too for the scriptwriter, Deborah Moggach. *Variety Magazine* praises Moggach for extracting ‘the youthful essence of Austen’s novel, as well as providing a richly detailed setting’ (Elley, par. 3). Moggach wrote the following about the script: ‘the book is a great national treasure and you mess with it at your own peril’ (qtd in Webster, p. 2). She explains her choices by stating that she ‘made it Lizzy’s story’ and that she ‘tried to be truthful to the book, which is already a perfect three act
structure, so I haven’t changed a lot’ (qtd in Webster, p. 7). These comments show that Elley, Moggach and possibly other filmmakers believe there is a core, an essential storyline to *Pride & Prejudice* and that this must be conveyed to film in order for an adaptation to be successful. The notion of making it Lizzy’s story ties in with what Wright said; we see the story through Lizzy’s eyes. By doing so, the filmmakers have provided the viewers with a more personal interpretation of the story, a result that could only be achieved by cutting certain elements.

So why make another adaptation, especially when there is an adaptation favoured by so many fans? John Wiltshire states that ‘even in Hollywood films are still made because a writer or producer wants to make them, believes in them, and pushes them through’ (Wilshire, p. 4). This proves to be true for the 2005 adaptation, as according to the companion booklet to the film, one of the executive producers, Debra Hayward, just ‘came up with the idea’ (Webster, p. 3). Joe Wright, the director, became involved early on and explained why he thinks *Pride & Prejudice* could be adapted again: ‘Like a fairytale on an emotional level, *Pride & Prejudice* is a true story and that’s why, like a fairytale, it is a story worth telling again and again through the generations’ (qtd in Webster, p. 2). Leitch in his article about fallacies of adaptation theory concurs with this. He notes that theatre critics often favour the theatre to films, as a play ‘allows performers to adjust their performances from night to night so that there will never be a single definitive performance’ (Leitch, p.154). Yet, when a story such as *Pride & Prejudice* is adapted several times, the audience sees several interpretations, like they do when they see a play. Right from the start, the film makers decided to make some alterations in comparison to earlier adaptations. One of the most significant is the period in which the film is set. Jane Austen wrote *Pride & Prejudice* in the last years of the eighteenth century, but it was published in 1813, during the Regency Era. The filmmakers decided to set the film in the period before the Regency Era, to reflect the world of the time the novel was written, as Joe Wright mentions in the DVD commentary. This is most notably present in the film in terms of fashion; the Bennet family dress according to the fashion of the time, whereas Caroline Bingley dresses more fashionably in dresses that hint at the coming Regency fashion, something she would have picked up upon in London. Another way in which the film differs from other adaptations is in the age of the actors. Wright explains that he wanted to cast actors and actresses who were close to the age of the characters they would portray. Elizabeth Bennet, for instance, is twenty years old in the novel. Keira Knightley, who plays Elizabeth in the 2005 film, was nineteen years old at the time of filming. The actresses who played the Bennet sisters were all in their late teens or early twenties, just as their characters. A critic of the 1995 miniseries stated that Keira Knightley appears much younger and fresher
than Jennifer Ehle, who was twenty-six years old at the time of the miniseries. Colin Firth was thirty-five when he portrayed Darcy, Matthew Macfadyen was thirty-one. The filmmakers chose to cast people close to the age of the characters they were portraying in order to give the film a more realistic tone. Wiltshire considered the role of the director and scriptwriter in the process of adapting a novel and he justifies them by stating that ‘scriptwriters and filmmakers are agents and creative consciousnesses, and that film and television versions do emerge – all things considered from intelligent and coherent encounters with the original works’ (Wiltshire, p.5). Wright and Moggach have considered the source text carefully, and this shows in the final product.

The other alterations made by the filmmakers contribute to Joe Wright’s mission to make a more realistic adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*. Wright claims that he was not ‘interested in the monolith that has been erected over her and her books. I was interested in being true to her spirit and the spirit of her stories. That was what was important to me’ (qtd in Woodworth, par. 2). Sally Palmer discusses an alteration that had critics talking: the portrayal of both Mr and Mrs Bennet. Palmer states that ‘Austen’s narrator seems to describe a disengaged Mr Bennet who is less than the attentive, affectionate, and involved husband Donald Sutherland plays in the film’ (Palmer, par. 4). Palmer goes on to talk about scenes in the film where Sutherland’s Mr Bennet shows a softer side than portrayed in the novel, specifically the scenes where he comforts Mary after her disastrous performance at the Netherfield Ball and when he becomes emotional when he hears of Elizabeth’s love for Mr Darcy. Of Brenda Blethyn’s Mrs Bennet, Palmer states that she is ‘rehabilitated’ (Palmer, par. 8). This in comparison to Peter Graham’s description of Austen’s Mrs Bennet. He describes Mrs Bennet as ‘shallow, self-centred, and unable to understand principles’ (qtd in Palmer, par 8). Mrs Bennet’s nerves, impatience with her children and her incorrect sense of importance are visible throughout the novel. Even in the first chapter, Mr Bennet jokes that his wife’s nerves have been his ‘old friends’ for at least twenty years (Austen, p. 3). Blethyn’s Mrs Bennet also suffers from nerves, but decidedly less so than in the novel. A character trait that Mrs Bennet retains is her apparent sole goal in life: getting her girls married. However, in the novel, she is slightly more driven to achieve this goal. The Mrs Bennet in the novel is almost a flat character, focussed solely on matrimony and her ‘poor nerves’ (Austen, p. 3). She also shows some dislike towards her children; the narrator actually confesses that Elizabeth is ‘the least dear to her of all her children’ (Austen, p.101). The Mrs Bennet in the film seems more human and more realistic. Joe Wright admits in the director’s commentary that they wanted a softer Mrs Bennet for the film, and that is why we see Elizabeth hugging Mrs Bennet when
Lydia leaves Longbourn with Mr Wickham. Blethyn’s Mrs Bennet also explains why she is so determined to see her daughters settled, as she explains to Kitty that ‘when you have five daughters, perhaps you’ll understand’. Another moment of rehabilitation is when Mrs Bennet cries out ‘you are all ruined’ to her daughters after she learns of Lydia’s elopement with Wickham. In the novel, Mrs Bennet only complains about her nerves, whereas in the film, Mrs Bennet does think about the implications for her family. By redeeming Mr Bennet’s lack of interest and his inaction and Mrs Bennet’s overall character, the filmmakers of Pride & Prejudice have provided the audience with a more three dimensional portrayal of the Bennet parents. Mr Bennet still retains his dry humour, but is more attentive to his daughters. Mrs Bennet is still very much focused on her daughters’ welfare, but is not the , perhaps intentional, caricature she is at times in Austen’s novel. Marvin Mudrick is of the opinion that the ‘refusal to sentimentalize ..... Mrs Bennet’ is ‘one of Jane Austen triumphs’ (qtd in Palmer, par. 10), but Wright and Moggach have struck a balance between sentimentalising Mrs Bennet and keeping true to the source text. Both Mr Bennet and Mrs Bennet keep the quality that makes them such memorable characters, but Wright has layered them with more softer, more redeeming personalities. By doing so, Wright shows that he knows how a modern day audience would react to two-dimensional characters, especially parental figures. Mrs Bennet is, as Catherine Stewart-Beer says, ‘a more rounded, layered character, who shows real love and concern for her daughters’ futures’ (Stewart-Beer, par. 10). Mr Bennet is still flawed in his inactions, but he redeems himself by really caring for his daughters. What Wright and Moggach have provided is some background to these characters; the audience learns that Mrs Bennet’s actions are motivated by her quest to secure her daughters’ futures.

