



# Nostalgic Austenmania: Transcoding *Pride and Prejudice*

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## ABSTRACT

The enigmatic charm of the Jane Austen novels, especially *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), continues to attract even 21st-century readers and spectators. The appeal of the Regency Era romances that lead spectators to find nostalgic and romantic impulses through visualised portrayals via appropriations have been inspired by 1990s adaptations of the Austen oeuvre, which now incrementally has been continuing with spin-offs, sequels or mash-ups to mention some of the diversions of her work. Regarding the contributions of these adaptations, it is significant to move away from criticising them for not being faithful to the source. Instead, for the cultural milieu, it may be more beneficial to see them as creating cultural meaning based on existing materials. This approach is justified by the fact that literature is also inherently interconnected through intertextuality. Remembering the previous, adapted versions of *Pride and Prejudice* together with the significant thematic and stylistic aspects of the novel, these re-visitations as sources of the reminders of the so-called good old days transform the codes of the text with the reminiscences of the pre-existing cultural products. The aim of this paper is to explore how some recent adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* are influenced by previous adaptations and contribute to the study of Austen and its adaptation. Examples of these adaptations include *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), which introduces a cultural variation; *Austenland* (2013), which integrates the text into a tourist resort; and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016), which combines blended genres into a mash-up.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Austenmania, intertextuality

## Introduction

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single person in possession of a good *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation must be in want of another one”  
(Anne E. Bromley)

Why do we still have rapturous feelings when tracing Austen’s heroines, especially Elizabeth Bennet? Is it because of the enigmatic charm of the literary style of Austen, as Sir Walter Scott succinctly reveals: “[t]hat young lady had a talent for describing the involvements



and feelings and characters of ordinary life ...”(Anderson, 1972, p. 114). Regency romances, such as Elizabeth and Darcy’s love, evoke nostalgic escapist fantasies in the ordinary lives of modern readers and spectators. The Regency Era romance is one thing, but the continuity of this demand incrementally is also due to BBC products, Andrew Davies’s screenwriting of Austen texts, Colin Firth’s Darcy, Emma Thompson, internet Austen-sites, Jane Austen tours, and so on. *Pride and Prejudice* continues to attract the attention of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century spectators, as examples of some of the recent adaptations titled *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), *Austenland* (2013), and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016) indicate. Since it is necessary to make the distant Austen’s world congruous to the interests of the contemporary spectators to reach their appraisal, the producers, screenwriters, and directors are involved in a collaborative process of filmmaking that requires certain tools. Interestingly, however, while conducting this adaptation process as a form of translative recreation, some conventional expectancies of the spectators should be complemented as if it is a formulation. This combination includes the Austen texts of romance, witty young heroines, Regency manners and their modern interpretations with costumes, balls, tricky relations, and erotic implications that lead to the final kiss of the main couple. In this article, I aim to explore how *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), *Austenland* (2013), and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016), as recent appropriations of Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, deviate from the original text by deploying it in a different culture, within popular cultural traits, and in a blended genre depiction, respectively. When reimagining Austen’s works, *Bride and Prejudice* and *Austenland* explore new cultural settings, such as an Indian backdrop and a romance resort. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* applies a combined approach to the horror genre with romance. Therefore, these adaptations provide unique perspectives on Austen’s works.

## ‘Austenmania’<sup>1</sup> in Adaptation Milieu

Jane Austen’s novels have never been out of print due to the never-ending interest, and as a consequence, the world of Austen continues with the newly produced adaptations in the cultural landscape. As “there is an ever-growing preoccupation with Austen adaptations” (Cartmell, 2012, p. 25), especially in television and cinema, Austenmania never ceases to continue in other cultural spheres, such as web pages, music, and tours to Austen’s England; her works are among the most preferred ones.

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1 “Austenmania’ [that had an outbreak in 1990s] generally distances us from the history of the Regency period while, at the same time, still having the capacity to bring us occasionally much closer to it” (Sales, 1994, p. 239).

