Understanding the Art of Adaptation:
New Approaches to *Pride and Prejudice* on Film

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by

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Abstract

In the hope of understanding the art of adaptation, theorists analyze the elements of literature that are present in their film versions and theorize about the processes enacted upon literature in order to represent it on screen. However, such approaches have not provided an understanding of how a film version must relate to its source text in order to be considered an adaptation. This thesis proposes to elucidate this relation through an identification of what changes and what remains constant over several of the film versions of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* from the 1940s to the present.

Approaching the phenomenon in terms of similarities among adaptations despite the various treatments of their source text in a number of contexts does more than synthesize the separate and limited studies of *Pride and Prejudice* on film, but uncovers what is essential in the adaptation of literature.

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It is a truth universally acknowledged, that anyone writing about *Pride and Prejudice*, must imitate its famous first line.

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Introduction

Adaptation Studies: Prescriptions, Problems and *Pride and Prejudice*

As with most fields of scholarship, studying the adaptation of literature to the screen requires more than the analysis of films based on source texts, but also the evaluation of how these analyses are performed to ensure that the goals of the discipline are being met, which in this case means determining whether or not theorists are identifying the elements of a source text that are ‘essential’ to its representation on screen. With respect to adaptation, this term may imply that conclusions about the presence of an element in a source text, as well as in its film versions are agreeable to all readers and viewers of the works in question. Although a single interpretation may be shared among many, the individual nature of the reader/viewer should prevent one from taking for granted the adherence to a certain approach. For the purpose of demonstrating what it is that a film has to do in order to be considered an adaptation, a more acceptable use of the term ‘essential’ would refer to those elements of a source text that tend to reappear consistently in its adaptations because they lend themselves to representation on the cinematic screen. While the argument that what is ‘essential’ for one reader may be irrelevant for another rejects the idea that a work of literature contains an ‘essence’ that *cannot be omitted* during the adaptation process, over time those elements that seem especially cinematic acquire the status of ‘necessary’ for a film to meet audience expectations. In some way, therefore, those elements do become ‘essential’ for the spectator to *recognize* a film as an adaptation of a literary source. But, an evaluation of adaptation studies finds that they have failed to identify these ‘necessary elements’ in filming literature because theorists disagree as to the kinds of knowledge a study should

offer and the means that should attain it. For example, insights are either based on case studies, neglecting the phenomenon itself, or of a more general nature that are not necessarily applicable to individual cases. Furthermore, in analyzing specific adaptations or speculating about the practice, theorists choose between two common approaches, each limited in one respect: when used methodically, a textual approach can make it easier to attain formal knowledge about what happens to the text in the process, but it ignores the conditions of the transformation; alternatively, a contextual approach attends to the circumstances of adaptation, but this knowledge is meaningless unless it is used to explain the treatment of the text. These disagreements must be resolved in order to identify what is essential in adaptation, which is what this thesis proposes to do. This task that is made more feasible by deciding what kind of knowledge and approach contribute most to an understanding of filming a specific work of literature and then expanding these insights to refer to filming the form of representation in question. As for which source text and its film versions should function as the platform for resolving issues in adaptation studies, one must look to how the discipline considers its own subject: *The Cambridge Companion to Literature On Screen* and *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* both feature images from various screen versions of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) on their cover, which speaks to its status as the embodiment of what it means to translate literature into visual terms. Austen's novel has earned its status because at present, it has inspired nineteen screen versions internationally* that exemplify the various ways a director can approach a source text.¹ A survey of the studies of *Pride and Prejudice* on film finds that although there has been

* Refers to screen versions with release dates before 2009. For a list, see the filmography. It should be noted that three more feature films inspired by the novel are in the works: *Jane Austen Handheld* (2010), *Pride and Predator* (2010) and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2011).

much work done on its assorted appearances on screen, the conflicts between specific and general conclusions and textual and contextual approaches have prevented them from learning what is involved in adapting this novel.

The attempt to understand the art of adaptation is made difficult by the question of what analyses of films based on source texts are supposed to accomplish – specific conclusions or a universal theory? The discipline has been dominated by case studies meant to reach conclusions about the transformation of a specific source text for the screen, which means that so too has the study of *Pride and Prejudice* on film. For example, Liora Brosh compares the representation of women in Austen's novel and Robert Z. Leonard's 1940 film version, finding that in the novel economic motives are integral to their interest in men, whereas money and marriage are separated more in the film,² an argument she is able to make because she performs a close reading of both the source text and a single adaptation. Since it is clear that concentrating on a single adaptation results in in-depth knowledge, it follows from the diversity within reading a film that each case study produces a unique conclusion, just as the diversity within filmmaking practices ensures that studies about each re-working of *Pride and Prejudice* are unique; in this way, specific conclusions contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon in that critics have at their disposal diverse knowledge about the different types of adaptation.

While it is beneficial to look closely at cinematic re-workings of literature, the phenomenon cannot be understood through a collection of specific conclusions alone because critics need to conceive of adaptation outside a series of particular source texts and films in order to define it, which leads to attempts to formulate more universal

theories. Robert B. Ray is critical of the proliferation of specific conclusions: he argues that the domination of case studies stunts the development of “cumulative knowledge” about adaptation because the insights such analyses offer are isolated.³ One solution to the stunted development of collective learning about adaptation is for theorists to generalize insights about specific case studies in some way so that other theorists can find similarities between the analysis at hand and previous work and use those conclusions to support their own arguments. In this way, the concept of adaptation is broadened so that it pertains to not only a single source text and film version, but to multiple film versions of a single source text or the film versions of multiple source texts. Although it would be beneficial for studies of single instances of *Pride and Prejudice* on film to consider the number of adaptations that have been produced, they rarely do. For example, in analyzing Gurinder Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), Cheryl Wilson discusses how the Bollywood form is qualified to adapt Austen’s comedy of manners,⁴ so it would be appropriate to fit these insights into a general discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* on film, but Wilson does not attempt at any time to present her insights as useful for any broader purpose, which means that this study does not afford other theorists the opportunity to apply its findings elsewhere. Even when theorists bother to generalize their findings, they do so in a few sentences at the end of the study for the purposes of merely concluding the paper, rather than explicating these generalizations out of interest for establishing the basis for ‘cumulative knowledge.’ For example, in the final paragraph of “The Passion Translated: Literary and Cinematic Rhetoric in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005),” an analysis of Joe Wright’s adaptation of the novel, Roberta Grandi argues that:

The Austenian passion is translated and transformed into tropes in a delicate balance between repression and desire. The techniques analyzed here are only a

few significant examples of a transfigurative attitude that embodies different but parallel exigencies both in the novels and in the films ... in an age when naked bodies are overexposed and sex is a common topic of discussion, costume films rediscover a taste for visual repression.⁵

The conclusion presents itself as a generalization of the insights made throughout the paper that can be used in other studies of the adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as studies of film versions of other works by Austen and even more generally, literature turned into costume dramas. However, because these ideas are left largely undeveloped, making these suggestions at the end of the paper does not merit a true generalization. Unfortunately, it is a trend within adaptation studies to use the conclusion to speak more broadly about adaptation, as Christine Geraghty points out.⁶ While Geraghty recognizes the temptation to try to move to a more general subject after a detailed discussion, as is characteristic of adaptation theory, she questions the usefulness of such a strategy with reference to the generalization made at the end of Ellen Belton's essay on Leonard's film and the BBC's 1995 television miniseries: Belton closes by saying "a successful adaptation enters into a conversation with the original that animates the viewer's pleasure in both works," the goal being to discover "new ways of understanding the source and appropriating those meanings for the adaptor's own ends," but Geraghty finds this generalization to be incompatible with the analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* that precedes it.⁷ When there is difficulty viewing an analysis in terms of its broad conclusions, it is an indication that the theorist did not take the time to ensure the accuracy of her speculations and such work does not benefit knowledge about the adaptation process as it otherwise would.

Although some deem a universal theory of adaptation necessary, others question whether it is possible. In his own multi-text analysis of the adaptation of European

dramas to the nineteenth-century Quebec stage, Glen Nichols asserts: “no comprehensive, universally applicable theory of adaptation can be reasonably aspired to yet.”⁸ The reason why some call for generalizations about the phenomenon – the diversity of adaptation – is the very reason why it may not be found. So many forms of representation can be reworked for the screen – novels, short stories, plays, graphic novels, non-fiction works – and the nature of these source texts requires specialized processes of adaptation. For example, the format of the novel is longer than the short story, play and graphic novel; of these shorter works, the short story is meant to be read, the play is meant to be performed and the graphic novel is meant to be read as well as seen; of the non-fiction works, the style of writing non-fiction necessarily differs from other forms of representation because these works are meant to correspond to the knowledge of the readers. The endeavor to translate various forms of representation to the screen will require different efforts on the part of the filmmakers, which limits the possibility that a single theory can explain the process in general. Even if a universal theory of adaptation cannot be aspired to yet, critics can at least generalize about the cinematic reworking of different forms of representation, which furthers an understanding of the art of adaptation.

If general knowledge of adaptation is possible, it can be attained through multi-text analyses of adaptations with a common feature, like author, genre or filmmaker for the purpose of coming to a conclusion about those adaptations. The number of studies that take as their subject several of the film versions of *Pride and Prejudice* speaks to the perceived value of the multi-text analysis in theorizing about the process: Sue Parrill’s chapter on *Pride and Prejudice* from her work *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A*

Critical Study of the Adaptations discusses Leonard's 1940 film and the two BBC miniseries from 1980 and 1995, as does Rachel M. Brownstein's "Out of the Drawing Room, Onto the Lawn"; the 1940 and 1995 adaptations are the subject of Belton's "Re-imagining Jane Austen: the 1940 and 1995 Film Versions of *Pride and Prejudice*" and of H. Elisabeth Ellington's "'The Correct Taste in Landscape:' Pemberley as Fetish and Commodity"; in "The Nineteenth-century Novel on Film: Jane Austen," Linda V. Troost discusses the 1940, 1995 and Wright's film, as does Geraghty in "Narrative and Characterization in Classic Adaptations: *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and *Pride and Prejudice*" which also adds to that list *Bride and Prejudice*. However, in order to come to a conclusion that applies to each film and can contribute to a general knowledge about the phenomenon, it is not enough to talk about several films; the conclusions about each must be integrated in some fashion. Most studies of *Pride and Prejudice* on film isolate the discussion of each re-working so that they are really a combination of separate analyses with a sentence or two at the end relating the discussions together, the result being a conclusion that does not contribute to general knowledge about adapting source texts. The failure to integrate discussions is likely due to the difficulty of the task: unless a theorist wants to discuss all that the novel has to offer as a source text and how each film deals with these elements, a strategy in which gaps are inevitable since every adaptation is different, a choice must be made as to what element will be discussed or what films will be discussed. As a result, theorists tend to examine whatever element of the novel is most relevant to each version, even if it is not relevant to any others.

The problem of isolating films in multi-text analyses of adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* is evident in Brian McFarlane's "Something Old, Something New: '*Pride and*

Prejudice 'On Screen' which mentions many of the adaptations: 1940, the BBC productions of 1980 and 1995, *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* (2003), *Bride and Prejudice* and Wright's re-working. The purpose of the analysis is to see how adaptors of the novel have "gone about their work," but McFarlene does not clarify what this 'work' consists of on an objective level.⁹ He begins by asserting that "important things" go on in this "light, and bright and sparkling" novel, which implies that the work of the adaptors is to bring to the screen these serious issues (like marriage and money) in a manner that retains the original's sense of fun.¹⁰ However, the relationship between the 'important things' and the 'light, and bright and sparkling' nature of work is absent from the discussion of the actual adaptations. Instead, there are several different ideas at the forefront, each of which are specific to a single film: according to McFarlene, those adapting the novel for the 1940 film went about their work by broadening the comedy;¹¹ he calls the authentic reconstruction of the period the task for makers of the 1995 version;¹² regarding the work of producing *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy*, he describes it as an injection of Mormon beliefs into the story and setting;¹³ as for *Bride and Prejudice*, he argues filmmakers were so concerned with creating parallels between Regency England and twenty-first century India that an infusion of noise, color and song was left to take the place of Austen's wit¹⁴ and finally, it is his opinion that those adapting the novel for the 2005 version retained the connections between marriage and money in order to lend the film a sense of realism.¹⁵ The isolation of McFarlene's multi-text analysis is emphasized by the fact that most of these individual ideas are left undeveloped. The argument that the makers of the 1940 version adapt the novel by broadening the comedy is expressed in a single sentence about turning Mrs. Bennet, Mr.

Collins and Lady Catherine into “mere caricatures.”¹⁶ Similarly, the assertion that the authentic reconstruction of the period is the task for the makers of the 1995 version consists of that statement alone, as does the reasoning about injecting Mormon beliefs into the story and setting for *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy*.¹⁷ At least the assertion that those involved with *Bride and Prejudice* went about their work by creating parallels between England’s past and India’s present is somewhat explained with a list of the changes made to suit the new setting, like turning Wickham into a backpacker, Darcy into an American businessman and his “ancestral home” into a hotel in Los Angeles.¹⁸ However, it is only when discussing Wright’s 2005 film that McFarlane bothers to fully explain his argument, which he does by relating facts about the novel to the adaptation: for example, he cites Mrs. Bennet’s insistence in the novel that Jane must take a horse to Netherfield as an announcement that their setting is a working farm, a description that the film builds upon realistically with its set design and inclusion of animals.¹⁹ Nevertheless, making several unqualified statements regarding how adaptors go about their work and only discussing one at length isolates the films in what is supposed to be a multi-text analysis and as such, it does not produce the broad ideas about adapting *Pride and Prejudice* that a proper multi-text analysis would.

The question of how the analysis of cinematic re-workings of represented material is supposed to establish knowledge – through textual or contextual approaches – further complicates the study of the art of adaptation. Textual approaches evaluate adaptations based on the formal properties of the source text and its film version. For example, George Lellis and Philip Bolton perform a textual analysis of Leonard’s version that describes how the film treats the style of writing, social mores, Darcy’s pride, Elizabeth’s

point of view, including her prejudice, the attraction between these two characters and the wit, concluding that “the movie is simply a good adaptation, and neither a great rendering of a novel nor a great film.”²⁰ The textual approach is beneficial because in dealing with information within the written and filmic texts, it clarifies what actually happens to the text when adapting it to the screen, thus facilitating a comprehension of *Pride and Prejudice* on film.

An issue that arises concerning the textual approach is the subjectivity of its conclusions, a problem that theorists attempt to rectify with the formulation of methods that permit them to describe the formal properties of the literary and cinematic texts in equal detail. When analyzing an adaptation, critics provide their own interpretation of a source text and film; they are not bound to describe certain elements, nor are they bound to describe any element at a prescribed length. For example, Lellis and Bolton merely provide their own interpretation of *Pride and Prejudice* and the 1940 film version, choosing for themselves what is relevant and how relevant it is because at the time of its writing, there were no formal rules of textual analysis that all theorists could follow when discussing adaptation. Since then, McFarlane was inspired by the reliance on “individual, impressionistic comparisons” of a source text with its film version to formulate a method based on narrative function and enunciation that he implements in *Novels Into Film*.²¹ Such a method forces theorists to identify the elements of the source text that are not limited to a signifying system and describe their presence in the film, a daunting task in that these elements are quite specific: cardinal functions are actions and events that have consequences and anticipate the contemplation of alternatives; catalysers are actions and events that support the important movements within the narrative; integrational functions

offer information, indices proper offer abstract information and informants offer ready-made information;²² character functions constitute the role that the character plays within the narrative; and mythic and/or psychological patterns constitute the qualities of human experiences within the narrative.²³ Theorists are also required to identify elements of the source text that are limited to a signifying system and provide a detailed explanation of their adaptation proper to the film. For example, the enunciative elements that shape the narrative, like the point of view, can be adapted to film in a variety of ways: a first person narrative is portrayed with a subjective camera and voice-over and omniscient narrative is portrayed with the camera, soundtrack and mise en scene.²⁴ Providing critics with a list of elements and a description of how they appear in films means they will be able to produce similar analyses of the same adaptation in terms of form. While it is still individual readership that perceives the transfer and adaptation proper, a clear definition of the elements that are subjected to these processes ensures that critics will discuss fully the same elements, even if they disagree as to whether these elements are present or how they are present in the film. However, recent studies of *Pride and Prejudice* on film show no evidence of being governed by a somewhat more objective method than the theorist arbitrarily choosing what to discuss. One need not look at its adaptations in terms of cardinal functions or enunciative elements as McFarlane does, but making logical decisions as to what elements of the novel are pertinent and structuring analyses of the films accordingly could begin a trend that will foster a conception of what it means to adapt *Pride and Prejudice*.

Despite the necessity of the textual approach, it does not offer a comprehensive understanding of adaptation because there are other factors involved in the process

besides what happens to the source text. In his introduction to *Literature and Film: Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, Robert Stam discusses the limits of formalism, asserting that a source text is a product of a time and space that inevitably shapes the text, just as a film reflects the time and space of its production.²⁵ A contextual approach takes into consideration these other factors, including the conditions of society in which a source text was written and the film produced, as well as the movements occurring within literature and film at the time. For example, Harry Haun considers Wright's 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice* in terms of the director's own words about the circumstances of the film's production. One such condition is the slew of period films he sought out during the development of his project: Wright names John Schlesinger's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1967) as a particular influence for his own film, which offers theorists a context in which to analyze his re-working of *Pride and Prejudice* that may shed new light onto the processes involved in adapting it.²⁶

Just as the exclusively textual approach lacks information about the context of adaptation, the contextual approach lacks an account of the actual process and limiting oneself to this method does not contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the art of filming literature. An analysis that provides information about the circumstances of the source text and its film version is merely an exposition, not an argument. In the example of Haun's piece, the majority of it is direct quotation from Wright himself, with little effort on the part of Haun to indicate how this information can be used. While contextual analysis offers knowledge about adaptation, in order for that knowledge to be constructive, it must contain an argument; preferably, the information about the source and its film version would be used to explain why a text was adapted and why it was

adapted in a certain manner. If the contexts of a literary work and its screen counterpart are used to elucidate the process of re-working it to the screen, the contextual approach advances the study of adaptation.

While the ideal approach is a combination of textual and contextual, the pervasiveness of the notion of fidelity that values film versions in terms of their reproduction of the source text prevents critics from using them in conjunction. In attributing value to adaptations according to its similarity to its literary basis, fidelity critics ignore the value in adaptations that do not attempt to reproduce the source text. For example, Rebecca Dickson believes that there is danger in shifting elements from Austen's novel in the adaptation process because the re-working may lose a vital portion of the novel's meaning, solidifying her status as a fidelity critic with the assertion that:

The BBC/A&E's recent production of *Pride and Prejudice* sticks to Austen's plot like glue, which perhaps explains why in my opinion it is the best of all the recent Austen adaptations.²⁷

An adaptation is faithful to its source text to varying degrees and the differences between a film version and the original literary work speak to the adaptation's purpose in engaging with the viewer. As McFarlene points out, "there are many kinds of relations which may exist between film and literature, and fidelity is only one – and rarely the most exciting."²⁸ Since knowledge about the purpose of adaptations contributes to the understanding of the practice, valuing only those adaptations that are faithful to their sources interferes with the study of the phenomenon. In the hope of demoting faithful re-workings from their privileged position and rectifying the issues that fidelity causes for the study of adaptation, theorists call attention to the different kinds of relationships between literature and film. For example, Geoffrey Wagner argues that film versions may

be “transpositions” that call for the novel to be portrayed on screen “with a minimum of apparent interference,”²⁹ “commentaries” in which the filmmaker alters the original text according to his intention that differs from the intention the author has for his source text³⁰ or “analogies,” which indicate the filmmaker seeks to create an entirely new work out of a source text.³¹ Other categorizations of adaptations are comparable, for Dudley Andrew conceives of adaptation as a matter of “borrowing,” “intersecting” and “transforming” the source text: in borrowing, the artist employs the idea of a source text, while intersecting entails the confrontation of literature with film that leaves the source text unassimilated in its adaptation and transformation refers to the rendering of what is essential of a source text in cinematic terms.³² Once again, a similar categorization is found in *The English Novel and the Movies* in which Michael Klein and Gillian Parker put forth their view that an adaptation may maintain fidelity to the “main thrust” of the narrative, share the structure of the work, yet reinterpret and deconstruct its details or use the source text as a platform for an original creation.³³

This categorizing approach is seen in studies of *Pride and Prejudice* on film with Troost’s classification of several of the adaptations as heritage, Hollywood, fusion or imitation films.³⁴ First, heritage or (so-called) ‘true to the novel’ adaptations appear often in the television miniseries format because a production that has several episodes of sixty minutes or more to tell its story allows for a greater faithfulness to the plot, characterization and setting of the novel; she identifies two of the three television miniseries of Austen’s novel produced in 1952 and 1980 as falling under this category.³⁵ Adaptation theorists are obligated to acknowledge these kinds of adaptations, but the purpose of creating a system of categorization is to deflate the importance of fidelity, so

Troost is sure to mention that there are disadvantages to recreating the historical period of the novel, like the lack of “sparkle” in the film and the valuing of authentic “objects and possessions” over “characters and ideas,” which distracts audiences from the story.³⁶ On the other end of the spectrum, Hollywood style adaptations take liberties with the plot, characterization and setting of the novel; for example, in Leonard’s 1940 film, the action is made to take place later than Austen dictates and the English setting, which is nondescript in the novel, is romanticized.³⁷ Troost cites the desire to create a political fantasy as the reason for taking such liberties, meaning that England and its inhabitants were represented in such a way so that American audiences would perceive them as a worthy alliance.³⁸ The regard for profit and disregard for faithfulness that drives Hollywood adaptations and the desire to tell a good story through compelling images guiding heritage adaptations come together in fusion adaptations of the nineties, like the 1995 BBC adaptation which takes much from the novel’s plot, but adds sexy costuming, quick cuts and attractive location shots³⁹ and Wright’s film which appeals to a teenage theatre audience with its contemporary look and naughty one-liners, but makes use of accomplished actors for an older audience who likely will watch the film on DVD.⁴⁰ The final category of adaptation is the imitation, which uses a novel’s plot and character, but updates the setting to focus on modern-day highly structured society, such as the use of a contemporary Indian setting and cultural themes for *Bride and Prejudice* and a contemporary Mormon setting and religious themes for *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter-day Comedy*.⁴¹ Categorizing adaptations in terms of their relationships to their source acknowledges that films may attempt to reproduce the texts they are based on, but makes

sure that the notion of fidelity does not define the phenomenon and as such, it adds to knowledge about adaptation.