The filmmakers have also decided to alter some of the elements of the storyline they felt were not quite right. One of the more obvious changes was the bond between Jane and Elizabeth Bennet. The characters of Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Bennet can be compared to the Jane Austen and her elder sister Cassandra Austen. Cassandra Austen, like Jane Bennet, was considered to be the beauty of the family and like Jane, had men fall in love with her. The two young women are also alike in temperament; both Cassandra and Jane are described as sweet, lovely and quiet girls. Elizabeth is more like Jane Austen; outspoken and witty, both women do not get along too well with their mothers, and both are very fond of their older sister. In the novel, the two eldest Bennet girls are very fond of each other, and they confide everything to each other. In this, the movie differs somewhat. When we first see Jane and Elizabeth alone, they are lying in the same bed; they in fact share a room, and are reminiscing about first meeting Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley. Joe Wright explains in the director’s commentary that he
felt that the relationship between Jane and Elizabeth is ‘too perfect’ and for this film, he wanted to make it more realistic. This is especially noticeable in the scenes when we see the two girls in bed. At the beginning of the film, they lay facing each other, but as the film progresses, they turn away from each other, ending up lying back to back. Elizabeth also does not tell Jane about Darcy’s first proposal. The relationship between Mr and Mrs Bennet, however, is warmer in the film. Wright comments on this by saying that Mr and Mrs Bennet still make love and are still in love, whereas in the novel, it is clear that Mr Bennet is no longer interested in his wife. By tweaking the relationships between Jane and Elizabeth and between Mr and Mrs Bennet, the film offers a somewhat more realistic portrayal of the Bennet family and by doing so comments on the portrayal of the family in the novel.

Another alteration that is quite significant is the shift in focus on Elizabeth and Darcy as individuals, with less attention to the community that surrounds them. Austen’s novel is loved for its portrayal of the Bennet family within the community of Longbourn and Meryton. A great deal of the novel is concerned with what other people will think and what sort of impact actions will have for the family. Lydia’s elopement with Wickham could have possibly ruined any chance for Elizabeth to marry a gentleman like Darcy, as Lady Catherine reminds her when she visits Longbourn to tell Elizabeth to stay away from Darcy, by asking Elizabeth if ‘the shades of Pemberly [are] to be thus polluted’ (Austen, p. 346), suggesting that Darcy will be tainted if he marries Elizabeth. The point is raised by Darcy as well, for when he first proposes marriage to Elizabeth, he goes on and on about how her mother’s conduct and her sisters’ conduct made him hesitant to offer marriage to her. In Joe Wright’s film, however, the notion of living within a community is not so prevalent as in the novel; the focus is much more on the Bennet family, and less on the community, to the extent that several characters are either cut or cut down to a minimum. In the film, only Caroline Bingley is there to represent the more upper class ladies, whereas in the novel she is backed up by her sister, Louisa Hurst. Charlotte Lucas’ father, Sir John Lucas, is hardly present at all in the film, he is only there to introduce Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley to the Bennet family, but in the book he serves as the local gentleman who knows all and sees all. It is in fact he who points out the possible marriage between Jane and Bingley to Mr Darcy, as he has seen their growing attachment.

Sarah Ailwood offers an interesting take on why the focus in the film is on the love story, rather than on the community. Ailwood dubs the film as ‘an insightfully Romantic interpretation of Austen’s novel’ (Ailwood, par. 1) and she believes that Elizabeth and Mr Darcy are represented as Romantic figures ‘in terms of the Romantic conception of the self.
Romanticism has been considered as reflecting and endorsing a conceptualization of the individual self as autonomous, all-consuming and socially detached or isolated’ (Ailwood, par. 2). This idea of isolation is reinforced by scenes where we see Elizabeth wandering around on her own, such as in the opening scene where she reads a book whilst walking towards Longbourn, or in the scene where she stands atop a majestic cliff in the Peak District. The nature scenes are also a strong contrast to the scenes that are shot indoors, ‘reflecting the uncomfortable social confinement of Darcy and Elizabeth’ (Ailwood, par. 21) and, as Ailwood reminds her reader, ‘frequently, the characters of Romantic poetry turn from the social world to seek self-fulfilment in nature’ (Ailwood, par. 3). Ailwood is not surprised that Wright has focused more on Mr Darcy and Elizabeth, as she states that Wright’s film has taken ‘as its central focus Austen’s concern with exploring the nature of the Romantic self and the possibilities for women and men to achieve individual self-fulfilment within an oppressive patriarchal social and economic order’ (par. 10) and that ‘Wright’s interpretation is..... firmly grounded in Austen’s novel, particularly with regard to the representation of the two protagonists and their functions within Austen’s broader commentary on the nature of the Romantic self’ (par. 5). Macfadyen’s Darcy is very much like a Byronic hero. Ailwood states that Wright’s characterisation of Darcy not only stresses ‘the autonomous and socially alienated conception of the self but also developed a particular masculine type, which has become known as the Byronic hero’ (Ailwood, par. 8). Atara Stein characterises a Byronic hero as having ‘ambition, aspiration and aggressive individualism”; he is arrogant, contemptuous of others and bad-tempered, and ‘lacks social skills and an ability to relate to other people’ (quoted in Ailwood, par 8). Deborah Lutz completes this characterisation with the following comment: ‘in the Regency, true Byronism lies in the man who, although failed and deeply wounded, can be redeemed by love’ (qtd in Ailwood, par. 8). This final notion is very evident in Wright’s film, as Darcy’s arrogance and contempt for others is somewhat softened. He does not participate so much in Caroline’s criticism of Elizabeth and this is, according to Ailwood, because

The film does not foreground these aspects of his personality because it is more concerned with presenting him as a socially alienated Romantic figure. Darcy’s unhappiness throughout his time in Hertfordshire indicates that, like the Romantic hero, he finds the forms and practices of social interaction offered by his society unfulfilling, laying the foundation for his later characterization as a Byronic hero. (Ailwood, par. 19)
Although Wright’s and Moggach’s interpretation of Austen’s novel leaves out some aspects that some readers will sorely miss, the basis of their film is there in the novel.