"Austen's novels, by far the most consistently (even obsessively) remade, provide a model and an incentive for the vogue of updating other classical texts into contemporary media" (Pucci & Thompson, 2012, p. 1) compared to other 18<sup>th</sup>- or 19<sup>th</sup>-century novelists' works. As Eckart Voigts-Virchow comments:

Similar to the cases of Shakespeare, Joyce and Beckett, authors that have become icons of national identification, appropriations of Austen raise urgent questions of canonicity and authorship. Austen is not so much a literary author, but a meeting ground, an affinity space, a textual as well as contextual, cultural and social universe. (2012, p. 38)

Considering the contextual aspects of Austen's novels, multi-faceted characters involved in a web of complex social relations having deeper evaluations blended with the societal dynamics that include issues about class, rank or gender together with more personal yet social issues like love and marriage, lead readers and spectators to think about these points more and more, sometimes with longing, sometimes with a fresh eye that makes her texts relevant for all times. Despite Austen's novels being located in the Regency period, which is the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and thereby being focused on the issues, manners, events, and cultural codes of that time, her texts' constant popularity in contemporary times through several mediums is a phenomenon to be analysed.

In contemporary times, within the cultural landscape, we are familiarised with the notion that every text reminds other texts, which means that there exists a continuous "intertextuality" and "intermediality" in adapting and appropriating (Nicklas & Lindner, 2012, p. 19). Different texts in different contexts bring back, insert, merge, and divulge among the newly produced cultural and literary materials. When this active involvement of the spectators is concerned, we reach a point where Austen adaptations attract the spectators via their expectations to be involved in a Regency-era romance domain. It is inevitable that, especially after the postmodern era, we trace the written, visual and audio material by using some other previously produced works intertextually, and the Austen world is enriched in that sense. As Linda Hutcheon states, when it is "seen from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8). That is why, as "[t]he inherent intertextuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning, and an ever-expanding network of textual relations" (Sanders,

2006, p. 3), by providing varied perspectives and experiences, adaptations of the Austen-oeuvre nourish the main material.

Today, there seems to be widespread consensus amongst researchers that there is not the one and only meaning of a piece of literature which a responsible adaptation will translate into a new work of art. To the contrary, the meaning of the 'original' will be enriched and re-actualized by the adaptation, which in this sense becomes a reanimation of the preceding work. (Nicklas & Lindner, 2012, p. 2)

Hence, we may deduce that rather than solely focusing on "fidelity" criticism, through which the written text from the canon is found to be superior to screen adaptations, current adaptations deviate from the original in several ways and methods. In other words, by re-visualising the source, neo-adaptations create something unique, and originality is maintained by the transcoded elements of the new product. Transcoded elements like the usage of modern costumes, dialogues, and even the perspectives, these re-workings serve as the "appropriations" that the producers, directors, and screenwriters prefer to maintain the attraction of the Austenique spectators.

While tracing the adapted versions of Austen's work in the 1990s, named as "Austenmania", a particular moment in modern times, a proliferation of Austen's work was seen either because "[t]here seems to be a trend in the 1990s to include or allude to the author in adaptations of 'classic texts'..." (Cartmell, 1999, p. 26) or a longing for the past "in the 'post-feminist' [world of ] 1990s" (Sonnet, 1999, p. 59). These earlier adaptations prepared us to confront the specificity of the Regency contexts in Austen texts, which is why contemporary adaptations operate as multi-layered historical transformations of the romance genre interposed by intertextuality reinforced transhistorically. These attempts also need a requirement to name the inclination of contemporary times in re-positioning Austen texts, perhaps by reconsidering the previous adaptations that left traces in cultural memory as well, which is why these most recent Austen appropriations create new images with *mise en scènes* that will bring new possibilities into the Austen world. *Pride and Prejudice*, as one of the most appealing of Austen's works, thoroughly presenting her views about relations, life, and marriage in Regency England, has been adapted many times; thus, the probabilities of some recent adaptations will be traced in this article.

The cultural sphere that Austen occupies is often described as a feeling of “nostalgia” for the good old times, “as an escape from modernity into some idealized past” (Pucci & Thompson, 2012, p. 2). However, this raises the question of whether the “longing for the past” is the sole feeling experienced by readers and spectators who continually seek something in Austen’s works. To some extent, the faithful followers of period romances stick to that feeling of nostalgia. While viewing, there exists a “nostalgic response to period drama [which] is achieved not simply by the text itself but in the relationship between the text and its audiences” (Cardwell, 2008, pp. 142-149). Thus, this kind of sticking to romance is particularly embraced by fans of Austen romance novels. Perhaps this is related to the Austen characters, particularly her heroines, who reach a transformative potential via self-realisation and romantic love. Austen characters, with their unique portrayal, transgress the boundaries of romance codes, which is why her depiction of the transformation story of the hero and the heroine turns out to be a core material for the deviation of the romance consumers’ preferences to create potential digressions and re-handlings. Considering several recent adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, it is seen that some deviation techniques in adapting and appropriating -like mash-up, pastiche, and inter-genre usages of this specific novel that presents a unique “template” both for “romantic comedies” and “heritage productions” pave the way to the inspiration for cinematic and television productions via “[i]ts fairytale qualities and its ‘shamelessly wish fulfilling qualities’ seem at odds with its more serious dimensions” (Cartmell, 2010, p. 19), yet, somehow, it still serves as a core sample.