Rather than acknowledging films that do something other than try to reproduce the source text, some theorists posit that fidelity is an impossible ideal in order to deflate its importance in the study of adaptation. Stam rejects the assumption that there is a “transferable core” that filmmakers can extract from a source text and place within a film in arguing that: “a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can trigger a plethora of possible readings.”⁴² His statement speaks to the subjective nature of readers and viewers: every reading of a text or viewing of a film is a subjective experience, meaning that other readers and viewers may not interpret either form of representation in the same way. The consequence of subjectivity is that those adapting the text may not perceive the qualities of the source text that some readers do and therefore do not include them in the adaptation, or perhaps they perceive a quality that the reader does not and leaves the viewer wondering why the element is present in the adaptation; in either situation, the film cannot be faithful to its source because the filmmaker cannot cater to the number of possible readings of the text.

The impossibility of fidelity is a theme within Belton’s analysis of the 1940 and 1995 versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, a paper that means to discuss the ways in which an adaptation reflects its own particular historical moment, more specifically, how the cultural contexts of these re-workings of Austen’s novel affects their production.⁴³ Belton asserts that fidelity is impossible because the differences in the circumstances of adaptation: the conditions in which Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* are obviously different from the conditions in which a filmmaker means to make a film version of it, so

that “even the most putatively faithful adaptation involves a reinterpretation of the original.”⁴⁴ The fact that theorists call attention to film versions besides those that try to reproduce the text and even question the reality of a film that is completely true to its source demands that an explanation be given for how a film can be called an adaptation at all if it does not need to resemble the material it is based on; in other words, the discipline demands that theorists discover what is essential in projecting a work of literature on screen.

There is one final issue preventing the combination of textual and contextual approaches that has gone unrealized by theorists of adaptation, but becomes noticeable when reading literature about *Pride and Prejudice* on film: when theorists use context to explain textual issues of the adaptation, its ability to be helpful is limited by the number of times it has been used, for many studies repeat the same context, a strategy that fails to produce new information about the adaptation. There is one context that appears frequently in studies of Leonard’s 1940 film: the relations between Britain and the United States during the war climate of the time. Troost uses it to explain the choice of costume, sets and score, as well as the addition of the garden party scene, the diffusion of class problems through the absence of symbols of wealth and changes in character, referring to these decisions as the result of an effort to characterize England as a formidable American ally.⁴⁵ Similarly, Belton attributes several changes to the desire to make England appealing to Americans, including the replacement of a ball with a garden party, the transformation of Lady Catherine into a matchmaker for Elizabeth and Darcy, modifications to the dialogue, an absence of exterior scenes, framing the family and ending the film with familial happiness instead of dysfunction, as in the novel.⁴⁶

Brownstein echoes this essential argument with her acknowledgement that “part of the context that shaped this film was the producer’s aim to get the United States into the war as England’s ally,” noting once again the decision to change Lady Catherine’s mind about Elizabeth, but also the transformation of Elizabeth from attractive and proud to beautiful and humble so that she is considered as a daughter of Old England, the daughter of America’s ancestor.⁴⁷ In light of these examples, it is interesting to consider Geraghty’s “Narrative and Characterization in Classic Adaptations: *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and *Pride and Prejudice*” which views the relationship between England and America as only one way contemporary concerns function in film adaptations of classic literature; the film also reacts to male anxieties by emphasizing femininity, endorsing its pleasures and seeking to find a way out of the problems excessive femininity can lead to.⁴⁸ Too often is the same context repeated by theorists and even used to explain the same changes; it is more beneficial to an understanding of adaptation to seek new justifications for modifications or use these contexts to justify modifications that remain unexplored.

Theorists study adaptation to understand the art of revising a form of representation for the cinema, but there are debates among them concerning the kind of knowledge that would allow such an understanding and the approach that discerns it, debates that are evident in researching studies of *Pride and Prejudice* on film. As a consequence, the knowledge about what is essential in adapting *Pride and Prejudice* is limited. In debates about knowledge, the specific conclusions of individual case studies are pitted against the calls for a universal theory: specific conclusions are useful to the discipline because they contribute information about the various kinds of film versions,

but in order to understand the art, theorists need to conceive of the process without reference to a source text and its film version, which they attempt to do by assimilating these findings into a general theoretical account of adaptation; although the possibility of formulating an applicable universal theory of adaptation is questionable, it is possible to apply insights from case studies to other analyses for generalizations about adaptations of each form of representation. In debating about how that knowledge should be discerned, the textual approach is pitted against the contextual approach: textual analysis clarifies the technical processes involved in adapting and although its subjectivity is an issue, it is suitable to the formulation of methodologies which ensures that when used, critics address the same elements, explaining them fully; furthermore, the textual approach ignores the other factors involved in the process of adaptation having to do with the circumstances of the source text and its film version, factors that the contextual approach attends to, yet that alone does not offer a complete understanding of adaptation for it is most useful in explaining the decisions involved in the process. A combination of textual and contextual analysis would seem to resolve the debate as to how best to contribute to the study of adaptation, but the issue of fidelity prevents such a combination from taking place because the value it attributes to faithful adaptations distracts from the meaningfulness of adaptations that deviate from their source texts, an effect that theorists attempt to overcome through a categorization of adaptation and a refutation of the possibility of fidelity. Studying the adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* through a textual and contextual analysis of a few of its many appearances on screen will not only resolves the problems inherent in adaptation studies to reach a conclusion about what is essential in filming this work of literature, but it should lay the foundation for learning what is

essential in the adaptation of its form of representation – the novel. Since the discipline is in need of such knowledge, this thesis sets out to discover what a film is required to do to *Pride and Prejudice* in order for it to be considered an adaptation of Jane Austen's work and in so doing, will put forth a theory detailing the nature of the novel-film relationship. As for the specific versions to be analyzed, there are three feature films that would realize this objective – Robert Z. Leonard's screwball comedy, Gurinder Chadha's Bollywood-infused *Bride and Prejudice* and Joe Wright's realist-romantic production. Those versions of the novel that were made for television are a necessary omission because the practice of television adaptation involves variables that cinematic adaptation does not which have to do with its "medium-specific technologies, institutions, and ideals."⁴⁹ More specifically, besides the fact that the serial form of television means that re-workings in this form of representation could be "much longer, enabling fuller, more slowly and complexly developed adaptations," early efforts to adapt literature to the small screen were affected by "the combination of relatively still cameras, infrequent changes of mise en scene and a lack of post-production editing" in that the result was a "staid and rigid," but "detailed" aesthetic, "stagy" performances and a "wordy" approach to the material – all of which became conventions even after these technical conditions improved.⁵⁰ Furthermore, television adaptations are informed by ideas about the social purpose of the medium and the institutions that initiate the process in that the re-workings must meet the objectives of informing and educating, as well as entertaining.⁵¹ Of the remaining six incarnations of the novel, these three film versions advertise themselves as such, which means they are more capable of answering the question at hand than films that adapt other works that reference the novel in some form. Two such films are Sharon

Maguire's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), an adaptation of Helen Fielding's novel of the same name which references the character of Mr. Darcy and the theme of first impressions and the film version of Karen Jay Fowler's *Jane Austen Book Club* directed by Robin Swicord (2007) in which the lives of the characters parallel those of each of Austen's novels, including *Pride and Prejudice* whose character Mrs. Gardiner is recognized in Bernadette, the oldest member of the book club.⁵² *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* is the only other theatrical work that credits Austen as a writer; while it refers to itself as an adaptation of the novel, the film did not receive a wide release⁵³ and subsequently, is not studied as an adaptation by scholars of Austen on film.

With the films for this analysis decided upon, one must first consider those aspects of *Pride and Prejudice* filmmakers are evidently not required to include in their screen versions because they are modified in every instance. The first chapter of this thesis will compare the novel with three of its adaptations in order to make the discrepancies clear and an examination of the circumstances of filmmaking offers reasons for these discrepancies. Next, one must consider those aspects that filmmakers feel compelled to include in their screen versions, evident from their continual presence; this process will be carried out in the second chapter with a textual comparison of these elements guided by contextual descriptions meant to qualify the filmmakers' decisions. With these tasks carried out, it becomes clear that these detailed explanations for decisions in adaptation all come down to the same basic explanation – the cinematic potential of elements of the novel – thus, the third chapter will deal with the ways in which these immediate contexts are related to the attempt to appeal to audiences on a sensory level. The thesis will conclude that the task of the filmmaker who endeavours to

adapt a novel is to find ways to engage the audience with images and sounds that capture those 'necessary elements' of the source text, those 'essentials' that lend themselves to audiovisual representation within the larger cinematic context that governs audience expectations.

Notes

¹ Linda V. Troost, "The Nineteenth-century Novel on Film: Jane Austen," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 75-76.

² Liora Brosh, "Consuming Women: The Representation of Women in the 1940 Adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 17, no. 2 (June 2000): 159.

³ Robert B. Ray, "The Field of 'Literature' and 'Film'," in *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 44.

⁴ Cheryl Wilson, "*Bride and Prejudice*: A Bollywood Comedy of Manners," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 34 no. 4 (2006): 323.

⁵ Roberta Grandi, "The Passion Translated: Literary and Cinematic Rhetoric in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 36 no.1 (2008): 50.

⁶ Christine Geraghty, "Narrative and Characterization in Classic Adaptations: *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and *Pride and Prejudice*," in *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 43.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Glen Nichols, "Interpreting Multi-Text Analysis: Is A Theory of Adaptation Possible?" *Theatre Research in Canada* 12 no. 1-2 (1992): 166.

⁹ Brian McFarlane, "Something Old, Something New: *Pride and Prejudice* on Screen," *Screen Education* 40 (2005): 8.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹² Ibid., 10.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁰ George Lellis and Philip Bolton, "Pride but No Prejudice," in *The English Novel and the Movies*, ed. Michael Klein and Gillian Parker (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1981), 51.

²¹ Brian McFarlane, *Novels to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 95.

²² Ibid., 13-15.

²³ Ibid., 24-26.

²⁴ Ibid., 15-18.

²⁵ Robert Stam, introduction to *Literature and Film: Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 41.

²⁶ Harry Haun, "Austentatious Debut," *Film Journal International* 108 no.11 (2005): 22.

²⁷ Rebecca Dickson, "Misrepresenting Jane Austen's Ladies: Revising Texts (and History) to Sell Films," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda V. Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 45.

²⁸ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 11.

²⁹ Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), 22.

³⁰ Ibid., 224.

³¹ Ibid., 226.

³² Dudley Andrew, "Adaptation" in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 422-423.

³³ Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, introduction to *The English Novel and the Movies*, 9-10.

³⁴ Troost, 75.

³⁵ Ibid., 78.

³⁶ Ibid., 80.

³⁷ Ibid., 76.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 86-87.

⁴¹ Ibid., 76.

⁴² Stam, 15.

⁴³ Ellen Belton, "Reimagining Jane Austen: the 1940 and 1995 films versions of *Pride and Prejudice*," in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina Macdonald and Andrew F. Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 175.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Troost, 76-77.

⁴⁶ Belton, 178-185.

⁴⁷ Rachel M. Brownstein, "Out of the Drawing Room, Onto the Lawn," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, 15.

⁴⁸ Geraghty, 35.

⁴⁹ Sarah Cardwell, "Literature on the Small Screen: Television Adaptations," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 183.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 185-186.

⁵¹ Ibid., 187-188.

⁵² Robin Swicord, "The Book Club Deconstructed," Special Features, *The Jane Austen Bookclub*, DVD directed by Robin Swicord (2007; U.S: Sony Pictures Classics, 2008)

⁵³ McFarlene, 10.

Chapter One

***Pride and Prejudice* on Film without Rebellion, Satire and Social Standing**

What is essential in filming a novel cannot be determined from an enumeration of the elements that these works take from their source text because without a sense of the adaptation process in its entirety, any conclusion that is made merely states that there are similarities between screen versions and the novel upon which they are based. However, when arguments about how the various adaptations resemble their literary source are accompanied by a consideration of the ways in which it is changed for portrayal on screen, the theorist is able to conclude that in spite of the inevitable omissions, additions and modifications of material that occur in the movement from one form of representation to another, certain elements of the original remain in the adaptation. As such, the task of determining what is essential in adapting Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* begins with a discussion of those qualities of the novel found to be dispensable in its adaptation. An analysis of Leonard's, Chadha's and Wright's versions of *Pride and Prejudice* finds that there are elements of the novel that all the filmmakers treat differently, like the central character of the story, its satiric sense of humour and the idea that social standing is an obstacle to romance.

To Rebel, or not to Rebel

For all of her manners, when the rules of social conduct conflict with her personal values, the heroine of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is more concerned with saying and doing what she considers right rather than what others consider appropriate; although the manner in which she resists convention is more understated than it is outright defiance and does not lead to the abolishment of these rules, modern readers who do not have to

abide by the same conventions may perceive it as a sort of ‘rebellion.’ In spite of this, the filmmakers of the three adaptations in question intentionally distort this sense of unconventionality. In the novel, Elizabeth abides by the rules of society as long as she can justify their purpose and if they are unjustifiable, she acts accordingly: for example, Elizabeth does not hesitate to walk the distance to Netherfield by herself early in the morning to tend to her sick sister and although she is aware that Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst thought her conduct “incredible” and “held her in contempt for it,” there is no mention of how Elizabeth feels about this reception, leaving the reader to assume that she does not care if they think her uncouth;¹ in another instance, Mrs. Bennet cannot convince Elizabeth to change her mind about refusing Mr. Collins’s proposal of marriage to save her family because she is not interested in marrying without love;² similarly, she astonishes Lady Catherine by responding to her demand that she not marry her nephew Darcy with a request that she leave the premises.³ Although these instances may be the basis for scenes in the films, their protagonists do not necessarily exhibit this unconventional attitude.

Although the heroine in Leonard’s *Pride and Prejudice* rejects the conventions of the day in the same manner as her literary counterpart does, the film contradicts her characterization as a rebel by making her appear apologetic for her actions, an alteration that can be attributed to a desire to compensate for the damage to the male ego caused by the Depression, a trend within Hollywood at the time.⁴ Even though this film’s Elizabeth (Greer Garson) also surprises the inhabitants of Netherfield by showing up dirty and unaccompanied on their doorstep early one morning, the moment differs considerably: instead of acknowledging the surprise at her arrival with apparent nonchalance, Elizabeth

takes care to wipe the mud off her boots on the outside wall and to act natural when Mr. Bingley (Bruce Lester) opens the door to greet her. The alteration of the scene has the effect of depicting Elizabeth as anxious to present herself as conforming to expectations, although in principle she is willing to reject them. The heroine in this film also refuses to marry for the benefit of her family and defies the wishes of a distinguished acquaintance and while these scenes may make Elizabeth seem rebellious, this characterization is undermined at other times in the film. In a scene added to the Netherfield party sequence, Darcy (Laurence Olivier) describes archery as a sport in which “even a young lady may become proficient ... at short range of course and with a light bow;” as a result, he does not expect Elizabeth to be a good shot and even gives her instructions on what to do. A close-up of her first arrow stabbing the bulls-eye follows, after which a smug Elizabeth looks back to a surprised Darcy. Although in this scene she seems pleased with herself for defying his expectations, this pleasure quickly turns into shame two scenes later when Darcy catches Elizabeth crying about having made a fool of herself with him earlier. This downplaying of Elizabeth’s noncompliance in certain scenes meets a wider objective – constructing a femininity to ease male anxieties about the increasing independence of women at the time. Brosh argues that up until the Depression, men were considered to be the breadwinners of the family, while women managed the household, so when large numbers of men lost their jobs and there was a rise in the number of women employed outside the home, traditional notions of masculinity and femininity were in crisis.⁵ That filmmakers working during the period from 1929 through the 1940s responded to this crisis of masculinity in developing their male characters is recognized by Philippa Gates who says: “Hollywood’s response to the Depression was to offer, on the one hand, the

rebellious gangster and, on the other, the aristocratic and stable sleuth,” characters that could offer audiences an escape from the reality of the time.⁶ However, Hollywood did more than meet these changing notions of masculinity with films about gangsters and detectives; they gave fragile men an ego boost by turning the ‘modern woman’ character on its head.⁷ For example, although Katharine Hepburn often played a “liberated heroine” during the 1940s, by the end of the film she concedes her position for the sake of the hero: in the conclusion of *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), Tracey discredits her past behaviour and promises her ex-husband she will be “yar” (meaning ‘easy to handle’) should he decide to marry her again; Tess in *Woman of the Year* (1942) realizes her mistake in valuing her career more than her marriage; and *Adam’s Rib* (1949) has Amanda admit to her husband that the female client she successfully defended for shooting her cheating husband was the one at fault in the case, not the husband. In offering audiences a female character who expresses modicums of remorse for acting in accordance with her instincts, Leonard is following this trend of putting ‘strong independent’ females of the screen in their place. Furthermore, those scenes in which Elizabeth’s acts of disobedience are not downplayed, as in when she disappoints her mother (Mary Boland) by refusing to marry for money and when she catches Lady Catherine (Edna May Oliver) off guard by insisting on her right to marry Darcy even if he should become penniless, take this direction because they bolster the male persona: they may not depict unconventional women as non-threatening, but Elizabeth’s assertions of independence demonstrate a lack of regard for monetary wealth, which assures male patrons at a time when they are not guaranteed salaries that women do not measure men

in terms of their income.⁸ Nevertheless, the overall impression of Elizabeth as a rebel does not come across in Leonard's *Pride and Prejudice* as Austen intended.