So what do all these alterations actually build up to? Catherine Stewart-Beer provides some answers for this. She has dubbed Wright’s film as ‘a film of our time’ (Stewart-Beer, par. 1) and argues that many of the before mentioned alterations reinforce that notion. The softening down of Mr and Mrs Bennet has provided a more happy home for Keira Knightley’s Elizabeth, yet she still wishes to escape her home. Stewart-Beer offers an explanation for this as she sees Knightley’s Elizabeth as a modern young woman, ‘hovering uneasily on the brink of responsible womanhood, still grappling with her emotional and sexual feelings and thus unable to express herself fully’ (Stewart-Beer, par. 12). This more taciturn Elizabeth would then not share everything with her sister Jane, and would most likely wander about alone, away from the restricting society. Stewart-Beer dubs Knightley’s Elizabeth as a true Elizabeth for 2005 - a time when young men and women are often forced, because of a precipitously expensive housing market, to live with their parents and are therefore rendered unable fully to take on the onerous responsibilities of adulthood, suspended in a false state of prolonged childhood. (Stewart-Beer, par. 16)

The claustrophobic feeling of staying indoors is emphasised by many scenes that involve eavesdropping at doors; there is no escape from one’s family. Elizabeth’s venturing out, and the focus on her individuality, are therefore a natural consequence. Darcy being a Byronic or Romantic hero leads him to be socially isolated as well, reinforcing the idea that Elizabeth and Darcy belong together.

As mentioned earlier, the 2005 adaptation gives a refreshing perspective and interpretation of the novel. However, there will be viewers who have not read the book prior to seeing the film. For these viewers, the alterations and cuts made by the filmmakers will influence their first reading of the novel. I myself had not read Pride & Prejudice when I saw the film in a local cinema with a friend. After seeing it, it did not take me long to read the book, as the film had made me very eager to read it. The classic fear of teachers that if students see the film they will not read the book did not apply to me. I surveyed five of my peers, all female students in their early twenties, who like me had not read the book before watching the film in order to see how watching the film influenced their reading of Pride & Prejudice. When asked if watching the film inspired them to read the novel, all answered positively. One even stated that although she dislikes reading a novel after she has seen an
adaptation, she still wanted to read *Pride & Prejudice* because she liked the story so much. Another interviewee said that she ‘wanted to experience it the way Jane Austen had originally wrote it.’ The interviewees were all in agreement that the changes that were made served the film. The more realistic depiction of characters like Mrs Bennet and the bond between Lizzy and Jane was generally praised, though some thought Elizabeth would have still told Jane about Darcy’s proposal. When asked if they thought that there is a definitive adaptation of the novel, they all responded with a clear ‘no!’.

Four of the five interviewees have seen other adaptations, including less strict adaptations like *Lost in Austen* and *Bride & Prejudice* and they felt that there are many different ways to adapt a story. One said that ‘everyone gets a slightly different thing out of everything’ and so there cannot be a definitive adaptation. Another interesting comment was that ‘there will always be certain interpretations which are connected to the time spirit and so you cannot say that a certain adaptation is the definitive one.’ Finally, I asked them if reading the novel altered their opinion of the film. Some said that they did see some more exciting scenes than depicted in the novel, like Lady Catherine’s calling at Longbourn in the middle of the night, but in general, they viewed the film as a summary of the novel, with interesting interpretive decisions made by the director and scriptwriter.

Joe Wright, along with screenwriter Deborah Moggach, took on the challenge to adapt Jane Austen’s beloved novel *Pride & Prejudice*. The adapting itself was made more challenging because it would be the first adaptation after the much loved 1995 television series. Wright and Moggach rose to the occasion and made a unique adaptation of Austen’s novel. By casting actors that are the same age of the characters they are portraying and by toning down certain story elements, Wright and his team created a *Pride & Prejudice* they felt was more realistic. With a Romantic emphasis on the individual, especially on Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy, the filmmakers stayed true to the source text, yet gave it a twist of their own. It has been dubbed a film of our time, as many young people will be able to identify with Elizabeth and the confinement of living with nosy parents, her falling in love with Darcy and her feeling out of place. Joe Wright’s film could encourage its audience to go and read the novel and it shows that Jane Austen has written a novel that people nowadays can still relate to.
Imagine that you could open a door and walk into the world of your favourite novel, meet the people you have read about over and over again and perhaps be a part of the storyline you know by heart. This is exactly what happens to Amanda Price in the 2008 television series *Lost in Austen*, directed by Dan Zeff. Amanda, played by Jemima Rooper, knows Jane Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice* by heart and confesses that she would rather curl up with the novel than spend time with her boyfriend. One night, after her boyfriend drunkenly asks her to marry him and then passes out on her couch, Amanda hears some noise in her bathroom and ventures in, only to find Elizabeth Bennet admiring her laundry. This happens a second night and this time Amanda decides to see where Elizabeth came from. The door shuts behind her, and Amanda finds herself in the midst of the plot of *Pride & Prejudice*, while Elizabeth finds herself in contemporary London. With the absence of its heroine and despite Amanda’s best efforts, the story quickly deviates from the original and disintegrates, as Jane marries Mr Collins, Lydia elopes with Mr Bingley and Caroline Bingley comes out as a lesbian. Amanda tries to set things right by travelling back to her London to get Elizabeth to come back, but finds Elizabeth on a macro-biotic diet, sporting a short haircut and owning a mobile phone. *Lost in Austen* is a good example of Wagner’s second type of adaptation: the commentary. The series starts off staying true to the story and continues to try to stay true to the story in Amanda’s attempts to set everything right again but in the end, the story is significantly altered. More than an analogy, like the film *Pride & Prejudice* discussed in the previous chapter, a commentary alters the main narrative in order to comment on the original text. We see the storyline of *Pride & Prejudice* up close through the eyes of one of our contemporaries, Amanda Price, and with her, we marvel at certain customs, behaviours and characters. *Lost in Austen* provides its viewers with a modern day commentary on Jane Austen’s novel and embodies the views on the novel of this time.

The framework for this modern commentary can be compared to fan fiction. Media scholar Henry Jenkins describes the phenomena of fan fiction, or paraliterature, using television programmes as an example. He looks at transmedia texts, texts that are inspired by other media, such as television shows and films, and states that

[T]he encyclopaedic ambitions of transmedia texts often results in what might be seen as gaps or excesses in the unfolding of the story: that is, they introduce potential plots which cannot be fully told or extra details which hint at more than can be revealed. Readers, thus, have a
strong incentive to continue to elaborate on these story elements, working them over through their speculations, until they take on a life of their own. Fan fiction can be seen as an unauthorized expansion of these media franchises into new directions which reflect the reader's desire to "fill in the gaps" they have discovered in the commercially produced material. (Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling”)

This notion of filling in gaps concurs with Iser’s gap theory, as both scholars discuss filling in the gaps of the source text. Fan fiction does this by altering the original text, and Jenkins has identified ten different ways of doing so in his book *Textual Poachers*. For instance, recontextualisation deals with ‘off-screen actions and discussions that motivate perplexing on-screen behaviour’ (Jenkins, p. 162). A *Pride & Prejudice* example of this could be a story telling Darcy’s background. *Lost in Austen* is a mix between Cross Overs and Character Dislocation. Cross Over stories ‘blur the boundaries between different texts’ (Jenkins, p. 170), in this case the text of *Pride & Prejudice* and the story of Amanda Price, who is the heroine of her own story, and in Character Dislocation stories, ‘characters are removed from their original situations and given alternative names and identities’ (Jenkins, p.171). Elizabeth Bennet swaps places with Amanda Price and they take on each other’s lives, so in a way there is character dislocation. Alternatively, *Lost in Austen* can also be viewed as a Personalization story. In this type of fan fiction, the writers ‘work to efface the gap that separates the realm of their own experience and the fiction space of their favourite programmes.’ (Jenkins, p.171)