Besides nostalgic feelings, another reason for this urge to remember the Regency era may be related to the partiality of preserving the present concerns and reconnecting with particular past periods. This is due to the rupture between the past, present and future, which steers us through the possibility of our failure to keep memories in the very post- or even post-postmodern moment to appeal to our memory by remembering Austen or Regency; we try to reconnect with the past through historical media products. As Pierre Nora explains: “Societies based on memory are no more: the institutions that once transmitted values from generation to generation – churches, schools, families, governments – have ceased to function as well...” (qtd. in Pucci & Thompson, 2012, p. 9). Both the past and the present are neither satisfactory nor demandable. As Andrew Higson expresses, “nostalgia” in postmodern times, shown through the period drama, consists of:

... the upper middle-class and upper-class past is displayed in a beguilingly realist manner, in the sense that the *mise en scene* is replete with apparently

authentic historical detail... This combination of spectacular display and rich realist detail - which is by no means confined to the English heritage films - is another example of ... postmodern nostalgia: it renders the past as co-existent with the present; it recovers the past as something that can be experienced by present day spectators. (2013, p. 129)

The past co-exists with the present due to the recent gaps filled by the so-called conservative aspects; still, there exists "a temporal ambivalence, a tension between past and present, both in terms of the process of memory and remembrance, and in the different ways in which past and present are valued" (p. 124). Hence, with a well-constructed social organisation and inimitable character portrayals, the Austen world is haunting the present. Exemplified by Elizabeth, for instance, Austen's portrayals presented unforgettable characters. With her liveliness and keen judgment of her surroundings, her uniqueness may be the reason why people want to see and read about her. About Elizabeth, Austen (1813) writes to her sister: "I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least I do not know" (as cited in Johnson, 1890, p. vi). This sense of irreplaceability is not only about Elizabeth but also related to her portrayal of Darcy, whose embodiment, especially after having a transformation process, seems as a man to be like the ideal in the eyes of women through his behaviours and tenderness.

As will be discussed further, the Regency Era romance has certain generic codes that attract the spectators, so it is intriguing how this ongoing effect of Austenian romance is achieved. By producing different genre-wise adaptations/appropriations, the 21<sup>st</sup>-century revisitings hint at a bilateral retro fascination: remembering the Regency and a nostalgic glimpse into the 1990s. In several adaptations, we see the genre's transformation; romance is transformed into gothic, mystery or comedy, through which nostalgia maintained by costume drama is deviated via genres that playfully re-consider the Austenique romance and can be called "mash-ups". When transformed via genre-deviation, this co-existence of the Regency romance heritage is a medium of revival which may tie the contemporary spectators to the lost past. When we come to more recent adaptations that deviate from the genre conventions, the presentist scope is obtained by this re-handling of the stylistic devices with the blending of the genres. When taken as a whole, these interconnected texts of adaptations as cultural products form an intertextual paradigm. Each film adaptation reveals some of the different

aspects of the original texts with a new emphasis or angle, including the embeddedness of the period when it was produced. "Therefore, an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is a second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 9). By using the visual components that cinema as the film-making oeuvre obtains, this renovative handling of the Austen text, together with the spectator's reception, contributes inevitably to the source material, which is why "texts are said to be mosaics of citations that are visible and invisible, heard and silent; they are always already written and read" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 21). Austen-world reminded by well-behaviours, good manners, adored dances and unforgettable love with the pure rural areas of Regency England and the luminous balls; consequently, the present-day spectators may imagine the blurred sides.