Lalita Bakshi (Aishwarya Rai), the female protagonist in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*, is more concerned with rejecting cultural stereotypes than societal conventions and as such, the three instances that are supposed to establish an individualistic attitude do not unfold in the same manner. Unlike Elizabeth, who ignores the rules of social conduct in walking to Netherfield because of her personal feelings for her sister, Lalita complies with them by consenting to travel to Goa in spite of her personal feelings about Darcy (Martin Henderson) because it would not be appropriate for her sister (Namrata Shirodkar) to accept the invitation otherwise. Furthermore, although Lalita refuses Kholi's (Nitin Ganatra) proposal because she does not believe in marriage without love, the same reason Elizabeth turns down Mr. Collins, the difference is that Lalita's refusal does not have the same consequences and therefore seems like less of a rebellion: the expectation that she marry Kholi comes from her mother's (Nadira Babbar) desire to avoid the shame of having unmarried daughters; there is no social convention that Lalita discards in rejecting her suitor as there is for Elizabeth, whose duty it is as a child in a family of all daughters to not only marry so she can take care her parents, but to marry Mr. Collins, the cousin to whom their state is entailed so that the family can remain in their own home. While it is true that a marriage to Kholi would ensure that the Bakshis are taken care of, these girls have other means of providing for their family.⁹ This is a truth that the audience does not need to take for granted because it is visualized throughout the film: in the opening sequence, Lalita rides through the field on a tractor and confers with an individual with a clipboard in a business-like fashion and the

morning after the wedding rehearsal at the beginning of the film, she and her father (Anupam Kher) sit together at the dinner table discussing business, looking over papers and calculating numbers. As for standing up to a lady of consequence when one is expected to submit to her demands, at Kholi and Chandra's (Sonali Kulkarni) wedding, Darcy pulls Lalita aside to talk to her when they are interrupted by his mother Catherine (Marsha Mason) who wishes to introduce Lalita to "Will's girlfriend Anne"; Lalita must endure Anne (Georgina Chapman) mispronouncing her name and is forced to compliment her when Catherine remarks, "doesn't Anne look wonderful in Indian clothes?" Although Catherine does not ask Lalita outright to promise not to marry her son as Lady Catherine asked Elizabeth about her nephew, the fact that she went through the trouble of flying Anne to the wedding and introducing her in such a fashion makes clear that she does not intend for Darcy to become involved with Lalita; instead of telling Catherine what she thinks of her manipulation, Lalita can only manage to respond politely to her conversation. The reason why the heroine of *Bride and Prejudice* acts in accordance with the rules of what is proper for a young lady in these instances is because making societal conventions a non-issue allows for the focus to be on the defiance of cultural stereotypes. Instead of demonstrating how she is not a simple and traditional woman, Lalita is determined to show Darcy that India is not the country he envisions it to be. So while she is unconventional to some extent, this aspect of her personality has a different basis than in the novel.

Wright is interested in maintaining a sense of realism to the Regency England setting of the novel in certain respects, but when it comes to Elizabeth (Keira Knightley), rather than depicting her as a rebel of this period, he turns her into a modern woman for

whom these conventions do not apply. The film includes the trot to Netherfield, Mr. Collins' (Tom Hollander) failed proposal and the rebuff of Lady Catherine (Judi Dench), but unlike Austen's Elizabeth who recognizes that there are social norms at work in these circumstances and chooses to ignore those that she does not agree with, Wright's Elizabeth does not acknowledge that such norms exist. The sense that Elizabeth is exempt from the code of conduct is created through her overall depiction as a contemporary woman: firstly, the casting of Keira Knightley, with her runway-worthy body, defined bone structure and wide-eyed look, is a departure from other 'true to the period' adaptations of the novel in that the female protagonist has traditionally been played by actresses whose beauty is 'classic' rather than 'modelesque.' For example, Greer Garson was an attractive woman, but no single feature of her appearance stands out in the same way as Knightley. Such is also the case with Madge Evans (1949), Jane Downs (1958), Celia Bannerman (1967), Elizabeth Garvie (1980) and Jennifer Ehle (1995). This impression of a "modern film star" is emphasized by her costuming in a more contemporary fashion than the rest of the cast, without the old fashioned signifiers such as bonnets or gloves and with her light, tentative, flat and breathy treatment of the dialogue.¹⁰ This modernization is enhanced by the sense of realism that he wishes to create elsewhere in the film, as in the costuming of the other characters, their conduct and the spaces in which the action takes place. As a result of these decisions to present Elizabeth as a woman of the twenty-first century, the audience accepts her as such and perceives her behaviour as customary, rather than nonconformist. Furthermore, the placement of a modernized character among individuals in a 'real' nineteenth-century setting dealing with conventions that are not present for today's audiences allows them to

see their society as greatly superior to earlier societies and therefore without a need for improvement.

Turning Satire into Physical Comedy, Musical Sequences and Dramatic Realism

The humour of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* comes from the commentary on the follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies of society and its members, seen in their preoccupation with marriage, perceptions of self-importance and the significance of class differences. While these issues may be included in film adaptations of the novel, humour is not necessarily derived from them in the same manner, if at all. That Austen intends to poke fun at her characters is evident from the first chapter: Mrs. Bennet pesters her husband to greet their new neighbor as soon as possible so that he may think of marrying one of their daughters before he thinks of anyone else, the irrationality of which is pointed out by Mr. Bennet who says, "I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chooses of my girls."¹¹ This sarcastic brand of humour is also aimed at Mr. Collins, who sees himself as more important than he really is: for example, he presumes that his words have power for Lady Catherine and thinks it is his duty to arrange and bestow "delicate compliments" to his patroness, an admission that is more amusing to the reader when it is mocked by other characters like Mr. Bennet who, upon finding his cousin to be "as absurd as he had hoped," listened to his cousin with "the keenest enjoyment."¹² Lady Catherine perhaps faces the most ridicule for her views on class and marriage. Near the end of the novel, she confronts Elizabeth with rumors of her relationship with Darcy, her alarm justified by how such a relationship impacts her plan for her nephew to marry her daughter:

My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. They are descended on the maternal side, from the same noble line; and, on the father's, from respectable,

honorable, and ancient, though untitled families. Their fortune on both sides is splendid. They are destined for each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses and what is to divide them - the upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections or fortune? Is this to be endured! But it must not, shall not be.¹³

This monologue is not humorous by itself, but Elizabeth has cause to make fun of Lady Catherine for arranging marriage according to the financial and social worth of each individual, as well as for expecting Elizabeth to agree:

Allow me to say Lady Catherine, that the arguments with which you have supported this extraordinary application, have been as frivolous as the application was ill-judged.¹⁴

Elizabeth is quite serious in tone while making fun of Lady Catherine, but the reader finds humour in it nonetheless. At each of these points in the narrative of *Pride and Prejudice*, the behaviour itself – preoccupation with marriage, perceived self-importance and significance of class – is amusing, but it is the sharp commentary on it that pervades the memory of the reader.

Audiences of Leonard's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* are amused by exaggerated visual representations of these follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, rather than by witticisms on the nature of society and its members. For instance, Mrs. Bennet obsesses to her husband (Edmund Gwenn) about meeting Mr. Bingley in the film and with tongue in cheek, he offers to send the man his "hearty consent" to his marrying any one of his daughters. However, the audience does not need Mr. Bennet to point out that his wife is ridiculous because previous to their conversation, they witnessed her racing Mrs. Lucas (Majorie Wood) in her carriage from the dress shop. Her reasoning is that if she gets to her husband first, he will become acquainted with their wealthy new neighbor before anyone else, thus increasing the chances Mr.

Bingley will marry into their family. The memory of this comical sequence overshadows the satiric dialogue, so that the humour is in the image, not in the commentary. A similar approach is taken to making fun of Mr. Collins' (Melville Cooper) self-importance: Mr. Bennet first mentions the illustrious cousin in pronouncing him to be "an uncommonly fine specimen." As soon as the character appears on screen, it is realized that Mr. Bennet was being sarcastic because his arrival is accompanied by frivolous music as he saunters down the stairs rehearsing 'little compliments' with which to greet Mrs. Bennet, like "I have heard much madam of your charm, your beauty of your daughters ..." The Bennet family shares the audience's impression of Mr. Collins as a pompous individual: Mary (Marsha Hunt) suggests that "perhaps he has beauties of character," but Mr. Bennet expresses doubt in saying, "yes perhaps my dear, but we shall see"; although their response is humorous, it is overshadowed by the signifiers of conceit associated with the character on the image and soundtrack.

Similarly, the verbal satire of the confrontation between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine is completely replaced by broad comedy; although the distinguished matriarch asks Elizabeth to promise not to marry her nephew and is ridiculed for it, what makes the scene amusing is the state of chaos that the household is in when Lady Catherine arrives: the family had been preparing to be turned out of their home when Lydia unexpectedly comes back a married woman, leaving the frame crowded with all the family members and their belongings. The honored guest must maneuver her way past several fawning Bennets to sit down, setting off a music box hiding underneath the chair cushion in the process; even when the two women are given their privacy, Elizabeth must clear a path to sit down and in doing so, she disturbs the family's obnoxious talking parrot. The

emphasis on broad physical humour as opposed to verbal satire is explained by the original vision for a film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*: Harpo Marx had seen the book acted out on stage and imagined that it could be a romp in the same vein of films made during the era of great screwball comedies, like *It Happened One Night* (1934), *The Gay Divorcee* (1934) and *Twentieth Century* (1934).¹⁵ In order to achieve this vision, Jane Murfin, experienced in writing screwball comedies,^{*} was contacted to write the screenplay and Leonard, familiar with the comedic form,[†] was set to direct.¹⁶ In order to capitalize on what was popular in cinemas at the time, those involved took measures to mold their adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* into a screwball/romantic comedy, including making the most of opportunities for broad physical humour that characterizes these genres, even if it should take away from the sharpness of the dialogue reproduced from the novel.

Austen's trademark wit meets the same fate in Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* in that audiences are amused by elaborate musical numbers showcasing the ridiculous, rather than by smart remarks on such behaviour. For example, although the film pokes fun at Mrs. Bakshi for obsessing about marriage – she is shown perusing through profiles on an Indian Matchmaker website – it parodies the importance of marriage on a larger scale in a montage of song and dance titled “Marriage Has Come to Town.” In the sequence, Lalita, her soon-to-be-married pal (Shivani Ghai) and a fellow bridesmaid are shopping in the market singing about their friendship when the townspeople surrounding them break into their own song celebrating the future of the bride. Lalita chimes in, “you’ve turned their lives around, you brought a marriage into town!” signaling the

^{*} Murfin's previous works include: *Alice Adams* (1935) and *The Women* (1939).

[†] Leonard's previous works include: *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941) and *The Divorcee* (1930)

chorus “marriage has come to town/laughter, color, light and sound/life is great, let’s celebrate the sacred union two souls have found” and after more choruses, Lalita pronounces “the city has gone mad.” This proclamation is unnecessary for the audience witnesses the madness of the city: amidst all the excitement on the soundtrack, the camera pulls back to show the choreographed dancing in the street and pans across the tall window-filled buildings in the marketplace from which extras wave excitedly. Just as Lalita does not need to comment on the absurdity she witnesses in the streets of Amritsar in order for the audience to laugh at it, neither does it need pointing out that Kholi is a fool for being so boastful. In this new setting, the association with high society that feeds Mr. Collins’ perceived self-importance is turned into a sense of pride in visiting India as a non-resident Indian with a green card; however, Kholi is ridiculed for thinking himself superior to residential Indians in a musical number titled “No Life Without Wife.”

The sequence begins with the Bakshi sisters enumerating Kholi’s many faults in song while dancing merrily around their house, but the suggestion that “maybe he’s good in bed” cuts to a shot of Kholi wearing a Speedo emblazoned with the American flag ready to pounce on a circular bed that has a “Kholiwood” sign in the background. As the girls wonder what a marriage to Kholi would be like, the image returns to this set, revealing more objects of the mise en scene, like an American flag hanging from the wall, a smaller replica of the Statue of Liberty and a life-size hot dog dousing itself in ketchup. Depicting Kholi with these objects conveys the character’s desperation to be thought of as American, which only emphasizes his failure, prompting laughter from the girls and the audience. It is not necessary that the characters comment on either the preoccupation with marriage or false sense of confidence because Chadha brings to the

film stereotypes of the Indian family, such as the marriage-crazed mother and the non-resident Indian, that are familiar to Indian and British audiences,¹⁷ as well as the conventions of Bollywood best known to Hollywood audiences, like the song and dance numbers. Finally, because the major conflict in the film is a cultural issue as opposed to a social one, the importance placed on class is not subject to irony, but neither is the importance placed on culture: Darcy speaks to Balraj (Naveen Andrews) about the objections his mother would make should he want Lalita for his wife and Catherine makes her feelings clear to Lalita in intentionally interrupting a conversation between the couple to introduce her to Anne, yet Catherine is not being made fun of for how she attempts to discourage their relationship. Unlike Elizabeth, Lalita finds no humour in her adversary's disapproval of her, as evidenced by close-ups of her distressed facial expression. Cultural differences may be subject to humour elsewhere in the film, but it is allowed a dramatic moment in order to speak to audiences about an issue of particular relevance at the time of the film's production – cultural prejudice. Apart from turning one of the most comical demonstrations of the importance placed on differences into a dramatic moment, *Bride and Prejudice* transforms the dynamic of its source text by letting musical numbers speak to the absurdity of obsessing about marriage and viewing a green card as a mark of superiority over residents of India.

What is ridiculed in *Pride and Prejudice* is treated with reverence in Wright's adaptation of the novel. It is clear from the onset of the film that Mrs. Bennet (Brenda Blethyn) means to make it her mission to see her daughters married as she first speaks to inform Mr. Bennet (Donald Sutherland) that Netherfield Park is let at last. Her excitement elicits gentle teasing from her husband, but the scathing remark that he will

give his hearty consent for Mr. Bingley (Simon Woods) to marry any of his daughters is not used to make his wife seem ridiculous; it comes after his admitting to having already met their neighbor, so it functions as a reassurance to his daughters that Mr. Bingley is not so disagreeable or ugly that he would refuse to have him as a son-in-law. The effect of these subtle changes is the transformation of Mrs. Bennet into a sympathetic character, a development that occurs throughout the film and is especially evident in an added scene in which Elizabeth asks if marriage is all she can think about and her mother retorts, “when you have five daughters, you’ll understand.” This version of Mrs. Bennet goes to the same lengths to secure marriages for her daughters, so it may be inevitable that she is seen as a fool, but at least she is seen as “a fool with a point.”¹⁸ Similarly, despite Mr. Collins’ occasional displays of arrogance, he is granted a modicum of dignity: his self-importance provokes laughter from the entire family when he confesses that he sometimes arranges “little compliments” to dole out at appropriate times, but the spectator is made to understand the pressure he is under to create a respectable, settled life.¹⁹ For example, the chaos of the moving camera capturing the goings-on at the Netherfield ball and its bustling music come to a halt with a medium-shot of Mr. Collins, tired from chasing Elizabeth all night, playing “she loves me, she loves me not” with the petals of a flower; after lingering long enough for a moment of sympathy, the camera moves on. In these two instances, the sense of ridiculousness is diluted, but it is completely edited from the confrontation between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth. The distinguished older lady asks Elizabeth to promise not to marry her nephew and she responds: “I will not and I certainly never shall. You have insulted me in every possible way and can now have nothing further to say. I must ask you to leave immediately.” The

implication that her presence at Pemberly would be considered pollution has a visible devastating effect on Elizabeth who promptly excuses Lady Catherine and shouts to her enquiring family to “once in your life, leave me alone,” a line not included in the novel that reminds audiences that Elizabeth is a young woman whose family, social standing and conduct has been attacked. The concentrated effort to treat the characters Austen satirizes seriously is rooted in Wright’s background in realist filmmaking;* the director stated that he was interested in capturing the real world of *Pride and Prejudice*, which for him meant to portray Mrs. Bennet as “the only one who really understands the jeopardy that her daughters are in and is completely guided by motherly love for her children,”²⁰ Mr. Collins as dealing with what is expected of him as an unmarried man of faith and Elizabeth as a young woman learning how to be an adult. It should be noted that realism does not permeate all aspects of the adaptation – in this ‘real world’ of *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth is played as ‘modern’ in terms of her regard for the conventions of Regency England society. The decision to exclude her character from the realist treatment in this way permits audiences to relate to Elizabeth, but it does not restrict Wright to a modernist approach. In fact, a sincere representation of characters that are preoccupied with marriage, self-important and value social standing above all else is useful in establishing her modernity in that showing the effect of the circumstances of the time emphasizes the irrelevance of these circumstances for Elizabeth.

Romance Interrupted or *Pride and Prejudice* Interrupted?

The core of Austen’s novel is social standing, as it is the source for the pride in oneself that Darcy and Elizabeth possess and the prejudice each directs towards the other.

* Wright’s realist tendencies can be seen in his television miniseries: *Nature Boy* (2000), *Bodily Harm* (2002) and *Charles II: The Power and the Passion* (2003).

While they are equal in so far as Darcy is a gentleman and Elizabeth is a gentleman's daughter, Darcy's estate is worth ten thousand a year and Elizabeth's is two thousand a year that must be shared among her four sisters, a difference that fuels their conflict. For example, when the two first meet, Darcy dismisses the suggestion he ask Elizabeth to dance because she is not handsome enough to tempt him to give consequence to a young lady slighted by other men, meaning that if lesser men than he cannot be bothered to dance with Elizabeth, he would not lower himself to dance with her either; in overhearing this, Elizabeth attributes his bad manners to a pride in his social standing and does not have cordial feelings towards him because of it.²¹ Darcy's air of superiority does not make a favorable impression on Elizabeth, but his refusal to honor his father's wishes for the son of his servant disgusts her even more.²² Adding to these offences is the revelation that Darcy is the one responsible for ruining the happiness of her sister by convincing his friend not to marry her, believing that he did so because his own pride would suffer from a "want of importance in his friend's connections" and it would leave Mr. Bingley free to marry his sister.²³ As for the obstacles preventing Darcy from embracing his feelings for Elizabeth, he admits to her that her financial worth, the want of connection on her mother's side and lack of propriety her family exhibits as a result made a marriage to her impossible.²⁴ For both individuals, the reasons they spend much of the narrative in conflict boil down to differences in their social standing.

In Leonard's film, Darcy and Elizabeth each cite class-based issues as barriers to their relationship, but his offending qualities are barely visualized, as are hers. Late in the film, Darcy explains to Elizabeth how he overcome her family's lack of wealth and want of connection that translates to a lack of propriety to fall in love with her, but these

obstacles hardly feature in the film. Darcy is present at only two occasions that cast the Bennet family in an unflattering light: at the assembly ball, while Darcy looks on, Kitty (Heather Angel) and Lydia (Ann Rutherford) flirt incessantly with the soldiers when one begins to choke on her punch and the other raises her arms and slaps her on the back to cure the fit before dragging her onto the dance floor; at the Netherfield garden party, Darcy overhears Mrs. Bennet bragging about the likelihood of a marriage between her daughter and the rich Mr. Bingley and runs into Kitty and Lydia drunk in public, making exhibitions of themselves yet again. The Bennets' behaviour in these two scenes certainly lacks decorum, but the filmmakers could have done more to establish why Darcy should object to marrying into such a family. At the same time, they could have done more to establish why Elizabeth is offended by Darcy: he does refuse to ask Elizabeth to dance because he is in no mood to "give consequence to the middle classes at play," but his objections seem forgotten only moments later when he begs Sir Lucas (E.E Clive) to introduce him to her and later saves her from Mr. Collins at the Netherfield garden party; they even confide to one another that it is difficult to believe one is so proud and the other so prejudiced and agree to start over, that is until his loyalty is tested by her family. Still, he proves himself very attentive to Elizabeth when they next meet at Rosings by prolonging their greeting, lingering at her side while at the piano, returning to her at every opportunity and wanting to walk her into the dining room. Though there are the other two offenses at work for Elizabeth – his treatment of Wickham (Edward Ashley) and ruining her sister's (Maureen O'Sullivan) chance for happiness – the objection to his manners is largely discounted and as such, so is the most demonstrable class-based obstacle to the relationship. In the film's final sequence, Elizabeth tells Lady Catherine

that Darcy's money is no matter to her and convinced that she is not a gold-digger, Lady Catherine ignores the class-based objections she had about Elizabeth and tells her nephew she is the kind of woman he needs. These two characters seem less proud and prejudiced as than their literary counterparts are and as a result, class differences are not as much of an obstacle as the novel would have it; these changes are a part of an attempt to reconcile the British class structure with American egalitarianism as a means of working towards an alliance between the countries that could be useful in the war that was ongoing during the production of the film.²⁵ While Leonard's *Pride and Prejudice* portends to complicate the love story with class-related issues, it does so only superficially, for adherence to the narrative of the source text is eclipsed by the decision to use the film to portray England as a site for equality amongst the classes, a country worthy of saving.