Although the screen writer, Guy Andrews, is a man, *Lost in Austen* is Amanda Price’s story and it is her own decision to travel through the magic door and play a part in the plot of *Pride & Prejudice* and ultimately alter it by marrying Darcy. It is clear from the start that Amanda loves the novel and from her opening monologue, it is clear that she fantasises about entering the story itself. She starts off by altering the famous opening line into ‘It is a truth generally acknowledged, that we are all longing to escape’ and continues that she ‘escapes always, to her favourite book: *Pride & Prejudice*’ and that she feels that because she has read the book so many times, ‘a little window opens’ to a place she knows so intimately, she ‘can see Darcy’ and she feels like she is ‘actually there’. Amanda Price clearly is a fan and according to Laurie Kaplan, she represents the Generation-Y as she is ‘a typical English singleton...who is tired of boorishness and longs for beauty, grace, elegance, courtesy, and romance’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par. 6). So when she discovers the possibility to enter a world that has all that, the target audience of fellow Generation-Y members will want to go with her. They, after all, must have also fantasised about entering the world of *Pride & Prejudice*. 
Fan fiction concerning Jane Austen’s novel is by no means a new phenomenon; novels like *Mr Darcy Takes a Wife* by Linda Berdoll, *Mr Darcy’s Diary* by Amanda Grange and numerous other stories on websites like *The Republic of Pemberly* written by fans show that many Austen fans use Austen’s work as a starting point for their fiction, both for actual novels and internet texts. In the last couple of years, more and more adaptations of Austen’s novels have been made and since adaptations of Jane Austen have always been popular, an adaptation which incorporates elements of fan fiction would not be out of place. Not only would it appeal to many female viewers with the prospect of actually meeting Mr Darcy in person, it would also provide some comic relief to see someone who is used to toothbrushes, mobile phone reception and shaving her legs manage in eighteenth century Britain, as well as seeing how characters from the novel react to modern day London. When Darcy follows Amanda to modern day London, his reactions to seeing people of colour, the Teletubbies and a working iron are very funny moments. In an interview with the cast and crew, which is featured on the DVD, director Dan Zeff states that he was interested in making an adaptation ‘more authentic than previous adaptations.’ This is obvious, he explains, in the small domestic details that Amanda encounters during her stay at Longbourn. When she asks Jane is there is a possibility to clean her teeth, Jane points out that ‘the instruments are already before [her]’ pointing to a piece of chalk, salt and some twigs. Later, when the Bennet family is off to the ball at Netherfield, we hear Amanda saying in the voice over that she ‘had cleaned [her] teeth with twigs and salt and had shaved [her] legs with some sort of potato peeler.’ Amanda’s need for modern bathroom equipment is emphasised in the fact that one of the first things she does when she gets back to modern day London is brush her teeth with an actual toothbrush. Executive producer Michele Buck states that they were ‘looking for a way to adapt *Pride & Prejudice* in a way that has not been done before; in an accessible way for 16-year-olds as well.’ She calls *Lost in Austen* a ‘modern spin on a classic tale, with a bit more mischief.’ Hugh Bonneville, who plays Mr Bennet, adds to this that ‘those who are appalled by Jane Austen being tempered with should be rest assured: it is an affectionate tribute.’

However, the plot of *Pride & Prejudice* must be tampered with, if the protagonist is almost completely absent and replaced by a modern twenty-something girl. By taking Elizabeth Bennet out of the picture, it becomes evident how she justifiably is the main character of *Pride & Prejudice*. As Amanda Price takes over Elizabeth’s role in the plot, she desperately tries to make sure the plot follows the novel. To some extent, she succeeds in this, but in the end, she fails. As soon as it become evident that Amanda cannot return to her London and as a result Elizabeth Bennet cannot return to Longbourn, Amanda tries to keep
Elizabeth on everybody’s mind. Elizabeth’s absence is especially hard for Mr Bennet and Charlotte Lucas, but the rest of the Bennet family seem unperturbed by it. When it is known that Mr Bingley’s rich friend, Mr Darcy, is in the county, Amanda immediately suggests that Darcy could be right for Elizabeth. The Bennet family, however, dismiss this idea, as Elizabeth is absent. When Elizabeth’s absence continues, Charlotte starts to doubt the friendship between them and when Mr Collins marries Jane instead of Charlotte, Charlotte decides that she ‘is for Africa’. Amanda later finds out that Elizabeth and Charlotte had made a pact to become missionaries in Africa when life became too lonely or too miserable. Elizabeth realises that if she had stayed, Charlotte might have stayed as well. As a result of Elizabeth’s absence, Amanda starts to take over her role more and more, even the role of Mr Darcy’s object of affection. Despite Mr Darcy’s allure, Amanda resists. Having grown up reading *Pride & Prejudice*, she believes it would be blasphemy to come between the protagonists of ‘the greatest love story ever told’. Even when Darcy passionately reveals his love for Amanda, she says that he must not, as ‘the entire world will hate [her].’ Amanda proves time and time again that she is a great fan of the love story of *Pride & Prejudice*. At the end of the series, when it is more than obvious that Amanda loves Darcy, she still would give up her place for Elizabeth. She encourages Elizabeth, who has returned to Longbourn, to talk to Darcy and she says that ‘with the talk comes the love.’ By having Amanda trying to keep the memory and the promise of Elizabeth alive, the filmmakers show that Elizabeth Bennet is the core of the story and that without her, the story will never be the same.

Lost in Austen also reflects on other characters by having Amanda Price be the protagonist instead of Elizabeth Bennet. By upsetting the natural order of the plot, Amanda learns that some characters are not who they seem to be in Austen’s novel. A clear example of this is Wickham. When he first enters the scene, Wickham is every bit the charming con man he is in the novel. As the story progresses, we find out that it was not Wickham, but Georgiana who caused all the trouble. When Georgiana is confronted by Amanda about her past, something Elizabeth was probably too hesitant to do, Georgiana sets things straight: she had fallen in love with Wickham and tried to seduce him at every possible moment. When Wickham refused, Georgiana lied to her brother and said that Wickham had seduced her, causing Wickham to become a social pariah. Wickham proved himself to be a gentleman by never setting the record straight. Changing the facts about the affair between Wickham and Georgina makes for an interesting take on the original text and Mr Darcy himself. It shows Darcy as a trusting man who perhaps does not see clearly when it comes to his sister. It also redeems Wickham himself, and because he also remains somewhat of a rake, he is a more
three-dimensional version than the character in the novel. The change also adds layers to Georgiana’s character; in the novel, she is merely an angelic creature, who nobody speaks ill of. It would make sense that a young girl would want to rebel against such prejudices, and why not do it with your brother’s handsome friend?