The Austen phenomenon is located within the interstices of the oral, visual, and spatial delivery systems, systems that reinforce each other and in turn reinforce the interaction among these media. Increasingly, this is the way cultural experiences are disseminated and consumed: see the film, read the book, buy the soundtrack, check out the Web site, visit the actual Austen sites in English country houses. (Pucci & Thompson, 2012, p. 5)

These inter-mediatic texts that try to deploy Austen's world lead spectators to watch these adaptations. What is more, Austen's "characters strike a perfect balance between recognisable types and individuals with complex motivations and idiosyncratic personalities. Readers and watchers identify with them and yet cannot fully predict their behaviours" (Troost & Greenfield, 2001, p. 3). This may be one of the reasons why we repeatedly have these adaptations. Yet, in 21st-century versions, related to the demands and participation of the fans of Austen novels and adapted versions, we trace these transcoded variants more. In a way, the claims of the consumers/participants are decisive in (re)/shaping the Austenique. Yet, it is also related to the fact that "[t]he concerns at the center of Austen's plots – sex, romance, and money – are central concerns in our own era" (Troost & Greenfield, 2001, pp. 3-4). Likewise, even in the twenty-first century, her central topics affect the spectators' ability to find a connection between her world and theirs. But somehow, the recalled Regency past reminds us of the genteel, upper-class, luxurious one rather than the less-known or ignored lives of marginalised people. In other words, "we seek difference, but a familiar difference" (Troost & Greenfield, 2001, p. 4) within these adapted versions of Austen's books.

These films give people the chance to escape from the harsh and uncertain issues of the twenty-first century. Thus, the longing for a secure environment, as in Regency and Austenian, is required, not because of desiring a more socially restricted community but of her criticism of it: "While we may desire to escape to the world of this older, genteel class, we are simultaneously uneasy about such a wish: Austen gives us the historical fantasy yet provides harsh ridicule of those who are too snobbish in their class distinctions" (Troost & Greenfield, 2001, p. 4), which is why we have ambivalent feelings about this experience of nostalgia in multiple ways. The visual material certainly transformed the world of Austen. The images and depictions of the settings of rural England, including the details of the costumes and domestic decorations or the heroes riding horses, all change our perception of Austen's Regency.

The unavoidable fascination of the spectators when losing themselves in the charm of the Austenian Regency while shuttling back and forth between the past and the present affects the repositioning of Austen in the contemporary cultural landscape. With the renewed fast-paced and more colourful adaptations compared to the earlier adaptations, the visual re-imaginings of Austen texts create acquaintanceship and attract the spectators to perceive the remote historical material as if they are their own. Within the act of filmmaking, it is necessary to make the distanced Austen's world congruous to the interests of the 21st-century spectators. Interestingly, however, while conducting this translative recreation, some conventional expectancies of the spectators should be complemented as if it is a recipe. While mediating between the presentation of the past and present presentation concurrently, the postmodern self-conscious appeals and nostalgic feelings toward another moment, primarily to Victorian or Regency as distant temporalities, somehow attract the spectators' attention. Together with this neo-formulaic tendency in the appropriation process, how the transcoded *Pride and Prejudice* notions have been presented is the very spot that functions for Austenmania in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***Pride and Prejudice* as the Most Appealing Austenique Text**

There have been several adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*<sup>2</sup>: the 1938 BBC version, the 1940 version produced in the United States, the 1949 version TV series in the US, a 1952 mini-series in the UK, and the 1952 and 1967 versions of TV mini-series of BBC,

2 As Rolf Beuer (2000) asserts, nearly "186 'completions, sequels, adaptations, pastiches, and fictionalisations' of Austen texts, 71 of which used *Pride and Prejudice* as a source text" (as cited in Voigts-Virchow, 2012, p. 40).



1980 version whose script was produced by Fay Weldon (the famous feminist novelist), famous 1995 version directed by Simon Langton which created a phenomenon called “Darcymania” because of the inspirational acting of Colin Firth, 2003 *Pride and Prejudice: a Latter Day Comedy*, 2004 *Bride and Prejudice* of which the setting is India, 2005 version directed by Joe Wright and 2007 *Becoming Jane* proposing the idea that Elizabeth’s story is also Jane Austen’s. 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, is an appealing version of adaptation in that so many spectators adored how it deciphers the novel via Andrew Davies’s re-creations while adapting it to the screen. To create an active feeling to the letters that reveal some truths about the position of the characters, he benefits from “additional scenes, flashback, and voice-over,” for instance when the letter about Wickham is presented, “Darcy moves to the window, which frames him. The camera zooms out and away from Darcy to a flashback, depicting the history between Darcy and Wickham with a voice over by Darcy” (Raguz, 207, pp. 353-4). Whereas, in the 2005 version, while the voice-over of Darcy delivers the contents of the letter, “... Keira Knightley [acting as Elizabeth], whose shoulders gradually droop the more she learns about the wickedness of Mr Wickham” (Raguz, 2017, p. 355), the more she realises the fact that she is wrong in her judgements of people. In this way, there is no need to add a speech since her body language shows how she feels and how she is transformed.