As Austen conceives it, *Pride and Prejudice* is a love story of a gentleman and a gentleman's daughter that is complicated by their stations in life, but this is not the story of *Bride and Prejudice*. In this film, class differences are secondary to the offenses generated by the cultural differences. Social standing functions as an obstacle in Lalita and Darcy's relationship in that she is told that Darcy denied Johnny Wickham (Daniel Gillies) an inheritance that was rightfully his and that he convinced Balraj that Jaya's interest in him was a ploy of Mrs. Bakshi's to get a rich hubby for her daughter; these revelations color her impression of him and lead her to decline his marriage proposal. However, it is to Darcy's poor manners that the filmmaker gives the most attention, manners Lalita attributes to his American upbringing. Before the two are even formally introduced at the wedding, they are pushed together on the dance floor; not only does Darcy resist and look uncomfortable in this situation, but he walks away when the song

ends without saying a word to Lalita. Following their proper introduction, Lalita offers to show Darcy how the dance works, but he declines bluntly and leaves the room. They meet next at the wedding reception and as they watch the celebration, he complains about power shortages in his hotel and exclaims that he does not know how business functions here, declares arranged marriage a “backward” concept and remarks that the dancing “looks like you screw in a light bulb with one hand and pet the dog with the other.” These statements reveal Darcy’s ignorance about Indian culture, but for Lalita, the idea that he thinks that a poolside resort in Goa is India speaks not only to his ignorance, it speaks to his imperialistic desire to have “people come to India without having to deal with Indians.” As for Darcy’s objections to her, he tells Balraj that Lalita is not Mrs. Darcy’s idea of “the mother of her grandchildren” and admits to Lalita that she might “flip out” about his choice of bride and although Lalita retaliates by saying “we may not have your family’s money, but that does not make us inferior to you,” it can be deduced that an objection to the family based on their financial status is a cultural issue as well, for it is acknowledged within the film that in terms of economic growth, India is dominated by America. The reason cultural differences prove to be a bigger obstacle in the development of a romantic relationship between Darcy and Lalita than class differences is, according to Laura Resnick, because “the principle of social equality is deeply embedded in our twentieth-first century ideology” that in order for the relationship to overcome obstacles, the conflict must come from a sensitive issue of relevance in the present day.²⁶ Since Chadha established her career making films about the Indian culture,* the plan to adapt *Pride and Prejudice* began with the idea to transport the

* Chadha’s explored cultural themes in *Bhaji on the Beach* (1994) and *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002)

narrative to modern-day India and with that decision, it made sense to make a film that would enable audiences to “really look at America and India and the kind of first impressions we make of each other culturally,” rather than one about the first impressions of those of a different social position.²⁷

When adapting *Pride and Prejudice* for twenty-first century audiences, the strategy of replacing class differences with an issue relevant to those audiences works when the film is set in the twenty-first century, but the narrative retains its original setting in Wright’s adaptation; consequently, the obstacles preventing Elizabeth and Darcy (Matthew Macfadyen) from being together have to do with their social standing, but Wright draws attention away from their conflicts by emphasizing their attraction. Upon Darcy’s entrance at the assembly ball, Elizabeth proclaims him to look like a “miserable” fellow, but as he walks past the assembly line, his eye is drawn to the right of the frame; a cut to Elizabeth’s bowed head signifies that he had been looking at her and as she looks up, the camera cuts to Darcy as he quickly faces the camera and then returns to Elizabeth, who giggles at this sign of affection. Even though Darcy says nothing in his introduction to Elizabeth and her family, rebuffs her hints that he ask her to dance and tells Mr. Bingley that she is not handsome enough to tempt him, the impression one has of their relationship is romantic, not antagonistic, for at the end of the night, Elizabeth turns and walks away from him, staying in the foreground of the frame while Darcy stares after her, becoming a blurry figure in the background. Similarly, when Mrs. Bennet, Kitty (Carrey Mulligan), Lydia (Jena Malone) and Mary (Talulah Riley) arrive at Netherfield to bring Jane (Rosamund Pike) and Elizabeth home, Darcy is present to witness their impropriety in excessively flattering the estate, insulting Darcy and pressuring Mr. Bingley to give a

ball, but the scene ends with Darcy helping Elizabeth into her carriage, a gesture that is emphasized with a series of close shots of her hand in his, Darcy's softened face, Elizabeth's surprised expression and his hand, as he clenches and releases it. While dancing at the Netherfield ball, Elizabeth alludes to Darcy about his treatment of Wickham (Rupert Friend), the mention of which causes him to become quite tense, but at this moment, the two circle around each other and the camera circles around them, creating the sense that they are the only two people in the room, dancing to their own music which now has a darker tone than earlier in the song. Finally, the reasons for each of their pride and prejudice are revealed as Darcy proposes to Elizabeth and she tells him that he is the last man in the world she could ever be prevailed upon to marry; however, the dialogue that speaks to all the reasons the two will not be together is eclipsed by the romance of the image: their confrontation takes place in a gazebo in the middle of the green forest, thunder and pouring rain on the soundtrack, rain which leaves their hair and clothes soaked and a frame that fits both their faces close-up, mouths wide open and eyes searching, the faces of two people about to kiss. It is true that the cinema is capable of representing attraction in a way that words on a page cannot, but Wright does more than merely visualize Elizabeth and Darcy's interactions as Austen describes them; at the expense of the central conflict of the narrative, he directs his actors and uses the camera, soundtrack and mise en scene to make the couple seem destined for each other from the onset.

Adapting *Pride and Prejudice* Without Rebellion, Satire or and Class Differences

The individualistic nature of the central character, the tone with which an obsession with marriage, the perception of self-importance and significance of class are

ridiculed and the extent to which class differences function as obstacles to the central relationship are elements of *Pride and Prejudice* that three filmmakers took it upon themselves to tone down. Each adaptation had its own context that made specific demands of its adaptors, asking that Leonard downplay the unconventionality of his heroine, substitute satire for physical comedy and inject egalitarian tendencies into a narrative in which pride and prejudice are central; that Chadha turn her heroine into a spokeswoman for rejecting something other than social norms, make the most of a form of cinema and character types familiar to her target audience and use as an obstacle to the central relationship a concept that has yet to permeate common sense; that Wright turn his heroine into a woman twenty-first century women can relate to, take a realist approach to the narrative that lends a sense of drama to the ridiculous and convey a sense of physical attraction between the two that overshadows the obstacles between them. The reason the contexts demand such changes to the narrative for their adaptation is that context dictated these elements for Austen: the conventions that Austen's heroine rebels against are the conventions of her own day, what is subject to ridicule in the novel are qualities seen everyday in her own society and class differences dictated marriages. While adaptations of the novel could retain these elements without even the slightest modification or another element overshadowing it, they do so not because it cannot call itself a film version of the novel without it, but because issues in its own context allow it to do so. That the filmmakers could treat the novel's rebellious heroine, ironic humour and placement of class differences as the object of prejudice in any way they choose and still refer to their film as an adaptation indicates that these elements are not essential in an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. The significance of this will be seen in the following

chapter in its demonstration of the similarities between the novel and each of its film versions in terms of social performances, a theme of first impressions and the conflict between marriage for love and marriage for other reasons, elements which in light of the changes adaptations have made to the source text appear to be essential in the filming of this work.

Notes

¹ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813; repr. Cambridge: Worth Press, 2007), 28.

² *Ibid.*, 100.

³ *Ibid.*, 319-320.

⁴ Philippa Gates, *Detecting Men: Masculinity and the Hollywood Detective Film* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 64.

⁵ Liora Brosh, "Consuming Women: The Representation of Women in the 1940 Adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 17, no. 2 (June 2000): 5.

⁶ Gates, 64-65.

⁷ Brosh, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Laura Resnick, "Bride and Prejudice," in *Flirting with Pride and Prejudice: Fresh Perspectives on the Original Chick-Lit Masterpiece*, ed. Jennifer Crusie (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2005), 94.

¹⁰ Christine Geraghty, "Narrative and Characterization in Classic Adaptations: *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and *Pride and Prejudice*," in *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 38.

¹¹ Austen, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 319.

¹⁵ Sue Parrill, "Pride and Prejudice," in *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2002), 49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Geraghty, 41.

¹⁸ Brian McFarlane, "Something Old, Something New: *Pride and Prejudice* on Screen," *Screen Education* 40 (2005): 12.

¹⁹ McFarlane, 14.

²⁰ Harry Haun, "Austentatious Debut," *Film Journal International* 108 no.11 (2005): 23.

²¹ Austen, 9.

²² Ibid., 70.

²³ Ibid., 166

²⁴ Ibid., 168.

²⁵ Ellen Belton, "Reimagining Jane Austen: the 1940 and 1995 Film Versions of *Pride and Prejudice*" in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 183.

²⁶ Austen, 95.

²⁷ Cheryl Wilson, "*Bride and Prejudice*: A Bollywood Comedy of Manners," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 34 no. 4 (2006): 328.

Chapter Two

***Pride and Prejudice* is not *Pride and Prejudice* Without Social Performances, First Impressions and the Quest for either Love or Marriage**

An analysis of the efforts by Robert Z. Leonard, Gurinder Chadha and Joe Wright to adapt *Pride and Prejudice* finds that not only does each film alter the central character, ironic tone and theme of romance interrupted by social standing, but they take from their source text the role of dancing in relationships, the learning process that the protagonist must go through before accepting Darcy's proposal and the tension between those for whom marriage is an affair of the heart and those for whom it is a more practical matter. However, there is more at stake in analyzing several adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* than a mere statement that certain aspects of the novel are usually modified, while others are usually retained; what is at stake is an argument about what is not essential and what is essential in adapting this work. Understanding that there are characteristics of *Pride and Prejudice* that are constantly reconfigured in its film versions in the same manner lends credence to the argument that those elements whose presence on screens is similar to that on the page are essential in adapting Austen's novel because not only are the similarities between the source text and its adaptation the same across many re-workings, but the resemblance exists regardless of the digressions from the novel that each film makes.

If You've Got Talent, You've Got a Spouse

In Jane Austen's time, women interpreted an eagerness to dance as an indication of how affectionate a gentleman would be as a husband and musical skills were suggestive of whether or not a woman will prove herself to be an accomplished wife;

similarly, a gentleman was thought to be ill-fit for the role of husband if he was awkward on the dance floor and men read a failure to demonstrate true accomplishments as a sign that she will not contribute to their social life; whether their evaluation is favorable or not, it was expressed in this setting.¹ The women of *Pride and Prejudice* use dancing to evaluate Mr. Bingley as a potential husband before even meeting him: the knowledge that a single young man is moving into the neighborhood prompts inquiries as to whether or not he will attend the assembly ball since “to be fond of dancing was a certain step toward falling in love” and of course, a husband who loves his wife will surely be a good husband.² Upon meeting Mr. Bingley, the women find that he is certainly fond of dancing, for he “danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield,” leading to the conclusion that he will be a most attentive husband to Jane, with whom he danced with the most.³ Other potential husbands do not receive as glowing a review, like Mr. Collins, whose style of dancing is further confirmation that he would be unsuited for marriage:

the first two dances ... were dances of mortification. Mr. Collins, awkward and solemn, apologizing instead of attending, and often moving wrong without being aware of it, gave her all the shame and misery which a disagreeable partner for a couple of dances can give.⁴

When the end of a dance is “ecstasy” for his female partner, that man is clearly not designed to be a husband, for if one partner is confused by the steps, the tempo or how to converse and dance at the same time, the interaction will suffer as a result, a principle that applies in marriage as well.⁵ In contrast, although Darcy was received warmly at first by the women of Hertfordshire, their observation that he “danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room” led them to conclude that he is “the most

disagreeable man in the world,” therefore certainly not husband material.⁶ Even when he is inclined to ask Elizabeth to dance, his manner leaves little for her to regard because “they stood for some time without speaking a word; and she began to imagine that their silence was to last through the two dances,” a mortifying thought because “it would look odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together.”⁷ While extending himself so far as to ask Elizabeth to dance proves Darcy capable of some affection, at this point in the novel he is not yet husband material because he is unaware of the work involved in a relationship, both on the dance floor and off.

This social atmosphere also provides the men of *Pride and Prejudice* with the means to judge women as their potential mate, for whenever there is dancing, ladies have an opportunity to demonstrate their musical abilities. After meeting at the assembly ball, the ladies of Netherfield wait on those of Longbourn at Lucas Lodge where Elizabeth is persuaded to “play and sing before anybody and everybody,” including Darcy,⁸ who upon hearing her play once again at Rosings tells her that “no one admitted to the privilege of hearing you, can think anything wanting” and joins in a request for her to remain at the instrument.⁹ The implicit judgment is that Elizabeth has something to offer in exchange for being kept, that is, she will be able to entertain at social events, thus contributing to her husband’s social life. Accomplishments are such an important consideration for single men that a poor demonstration not only affects one’s own chances of winning a husband, but the chances of other single females in the family: for example, singing is talked of at the Netherfield ball and Mary takes it upon herself to oblige the company, but her “powers were by no means fitted for such a display; her voice was weak and her manner affected”¹⁰ and Elizabeth thought it was lucky for “Bingley and her sister that

some of the exhibition had escaped his notice and that his feelings were not of a sort to be much distressed by the folly which he must have witnessed” because the embarrassment of having an unaccomplished sister act as if she were so would turn off many suitors.¹¹

Furthermore, the results of these appraisals are made evident in such social settings in that dance can communicate desire, but also dislike. For example, Jane was the only woman Mr. Bingley asked to dance with a second time at the assembly ball, making it evident to her mother and her sister that he was “quite struck” with her.¹² On the other end of the spectrum, Darcy expresses his disinterest in all of the ladies of Longbourn by refusing to ask any of them to dance, asserting that “there is not another woman in the room, whom it would not be a punishment for me to stand up with,” snubbing Elizabeth in particular because she is not handsome enough “to tempt him to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men.”¹³ In turn, Elizabeth makes her disinterest clear in promising not to dance with him,¹⁴ a promise she keeps when Darcy extends himself to her on two occasions once he begins to regard her as an object of desire.¹⁵ Since much of *Pride and Prejudice* is devoted to the evaluation of potential mates and the expression of their attraction or the rejection of their advances, it is a matter of interest how film versions of the novel should treat the activities that initiate these processes.

Part of Leonard’s project of adapting *Pride and Prejudice* for the cinematic screen involved emphasizing the role that social performances has in recommending oneself to marriage partners. As in the novel, dancing serves as the means for portraying men in a certain light, although both the terms of evaluation and the result itself are visualized rather than a matter of narrative exposition and dialogue. Mr. Bingley’s fondness of dancing is not a topic for discussion before his arrival at the assembly ball, but it comes

across nonetheless in his first few minutes of screen time with his asking Jane to dance and in a modified Netherfield ball sequence in which he initiates the song and dance to a highland reel. Although his asking Jane to dance makes Mrs. Bennet think of her daughter as “happily settled at Netherfield,” with the implication being that her happiness would come from having such an affectionate husband, the audience receives this impression of Mr. Bingley through his conduct with Jane as they dance: it is clear that Jane has Mr. Bingley’s complete attention, for he looks only at her and is interested in what she has to say about herself, so the expectation the spectator has of their future is reinforced by his attentiveness. Similarly, Mr. Collins’ awkwardness on the dance floor comes across in the Netherfield party sequence in which the camera films him from behind dancing with Elizabeth, his arms flailing about, while she shoots embarrassed glances Darcy’s way. The connection between his awkwardness and unsuitability for marriage is made in the visual comparison between Mr. Collins and Mr. Bingley who is shown dancing happily with Jane in the next shot, which when combined with the knowledge of Mr. Bingley’s fondness for dancing that has already established as a desirable husband, means that an ineptitude towards the practice must establish Mr. Collins as undesirable for that role. As for Darcy, that none of the women of Longbourn care to be Darcy’s wife because his disagreeable manner is a matter handled by the dialogue, but that his performance as a dancer speaks to what kind of husband he would make is a point that comes across visually, for although his first act is to acquiesce to Miss Bingley’s invitation to dance, his body language is stiff and he barely glances at her, prompting Elizabeth to note that he looks quite bored, which becomes a conclusion about how cold a husband he would make when Mr. Bingley, whose capacity to make his wife

happy having already been suggested, is shown to be affectionate and attentive to his dance partner.

Leonard also incorporates into his film the importance of the accomplished woman when considering marriage by visualizing the reaction men have to the female social performance. For instance, once Elizabeth admits to Lady Catherine that she plays and sings “a little,” she is forced to display her talent at the pianoforte and Darcy moves closer to her in the frame, takes it upon himself to turn her pages for her, reluctantly leaves his situation next to her when called away and eagerly returns to her side. Knowing from an earlier scene that Darcy puts great stock in the term ‘accomplished woman,’ the spectator recognizes his behavior as his admittance of her to that category. Lady Catherine appears to read this reaction as a judgment about Elizabeth’s usefulness as a wife: a shot exchange between Darcy at the piano and his aunt looking curiously in their direction is followed by her calling Darcy away from Elizabeth to discuss how providence created Darcy and her daughter for each other, which rattles him noticeably. The influence of a failed social performance on the matter of marriage is depicted as well. As in the novel, the chances for the Bennet girls to find happiness are jeopardized by Mary’s eagerness to display her musical talent despite her lack of it, evident in the film with its interpretation of the scene in which Mary sings for the crowd at Lucas Lodge: in it, reaction shots of Darcy and Miss Bingley to the exhibition followed by close-ups of Elizabeth’s disturbed face create a sense of urgency concerning the danger Mary poses to Jane and Bingley’s relationship.

Finally, Leonard’s film uses these musical settings to communicate these decisions about potential mates. First and foremost, Jane and Bingley are often depicted

dancing happily and during their separation, she configures her desire for him in dancing terms in an added scene in which she confesses to Elizabeth that dreaming helps her to endure the heartache of being separated from Mr. Bingley and in those dreams, “sometimes we’re dancing and it’s the waltz.” Dance functions as both an expression of desire and a form of rejection in the more complicated relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth: Darcy initially rejects Elizabeth by refusing to ask her to dance, but when he does ask her the first time, she declines the “privilege” of dancing with him and adding insult to injury, accepts Mr. Wickham’s invitation to dance right in front of him, but the second time, she accepts Darcy’s hand at the Netherfield garden party, only for him to withdraw the invitation after being reminded of her family’s ridiculousness.

Leonard includes the role of social performance in evaluating potential mates and communicating those decisions because much of the narrative takes place in a setting where social performances occur. Dancing and musicality were important in choosing a marriage partner because these activities were ongoing whenever men and women would have the opportunity to meet and they met quite often in Austen’s depiction of Regency England. If a film takes from the novel its time period, it must admit that the action frequently occurs within such a social setting and in doing so, it takes advantage of the opportunities to engage viewers with the dancing and music-making that occurs within social settings. Since Leonard adapted Austen’s work during the era of filmmaking that saw the rise of the musical in the thirties and its sustainment as a genre until the mid-fifties,¹⁶ it was especially likely that his film would include this aspect of the novel, the intention being to benefit from the popularity of the genre.

More than sixty years after the first feature film version of *Pride and Prejudice*, the relationship between social performances and decisions about marriage and expressions of desire and dislike continues to be a part of the project of adapting the novel, as evidenced by Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*. Despite the fact that this filmic narrative takes place in the twenty-first century as opposed to the nineteenth, the men are still evaluated in terms of their attitude toward dance: in the "No Life Without Wife" sequence, Lalita sings "I just want a man who loves romance/will clear the floor and ask me to dance," a sentiment that is echoed by her sisters with their play-dancing with each other as this line is sung. This agreement that an interest in dancing, which is read as a sense of romance, is a must-have quality in a husband explains why Balraj is regarded highly, while Darcy and Mr. Kholi are not. Balraj eagerly jumps in with the crowd of wedding guests as they perform the dance "where the girls tease the boys and the boys tease the girls," he introduces himself to the Bakshis in order to formally ask Jaya to dance and according to her mother the next day, he "didn't dance with any other girl all night." The excited tone in which she shares this information may come from the fact that it means he was not able to resist Jaya's "pretty charms," but it also implies that his heart is open to falling in love, a characterization that is reinforced throughout the film with several shots of him dancing with Jaya at the wedding, as well as at the Ashanti concert. Darcy, on the other hand, is reluctant to transform himself into "M.C Hammer" as Balraj does because he does not have the coordination required to do so: at the first social event of the film, he is pushed onto the dance floor, the revolving camera catches him interrupting the dance by wiping his sweaty hand at his side, he runs away immediately after the dance is over and does not wish to ask one of Jaya's sisters to dance. His attitude is

not appreciated by the ladies of Amritsar, as voiced by Mrs. Bakshi who exclaims, “what does he think, we are not good enough for him?” Although the Darcy of this version also tries to adjust his attitude in voluntarily asking Lalita to be his partner on two occasions, she still chastises him for describing the traditional Indian dance as “petting the dog with one hand, screwing a light bulb in with the other” by telling him to get someone else to teach him to “dance like the natives” and for having difficulty following the steps of another by abandoning him on the floor to take Wickham as her partner. The poor opinion the ladies have of Mr. Kholi is not improved by seeing him in action at the Garbha. He break dances into the frame before conforming to the prescribed steps and his style of dancing is such that Chandra comments to Lalita: “I thought he was going to put you in hospital out there.” When both of these characters are considered in the context of the call for romantic husbands, the spectator recognizes that their disinterest in and/or their inability to dance means as mates they would leave something to be desired.