Another character who becomes more three-dimensional is Caroline Bingley. In the novel, she is a mean, conniving young woman who would have seen her brother marry Georgiana Darcy just so that her marrying Mr Darcy would become easier. What makes her so single minded is never explained. *Lost in Austen* gave a little twist to her character; when Amanda pretends to be a lesbian in order to transfer Mr Bingley’s affections from herself to Jane, Caroline admits to Amanda that like Amanda, as she puts it, ‘the poetry of Sappho is the only music that will touch [her] heart.’ When she reveals this to Amanda, who had earlier said that she never ‘understood [Caroline] as a character’, Amanda has a look of finally understanding Caroline on her face. She realises that Caroline has to marry, as homosexuality was not accepted at that time, and as Mr Darcy is conveniently rich, she wants to marry him. Again, through the presence of Amanda, who Kaplan describes as having ‘the verbal tools to undermine Caroline’ (Kaplan, ‘Without Sense’, par. 20), another character reveals more about herself than the source text reveals. Kaplan also states that Amanda has the verbal tools to undermine Mrs Bennet and at first, the two do not get along. Mrs Bennet is shocked by Amanda’s appearance and finds her ‘indelicate, unkempt and not at all couth’. Amanda’s revealing, modern outfit attracts his attention away from Jane, and as a mother of five unmarried girls, Mrs Bennet naturally distrusts an intruder who ‘queers Jane’s pitch.’ However, when the plot progresses, Mrs Bennet draws strength from Amanda’s presence and modern wit and savvy. When Lady Catherine comes to Longbourn to scold the Bennet family, it is Mrs Bennet, after a little push from Amanda, who tells her off and even tells her that she wants to use Lady Catherine as a broom to clear the pig’s quarters. By changing the protagonist, *Lost in Austen* gives more layers to other characters. Despite Amanda’s best attempts to make sure that the plot goes as it should, ‘the characters she thinks she knows so well transmogrify into strangers with minds of their own’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par 5) and provide the audience with an interesting what if? take on Austen’s novel.

*Lost in Austen* is a commentary adaptation and, as the name suggests, it comments on the original text, but it also comments on how the novel has been received. Amanda is introduced as the ultimate Jane Austen fan. She confesses preferring to cuddle up on the couch with *Pride & Prejudice* rather than go out with friends like her roommate Piranha or cuddle up with her boyfriend. Amanda’s mother criticises her daughter for losing herself too
much in the novel. Amanda defends her reading of *Pride & Prejudice* by saying that she loves ‘the romance and the manners’ and that the novel has become part of her standards, to which her mother replies that she may have her standards but that they will not ‘help [her] on with [her] coat when [she is] seventy.’ Mrs Price here comments on having an overly idealised view on life, caused by reading novels like *Pride & Prejudice*. The fact that Mrs Price is proven wrong by Amanda, by Amanda travelling to the story of *Pride & Prejudice* and meeting and finally marrying Mr Darcy is a boost for Generation-Y daydreamers, yet it is also critical of the notion of losing oneself in a novel, as Mr Darcy is only to be found inside the novel. When Darcy finds his way into modern day London, he is completely lost, insults a black man on a bus and wishes for nothing more than to return to Regency England. He becomes, as Kaplan describes him, ‘an anachronism’, something she finds ironic, considering ‘how many contemporary women .... are attracted to the fictional character’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par. 15). The ultimate message seems to be that you cannot find a Mr Darcy in real life. Amanda’s boyfriend sums this up, in his own words, by saying that Mr Darcy is ‘just a ponce in some book’ when he is confronted with Darcy in modern day London. *Lost in Austen* also comments on another adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*. When Amanda contemplates her obsession for the novel and tries to downplay it, she mentions that she does not ‘pause the video on Colin Firth with clingy trousers.’ This joke refers to the 1996 television series, in which Colin Firth stars as Mr Darcy. One famous scene of the series is when Darcy, in an attempt to cool off, goes for a swim in a pond. He then walks back to Pemberly, dripping wet, when he walks into Elizabeth. This scene is one of the most talked about scenes of the series, as it showed a sexier, physical side of Mr Darcy. The impact of this scene is even more visible when Mr Darcy in *Lost in Austen* admits his love for Amanda. After his confession, which conveniently takes place beside a pond, Amanda asks if he could do something for her. The scene then cuts to Mr Darcy emerging out of the water, while Amanda looks at him with a smile, saying that she is having ‘a bit of a strange post-modern moment here.’ This reflects on the series, as *Lost in Austen* is a mix of an 18th century story and a 21st century story; Darcy encounters the Teletubbies, Amanda has to clean her teeth with twigs and sings ‘Downtown’ while at Netherfield. By spoofing a memorable scene from a previous adaptation, *Lost in Austen* shows how important adaptations are and how they shape the image of certain characters. It also shows how much of an impact the novel had and still has on its audience.

Mixing time travel with an Austen novel is bound to evoke criticism. Combining science fiction with a classic novel like *Pride & Prejudice* was something that was very much liked at *JaneAustensWorld.com*. The reviewer, who only goes by the name Vic, states
that *Lost in Austen* is ‘entertainment for audiences who are interested in time travel and
Austenesque period pieces’ and that ‘one must suspend all disbelief and accept the film’s fun
and frolicky intent in order to enjoy it’ (*JaneAustensWorld.com*). Vic goes on to claim that
some matters were ‘outlandishly wrong’ and especially focuses on the time travel logic of
*Lost in Austen*. Time travel should make sense in the novel, series or film within which it is
employed, and Vic has yet to see a logically explained time travel sequence, including
Amanda’s stepping through a magic door in her bathroom. Laurie Kaplan, however, states
that the Generation-Y is more than familiar with the concept of the magic door as it appears in
many famous texts, such as the *Harry Potter* series (1997) in the form of Platform 9 ¾ and
*The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950), in the form of the closet through which the Pevensie
children must travel in order to reach Narnia. Kaplan explains that ‘a character’s need can
make the door open upon a different world’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par. 13). Amanda’s door
appears after her boorish boyfriend, Michael, drunkenly – and in an unromantic way – asks her
to marry him, and reappears after her mother urges her to forget about *Pride & Prejudice* and
just marry Michael. In other words, it appears when she needs it, just as Harry needs the
magical world to escape from his family, and the Pevensie children need Narnia to find their
inner strength and escape from a war-ridden England. When looking at some reviews on other
sites, such as *IMDB.com* and *TheRepublicOfPemberly.com*, it seems that Jane Austen fans are
also somewhat critical of the series. When looking at the reviews on *IMDB.com*, most were
positive, but as much as there are positive reviews, there are also negative reviews. One
reviewer states that *Lost in Austen* was ‘a complete cannibalistic monstrosity that devoured
the whole soul and heart of the book.’ Another reviewer compares *Lost in Austen* to ‘drawing
a moustache on a great painting.’ As was to be expected, the series attracted mixed reviews.

Perhaps the most critical reviewer is Hugo Rifkind of *The Times*. He calls *Lost in
Austen* a ‘stupid, stupid programme’ (Rifkind, par.2) and calls for the creators to be shot in the
head. He also states that a viewer ‘has to be stupid enough not to have minded all that crap
about the secret door in the shower cubicle’ (Rifkind, par. 7) but, as mentioned above, the
average viewer of *Lost in Austen* will recognise the magical door for what it is. Kaplan also
refutes criticisms about certain anachronistic elements, stating that they abound ‘not because
of compositional carelessness by the writer Guy Andrews’ but rather, they ‘set up situations
that resonate with double meanings’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par. 2). As an example, Kaplan takes
the cross-cultural and cross-textual references, claiming that they enhance ‘the social
insecurities that arise when someone new to a particular environment and ignorant of the
cultural codes wants to fit in but does not know quite how to behave’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par. 2).