Using cinematic and narrative techniques, instead of focusing more on the debates about fidelity or infidelity to the adapted text, 90s adaptations transformed how Austen texts revealed the characters and the spectators’ perceptions.<sup>3</sup> Lights, colour, music and editing all lead readers to imagine their lustful longings. “Francois Truffaut calls this kind of film-editing and shooting ‘the contrary of variety,’ a use of a variety of technologies to paradoxically blend into a single impression of unity within which this host of technologies assaults the viewer continually” (as cited in Gallager, 1989, p. 266). In some instances of the renovated adaptations of Austen novels, we see “the film’s mise-en-scene visually recalls other much loved films... these meta-adaptive moments foster nostalgia” (p. 246). Balls, music, and dance are embedded into Regency-decorated houses within the idyllic English countryside, reminding us of the peculiarities of heritage cinema. While benefiting from these new techniques to renew Austen’s world, adaptations deploy some similarities like the use of “archaic dialogues” (Moody, 1997,

3 As an example of “camera-driven” works, for instance, the 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* “fetishises the looks of the heroes ... by a variety of devices” (Moody, 1997, n. p.), such as the camera continuously focusing on Colin Firth as Darcy. What is more, not only the camera but also Elizabeth, acted by Jennifer Ehle, gazes at him, and the camera angles create unforgettable mise en scènes of Firth, and he becomes the iconic figure of Darcy.

n. p) accompanying the illuminating balls, elegant costumes of men and women, and green rural England depicted as the essential parts of all these adaptations.

In addition to cinema's stylistic devices, *Pride and Prejudice* stands out exclusively due to Austen's unique portrayal of human nature through her characters. Within the web of social interactions, she presents how people's essentialism and harsh judgements may affect our personality and life depending on the outside realities. From the explicit individualism of Elizabeth to proud Darcy<sup>4</sup> and the flirtatious Lydia to surrendered Charlotte, all the characters represent and reveal several dimensions of the essence of human beings within society. Elizabeth is a distinguished character because she resists society's expectation of people to preserve their status (mostly via marriage) and wants to resolve the so-called fragility of her femaleness. Hence, one of the reasons why this work is apt to be an adaptation milieu is related to the timeless notions of Austen characters (like the unique individualism of Elizabeth), in addition to the feelings of nostalgia that the contemporary spectators feel for the old times embodied by these characters. *Pride and Prejudice* is so proper to be adapted to screen in that, as George Bluestone (1966) asserts:

... given the special attributes of its style, possesses the essential ingredients of a movie script... [resembling] to the components of Jane Austen's style – a lack of particularity, an absence of metaphorical language, an omniscient point of view, a dependency on dialogue to reveal character, an insistence on absolute clarity. (pp. 117-8)

Austen texts are suitable for the adaptation process "because her plots are well constructed, her casts of characters and settings are relatively limited, and her subject matter is archetypal or romantic – characteristics that accord with definitions of cinematic based on narratological criteria" (Monaghan, 2009, p. 12). Yet, for some critics the difficulty of adapting her novels stems from the fact that she uses dense "irony" in her narration, she emphasises the "inner" worlds of the characters, and she maintains "spare descriptions

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4 The difference in the costumes attracts our attention, together with the deviations through the scenes in which director Simon Langton and writer Andrew Davies added that Darcy's wet clothes have turned out to be one of the iconic moments in the adaptation history. With this re-portrayal of Darcy, the spectators' gaze is transformed into female gazes that objectify Darcy as the object of desire, this time, Darcy becomes an indispensable image of the desired spectacle "with [his] appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that [he] can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 11), which paves the way to a concept called Darcymania, in way deconstructing the preferences of the spectators even by reflecting a classical world.