Besides imagining what kind of husband a man will make based on his performance on the dance floor, this version of *Pride and Prejudice* shows how men use musical performances to judge what kind of wife a woman will make. Instead of the pianoforte, Lalita demonstrates her talent with the guitar in a scene that takes place on the beach during her visit to Goa with Darcy, Jaya and Balraj. In it, a close shot of Lalita concentrating on the guitar is followed by a longer shot in which she is in the foreground and Darcy in the background, staring at her playing. That Darcy is attracted to Lalita because of her musical accomplishments seems obvious from the way the camera insists on showing his reaction to her performance, but is confirmed in his sister Georgie (Alexis Bledel) telling her: “I hope I get to hear you play guitar while you’re in town ... Will said

you played beautifully.” Although the nature of his attraction for her talent is never articulated, it can be deduced from the reaction that this reference to Lalita’s playing has on his mother – she immediately calls for lunch to be served, which signals a cut to the next scene. The abruptness of her manner and the editing implies that the subject of Lalita’s musical accomplishments is not to be dwelled upon because if she is seen as possessing the qualities of a respectable wife, it might interfere with the plan to marry him in what Wickham describes as the “ultimate business merger.” Working against ideas Balraj and Darcy might have about the kind of wives Jaya and Lalita would make is their sister Maya’s performance of the traditional Indian cobra dance for the visitors at the Bakshi residence. The sequence of reaction shots cut into shots of the dance itself make clear that the spectator should not consider it a demonstration of a real talent: the camera zips past the smiling Mrs. Bakshi to the horrified faces of Lalita and Jaya who realize that the chances of either of them marrying who they want are greatly decreased by their sister making a fool of the family.

In *Bride and Prejudice*, the social setting offers men and women opportunities to accept or reject marriage partners. Balraj and Jaya and Darcy and Lalita tentatively express their desire in the first formal dance sequence where “the boys tease the girls and the girls tease the boys” by shooting each other glances across the dance floor. This desire is fully expressed between Balraj and Jaya when he engages her as his partner, but is squelched between Darcy and Lalita when he declines to ask her to dance and again when she refuses him twice, once on the basis that he insults the dance and the other time because he cannot keep up with her, so she abandons him to dance with Wickham instead. However, once the two begin to revise their impressions of one another, the

“Take Me to Love” sequence in which they waltz through a fountain garden indicates that desire is building between them once again.

There is the expectation that an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that transports the narrative to twentieth-first century India by a filmmaker who is versed in the conventions of Bollywood¹⁷ should feature the kinds of social performances that are important in Austen’s novel because the culture of its setting demands the public staging of femininity for the purpose of attracting husbands and Bombay cinema is known for its musical interludes and dance numbers. The female identity in Indian society is “a domestic warrior for the prosperity and the health her family” and the way a daughter ensures the prosperity and health of her family is through the demonstration of her abilities that attract suitors who could help take care of her family.¹⁸ This requirement of femininity finds its expression in *Bride and Prejudice* with three staples of the Bollywood form: the mujra, a “sensual performance by a single female” as seen with Maya’s cobra dance and Lalita’s guitar playing, the wedding dance that occurs in the opening sequence and the cabaret that is the “Take Me to Love” number.¹⁹ Routines that are not a part of the Bollywood form fit in easily with these other numbers, fulfilling the other functions that these staples do not, like communicating the feelings men and women have for one another, whatever they may be. Not only should a version of *Pride and Prejudice* that takes place in India adapt the social performances that feature prominently in the novel, but it is its opportunities for song and dance and their involvement in the marriage quest that makes for an appealing project for a filmmaker like Chadha, who had a desire to “capture the joyfulness of Bollywood and to celebrate its unique aesthetic.”²⁰

It is not surprising that social performances and their implications for the marriage quest feature prominently in a film version of *Pride and Prejudice* made during the rise of the musical, nor is it surprising that they should be important sixty years later in its adaptation to an Indian setting in a Bollywood style of film, but these elements also find their way into an adaptation in which neither of these contexts apply. In Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*, the women evaluate the men in terms of their abilities on the dance floor. Bingley's attitude toward dancing is the basis for female opinion about what kind of husband he will make: it is clear that the prospect of spending an evening dancing is a pleasant one for Mr. Bingley, for he is all smiles in his first minutes on screen walking into the assembly ball and following his introduction to the Bennets, the camera spends multiple shots capturing his dances with Jane and then Charlotte, which he does in a most energetic manner; at home in bed that night, Jane proclaims "Mr. Bingley is just what a young man ought to be" and objects to Elizabeth's suggestion that she is referring to his wealth, indicating that his demeanor at the ball has convinced her of his suitability as a husband. So too is Darcy's attitude about dancing the basis for female opinion of him: for Elizabeth, Darcy's "quizzical brow" conveys his unhappiness at being at the ball and when she asks, "do you dance Darcy?" he responds, "not if I can help it." Elizabeth's raised eyebrows and bitten lip betray her thoughts: in finding no pleasure in dancing, Darcy has confirmed that he truly is a miserable man, which of course means he would make a miserable husband. A man must be a willing dancer in order to be judged a suitable husband, but the case of Mr. Collins demonstrates that a man must be able to follow the rules of the dance floor as well. He claims to have "lightness of foot," but when he and Elizabeth begin their dance at the Netherfield Ball, he cannot keep up with

the steps or converse with her during the performance and as a result, Elizabeth can barely contain her laughter in the shot exchanges with Jane. The spectator learns from this sequence that if a man cannot partner a lady properly in a formal dance, he will not earn her respect, a circumstance that foreshadows the marriage partnership.

Like the previous two adaptations, Wright uses the success or failure a lady has in the musical setting to indicate what kind of wife she will make. Elizabeth is presented as someone with talent at the pianoforte: although she professes to play “very poorly,” Darcy in the background of the left side of the frame cannot take his eyes off of her at the instrument in the right of the foreground and he walks into it to be closer to her. The romantic implications of the sequence are made explicit with two cuts to Charlotte noticing the couple at the piano, which tells the audience that there is something to be noticed. The final shot of the scene confirms Darcy’s feelings towards Elizabeth, for as he walks away from Elizabeth at the piano, he stops to turn back and stare at her for quite a long time, unbeknownst to her. She does eventually come to realize these feelings: his sister Georgiana expresses an interest in hearing Elizabeth play the piano, adding that her brother told her she played so well, which surprises her not only because she does not expect Darcy to have a civil word to say about anybody, but also because she knows that such a compliment means that Darcy has been thinking of her as a potential bride. Mary’s character performs the same function in this version of the novel as she does in all incarnations of the narrative: as a demonstration of how social performances could deter a suitor from making someone his wife. After Elizabeth and Darcy dance, the camera follows her as she walks away into another room, but before she enters, a strained and shaky song is heard on the soundtrack and Elizabeth finds Mary sat at the piano while the

girls lined up waiting for their chance to perform snicker when her father shuts the piano on her placating, “Mary dear, you’ve delighted us long enough; let the other young ladies have a turn.” Afterwards, the camera moves on its own throughout the ballroom catching other members of the Bennet family behaving badly before returning to Elizabeth in a two shot with Charlotte as she proclaims “clearly my family are having a competition to see who can expose themselves to the most ridicule,” the danger of which is clear in Charlotte’s response that “at least Bingley has not noticed.” The failure to please with one’s social performance is to expose one’s family to ridicule, thereby affecting a gentleman’s decision to marry into that family.

Dancing is how the characters in Wright’s *Pride and Prejudice* communicate their decisions about marriage partners. The audience knows that Mr. Bingley cares for Jane because they see, as Elizabeth points out, that he dances with her for most of the night. By the same token, Darcy rejects Elizabeth in declining his friend’s suggestion that he ask her to dance at the assembly, a sentiment she returns in announcing that she would not “dance with him for all of Derbyshire, let alone the miserable half.” In the Netherfield ball sequence, Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance, which she takes for a polite formality, but the audience recognizes as an expression of his desire because of the bringing up the volume and slowing down of the soundtrack and the momentary absence of other couples during their dance so that the music appears to play and time appears to stop just for them, the only two people in the world.

In the context of the rise of the musical, an Indian cultural setting and the Bollywood form, it makes sense for the filmmakers adapting *Pride and Prejudice* to incorporate the importance of social performances, but Wright’s decision to emphasize

the role of social performance in marriage is reasonable considering his interest in realism. That is, it is a fact that women thought men who enjoyed dancing and excelled at it would make a more affectionate husband and that a woman's chances of marriage are greatly increased if she has musical talent or decreased if her family does not. That Elizabeth, with her contemporary identity, participates in this world does not contradict the realist purpose in creating it. In situating a modern character in a genuine nineteenth-century scenario, Wright sets up a comparison between this earlier society and the contemporary one to which Elizabeth really belongs that leads audiences to conclude their current means of judging potential mates and communicating these decisions are preferable to these oblique methods. Furthermore, Wright's sense of realism should not be considered as merely adhering to the novel because in other matters particular to the Regency period, he does more than present them as Austen does: for example, he actually turns Mrs. Bennet, whose concern with marriage trumps all else, from a satirized character to a sympathetic one in order to demonstrate the real consequences of not finding a husband. Although in this instance Wright does no more than Austen did to portray social performances as a real factor in the marriage quest, it is important to note the motivation of its inclusion is not merely a desire to be faithful to *Pride and Prejudice*, but to the real Regency England.

Judging a Book by its Cover

That the original title of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was "First Impressions" speaks to how important Austen considered the difficulty in discerning between the appearance and the true nature of a character to be to her narrative. Darcy appears to have disagreeable manners in that he refuses to give consequence to anyone outside of his own

party and even though Mr. Bennet states in the beginning that “one cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight”²¹ and Jane cautions that their first impression of him may not be a true impression, this left Elizabeth “with no very cordial feelings toward him”²² and does not keep her from promising never to dance with him.²³

Although Darcy certainly exhibited bad manners in their first meeting by refusing to ask her to dance, one should not interpret such behavior as indicative of his true character, nor proceed to view everything about him in a negative light, as Elizabeth does. She adds to her character study of him that his act of correcting her attribution of “an incredible sense of humility” to Mr. Bingley, he allows nothing for the influence of friendship and affection.²⁴ There are other occasions when Darcy suggests that Elizabeth does not yet know what it is to know someone: he accuses her of willfully misunderstanding people in general²⁵ and professes the hope that she will learn his real character.²⁶ At first Elizabeth continues to pride herself on her judgments, but she must admit that Darcy does allow for the influence of friendship and affection upon learning more of his character: she learns that Darcy’s reason for separating Jane and Bingley was that he thought he was saving his friend from an imprudent marriage in which the woman was disinterested; that he helped marry Lydia and Wickham because she is Elizabeth’s sister, even though Wickham is his sworn enemy; and she sees how devoted he is to his sister. From this admission follows her realization that she is in love with him. She does not express either of these revelations until her father questions whether she could really want to marry someone who everyone knows to be “a proud, unpleasant sort of man” and she responds, “You do not know him for what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him

in such terms.”²⁷ This misunderstanding of character is one obstacle that must be overcome before Elizabeth and Darcy can relate to each other on another level.

Leonard ensures that Elizabeth’s ignorance of what it is to know someone contributes to her conflict with Darcy in his version of *Pride and Prejudice*. After a mere minute’s observance, Elizabeth describes Darcy as “so supercilious,” commentating that “he does have an air about him.” After overhearing Darcy insulting her to Bingley, Elizabeth is especially convinced that Darcy is “an arrogant detestable snob.” It is true that Darcy has all the appearance of being disagreeable, but because of that she is willing to believe any story that presents him in a poor light even before she hears it, as with Wickham’s tale of how Darcy refused him an inheritance promised to him. Elizabeth’s credibility as a judge of character is questioned by Darcy when she accuses him of being severe and he retorts: “I’m not sure you’re character reading is that brilliant.” She mocks her own character reading in this conversation when Darcy protests her taking leave of him in saying: “if my leaving is a punishment, you are quite right, my character reading is not brilliant.” Genuine doubt surmounts when Darcy comforts her after Miss Bingley (Frieda Inescort) brings her to tears with insults of her family, so much so that she confesses “You’re very puzzling Darcy, in this moment it is difficult to believe you’re so proud.” However, just as they are about to enter the ballroom, Elizabeth’s drunken sisters and her idiotic cousin reminds Darcy why he should not associate with her and he quickly exits the frame, reinforcing her perception of his self-importance and with the knowledge that he is responsible for her sister’s unhappiness, she adds “selfish disregard for others” to her opinion of Darcy. When he explains to Elizabeth that he thought Jane was indifferent to his friend and meant to save him from a loveless marriage, close-ups of

her furrowed brow reveal she is re-examining her opinion, but it is not until he tells Elizabeth of saving his sister from a scandal at the hands of Wickham that she asks herself “how could I have misjudged him so? What a fool I have been, what a despicable fool” and it is not until she learns of his part in saving her own sister from the same scandal that she is able to admit to Darcy: “when I think of how I misjudged you, of the horrible things I’ve said, I am so ashamed.” Once she does make this admission, the two wrap their arms around each other in a loving embrace, signifying the resolution of their conflict.

Leonard ensures that misunderstanding human nature is a factor in the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy because the romantic comedies of the screwball era featured a couple who start out as sworn enemies, determined to bicker at every point, but eventually come to learn that they had not seen the other for the person they really are.²⁸ In defining Elizabeth and Darcy’s relationship according to first impressions and their constant revisions, Leonard means to advertise the film as part of the screwball/romantic comedy genre that was so popular at the time.²⁹

The endeavor to adapt *Pride and Prejudice* to an Indian setting also situates the main character as priding herself on being a discriminating judge of character when in fact she simply acts on prejudice. After one conversation with Darcy in which he complains about his hotel and comments on the strangeness of arranged marriage, Lalita judges him to be a cultural snob, a judgment that is implicit in her responses that there is nothing wrong with having standards “as long as you don’t impose them on others” and “Americans think they’ve got the answers for everything, including marriage; pretty arrogant, considering they’ve got the highest divorce rate in the world.” Since she already

conceived of Darcy as a cultural snob, it is easy for Lalita to accept other faults in him, such as his failure to respect the desires of others as per Wickham's account of him. The idea that she does not know the difference between appearances and true character comes about in a scene where she suggests Darcy is like most men in the world whose faults include arrogance, pride, vanity and he responds, "I just think you got me all wrong." Not convinced, Lalita uses dancing with him at the Garbha as an opportunity to ask Darcy if he is a loyal friend, but her scathing tone suggests she already has an answer in mind, despite his warning her not to listen to everything she hears. Eventually, Lalita begins to see that her claims about Darcy's character are not necessarily true judgments: she begins to understand him more fully during her trip to Los Angeles in which she agrees to dine with him, a transformation that is explicit with her admission that the small Mexican restaurant "is not where I expected you to take me," the latter half of that statement – "because you are a cultural snob" – remains unspoken. However, at Kholi's wedding Lalita learns that Darcy had a hand in Balraj's sudden departure from Amritsar and in anger, she confesses: "the last few days I thought maybe, maybe I made a mistake, but I was right." Although momentarily deterred, Lalita's realization that one cannot know a person from his actions alone culminates when Darcy supplies his motivation for causing her sister unhappiness, which is that he believed Jaya had been feigning interest in Balraj for her mother's sake, and his reason for treating Wickham the way he does, which is that Wickham impregnated his sixteen year old sister. Although Lalita does not apologize for misjudging him yet again, the admission is complicit in her accepting his help to find her own younger sister who has run away with Wickham and giving him the credit for finding her in front of her family, who shared in her poor judgment of him. Now that all

prejudices have been replaced by real understanding, romantic feelings can come to the surface: in the scene after Darcy's reception as a hero, Lalita finds Darcy playing the drums at Jaya and Balraj's wedding celebration and runs over to embrace him and in the next sequence, the two are atop an elephant at their own wedding celebration.

The decision to make the difficulty in judging a person based on their first impression a theme in *Bride and Prejudice* is not a decision at all, for Chadha saw an adaptation of Austen's novel as an opportunity to explore the issue of stereotypes in a modern, cultural context.³⁰ As such, the film's version of Elizabeth, a young lady born and raised in a small city in India, perceives Darcy, an American visiting India, as thinking in terms of stereotypes about India and must learn that she is not the only one who thinks in terms of stereotypes.

Truth is in a first impression for Elizabeth in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* and before she can accept Darcy as a marriage partner, she must learn that understanding character involves more than formulating a first impression and perceiving only qualities that reinforce it. In the beginning of the film at the assembly ball, Elizabeth brags "men are far too easy to judge; they are all humourless poppycocks in my limited experience." Upon meeting Darcy, she observes that he looks like a "miserable" person and that becomes her judgment of him when she finds that he talks very little unless it is to Mr. Bingley or Miss Bingley (Kelly Reilly) and when he does so, it is to insult those not in his acquaintance, including herself who is "not tolerable enough" to tempt him to dance. In hearing Wickham's account of Darcy as withholding an inheritance due to him, her first impression that "gentleman merely warrants the name" is corroborated and even more so when she learns of the part he played in ending the relationship between her

sister and his friend. At the Netherfield ball, her judgment is questioned for the first time: although she tells Darcy that she is trying to make out his character since she hears “such different accounts of him,” her scornful tone of voice indicates she is not puzzled by him at all, but is just asking him questions to let him know that she believes she knows the answers and he expresses the sincere hope that he can afford her more “clarity” in the future. In fact, Darcy offers her insight in confessing to her that he convinced Bingley to leave Hertfordshire because he believed Jane to be indifferent toward him and explaining that he is justified in his treatment of Wickham. The effect of this confession is realized when upon visiting Pemberly and being asked by the servant if she knows Darcy, she replies “only a little,” signifying Elizabeth’s growing awareness that she had misjudged him. Although accepting his proposal implies that Elizabeth has come to know Darcy for who he really is, she does not say as much until reassuring her father that “he’s not proud; I was wrong, I was entirely wrong about him, you don’t know what he’s like” and continues to say: “we misjudged him papa, me more than anyone.” The significance of learning the difference between appearances and the true nature of character is found in the fact that the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy is strained as long as her opinion of him is based on a first impression and second-hand information, but can flourish when she gets to know him for himself.

Before the most recent incarnation of *Pride and Prejudice*’s Elizabeth learns to recognize the true nature of her feelings for Darcy, she must accept the fact that she was wrong about him and therefore wrong in thinking herself to be a great judge of character. It should be noted that although Wright wishes to maintain a degree of faithfulness to the novel in that its events occur in Regency England and he wishes to portray that setting

authentically, this Elizabeth does not learn what it is to know someone because simply the director wishes to be faithful to the novel; she does so because the reality is, young women have much to learn about themselves. Wright acknowledges this reality in speaking about the decision to cast the twenty-year old Keira Knightley as Elizabeth: he says, “I wanted to cast the characters at the ages Jane Austen wrote them” because at that age, individuals are not yet enough aware of themselves to know anyone else, knowledge that keeps them from understanding emotions they are experiencing “for the very first time.”³¹ Knightley may bring a sense of modernity to the role, but it does not make her seem older than her twenty years, which preserves the sincerity of her maturation into someone who can acknowledge and rectify her own inadequacies.

What’s Love Got to Do With It?