In fact, the cross-cultural and cross-text references justify the relevance of *Pride & Prejudice* for a modern heroine such as *Lost in Austen’s* Amanda Price. Her unease in the new world she has to inhabit as long as the magical door does not open is similar to the unease Elizabeth Bennet feels when she is at Netherfield when she inquires after Jane. Amanda’s modern clothes are as out of place as Elizabeth’s muddy clothes. When Amanda dines at Netherfield and refuses to eat oysters the situation is similar to Elizabeth preferring ‘a plain dish to a ragout’, which makes no sense to Mr Hurst. At Netherfield, Caroline Bingley bullies Amanda to perform, thinking that Amanda will either refuse or falter. What follows, Kaplan calls a ‘wonderfully bizarre anachronistic move...a scene that sets cultures clashing’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par. 10), when Amanda sings Petula Clark’s 1964 song “Downtown”. Despite the fact that Amanda singing this song sets cultures clashing, it also hits the mark, as the song that is all about loneliness, worries and troubles is sung by a girl who is clearly out of place and out of time. Kaplan is also aware that *Lost in Austen* might offend some hard-core Jane Austen fans, so-called Janeites. Claudia Johnson describes these fans as having ‘the self-consciously idolatrous enthusiasm for 'Jane' and every detail relative to her’ (Johnson, p.211). Kaplan, however, calls these fans ‘grumpy’ (Kaplan, ‘Janeites’, par 15), but she says that ‘if Janeites are too fussy about textual fidelity, however, they risk missing something they will actually end up appreciating more’ (Kaplan, ‘Without Sense’, par. 6) than other types of Jane Austen fans. In other words, Kaplan urges picky Jane Austen fans to set aside their objections to adaptations like *Lost in Austen*, as they might really enjoy it. Kaplan describes *Lost in Austen* as ‘a rich intertextual document that comments on such issues as love, kindness, trust, female friendship, feminine desire, and personal and social anxiety’ (Kaplan, ‘Without Sense’, par. 3) Amanda brings her own social and cultural baggage into the world of *Pride & Prejudice*, and this makes *Lost in Austen* an adaptation for the modern Austen fan.

*Lost in Austen* incorporates a lot of different elements. It is a commentary adaptation, as it has altered the source text of *Pride & Prejudice* by replacing the main character with a modern girl who questions certain elements of the novel. It also comments on the source text by adding new layers to characters, in order to give a new perspective on them. By replacing Elizabeth Bennet with Amanda Price, a fan of Austen and of the novel, *Lost in Austen* contains elements of fan fiction, a form of fiction that is becoming popular. As the reviews mentioned above reflect, people hate it or love it; *Lost in Austen* certainly has made an impact by mixing a well-loved novel with time travel, by having Mr Collins marry Jane and by
having Caroline Bingley coming out of the closet. What *Lost in Austen* is, is a reflection of ‘a longing to escape’, as Amanda Price calls it in the opening monologue, which is something many viewers will relate to. *Lost in Austen* allows them to experience what it would be like to do something they might want to do: to enter the world of *Pride & Prejudice*, with its ups and downs. It is obvious that it cannot happen and the series even points out that Darcy would not fit in today’s world, but it leaves the audience with a sense of possibility.
A chaperoned courtship, your father’s approval of your future husband and upholding the family name and honour are a thing of the past in Western Europe. We read about it in novels and we see it happening in period films or series, but we do not encounter it in our daily lives. Therefore, the rituals and behaviours in Jane Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice* are somewhat foreign to a modern day audience. In countries such as India, however, the rules of courtship have not changed that much over the centuries. Fathers still have a say in their daughters’ choice of husband and the whole community will keep a close eye on dating couples. It is therefore no wonder that Gurinder Chadha took the storyline of *Pride & Prejudice* and adapted it into a modern story, set in India, about Will Darcy and Lalita Bakshi. This film, released in 2004 belongs to Wagner’s third type of adaptation, the analogy. An analogy is ‘a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art’ (p.227), meaning that the filmmakers will take the source text as a foundation, but they will try and build something new on this base. It often happens that the source text will no longer be recognisable for the audience. People who have read Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice* will recognise that *Bride & Prejudice* is an adaptation, as the title contains an obvious hint, but those viewers who are not familiar with the source text will probably not recognise that the film is an adaptation of a 200-year-old novel. This is because Chadha has taken some of *Pride & Prejudice*’s universal elements and incorporated them into a modern day story. Because *Bride & Prejudice* takes place in such a different setting than the source text, it is interesting to see which elements of Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice* will work, as it will be these elements that have made the novel such a beloved novel all over the world, to this day.

The love against all odds theme of *Pride & Prejudice* is one of its universal and timeless elements. By no means is it Austen’s creation, as it surfaces in Shakespeare’s *Romeo & Juliet*, Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan & Isolde* and Ovid’s *Pyramus & Thisbe*. The two young lovers are hindered by either an external obstacle, such as disputing families, or an internal obstacle, like in *Pride & Prejudice*, as Elizabeth dislikes Mr Darcy so much so that she finds him to be a man she could not ‘be prevailed on to marry’ (p. 187). The same applies to Chadha’s *Bride & Prejudice*, as it is Lalita’s dislike of Will Darcy that keeps them apart. In *Pride & Prejudice*, it is Darcy’s pride and his indignation of Elizabeth’s family that hinder Elizabeth to fall for him. In *Bride & Prejudice*, Will Darcy is from America and does not quite fit in during his trip to India, where he meets Lalita. He cannot do the traditional dances and is generally uninterested in Indian culture. When Lalita meets Darcy’s mother, it becomes
clear that the Darcy family look down on Indian people. However, just like in the source text, Darcy and Lalita find that they are in love and that the obstacles that first stood in their way are insignificant. As Amanda Price says in *Lost in Austen*, many fans ‘love the love story’ of *Pride & Prejudice*, and John Wiltshire attributes the popularity of *Pride & Prejudice* to its ‘obvious appeal as a story about love’ (p. 99). The star-crossed lovers theme is a common one in Bollywood films. In the *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, romanticism and love are mentioned as ‘the most popular theme in Hindi film’ (Chatterjee, p. 268). The encyclopaedia also states that tales of star-crossed lovers are ‘nearly as popular’ (Chatterjee, p.268) as general love stories and that the main obstacles in Bollywood films are hostilities between families and cultural differences. In *Bride & Prejudice*, Darcy and Lalita overcome their obstacles when Darcy is revealed to be a kind man as he saves Lalita’s sister from an elopement with Wickham. He also overcomes his unease with Indian culture by joining in the traditional drumming at a celebration. This is an interesting spin on the star-crossed lovers theme, as nowadays in western society, matters such as class and birth are no longer of great consequence between two potential lovers. So in order to create an obstacle, authors have to search for something else. A difference between species is used a lot, as novels like the *Twilight* series, *The Vampire Diaries* and the *Sookie Stackhouse* series all revolve around a young woman falling in love with a vampire. Another device which is within the boundaries of reality is cultural differences; they still exist and cross-cultural relationships are often hindered by these differences. This struggle has been portrayed in recent television series, such as *Najib & Julia* in the Netherlands, which is about a regular Dutch girl who develops a relationship with a Muslim boy. *Bride & Prejudice* has taken the universal theme of star-crossed lovers who overcome their obstacles and placed it in a modern day context, appealing to readers of Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice* as well as viewers of Chadha’s *Bride & Prejudice*.