of characters and places” (p. 13). Yet, this difficulty also paves the way for the enriching aspects of the re-handlings of the source material. Moreover, through her characters’ evaluations of themselves, we see the discrepancies between our inner feelings and how we utter or show them. As Nicholas Marsh asserts, “We are aware of constantly telling stories to ourselves and about ourselves, trying to explain our feelings and actions, trying to capture life in words; and we also know that we can never entirely succeed – life experience is too fluid and complex to be contained in words” (1998, pp. 236-7). For instance, as Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth, he rationalises his act, but these are Austen’s criticisms towards the society that created such stereotypical absurd situations:

My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. (Austen, 2006, p. 97)

That shows how life and relationships are too complicated to not to be deduced to certain formulaic so-called rationalisations, which is seen when Elizabeth responds to him, explaining, “I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than to decline them... You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so” (p. 98). In this way, Austen both achieved to compare the ridiculed version of Mr. Collins’ rationalism versus Elizabeth’s ironical rationalism about the society’s socio-economic interests about marriage. These kinds of ironical satires about characters’ relations and positions within society become a prolific source for adaptors.

Another aspect of the continuous adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* is its being a core model for the romantic comedy genre, as Deborah Cartmell (2010) claims:

Indeed Austen’s novel provides the template for so many romantic comedies as well as repeatedly being repackaged into ‘heritage productions’. Its fairy tale qualities and its ‘shamelessly wish fulfilling qualities’ seem at odds with its more serious dimensions, but nonetheless explain why the narrative structure is so frequently used in romantic comedies. (p. 19)

When the spectators question the function of marriage with or without romantic involvement, beginning in the 1990s as a turning point in gender issues concerning the postfeminist era and carrying onwards. When the interest in romance fiction is concerned, “it becomes clear that romance novels perform this compensatory function for women because they use them to diversify the pace and the character of their habitual existence” (Radway, 1991, p. 89). These qualifications that create a romantic world are also related to its inspirational notions, evoking sensations for females who long for an ideal love relationship:

Because they focus on the inevitability of marriage in a woman’s life and subtly explore the relationship between marriage and happiness, Austen’s novels allow filmmakers to explore what has again become a central concern and anxiety of our times and certainly of many women’s lives: finding the appropriate mate. Of course, most of the adaptations play on the concomitant fear of never finding such ‘fullfillment.’ (Voiret, 2012, p. 234)

As Janice A. Radway also explains in her article “Women Read the Romance: the Interaction of Text and Context” (1983), this may also be because there existed specific structures of romance novels and “by continuing to maintain that a woman’s journey to happiness and fulfilment must always be undertaken in the company of a protective man” (p. 53). Nevertheless, with Austen’s heroines, the ironical stance toward stereotypical gender notions has always been questioned. Besides, because of her ironical depictions of the confinements of the society where she lives, there also appear to be some comical behaviours and situations. “While describing ‘female difficulties’ in plentiful, believable detail, she nevertheless manages to envelop women’s lives in romantic comedy” (Ross, 1991, p. 167), surrounded by typical figures and social ills of those times. In Elizabeth’s case, with her keen judgment, wit, and the romantic entanglements she faces, she is already in a romantic comedy environment. Mostly verbally, she directs her witty evaluations to Darcy:

From the very beginning—from the first moment, I may almost say—of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry. (Austen, 2006, p. 215)

The satirical tone, which contains comic elements in Austen's writing, comes to the forefront, especially when we see stereotypical members of the Regency society. Elizabeth's intelligence and ironic stance make her an unforgettable character, positioning her as a figure eligible for multi-dimensional evaluations. *Pride and Prejudice* shows us how a person gains a thorough insight through making some deductions after learning from their own misjudgements, "She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (p. 188). After learning the truth and how she misinterpreted everything, she felt disappointed. This is a universal and timeless issue when human beings are concerned regardless of gender. Throughout the novel, Elizabeth confronts some possible relationships and specific challenges against which she responds mostly ironically. Yet, she loses herself in her inner turmoils to decide what is right or wrong. Considering the social norms of the Regency period, it was very problematic to lead a lonely life without a proper marriage candidate, which is why "for the young ladies of the peerage, being presented to the queen at court marked their entry into fashionable society and the marriage market. Once she had been presented, a young woman then ... set her mind upon finding a suitable husband..." (Hughes, 1998, p. 179). On several occasions, she comes to the edge of marriage because, as a woman, this is necessary for her future security. Since Elizabeth is a multidimensional character, her ups and downs are intertwined with the social expectancies of other characters.