The final matter that is adapted by all three of these feature film versions of *Pride and Prejudice* is the tension between those who want to marry for love and those who view marriage more realistically. The idea that marriage is a means to an end is present with Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins and Charlotte, all of whom contend with Elizabeth because she is only interested in marrying for love. Mrs. Bennet is described as a woman who makes it her business to see her daughters married,³² regardless of whether or not they have feelings for their mate.³³ This description comes to life as the narrative unfolds, for Mrs. Bennet is obsessed with Mr. Bingley falling in love with Jane, yet she does not inquire as to how Jane feels about Mr. Bingley and she is fully aware of Elizabeth’s disinterest in Mr. Collins, yet she continues to encourage his advances. Mr. Collins makes it his business to marry because he is convinced it will add to his happiness insofar as anything that pleases the venerable Lady Catherine will make him happy; more

specifically, it is his business to marry Elizabeth because it would satisfy his conscience if he could make amends for their estate being entailed to him if he could keep it in their family.³⁴ Charlotte makes it her business to be married as well, for the narrator confides that “marriage had always been her object, however uncertain of giving happiness,”³⁵ an attitude that is present early in the novel with her opinion that Jane should show more affection towards Mr. Bingley than she really feels since “when she is secure of him, there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses” and with her assertion that “happiness is entirely a matter of chance in marriage.”³⁶ Still, Elizabeth is shocked when Charlotte tells her:

I’m not romantic you know, I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’ character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.³⁷

These three characters are similar in that the happiness they derive from marriage comes from the fact that it signifies the ‘wrapping up’ of business. In contrast, it is clear from the onset that any happiness Elizabeth will have in being married will come from being in love with her husband and she contends with those who feel otherwise. For example, in response to Charlotte’s opinion that one should show more affection towards a suitor than she feels, Elizabeth says “where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married and if I were determined to get a rich husband or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it”; however, for Elizabeth there is more in question than these matters, there is the desire to be in love, so she is not determined to get a rich husband or settle for any husband for that matter.³⁸ As for contention with Mr. Collins, his assertion that their marriage would be a happy one is met with Elizabeth’s declaration that “you could not make me happy and I am the last woman in the world who would make you so.”³⁹ Her

mother argues with Elizabeth on this point as well, for she insists that Elizabeth change her mind and accept Mr. Collins' proposal, even threatening to never speak to her daughter again if she does not.⁴⁰ These conflicts not only add a dynamic to these character relationships, but also stress the reality fueling the marriage quest, which is that unless Elizabeth or one of her sisters gets married, she will be left without a home upon her father's death; unless Charlotte gets married, she will continue to be a burden to her family; and unless Mr. Collins gets married, he will not gain the respect of his parish, including Lady Catherine, which for him would be a particularly devastating circumstance.

The first feature film version of *Pride and Prejudice* ensures that the motivations for marriage are a subject for debate between Elizabeth and her mother, her potential suitor and her friend. Hearing that the new tenant of Netherfield is worth five thousand pounds and is unmarried is for Mrs. Bennet "the most heartening piece of news since the battle of Waterloo" because, as she says to Mr. Bennet, "I am thinking of him marrying one of our daughters." Encouraged by Bingley's apparent interest in Jane at the assembly ball, Mrs. Bennet does more than think of him marrying her, but goes about in trying to make him fall in love with Jane without ever asking her whether or not she wants to marry Bingley. Elizabeth objects to such an approach to marriage when it involves her own future: Mrs. Bennet is aware that her daughter is not interested in Mr. Collins, but she insists that Elizabeth meet with him privately and is surprised when she does not accept the marriage proposal. A proposal that Mr. Collins offers because, as he explains to Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine "advised me to marry as soon as possible" since it is "the duty of every gentleman in easy circumstance" to do so and "when a certain melancholy

event occurs, I will be the involuntary means of disinheriting your daughters. I have long considered it my duty to make such reparation as within my power.” In short, these are not reasons for marrying that would persuade a woman looking for love to accept such a proposal. However, a woman looking for comfortable home would be persuaded to marry someone who wants a wife to please his patroness and fulfill his duty as a gentleman in easy circumstances, a woman like Charlotte. Elizabeth is in disbelief upon hearing her friend is to marry Mr. Collins and in “thinking of her happiness,” pleads that Charlotte postpone the wedding in order to get to know him better, but Charlotte retorts: “in marriage happiness is just a matter of chance.”

Leonard’s visualization of *Pride and Prejudice* includes this tension between marital views because it adds depth to the character relations and the more complications there are in the narrative, the more it resembles a screwball comedy in which the characters, not only the central couple, are constantly at odds.⁴¹ Considering its popularity, identification of the film with this genre would ensure an audience at the box office.

Individuals in the twenty-first century are inspired to marry for either romantic or realistic reasons and so it is made an issue in Chadha’s ‘present day’ adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. The modern version of Mrs. Bennet still makes it her business to see her daughters married: in the first scene in the film, the girls are dressing for the wedding celebration and Mrs. Bakshi warns them “if we don’t get the elders married first, we’ll never get the rest of you married for the shame” and should that happen, she would have “to live in that rotten house full of spinsters and no grandchildren.” Therefore, her goal for the evening is to “get Balraj to look into Jaya’s eye,” a goal that was more than met,

for in fact, “Balraj didn’t dance with another girl all night,” which gives Mrs. Bakshi the opportunity to gloat that “I knew he wouldn’t be able to resist my pretty Jaya’s charms.” There is never a reference to wanting Jaya to look into Balraj’s eyes or how she reacted to his charms, which reinforces the sense that marriage for Mrs. Bakshi is a means to an end, not a life choice she encourages her daughters’ to make for the sake of their happiness. Of course Jaya is interested in Balraj, so Mrs. Bakshi receives no objection to her approach, but such is not the case for Lalita and Mr. Kholi. Mrs. Bakshi finds herself trying to convince her to change her mind and accept the proposal from him that she had just rejected, explaining to Mr. Bakshi that “she wants love to be there from the beginning. Where was the love when we first got married? Huh? Tell her, tell her that you marry first and then love grows,” but to no avail. Love is not there from the beginning on Mr. Kholi’s part either: he wants to marry because there is “no life without wife” and the decision to propose to Lalita is due to the family being his relation (he’s her father’s sister’s husband’s sister’s son) and she being the second oldest, since Jaya, who as the eldest is the first choice, “is practically engaged to someone else.” While Kholi is off-put by her rejection, he takes no time in proposing to Chandra, whose attitude is hinted at in the beginning of the film with her advice that Lalita should “marry him [Darcy], divorce him right away, and then give me half.” Chandra explains to Lalita her decision to marry Kholi in saying:

I know what you’re thinking, but he’s a good man ... I’m not romantic like you Lalita, I didn’t want to take the chance if my prince never came. I know he’s not for you, but he’s kind and adores me and I love it here.

Kholi can offer his wife a comfortable home in Los Angeles, which is not enough to entice Lalita, but to her surprise, it is enough to entice her friend.

The confrontation of perspectives on marriage fits into the modern narrative of *Bride and Prejudice* because it is set in a context in which approaching marriage as a business is a part of a traditional culture and Chadha sees an adaptation of Austen's text as an opportunity to dispel stereotypes of this practice. The concept of arranged marriage is presented at the beginning of the film with the wedding celebration for Lalita's friend (the bride) and Darcy's friend (the groom); Darcy describes the turn of events as "strange" and "backward," but Lalita refutes this charge, asserting that "it is more of a global dating service" and pointing out that "the groom looks happy, did his parents force him into it?" to which Darcy admits that he had asked his parents to find him a bride. This sequence challenges the idea that arranged marriages are a primitive practice forced upon the younger generation, a preconception that is further reinforced with the interactions between Lalita and Chandra who assures her friend that an arranged marriage with Kholi is what she wants, as well as with the interactions between Lalita, her mother and Mr. Kholi in which the romantic notion of marriage triumphs.

As in the two previous film versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, marriage is a source of conflict for the characters in Wright's adaptation. The business of getting one's daughters married is not the same as seeing to it they are happy, as Mrs. Bennet demonstrates: she tells her husband that Mr. Bingley must marry one of their daughters and when she returns from visiting Jane at Netherfield, she is able to report that "he's half in love with her already!" which expresses a desire for Mr. Bingley to marry or be in love with one of her daughters, but it is not an issue whether or not any of her daughters wants to marry or has fallen in love with Mr. Bingley. This indifference becomes problematic when Elizabeth asserts her right to be happy in marriage in refusing Mr. Collins'

proposal, causing Mrs. Bennet to beg Elizabeth to “think of your family,” before threatening never to speak to her again. After all, such practical considerations dominate Mr. Collins’s mind: it is not an issue for him whether or not he is in love or if the lady he proposes to is in love with him; what is an issue is how he can set an example for his parish, satisfy his “esteemed patroness” Lady Catherine de Bourgh and make amends to the Bennets for entailment of their estate to him. Since getting married would settle all these matters, then that is what he intends to do, but his disinterest in the custom is evident in how the choice of bride is made: although he claims that “the eldest Miss Bennet has captured my special attention,” the information that “Miss Jane is very likely to be engaged” and the suggestion that “Elizabeth would make any man an excellent partner” is all that is needed to convince Mr. Collins he should marry her instead. His disinterest is exceeded only by Charlotte whose opinion about Jane and Mr. Bingley is that she “should move fast, snap him up” because “there is plenty of time for us to get to know him after they’re married,” which speaks to her own belief that love is secondary to marriage. This is why she is able to accept Mr. Collins’ proposal, as she explains to Elizabeth who is thoroughly surprised by these turn of events:

There is no reason why I shouldn’t be as happy with him as with anyone else. Not all of us can afford to be romantic. I’ve been offered a comfortable home and protection. There’s a lot to be thankful for. I’m 27. I’ve no money and no prospects and I’m frightened. So don’t you judge me Lizzie; don’t you dare judge me.

Charlotte is defensive because she realizes that Elizabeth thinks Mr. Collins is “ridiculous” and will judge her for agreeing to marry him.

A realistic version of *Pride and Prejudice* must present marriage as a practical venture, but an interest in romance also demands that Elizabeth contend with these

characters as she does in the novel, for not only does it complicate the narrative, but it makes way for the romantic deepening of tone that occurs as her relationship with Darcy progresses. Furthermore, Elizabeth's position as a romantic surrounded by practical thinkers contributes to her 'otherness' that the novel creates in making her unconventional in her time and that this adaptation creates by turning her into a character from a more contemporary period that is stuck in Regency England.

The importance of dancing and social performances in the marriage quest, the necessity of learning what it means to know someone before one can fall in love and the use of differences of opinion about marriage as a source of conflict between characters are elements of *Pride and Prejudice* that three filmmakers saw fit to incorporate into their adaptations without interference so that the presence of these elements in the films are equal to their presence in the novel. Each of these filmmakers were working within a context in which the inclusion of these elements was appropriate: Leonard was prompted by the rise of the musical to make the most of the cinematic potential of dance and by the nature of the screwball comedy to ensure that romance is riddled with misunderstandings of character and differences of opinion about marriage; Chadha's decision to take from the novel the musicality involved in the marriage quest, as well as the concept of character prejudice and conflicts about what marriage means comes from her familiarity with the Bollywood form and stereotypes of Indian culture; influencing Wright's use of social settings and all that they entail, learning processes and the conflict between practicality and affection is the interest in keeping the setting and narrative as true to Regency England as possible with an injection of twenty-first century romance added where appropriate. The reason why all three contexts permit the incorporation of these

narrative elements is because there is some compatibility between the novel's context and that of its adaptations. In Austen's time, men and women judged their potential marriage partners based on their dancing skills and musical accomplishments; although music and dancing may not have played a part in the marriage quest of North American couples in the 1940s, they were important to a popular genre of the time; whereas in modern India, men and women continue to be judged according to those terms, which also appear on its national screens, terms which are also significant for a director whose intention is to maintain a sense of realism to the nineteenth-century setting. That an individual can value a first impression, adding to it evidence that supports that impression and ignoring evidence to the contrary until learning what it is to really know someone is a situation not limited to time or place and therefore can serve a number of purposes: for Austen, it complicates the central coupling, which it also does for an adaptation seeking to share in the popularity of screwball comedies in which such complications are humorous, but also provides filmmakers with the means of opening up a discussion about cultural prejudice or portraying the maturation of a young woman. Individuals in Regency England could choose to marry for practical or romantic reasons, as can men and women in the present, so the conflict that arises from those who believe in practicality and those who believe in romance is one motive for adapting this element, so is the renouncing of stereotypes associated with the modern treatment of marriage as a business and the desire to enhance the romance in a reconstruction of a nineteenth-century setting. That the circumstances of the adaptation allow filmmakers to take from *Pride and Prejudice* these elements despite the changes to the text that were demanded speaks to the necessity of their presence. The next chapter will demonstrate the problem with determining the necessary elements in the

adaptation process based on contextual explanations of their treatment, as well as attempt to reconcile this concept of 'necessary presence' with the instability of these immediate contexts by finding what they all have in common – an interest in creating material that will appeal to audiences of the cinema on a sensory level.

Notes

¹ Maggie Lane, "Pride and Prejudice: Regency Life," in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813; repr. Cambridge, UK: Worth Press, 2007), xvi.

² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813; repr. Cambridge, UK: Worth Press, 2007), 4-6.

³ Ibid., 8.

⁴ Ibid., 80.

⁵ Lane, xix.

⁶ Austen, 8.

⁷ Ibid., 81-82.

⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁹ Ibid., 156.

¹⁰ Ibid., 90.

¹¹ Ibid., 91.

¹² Ibid., 10-11.

¹³ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., 22, 44.

¹⁶ Steven Cohan, *Hollywood Musicals, the Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.

¹⁷ Sandip Roy-Chowdhury, "New Film Tries to Bring Bollywood Aesthetic to American Audiences: *Bride and Prejudice* Marries Hollywood to Bollywood," *India Currents* 11 February 2005
http://news.ncmonline.com/news/view_article.html?article_id=7ca2d57178700b3c27cb04f2031698d9
 (accessed December 20, 2008)

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- ¹⁸ Carol E. Henderson, *Culture and Customs of India* (Westwood: Greenwood Press, 2002), 131.
- ¹⁹ Cheryl Wilson, "Bride and Prejudice: A Bollywood Comedy of Manners," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 34 no. 4 (2006): 326.
- ²⁰ Roy-Chowdhury,
http://news.ncmonline.com/news/view_article.html?article_id=7ca2d57178700b3c27cb04f2031698d9
- ²¹ Austen, 4.
- ²² Ibid., 9.
- ²³ Ibid., 15-16.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 43
- ²⁵ Ibid., 51.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 155.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 337.
- ²⁸ Sue Parrill, "Pride and Prejudice," in *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2002), 49.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Wilson, 324.
- ³¹ Harry Haun, "Austen's Debut," *Film Journal International* 108 no.11 (2005): 22.
- ³² Austen, 3.
- ³³ Ibid., 93.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 95.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 111.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 19.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 131.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 18.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 96.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 100.
- ⁴¹ Parrill, 49.

Chapter Three

Breaking Down Contextual Boundaries: *Pride and Prejudice* and the ‘Cinematic’

On three separate occasions, the circumstances of filming *Pride and Prejudice* – whether those have to do with politics, genre, cinematic conventions or directorial style – have influenced decisions as to what aspects of a source should be retained or modified; despite the differences between cinematic contexts, an analysis of three film versions finds the choices filmmakers have made are comparable. However, it does not follow from a contextual explanation of these decisions that the affected elements of the novel are “essential” in an adaptation of this work because the instability of context leaves open the possibility that future film versions may not treat those elements as their predecessors did. Although contextual explanations establish that filmmakers adapting *Pride and Prejudice* at certain times and places made similar choices, an argument about what is required of a film in order for it to be considered an adaptation must not be subject to change. Yet, the influence that circumstantial issues have on filmmakers makes it difficult to imagine how to answer the question of what is essential in adapting Austen's novel without referring to the context of its film versions. A resolution to this dilemma may be found in asking why it is that context should allow filmmakers to retain certain elements; in other words, what do these elements have in common that make them compatible to filming *Pride and Prejudice*? The answer can be found in considering that the task of the mainstream filmmaker, whether or not a film is based on a novel, is to present audiences with a series of images that allows them to form a connection with what they see on screen and the sounds they associate with those images.

The contexts of three major film versions of *Pride and Prejudice* are such that the

social performances, learning process and differing points of view on marriage that figure in the novel have a similar presence on the screen: the rise of the musical and the popularity of the screwball comedy during the 1940s makes for an appropriate setting for these elements; Indian culture, the international recognition of Bollywood and the prevalence of cultural stereotypes justifies their adaptation in the contemporary version set in modern day India; and the filmmaker's attention to historical period and interest in romance means there is a place in the film for certain elements. However, these immediate contexts do not provide a sufficient basis to argue that a film is not an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* unless it features social performances, a learning process or a theme of practical versus romantic marriages for reasons that become obvious when probing the fact of context: what if the musical had not been on the rise when Leonard was making his version? What if musicality were not a part of the Bollywood form that Chadha was influenced by in *Bride and Prejudice*? What if Wright had no desire to respect the historical period in which the social atmosphere was wholly dependent on dancing and playing music? If any of these scenarios had been the actual context of adapting Austen's novel, social performances may not have had a part in these film versions. The same principle applies to the novel's learning process and theme of practical versus romantic marriages: had the screwball comedy not been popular in the 1940s, contemporary thinking not been pervaded by cultural stereotypes or realism and romance not guided Wright's career, the resulting films might have been different. If there is the possibility that an adaptation could be made without any of these elements, they cannot properly be called 'essential,' for the term implies that without them, a film does not function as an adaptation of this particular source text; it is just a film that

coincidentally bears some resemblance to a prior work.

If the particular conditions of filming *Pride and Prejudice* cannot determine what is essential in the filming of Austen's novel, what can? One alternative is to look to the novel itself; for example, determining that Pemberley is essential because of its impact on the narrative – it is when Elizabeth visits there that she begins to fall in love with Darcy. However, films versions can completely ignore an element that features prominently in a work and still be considered an adaptation, as evidenced by Leonard's film, which does not even mention Darcy's ancestral home, let alone have Elizabeth visit it, yet it is still studied as an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. It is logical then to look to the films first to find out what are the elements that most films incorporate in the same manner, for whatever is essential will be found in all the films that claim to be based on the novel. However, to say that those qualities that appear in many films with a presence that equals the novel are essential is inadequate still, for it leaves unanswered the question of why these qualities (and not others) are essential. It is tempting at this point to turn to context to provide an explanation for why filmmakers would adapt those qualities, but the fact that it may not always be able to do this encourages one to resist the temptation. Unlike the difficulties one meets in looking to the novel first, the problem with looking to the film first and its circumstances of production can be resolved with asking if these individual, potentially variable contexts are governed by a larger, more stable one.

Essential Elements, Immediate Contexts and the 'Cinematic'

Although social performances, learning processes and differences of opinion concerning marriage fit into each film's interpretation of the novel in a certain context, each of these individual contexts are driven by the attention to material that can be

represented in visual and aural forms to draw in spectators. For instance, the rise of the musical is responsible for the inclusion of social performances in Leonard's adaptation of the novel, but one needs to ask why the musical was on the rise in the first place?

According to Barry Langford, the “strong audience appeal of music and song” helped convince studios to convert to sound, but also inspired them to establish a genre based on this appeal.¹ From 1927 until 1930-1931, most of the films belonging to the genre were musical-comedy revues, loosely structured films based on the combination of skits, production numbers and musical performances, which were attractive because of their visual and auditory power.² Following 1931, three movements took place that prepared the musical for its rise in the next decade. First, the novelty of onscreen variety shows eventually began to wear off and in an effort to maintain the genre, more films began to integrate music and song with narrative, as in backstage musicals, which still entertain audiences with music, song and dance, but with a plot as well.³ Occurring at the same time in a movement separate from the act of integration was the amplification of ‘the spectacular’ in musical numbers, as found in the Warner Bros. films involving Busby Berkeley* in which artistic techniques transform the image into a surrealist fantasy, ensuring that audiences would be fascinated by the screen.⁴ In contrast to this approach that emphasized the image as a whole rather than the dancers or their movements, it also became trendy to incorporate “pyrotechnical dancing” into routines, a strategy often utilized in films with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers;† not only did these numbers demonstrate their abilities, but because the focus was on these two individuals, viewers

* Including: *Dames* (1934), *Gold Diggers of 1935* (1935), *Stage Struck* (1936), *Hollywood Hotel* (1937), *Garden of the Moon* (1938) and *Babes in Arms* (1939).