Another element of *Pride & Prejudice* that has stood the test of time is its humour. *Pride & Prejudice* is often hailed as Jane Austen’s funniest novel, due to Mr Bennet’s dry remarks, Mr Collins’ general absurdity and Mrs Bennet’s poor nerves. In *Bride & Prejudice*, the character of Mr Collins, dubbed Mr Kohli, is used as comic relief in the Bollywood film. Mr Kohli has come to the Bakshi household to choose a wife, just as Mr Collins goes to Longbourn to choose a wife, and both men do not make a good impression. Mr Kohli lives in America and values the luxuries of his life there very highly. He dotes on his (almost) million dollar house, much like Mr Collins dotes on Lady Catherine’s mantelpiece. His manners are affected, as he cannot even remember all the names of the Bakshi girls and he dresses like a ladies’ man from the 80’s. When the Bakshi girls sing a song about Mr Kohli, upholding the
Bollywood tradition of incorporating songs in the plot, they imagine what he would consider to be sexy. It involves a round bed, velvet sheets and an all too small thong sporting the American flag, which could be a possibility, seeing his overall fashion sense and inept flirting techniques. As John Lauber notes, a life without fools and comedy without fools seem ‘equal impossibilities’. *Bride & Prejudice* shows how universal certain examples of Jane Austen’s humour is, something other modern day adaptations of Austen’s work have done. The 1995 film *Clueless* is a modern adaptation of *Emma* and is listed as a comedy on IMDB.com. It shows how Cher (Emma Woodhouse) fails at being a good matchmaker and how she tries to fit Tai (Harriet Smith) in with the rest of her friends. Another adaptation, *Bridget Jones’ Diary*, also preserves Austen’s humour, as we see Bridget (Elizabeth Bennet), a thirty-something year old Londoner stumble through life, finally falling in love with Mark Darcy. The humour in films like *Bride & Prejudice*, *Clueless* and *Bridget Jones’ Diary*, and characters like Mr Collins seem to be universal and timeless and it is one of the elements that make *Pride & Prejudice* a timeless novel.

Journeys are also very important in *Bride & Prejudice*, as they are in Austen’s novel. In *Pride & Prejudice*, the journeys Elizabeth Bennet takes provide her with encounters with and knowledge about Mr Darcy, which ultimately help her on her way to become Mrs Darcy. Her journey to Hunsford to visit Charlotte and Mr Collins provides her with an intimate encounter with Darcy, including the first and disastrous marriage proposal, and it is her journey to the Peak District, which takes her to Pemberley, that makes her see the real Darcy. In *Bride & Prejudice*, Lalita undertakes similar trips. She first goes to Garba with her sister Jaya and Balraj, his sister and Darcy. Here, she encounters Johnny Wickham who misleads her about Darcy’s character. Later in the film, the whole Bakshi family travels to London and Los Angeles. It is in London that Lalita discovers the truth about Darcy’s character, and it is in Los Angeles that she discovers her true feelings for Darcy. The journeys Elizabeth Bennet and Lalita Bakshi undertake are not about the destinations, but about the journey itself, as they are really journeys to knowledge and self awareness. This reflects on modern day society as well, as young people tend to travel abroad either before going to university of before settling down and finding a job. This time off, sometimes called a gap-year, is often associated with a coming-of-age journey, resulting in the traveller’s emotional journey. The journey theme is yet another universal theme of *Pride & Prejudice*, as it fits easily into a Bollywood film and many members of a modern day audience will be able to relate to it.

The final element of *Pride & Prejudice* that can easily be translated into a Bollywood film is the sense of community. Unlike other adaptations, especially Joe Wright’s adaptation,
*Bride & Prejudice* kept the community that surrounds the main characters. In Austen’s novel, the extended family of the Bennet’s and the inhabitants of Meryton play a part in the central storyline, as the Gardiners, Elizabeth’s aunt and uncle, take Elizabeth on their vacation during which they encounter Darcy, and Sir Lucas, the unofficial mayor of Meryton, alerts Darcy to the growing connection between Jane and Mr Bingley, which causes him to take Bingley away and break them up. In Chadha’s *Bride & Prejudice*, the Bakshi girls first encounter Will Darcy and Balraj during a traditional Indian wedding celebration. Balraj immediately joins the dancing and integrates himself into the community, whereas Darcy does not join in. Darcy is clearly not comfortable in his surroundings and this causes him and Lalita to fight. Instead of refusing to dance with Lalita because of her looks, as Darcy does in *Pride & Prejudice*, he refuses to dance because he is unwilling to learn the steps. Lalita’s reaction to all this shows how important culture and community are, as throughout the film people use dance to express themselves. The opening scene also shows the importance of community, as the approaching wedding of a young couple is celebrated by a great number of people. The traditional dance that occurs is performed by all the young men and women, as the parents look on. The community in *Bride & Prejudice*, much like the community in *Pride & Prejudice*, plays an important role in the main plot.

Gurinder Chadha took a 200-year-old English plot, and incorporated it into a 2004 Bollywood film. Naturally, some changes had to be made, but some key elements were kept in. The theme of the star-crossed lovers, divided by their differences is still visible, Jane Austen’s humour is kept alive through Mr Kohli and the sense of community is integrated smoothly into the setting of modern day India. *Rolling Stone* critic Peter Travers describes the film as ‘lightweight’ and dubs the songs ‘deliciously silly’ and Derek Elley of *Variety Magazine* writes that ‘Austen nuts may rend their frocks, and Bollywood buffs may split their cholis’ but he thinks that *Bride & Prejudice* has an ‘immensely likable, almost goofily playful charm’. Travers claims that Jane Austen will not be spinning in her grave, but that ‘she’ll be dancing’ and by claiming this, Travers seems to imply that looking at Austen from a biographical point of view can legitimate an adaptation. Overall, the film shows how universal and timeless Jane Austen’s novel is. People can still relate to its themes, characters and humour and the general storyline can even be used for something as far removed from the source text as a Bollywood film.
As of March 2011, over fifty adaptations have been made of Jane Austen’s six completed novels. This number will more than likely continue to grow, as there are at this moment two more adaptations in the making. Adaptations of novels have generally produced popular films and novels have always been a popular source text for filmmakers. These films, which have adapted the written word to the visual medium, are more than just regular film entertainment: they are a critical interpretation of the source text, as they are the result of interpretation, reworking and visualisation of the filmmakers. Film adaptations are often called translations, as the filmmakers take material from one language, the written word, and translate it into the visual. When a translator has to translate from for instance English to Dutch, he or she is allowed some liberties if a direct translation will not work. In film adaptations, these alterations are what make them interesting to a critical audience. The alterations that are made tell us something about the interpretation of the filmmakers, something about what elements of the novel would not work in a film, and something about the time the film was made in. In my dissertation, I looked at an example each of three different types of film adaptations of Jane Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice*.

In chapter 1, I discussed Joe Wright’s 2005 adaptation, *Pride & Prejudice*. This adaptation falls in the category of the transposition adaptation, an adaptation that follows its source text closely. This adaptation does indeed stay fairly close to Jane Austen’s novel. Some elements have been cut, due to time restraint, but overall, it is faithful to the source text. One interesting change is that this adaptation focuses more on the love story, and focuses less on the characters outside of the love story. This is a result of the film makers desire to make a relatable adaptation, an adaptation of this time. The changes that were made reflected on how a modern day audience will relate to the storyline of *Pride & Prejudice*. In chapter 2, I discussed Dan Zeff’s miniseries *Lost in Austen*. This series falls under Wagner’s second adaptation category, the commentary. By altering an aspect of the original story, a commentary adaptation will comment on the source text. In *Lost in Austen*, a modern day twenty-something year old, Amanda Price, swaps places with Elizabeth Bennet, which causes the storyline to completely disintegrate. *Lost in Austen* combines some elements of fan fiction, resulting in a series that allows the audience to experience the possibility of participating in one’s favourite novel, as we follow Amanda closely and are her confidante, as she often looks
into the camera and makes the audience part of her story. By removing Elizabeth Bennet, the filmmakers shed a light on her importance in the story; without Elizabeth there, Jane marries Mr Collins, Charlotte travels to Africa and Bingley elopes with Lydia. Amanda’s presence causes Bingley to ignore Jane, reveals that Caroline Bingley is a lesbian and it is Amanda’s inquisitive nature that reveals that Mr Wickham is in fact a good guy. *Lost in Austen* comments on the importance of Elizabeth Bennet, multiple layers of other characters and the idolisation of Mr Darcy. In Chapter 3, I discussed Gurinder Chadha’s *Bride & Prejudice*. This Bollywood film falls under Wagner’s third and final adaptation category, the analogy. An analogy adaptation if often so far removed from the source text, that the source text is no longer recognisable in the film. Chadha has taken the main plot of Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice* and turned it into a twenty-first-century story involving the Bakshi’s and the Bakshi girls’ search for husbands. Elizabeth Bennet is now Lalita Bakshi, who first wants nothing to do with Will Darcy, but discovers that he is exactly right for her. *Bride & Prejudice* shows that Jane Austen has written a story that can be adapted to various cultures and places in time.

One novel, three very different film adaptations. Each film had Jane Austen’s novel as a starting point and each film adapted it in a different way. Whether it is a faithful adaptation or an adaptation loosely based on the source text, each adaptation of a novel will give an insight to the novel, as it represents the interpretation of the novel by the filmmakers. Each film is influenced by the time it is made in, and therefore each adaptation can be seen as a reflection of that time. As an adaptation leaves things out, adds elements, alters storylines or characters, according to how the filmmakers want to interpret the source text, an adaptation is a critical reading of that source text. Joe Wright’s film reflects on how Elizabeth’s position in life is not so different from modern day youngsters, *Lost in Austen* comments on the infatuation readers can have with Mr Darcy and *Bride & Prejudice* shows how certain elements of the novel are dated in some parts of the world but not in other parts.

As was to be expected, each adaptation received both praise and criticism, by fans and critics alike, and I have highlighted both the positive aspects of each adaptation and the negative aspects. However, this dissertation’s focus is the merit of each adaptation, as each adaptation brings something different and new to the table. Karen Gevirtz wrote an article in which she discusses the trend in Jane Austen adaptations, and she fears a shift in film response that reduces the interpretation of Austen’s work to ‘the inevitably limited product of a historically-bound being’ rather than a ‘result of brilliant literary endeavor’ (Gevirtz, par 1.). She argues that this is evident in the trend in Hollywood to involve the author, thereby placing emphasis on biographical influences. For instance, *Mansfield Park* (1999) also used Austen’s
letters as source material and in *Becoming Jane* (2007) it is implied that Austen based the plot of *Pride & Prejudice* on circumstances in her own life, rather than using her imagination. By doing so, Gevirtz claims that filmmakers remove Austen from ‘at least some of the cultural authority’ (Gevirtz, par. 25) other authors have who do not receive the same treatment. Gevirtz, however, also sees another trend, which involves modernising the source text. She lists *Clueless* (1995) and *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001) as examples. These adaptations, according to Gevirtz, are not as bound to Austen as other adaptations have, as they interpret the source text with an eye for its audience. Gevirtz is concerned about ‘what the trend indicates about approaches to Austen and her work, and what the consequences of those approaches might be’ (Gevirtz, par. 7). The three films discussed in this dissertation show that Austen’s work is open for interpretation. Joe Wright’s *Pride & Prejudice* is a more classical adaptation whereas the other two films are two completely different adaptations. I therefore believe that Jane Austen is not in danger of losing her cultural authority, as, in the time span of four years, three completely different adaptations have been made.

One of the goals I set for this dissertation was to validate the use of adaptations in literature classes. Joe Wright’s adaptation reflects on what young people today struggle with, and an adaptation from 2025 will most likely reflect on how the novel is interpreted in that time. Therefore, it is interesting to compare and contrast several adaptations of the same novel, as I have done, and see what they actually say about the source text, and adaptations could therefore be used as both primary as secondary material for essays written for literature classes. Primary, because adaptations are a works of art in their own right; one can watch an adaptation and still appreciate it without having read the source material. Secondary, because adaptations supplement the source material. By using the film adaptation theory described in this dissertation, students can look at a novel in a whole new way. A transposition adaptation shows what the filmmakers consider to be the core story, the story that needs to be told. A commentary adaptation shows what happens to the story if a certain element is highlighted or altered, and an analogy adaptation shows how the source material can be altered completely, while still retaining certain core elements. Film adaptations are also a reflection of how the source material is interpreted in the time it was made in. Literature students, or even history students, therefore have a world of interesting interpretations at hand when they include adaptations into their research.

Of course, there will be new adaptations of Jane Austen’s *Pride & Prejudice*. *Lost in Austen* is set to be remade as a Hollywood film and an adaptation of the novel *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith is also in the making. To expand this
dissertation, it would be interesting to look at either all adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice*, or, on a smaller scale, perhaps look at all adaptations within one of the three adaptation categories. Another interesting approach would be to discuss the next three adaptations and relate them back to the time they are made in. What this dissertation has also shown it that categorising adaptations is a tricky business, as the definitions are not as clear cut as they set out to be. *Lost in Austen* can also be labelled as an analogy adaptation, as it does deviate from the original story line, and *Bride & Prejudice* can be labelled as a commentary because the only real change is the time and place it is set in. Perhaps a new inventory of categories should be devised where a single adaptation could belong to several adaptation categories. Jane Austen’s work is still very popular, so adaptations will be made and studies about these adaptations will reflect on what these adaptations say about the interpretation of my favourite novel, *Pride & Prejudice*. 
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