† *Flying Down to Rio* (1933), *Top Hat* (1935), *Roberta* (1935), *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle* (1939).

became more invested in the film.⁵ These movements were motivated not just by technical possibilities, but by social factors as well. During the Depression, a form of entertainment that made use of “the magical power of music to elevate the human spirit,” that could ground “its narrative firmly within the economic distress of the time” in order to depict characters successfully coping with their situation and that could produce “escapist fantasies” that “blithely disregarded the bad news of the Depression,” proved extremely useful to audiences.⁶ As the decade came to a close, not only did filmmakers of the genre have at their disposal various tools that would guarantee engagement with their work, but they had the foresight to see that this potential could be exceeded when these tools were used in conjunction; the result being a narrative infused with music and song in a stylized frame filled with movement which satisfied audiences who were in need of this kind of amusement. Although Leonard was not concerned with recreating Berkley’s vision or the pyrotechnics of the Astaire-Rogers pairings, he was still inclined to take advantage of the genre’s popularity and include social performances in his film, captivating the spectator with the constant activity of dancing couples to musical accompaniment that occurs naturally within the narrative.

Answering the question of why the musical was on the rise with reference to the social factors affecting a specific audience seemingly contradicts the attempt to make it a ‘more stable’ context for explaining the inclusion of dancing and piano-playing in Leonard’s film because it leads one to ask, what if audiences in 1940 had not been starved for such entertainment? Social factors may have affected the ability of the musical to engage these viewers, but it is its combination of visuals and sound that underlies the appeal of the genre, as evidenced by the fact that it keeps reappearing, albeit

in different forms. For example, some musicals in the 1970s, 80s and 90s found success, like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), *Grease* (1978), *The Wiz* (1978), *Hair* (1979), *Flashdance* (1983), *Footloose* (1984), *Little Shop of Horrors* (1986), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994) and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996).⁷ In addition, so far the twenty-first century has seen the production of *Moulin Rouge* (2001), *Chicago* (2002), *Phantom of the Opera* (2004), *Rent* (2005), *Dreamgirls* (2006), the *High School Musical* franchise, *Across the Universe* (2007), *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007), *Enchanted* (2007), *Hairspray* (2007), *Mamma Mia!* (2008) and *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). The musical may very well fall out of popularity again, but the potential of its aesthetics to engage spectators ensures its persistence as a genre and establishes those aesthetics as a fixed context that encompasses the rise of the musical in the 1940s.

As for Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*, the musicality of the Bollywood form explains the social performances, but why does the form emphasize musicality? Bombay cinema, like Hollywood, was musical from the onset of the sound film.⁸ However, the emergence of sound technologies in India did more than inform a single genre – it infused music, singing and dancing into a whole industry. The reason for this is that Bollywood filmmakers feel songs are better able to perform the functions that Hollywood relegates to other elements of a scene, like conveying emotions, portraying intimacy, demonstrating the passage of time, suggesting memories, characterization and allowing characters to address the audience directly⁹ – in other words, musicality enhances what is definitive about the cinema. Chadha's interest in paying homage to the cinema she grew up with explains why she would retain social performances in her task of adapting *Pride*

and Prejudice, but more abstractly, the reason they appear in the film is because of the potential for music and song to reach audiences.

The presence of social performances in Wright's adaptation has been credited to his interest in directing a historically correct depiction of Regency England, but why should a director in the twenty-first century want to do this? A very practical reason to be historically accurate is that images that look and sound old-fashioned are compelling to those contemporary viewers nostalgic for the past. The past was first represented onscreen in silent historical epics – films more about spectacle than actual history – like *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Intolerance* (1916), *The Ten Commandments* (1923) and *Cleopatra* (1934).¹⁰ These kinds of works continued to be a part of the cinema, although the majority of films were set in the present, particularly during certain eras like the 1960s, in which “people saw the chance to create films that related directly to their own lives and spoke to the realities and dreams of their varying situations.”¹¹ However, period films came back into fashion in the 1980s, as evidenced by the success of Merchant-Ivory “heritage” films like *A Room With a View* (1986), which has a lifetime box office gross of over \$20 million and earned eight Academy Award nominations;¹² *Howards End* (1992), which made \$25 million and was nominated for nine Academy Awards;¹³ and *The Remains of the Day* (1993), which grossed over \$23 million and earned eight Academy Award nominations.¹⁴ These films rely on “self-conscious visual perfectionism of period details” in their authentic sets, costumes and music to “create a fascinating but self-enclosed world” to which audiences could escape,¹⁵ but unlike historical epics of the past, period films of the 1980s offered spectators a more personal form of distraction with their emphasis on the conflicts, anguish and desires of a more recent history instead of

“thunderous battles, larger-than-life heroes, masses of churning humanity” of centuries past.¹⁶ Upon entering the twenty-first century, viewers seem to be even more nostalgic for the past than before, if the recent boom in costume dramas is any indication. Between October and December of 2008, eleven films set in the past were released in theatres: *Changeling*, *Australia*, *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Doubt*, *The Duchess*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Revolutionary Road*, *Milk*, *Defiance*, *Miracle at St. Anna* and *Brideshead Revisited*,¹⁷ all of which made at least nine million dollars worldwide and upwards of two hundred million.¹⁸ As such, the reason why a contemporary filmmaker adapting *Pride and Prejudice* would decide to be historically accurate in respect to how the setting looks and sounds comes down to offering audiences an image that appeals to them. As this condensed history of the period film demonstrates, the effort to appeal to nostalgic audiences may vary over time, but the potential the cinema has to represent the past and engage these viewers persists, which makes it a more stable context to house an interest in realist filmmaking.

In terms of the process of learning what it is to know someone, its presence in Leonard's film is attributed to its speaking to the kind of misunderstandings common in a popular genre at the time – the screwball comedy - but what can account for its popularity? A breakdown of a typical scene in a screwball comedy will demonstrate its appeal: a man and a woman (often romantically involved) participate in a fast-paced exchange of insults and use their body language to express their mutual contempt, all of which entices the spectator to listen, but to attend to the image as well. While dynamic interactions are an important aspect of the screwball comedy, they are not the sole reason for the genre's popularity; if they were, it would not have fallen into decline in the 1950s.

Part of the pleasure in these interactions comes from the revelation that relationships are not a state of “ecstatic bliss,” but more like a “crazy adventure.”¹⁹ Since the process of learning what it is to know someone could contribute to a depiction of Elizabeth and Darcy’s courtship as such a ‘crazy adventure,’ Leonard was inspired to retain the couple’s misunderstandings in his film version of the novel. As such, the motivation for this decision is ultimately due to the desire to create an image that engages 1940s audiences.

If Leonard included the process of learning what it is to know someone in his adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* because of its association to the screwball comedy, which engages a certain audience with the social insights it provides, the stability of this larger context is threatened, for what if the dysfunction of relationships was not a revelation for these audiences? Regardless of whether or not viewers realize that perfect relationships are an illusion, it is the dynamic image and soundtrack that makes this revelation possible, thus it is the cinematic form that is ultimately responsible for the popularity of the screwball comedy.

The perpetration and correction of prejudice is a part of the narrative of *Bride and Prejudice* because it lets Chadha explore the nature of cultural stereotypes, but one must ask why would she choose to deal with this issue on film? Cultural stereotypes lend themselves to representation for the screen because they manifest themselves in perceptions of appearances, behaviour and speech, as David J. Schneider notes in his *The Psychology of Stereotyping*.²⁰ In presenting spectators with their own perceptions, filmmakers have the opportunity to negate them either in the narrative or replace them with new perceptions, with the hope that what happens onscreen foreshadows what

happens in the world outside of film. While audiences are likely occupied by visualizations of cultural stereotypes, Chadha's decision to have her characters learn the difference between perception and understanding has more to do with the power of the cinema to persuade. If it is the intent of the filmmaker to convince the audience to accept or reject a certain point of view, what happens on the screen and what is heard on the soundtrack can further that objective. For example, audiences are first confronted with the stereotype of the non-resident Indian in Mr. Bakshi's response to his wife's lamentation that they did not move to the United States. He asks the family if he ever told them about "this fellow who went to America and made it rich" and he proceeds to tell them:

this fellow went to America and bought a huge American house ...when his father visited him from India, he showed him around his mansion. His father asked, "but son, why do you need three pools?" So he said proudly, "well, one is filled with cold water for when I feel hot. The second is filled with hot water for when I feel cold. The father nodded and said "but why is the third pool empty?" He said, "well that's for when I don't feel like swimming at all."

The implication in this anecdote is that Indians who move to the United States disregard their practical upbringing in favor of a materialistic lifestyle. This stereotype is visualized with the character of Mr. Kholi who arrives at the residence dressed in a suit with his shirt open at the collar to reveal a gold necklace. The first time he speaks (besides the initial greeting) it is to describe for the family his "dream home," which is a "colonial style, five bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars ...I bought it only six months ago and it's already worth nine hundred thousand dollars!" Lalita announces the similarity between the anecdote and Mr. Kholi with her sly comment, "I bet it has three swimming pools." At this point, the viewer is prepared to classify him as the non-resident Indian who is concerned about money above all else, as

Lalita does. However, when Kholi welcomes the Bakshis to his home, his wife Chandra tells Lalita, “I know what you’re thinking, but he’s a good man ... he’s kind and he adores me” and Lalita must admit to her that she was “a bit too quick to judge him.” The audience comes to this conclusion too when they see Kholi’s physical affection for his wife in their scenes together – it is clear money is not his priority. This strategy of using the image to establish and demolish stereotypes allows Chadha to take from her source text misunderstandings about character.

For Wright, the process of learning what it is to know someone calls attention to the fact that Elizabeth is a young woman who naturally, has a lot to learn about the world. Presenting viewers with an authentic image of the past appeals to nostalgic audiences, but what is appealing about authentic characters? By definition, such a character has qualities that individuals in the real world have; on a basic level, if a character can offer audiences a point of identification, they are more likely to appreciate that character. Audiences are invested in the character because her insistence on judging Darcy based on her first impression of him and her resulting ignorance of the kind of man he really is mimics the experience of the viewers watching the film for they must also operate on visual information in encountering characters. However, as Elizabeth learns what it means to know someone, it not only signifies her leaving adolescence behind, it indicates that a romantic conclusion is forthcoming. Similarly, spectators gain character understanding as the initial power of the image gives way to the unfolding narrative. In this way, the decision to use the difference between perception and understanding to indicate maturation comes down to Wright’s interest in involving spectators with the narrative.

Finally, the conflict between those who perceive marriage as a matter of the heart

and those who feel otherwise is adapted in Leonard's version of the film because like the process of learning what it is to know someone, it qualifies as one of those misunderstandings upon which the screwball comedy is based. Therefore, the origins of these contexts are similar: fundamentally, the screwball comedy includes physical confrontations and verbal sparring matches between characters to stimulate audiences visually and aurally, but on a more complex level, there is humour in the presentation of dysfunctional relationships. Even though the disagreements about marriage in this film are between family members or friends, rather than couples, the relation to the screwball comedy is still valid because one of the reasons relationships were not romantic fantasies fulfilled had to do with finances in that individuals of this era had to deal with the stresses of poverty that came with the Depression.²¹ Since audiences would have to relate to the desire to marry for love, but also to the practicalities of marrying for money, the purpose of representing conflicts about marriage is to encourage audiences to be interested in what happens onscreen.

The presence of conflicts concerning marriage in Leonard's film is due to the popularity of the screwball comedy, which in turn is due to the familiarity of disagreements about money for Depression-era viewers, yet because it refers to a specific condition of the time, this description does not create a more stable context for the decision about adapting *Pride and Prejudice*; would audiences have engaged in the film if they were not experiencing their own financial difficulties? It is important to note that engagement is made possible by the action on the image and sound track and it is this cinematic fact that is the stable context explaining Leonard's treatment of his source text.

As for *Bride and Prejudice*, the inclusion of conflicting opinions about marriage

comes down to the desire to dispel stereotypes. The idea that one should marry for practical reasons is read in this film by certain Western characters as a part of a tradition of arranged marriage in which children must marry according to the best interests of the family, which speaks to a stereotype of the 'backwardness' Indian culture. Again, the question in this case is how does the medium of film let her do this? When it was asked how filming the process of learning what it is to know someone could dispel cultural stereotypes, the answer was that they lend themselves to representation for the screen, thus creating an opportunity for negation and it applies in this case as well. The perception of arranged marriage as a practice in which man and wife have no choice is suggested in the film, only to be disproved by the visualization and vocalization of the happiness such a union can produce. For instance, although Lalita voices her skepticism in asking her friend (identified only as 'Bride') if she is okay about moving to London with a man whom she only met twice, the bride assures her the groom and his family are nice, a sentiment that her smiling face endorses. Similarly, the bride's entrance into the hall for the engagement party is met with the visible approval of the groom, which Darcy confirms is sincere when Lalita asks him if his business associate was forced into this situation. For the audience, any prejudice they might have had about India because of its tradition of arranging marriage is contradicted by the presentation of such a practice as a voluntary and happy occasion for the couple. While the decision to make conflicts about marriage a part of *Bride and Prejudice* stems from Chadha's political interests, it is the persuasive power of the image that accomplishes this task.

The presence of a difference of opinion concerning marriage in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* is explained by the director's preoccupation with romance, leaving the

final question to be, why should he be interested representing passion onscreen? Insisting on marriage for love despite practical offers is a romantic ideal that inevitably leads to a conclusion in which the lovers gaze longingly at each other, embrace or kiss. It would be a mistake to claim that every spectator desires a narrative like this all the time, but it is fair to say that today the fan base for romantic fantasies is greater than ever: the 1990s saw a “chick culture” boom in which romance became central to narratives in literature (*Bridget Jones’s Diary*) to television series (*Sex and the City*) and film (*Ghost*, 1990) that continues into the present.²² After three decades (1960s, 70s and 80s) of largely neglecting this theme, the film industry reworked the love stories of the past to speak to the contemporary situation women face – the difficulties involved in achieving the romantic fantasy when trying to establish a career and amid an ever-growing divorce rate.²³ In this context, many filmmakers turn to Jane Austen’s narratives of courtship and marriage, Wright being only one of them. As such, his decision to include the tension between those for whom marriage is a romantic ideal and those who think otherwise can be attributed to the need to engage a specific audience.

The presence of romantic themes onscreen at the moment does not mean that its fixed characteristic of films, for they could fall out of fashion, just as they did for three decades following the 1960s. However, the cinema maintains the potential to appeal to audiences like those of the Golden Age of Hollywood and the present with the visualization and vocalization of passion, which is a stable context accommodating an interest in romance.

Although social performances, learning processes and differences of opinion concerning marriage fit into each film's interpretation of the novel in a certain context,

what makes these elements essential in the adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is that they lend themselves easily to a form of representation that operates based on its ability to involve audiences with what they see on screen and hear on the soundtrack; in other words, these elements are essential in the movement from novel to film because of their cinematic quality.

Nonessential Elements, Immediate Contexts and the ‘Cinematic’

The truth of this argument is reinforced when considering those elements of *Pride and Prejudice* that are routinely modified by filmmakers because of their inability to draw audiences in visually and aurally. The individualistic nature of the lead female character is altered in all three films for contextual reasons that have in common the desire for a more engaging image. For instance, Leonard, like many directors during the period, sought opportunities to restore the male ego to its former glory, before the Depression deflated its sense of importance. This has to do with the audience’s immersion in the film because a scene in which the female lead defies gender conventions at the expense of male characters would have antagonized spectators of the time. However, scenes in which a woman wipes off her boots before entering a man’s home or cries in his presence reinforces female weakness and male dominance, which these spectators are more likely to connect with. Furthermore, even if these social factors were not at work – if the defying of gender conventions would not alienate audiences – this modification is still at its basic level more engaging than fidelity to instances of nonconformity. In the text, Elizabeth makes no effort to groom herself before being “shown into the breakfast parlour, where all but Jane were assembled, and where her appearance created a great deal of surprise;”²⁴ the visualization of inactivity is less

stimulating than a hurried attempt to make oneself presentable that is fruitless anyway.

The reason Lalita in *Bride and Prejudice* is not a rebel like Elizabeth is because Chadha is more interested in using the character to reject cultural stereotypes than societal conventions, which are less of an issue for today's spectators. For example, if Chadha had translated the scene in which Elizabeth walks to Netherfield alone and arrives in a disheveled state into the modern setting of her film, it would not make sense to consider Lalita a rebel and audiences would be more confused than interested in the film. However, it does make sense that Lalita should be determined to show Darcy that India is not a country of simple and traditional women, considering that he speaks about it in terms of the stereotypes that persist in places like the United States, which she does by proving to him that she is not such a woman. Over the course of the film, Lalita informs Darcy that he cannot claim to know everything about marriage since America has the highest divorce rate in the world nor does he have the right to buy a hotel in Goa under the guise of creating more investment when it is not Indians that really benefit; she implies that she is a more accomplished woman than the non-resident Indian Kiran (Indira Varma) because she values books more than outfits or makeup; and Darcy witnesses her enjoying a game of T-Ball and entertaining the campfire crowd with her guitar-playing. Collectively, these events change Darcy's attitude towards India, a process spectators becomes involved in as well. The decision to deal with a more relevant issue in this adaptation makes logical sense in that it is the task of the filmmaker to engage audiences with what is onscreen. It should be noted that even if cultural stereotypes were not more relevant to spectators at this time, these modifications result in more immersive images. For example, if Lalita had rebelled against convention and

refused to accompany her sister to Goa instead of accepting the invitation (the comparable scene to the choice to walk to Netherfield alone and in terrible weather), the initial argument might have engaged spectators in more fundamental terms, but the modification creates more opportunities for such engagement with its poolside scenes, rave sequences and all the arguments and sexual chemistry that occur in that setting.

In terms of Wright's version of the novel, audiences may be nostalgic for a past in which romance begins with a country dance to a Henry Purcell composition, but they are not nostalgic for a past in which women are expected to comply with rules of femininity, marry who their parents want them to and respect the bourgeoisie that disrespects them. The reason being that the past is only useful as a means of escape insofar as it is superficial; once the more meaningful details of the past are represented on the screen, such as gender restrictions, it is no longer suitable as a fantasy. As such, his decision to negate Elizabeth's rebel status in favor of the status of a woman for whom societal conventions do not apply is due in part to the necessity of not alienating this audience. In terms of creating a superficial fantasy for nostalgic viewers, it might be easier to accept Elizabeth as a rebel in adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* that are faithful to the Regency England look, but Keira Knightley's long dresses are not enough to turn her into a representative of this period when important signifiers like her body type, face and manner of speaking work against her in this respect. It is enough however, to allow audiences to relate to Knightley's Elizabeth. So, turning a rebellious character into a modern one is a decision to involve spectators who would be alienated by a character who does not look, dress and speak like a modern young woman. While these changes are made in response to certain kinds of viewers, they contribute to an absorption in the

film that fidelity to the novel would not. If Elizabeth resembled a woman from the Regency period who rebelled against the conventions of her time, she might appeal visually to nostalgic audiences, but the film could not function as a fantasy for them and younger audiences interested in relating to Elizabeth on a personal level might find it difficult.

There are various contextual reasons these three directors modify Austen's satiric humour in their film versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, all of which stem from the desire for the film to involve the spectator. The popularity of the screwball comedy explains the replacement of irony with broad comedy, but thinking more broadly, the visualization of irony is less engaging than physical humour. What is more likely to draw a spectator in – Mr. Bennet's offering to send Mr. Bingley his "hearty consent" to his marrying any one of his daughters in a subtle ridiculing of his wife's obsession with marriage or the sequence in which Mrs. Bennet races Mrs. Lucas in her carriage from the dress shop, reasoning that if she gets to her husband first, he will become acquainted with their wealthy new neighbor before anyone else, thus increasing the chances Mr. Bingley will marry into their family? Is Mr. Bennet's proclamation that Mr. Collins is "an uncommonly fine specimen" and his expression of doubt that they will find in him "beauties of character" more appealing than Mr. Collins' appearance onscreen rehearsing 'little compliments' with which to greet Mrs. Bennet while the soundtrack cues frivolous music? Is Elizabeth's ridiculing Lady Catherine for asking her to promise not to marry Darcy or having the honored guest maneuvering her way past several fawning Bennets to sit down, setting off a music box hiding underneath the chair cushion in the process, being interrupted by an obnoxious talking parrot more engaging? The activity on screen

and on the soundtrack manages to make the characters seem ridiculous, but also results in a greater connection with the film than an exact adaptation of these scenes would.

As for *Bride and Prejudice*, the musical sequences are the primary source of humour in the film because energetic song and dance numbers are more obviously comical than ironic commentary. For example, replacing the witty critique of marriage is a sequence in which dozens of colorfully dressed extras dance around, singing silly lyrics like:

Fancy pearls and precious stones imported from far and wide/
We melt and mould and set for our twenty-four carat bride/
Cut, color, clarity, the best you've ever seen/
Only the Kohinoor is better, but you'll have to ask the Queen!

Similarly, instead of merely laughing at Mr. Kholi's misplaced confidence that Lalita will consent to being his bride because of his circumstances in life during a conversation, he is made fun of during the "No Life Without Wife" sequence in which the Bakshi sisters imagine him acting foolishly in ridiculous costumes as they sing:

Lonely Mr Kholi from Los Angeles/
Came to Punjab on one bent knee/
He had a Green Card, new house, big cash/
Still made a wish with every fallen lash/
For you to do the journey with him/
To smile when he got home, ask how his day had been/
He wants you by his side, in joy and strife/
Poor Mr Kholi/He has no life without wife!

Replacing the irony with musical interludes not only makes the humour more apparent, but it appeals to the spectator visually as well as aurally, to a greater extent than the verbal commentary on behaviour that is not quite as pronounced. However, the scene in *Bride and Prejudice* that corresponds to the one in which Elizabeth ridicules Lady Catherine's notion that Darcy's reputation would be damaged by marrying into a family like the Bennets is not meant to be comical; in this instance at least, the seriousness of cultural prejudice is supposed to be felt. Had Lalita actually confronted Catherine about

her narrow-mindedness in an amusing fashion rather than merely wearing her frustration on her face, the spectator would not have been able to take seriously the fact that discrimination of cultures still persists or the effect that it has on those who must endure it. The change in tone of this conversation may not engage audiences through laughter, but the decision to execute this change speaks to the power of the image to argue a point of view.

There is nothing to be ironic about in Wright's version of *Pride and Prejudice*; what is subject to humour in the novel and in the two other adaptations is the source of dramatic tension in this film because Wright felt that such a representation was more true to Austen's Regency England. Showcasing the sincerity of Mrs. Bennet's obsession with marriage, hinting that an eagerness to be respected is what makes Mr. Collins seem pompous and having Elizabeth take Lady Catherine's insults seriously as opposed to finding them ridiculous reveals their humanity. Audiences may be amused by caricatures because their behaviour is exaggerated to the point that they cannot resemble individuals in the outside world, but they can only connect to caricatures on this superficial level. If audiences are able to regard characters as humans, they may still find humour in their obsession with marriage, false confidence or the insistence on marrying or social standing, but be able to relate to them as well. In this way, the decision to take a more earnest approach to the qualities that are ridiculed in the novel is due to the desire to present audiences with three-dimensional characters that they can connect with.

As in the case of modifying the acts of unconventionality and comedy in the original source text, the reason social standing does not have the presence it does in the novel has to do with a larger cinematic context, not just the particular contexts. The

particular context cited as the explanation for why Leonard and the characters in his version make class less of an issue than the novel does is because the film as a whole attempts to reconcile the British class structure with American egalitarianism in order to benefit the war effort that was ongoing during the production of the film. This decision does not necessarily have to do with creating a more persuasive film, but it does have to do with the influential power of the cinema. For example, as Austen writes the confrontation between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth about her rumored marriage to Darcy, she informs her that such a union would “ruin him in the opinion of all his friends, and make him the contempt of the world” and she takes leave of her, expressing her serious displeasure.²⁵ Furthermore, “Lady Catherine was extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew,” although over time her resentment “gave way.”²⁶ If Leonard were to portray Lady Catherine in this way, the audience would believe that class differences are important in British society. Instead, Lady Catherine asks for Elizabeth to promise not to marry her nephew, merely implying the financial implications, without insulting Elizabeth directly. Even this display turns out to be a ruse, for Lady Catherine reports to Darcy their conversation, assuring him that “she’s right for you.” What happens onscreen leads the audience to believe that class differences are easily overcome in British society, which is what Leonard intended. As such, it is the power of the cinema that propels the decision to neutralize the role of social status in the narrative.

For the more recent production of *Bride and Prejudice*, the immediate reason that social standing does not have the same presence in the novel is because social equality is accepted on such a level that a filmmaker adapting Austen’s novel in the twenty-first century is forced to either downplay these complications or to replace social position with

an obstacle that is more relevant for present day audiences. Chadha opts for the second alternative in giving Darcy's poor 'American' manners and Lalita's heritage more attention than his wealth and reputation or her lack of both. The solution is successful in that these problems seem to occur naturally between couple: for example, Darcy's discomfort in visiting an unfamiliar place (evident in his first encounters with Lalita punctuated by awkward dancing, fiddling with too-baggy pants and an anxious getaway) is understandable, but so too is the offense that she takes at it; similarly, Lalita's pride in her cultural identity (evident in her insistence on staying in Amritsar, defense of India to Darcy and Kholi and pleasure in the interest Wickham takes in the culture) is acceptable, but so too is Darcy's interpretation of that pride as being unreasonable. It would be less understandable or acceptable if Lalita were to judge Darcy based on his riches and if he were to judge her on her poor relations. In order for the relationship to appeal to contemporary audiences, it was necessary to substitute its primary obstacle for one that would not compromise the authenticity of Lalita and Darcy's courtship. However, if social equality were not accepted on such a level, the images that Chadha produces are more compelling on a basic level than fidelity to the novel would be, since it is easier to visualize the difference between America and India than the difference between an estate worth ten thousand a year and one worth two thousand a year (shared between six women). In the novel, the difference is manifest in Darcy's snobbery, which Elizabeth (and the reader) realize through his initial rejection of her, a report of his denial of an inheritance to a servant and an account of his 'saving' his friend from an imprudent marriage, and in Elizabeth's want of connection and an association with those who lack of propriety, which Darcy (and the reader) come to know through gossip and being

witness to her family's behaviour in public. The visualization of these differences may take place in terms of performance, costume, setting and certain scenes from the novel, like Darcy's attitude at the first assembly ball and Mrs. Bennet's loud bragging about Jane and Mr. Bingley at the Netherfield ball.²⁷ In contrast, the differentiation between America and India is more pronounced regarding costume and setting and there are more opportunities for scenes that demonstrate first hand the intricacies of Indian heritage (like music, dances, wedding ceremonies) and the American cultural snobbery (as in various characters' responses to these intricacies).

As a contemporary director, Wright must also decide how social position will figure into his adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is affected by their class differences, but it is overshadowed by the representation of their attraction, which reflects Wright's interest in appealing to participants of 'chick culture' for whom passion is essential. Arguably, members of this audience appreciate the romantic payoff in a relationship that overcomes hardship, but a more immediate satisfaction comes from conventions like close-ups, revolving camera, non-diegetic music, near kisses in the rain and movement in slow motion. In the novel, sex is suggested in literary allusions, puns, descriptions of body language and imagery, but never is it explicitly mentioned;²⁸ in its other adaptations, sex is suggested in costume or lack of it (as in BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* corseted frocks and Colin Firth's naked rear end), in restrained public displays of affection (the close-mouthed kiss at the end of Leonard's film) and in physical movement (as in the sensual dances of *Bride and Prejudice*), but these representations are either subtle, occur in a private moment of a single character or too silly to be significant. Until this adaptation, audiences of the film

versions have not witnessed an immediate, sustaining physical attraction between Elizabeth and Darcy. In this way, emphasizing attraction offers Wright an opportunity to keep spectators engaged despite the presence of relationship problems that threatens disconnect with a narrative.

Commonalities Between Contexts

A consideration of the rise of the musical, the musicality of the Bollywood form, an interest in realist filmmaking, popularity of the screwball comedy, practice of dispelling cultural stereotypes on film, historical accuracy and the visual translation of romance related in any way, as well as the contexts that explain the deviations from the novel finds that each is concerned with making the most of the possibilities of the cinema. The significance of this finding is that regardless of politics, genre, cinematic conventions or directorial style, adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* will adapt social performances, first impressions and the quest for either love or marriage because they lend themselves easily to representation for the screen in a way audiences can appreciate, but not rebellion, satire or social standing because these elements are not as appealing visually or vocally as their modifications. This suggests that if an element of a novel is to be deemed necessary in the process of adaption, it is because of its potential to engage audiences with its cinematic representation.

Notes

¹ Barry Langford, "The Musical: Genre and Form," in *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 84.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 87.

⁴ Ibid., 88.

⁵ Ibid., 89.

⁶ Richard B. Jewell, "Genres," in *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood 1929-1945* (MA: Blackwell, 2007), 234-236.

⁷ Langford, 99.

⁸ Film 4, "The History of Bollywood," <http://www.channel4.com/film/reviews/feature.jsp?id=133430&page=1> (accessed December 30, 2008).

⁹ Tejaswini Ganti, "The Production and Distribution of Popular Hindi Cinema," in *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 80-81.

¹⁰ Julianne Pidduck, "Microcosms and Miniatures," in *Contemporary Costume Film* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 5.

¹¹ Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, "The 1960s Explosion," in *A Short History of Film* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 301.

¹² Box Office Mojo, "A Room with a View," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=roomwithaview.htm> (accessed December 30, 2008).

¹³ Box Office Mojo, "Howards End," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=howardsend.htm> (accessed December 30, 2008).

¹⁴ Box Office Mojo, "The Remains of the Day," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=remainsoftheday.htm> (accessed December 30, 2008).

¹⁵ Andrew Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film," in *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, ed. Lester Friedman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 113.

¹⁶ Morris Dickstein, "Time Bandits," in *American Film* 8 no.1, October 1982, 40.

¹⁷ Australian Broadcasting Corporation, "Period Films 'Fashionable' in Hollywood," <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/20/2280734.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009).

¹⁸ Box Office Mojo, "Changeling," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=changeling08.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Australia," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=australia.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "The Secret Life of Bees," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=secretlifeofbees.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Doubt," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=doubt.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "The Duchess," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=duchess.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Frost/Nixon," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=frostonixon.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Revolutionary Road," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=revolutionaryroad.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Milk," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=milk.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Defiance," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=defiance.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Miracle at St. Anna," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=miracleatstanna.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009); "Bridgeshead Revisited," <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bridgesheadrevisited.htm> (accessed March 9, 2009).

¹⁹ Raymond Durnat, "Lightly and Politely," in *The Crazy Mirror: Hollywood Comedy and the American Image* (1970; rpt New York: Dell Publishing, 1972), 122.

²⁰ David J. Schneider, "Introduction," in *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004), 24.

²¹ Durnat, 122.

²² Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, "Introduction: Chick Flicks and Chick Culture," in *Chick Flicks: Contemporary Women at the Movies*, ed. Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

²³ Roberta Garrett, introduction to *Postmodern Chick Flicks: The Return of the Woman's Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 11.

²⁴ Austen, 28.

²⁵ Austen, 320.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 348.

²⁷ Austen, 89.

²⁸ Roberta Grandi, "The Passion Translated: Literary and Cinematic Rhetoric in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 36 no.1 (2008): 46, 47, 49.

Conclusion

Adaptation Studies: New Method, New Understanding

An analysis of adapting *Pride and Prejudice* finds that three major film versions of the novel are similar in their retention and modification of particular characteristics that are subsequently deemed essential and not essential in the process of adapting Austen's work. However, what defines these elements as one or the other is not the contextual reasons that explain their presence or alteration, but the larger context that governs the production of all these films – the task of the filmmaker to engage audiences with a combination of an image and a soundtrack. What is learned about the process of bringing *Pride and Prejudice* to the screen can be reworked into a method for analyzing adaptations, one that resolves the issues within the discipline that had been preventing theorists from gaining a true understanding of the art. Such a method begins with a comparison of source text and film version accompanied by immediate contextual explanations for retention and modification of elements, is followed by a consideration of these elements of the source text as easy to visualize and vocalize to the extent that they captivate a specific kind of viewer and concludes with an explanation of how the immediate context is governed by the larger context of the cinematic. Up until now, theorists have been unable to identify what it is that is essential in adaptation because of the disagreement between what kind of knowledge studies should offer and how they should go about attaining this knowledge. The ideal is a combination of specific conclusions and universal theories, which the 'cinematic' approach demonstrates: a theorist can look to a single source text and one specific adaptation of it with easily visualized and vocalized, engaging material in mind or a theorist could look at many

adaptations of many source texts; moreover, this approach can be applied to all forms of representation. These theories should offer both textual and contextual knowledge, as the 'cinematic' approach does, for it involves looking at the source text and its film version in terms of its formal make-up and offering explanations of these formal decisions that have to do with the circumstances of the film's production. The 'cinematic' approach even accomplishes this without encountering the problems of fidelity and repetition to the same extent as other approaches: despite the role that comparison between text and film continues to play, this approach does not advocate attributing value to certain kinds of adaptations for it operates on the principle that if an adaptation has managed to find elements in the text to visualize and vocalize, it is already a success; and finally, this approach may make use of contexts that have often been repeated, but referring to them as immediate contexts that are related to a larger context, it produces new information about the adaptation. If adaptation theorists began to look at film versions as the visualization and vocalization of source texts, what is essential in the art of adaptation would become clear.

Filmography

Television Versions of *Pride and Prejudice* (Chronological)

Pride and Prejudice. 1938; U.K: BBC.

The Philco Television Playhouse. "Pride and Prejudice." Season 1, episode 17. Dir. Fred Coe. 1949; U.S: NBC.

Pride and Prejudice. 1952; U.K: BBC.

Matinee Theatre. "Pride and Prejudice." Season 2, episode 21. Dir. Sherman Marks. 1956; U.S: NBC.

Orgoglio e pregiudizio. Dir. Daniele D'Anza. 1957; Italy: Radiotelevisione Italiana.

General Motors Presents. "Pride and Prejudice." Dir. Paul Almond. 1958; Canada: CBC.

Pride and Prejudice. 1958; U.K: BBC.

De Vier dochters Bennet. 1961; Netherlands: NCRV Television.

Pride and Prejudice. 1967; U.K: BBC.

Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Cyril Coke. 1980; U.K: BBC.

Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Simon Langton. 1995; U.K: BBC.

Wishbone. "Furst Impressions." Season 1, episode 25. 1995; U.S: PBS.

Lost in Austen. Dir. Dan Zeff. 2008; U.K: Granada Television International.

Film Versions of *Pride and Prejudice* (Chronological)

Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Robert Z. Leonard. 1940; U.S: MGM.

Bridget Jones' Diary. Dir. Sharon Maguire. 2001; U.S: Miramax.

Pride and Prejudice: A Latter-Day Comedy. Dir. Andrew Black. 2003; U.S: Excel Entertainment.

Bride and Prejudice. Dir. Gurinder Chadha. 2004; U.S: Miramax.

Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Joe Wright. 2005; U.S: Focus Features.

The Jane Austen Book Club. Dir. Robin Swicord. 2007; U.S: Sony Pictures Classics.

Other Films (Alphabetical)

Across the Universe. Dir. Julie Taymor. 2007; U.S: Columbia Pictures, Revolution Studios.

Adam's Rib. Dir. George Cukor. 1949; U.S: MGM.

Aladdin. Dir. Ron Clements and John Musker. 1992; U.S: Buena Vista Pictures.

Alice Adams. Dir. George Stevens. 1935; U.S: RKO.

Australia. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. 2008; U.S: Twentieth Century Fox.

Babes in Arms. Dir. Busby Berkley. 1939; U.S: Warner Bros.

Beauty and the Beast. Dir. Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise. 1991; U.S: Buena Vista Pictures.

Bend It Like Beckham. Dir. Gurinder Chadha. 2002; U.K: Helkon SK.

Bhaji on the Beach. Dir. Gurinder Chadha. 1994; U.S: First Look International.

The Birth of a Nation. Dir. D.W Griffith. 1915; U.S: Epoch Producing Corporation.

Bodily Harm. Dir. Joe Wright. 2002; U.K: Channel 4 Television Corporation.

Brideshed Revisited. Dir. Julian Jarrold. 2008; U.S: Miramax Films.

Changeling. Dir. Clint Eastwood. 2008; U.S: Universal Studios.

Charles II: The Power and the Passion. Dir. Joe Wright. 2003; U.K: BBC.

Chicago. Dir. Rob Marshall. 2002; U.S: Miramax.

Cleopatra. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. 1934; U.S: Paramount Pictures.

Dames. Dir. Ray Enright and Busby Berkley. 1934; U.S: Warner Bros.

Defiance. Dir. Edward Zwick. 2008; U.S: Paramount Vantage.

The Divorcee. Dir. Robert Z. Leonard. 1930; U.S: MGM.

Doubt. Dir. John Patrick Shanley. 2008; U.S: Miramax Films.

Dreamgirls. Dir. Bill Condon. 2006; U.S: Paramount Pictures.

- The Duchess*. Dir. Saul Dibb. 2008; U.S: Paramount Vantage.
- Enchanted*. Dir. Kevin Lima. 2007; U.S: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Far From the Madding Crowd*. Dir. John Schlesinger. 1967; U.S: MGM.
- Flashdance*. Dir. Adrian Lyne. 1983; U.S: Paramount Pictures.
- Flying Down to Rio*. Dir. Thorton Freeland. 1933; U.S: RKO.
- Footloose*. Dir. Herbert Ross. 1984; U.S: Paramount Pictures.
- Frost/Nixon*. Dir. Ron Howard. 2008; U.S: Universal Pictures.
- Garden of the Moon*. Dir. Busby Berkley. 1938; U.S: Warner Bros.
- The Gay Divorcee*. Dir. Mark Sandrich. 1934; U.S: RKO.
- Ghost*. Dir. Jerry Zucker. 1990; U.S: Paramount Pictures.
- Gold Diggers of 1935*. Dir. Busby Berkley. 1935; U.S Warner Bros.
- Grease*. Dir. Randal Kleiser. 1978; U.S: Paramount Pictures.
- Hair*. Dir. Milos Forman. 1979; U.S: United Artists.
- Hairspray*. Dir. Adam Shankman. 2007; U.S: New Line Cinema.
- High School Musical*. Dir. Kenny Ortega. 2006; U.S: Disney Channel.
- High School Musical 2*. Dir. Kenny Ortega. 2007; U.S: Disney Channel.
- High School Musical 3: Senior Year*. Dir. Kenny Ortega. 2008; U.S: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Hollywood Hotel*. Dir. Busby Berkley. 1937; U.S: Warner Bros.
- Howards End*. Dir. James Ivory. 1992; U.S: Sony Pictures Classics.
- Intolerance*. Dir. D.W Griffith. 1916; U.S: Triangle Distributing Corporation.
- It Happened One Night*. Dir. Frank Capra. 1934; U.S: Columbia Pictures.
- The Lion King*. Dir. Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff. 1994; U.S: Buena Vista Pictures.

The Little Mermaid. Dir. Ron Clements and John Musker. 1989; U.S: Buena Vista Pictures.

Little Shop of Horrors. Dir. Frank Oz. 1986; U.S: Warner Bros.

Mamma Mia! Dir. Phyllida Lloyd. 2008; U.S: Universal Pictures.

Milk. Dir. Gus Van Sant. 2008; U.S: Focus Features.

Miracle at St. Anna. Dir. Spike Lee. 2008; U.S: Touchstone Pictures.

Moulin Rouge. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. 2001; U.S: Twentieth Century Fox.

Nature Boy. Dir. Joe Wright. 2000; U.K: BBC.

Phantom of the Opera. Dir. Joel Schumacher. 2004; U.S: Warner Bros.

The Philadelphia Story. Dir. George Cukor. 1940; U.S: MGM.

The Remains of the Day. Dir. James Ivory. 1993; U.S: Columbia Pictures.

Rent. Dir. Chris Columbus. 2005; U.S: Sony Pictures Releasing.

Revolutionary Road. Dir. Sam Mendes. 2008; U.S: Paramount Vantage.

Roberta. Dir. William A. Seiter. 1935; U.S: RKO.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Dir Jim Sharman. 1975; U.S: Twentieth Century Fox.

A Room With a View. Dir. James Ivory. 1986; U.S: Cinecom Pictures.

The Secret Life of Bees. Dir. Gina Pryce-Blythewood. 2008; U.S: Fox Searchlight Pictures.

Sex and the City. 1998-2004; U.S: HBO.

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Top Hat. Dir. Mark Sandrich. 1935; U.S: RKO.

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The Wiz. Dir. Sidney Lumet. 1978; U.S: Universal Pictures.

Woman of the Year. Dir. George Stevens. 1942; U.S: MGM.

The Women. Dir. George Cukor. 1939; U.S: MGM.

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