### **Some Recent Adapt/(Appropriations) of *Pride and Prejudice***

Austen's novels are suitable for adaptation because they present universal themes that do not require specific placement or time. Her depiction of the importance of human beings' refrainment / urge to be socialised has taken place in her books, "From group to group, from person to person, and from moment to moment, the sociability that produces a community or a culture may seem to a reader welcoming, warming, stimulating, challenging, irritating, alienating" (O'Farrell, 2009, pp. 480-1). Her inclusion of free indirect discourse deciphers her characters' inner worlds. Signifying the domination of the two protagonists' inclinations in a love relationship makes *Pride and Prejudice* apt to adapt. Darcy is so proud of his social position in Regency England, whereas Elizabeth is prejudiced against him due to his detestment of her. Adapting *Pride and Prejudice* into all sorts of genres, like murder mysteries, zombie movies, children's literature, modern romantic comedies, or Bollywood or Pakistani versions, never ends. Modern-day adaptations benefit from the prevalent, popular genres inserted into

Austen plots as mash-ups. A strictly faithful presentation would be impossible while adapting and appropriating, specifically in contemporary times. This is due to the difference in the mediums and the inevitable presentist handling of the producers. As Rosemary Arrojo asserts: "Our translation of any text won't be faithful to the original but to what we consider the original to be, to what we consider what constitutes it, - to our own interpretation of the original text, that will be always a result of what we are, feel and think" (2000, p. 41). Mostly, we admire those places and times of England together with our longing gazes to witness how Darcy transforms from a so-called arrogant man to an ideal man for Elizabeth, who has a rather dense emotionality. Yet, with the conventional codes of that world transferred by transcoding them to tempt the spectators somehow, there appear varied versions of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Struggling within the confinements of the time, particularly shown via the families' demands from their daughters and sons to marry the proper marriage candidate, when the characters are able to understand both their own desires and the other person who would be a possible match, the novels' thematic concerns go beyond the times it had written. Contextually speaking, Jane Austen's recognition as a writer who uses satire to criticise society's perfunctory morality paves the way for her novels to become multi-faceted. For instance, in *Pride and Prejudice*, beneath the romantic plot, the characters struggle to find themselves in a society where the opinions of others are also important. In other words, the outcome of the plot of marriage arousing curiosity is accompanied by a thoroughly presented essence of human nature and behaviours, including their ups and downs, good and bad sides. In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth and Darcy eventually reach the point of loving each other and are united as a pair, but they also experience a transformation of self-assessment, and specifically, mutual understanding of certain moral issues signified in the title of the novel, "pride" and "prejudice". Austen's texts create:

powerful images translating our desire to go beyond our present stereotyped dichotomies, they also offer a complex sample of male and female characters presenting more or less traditional masculine and feminine traits. The staging of those diverse characters and relationships allow filmmakers to explore unabashedly our conflicting and at times regressive understanding of gender and gender relations. (Voiret, 2012, p. 233)

Perhaps one of the reasons for choosing Austen's texts to adapt is the confusion of modern women who try to choose between love and maintaining power, marriage and remaining single, which is why Austenmania proceeds due to its thematic concerns like finding the ideal spouse, mutual love and marriage (if possible).

The novel consists of several instances the adaptors prefer to use regardless of genre or time differences. "At the occasion of this first ball, Jane Austen introduces her novel's main topics: prejudice based on 'first impressions' and 'pride' as a trait of a non-virtuous character" (Fricke, 2014, p. 350). When the protagonists see each other at a ball for the first time, we see Darcy, who is reluctant to dance. He wants to be with people who are his equals in terms of socioeconomic status. When Bingley shows Elizabeth, he immediately answers: "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (Austen, 2006, p. 12). This rudeness on Darcy's side is because of his not taking any measures to prevent himself from being overheard by Elizabeth. As seen, the popularity of this novel might also be related to Austen's use of the formula of "good romance" (Radway, 1991, p. 73), which maintains a transformation story of a male character who is very loving, considerate, and cordial in his treatment of the female character. As Voigt-Virchow categorises, the current adaptations blend different genres into the conventional Regency romance formula. In this way, the appropriated world of Austenique appeals to the interests of contemporary spectators who want to consume and participate in this exclusive oeuvre. These revisitings sometimes self-reflexively represent Austenique - as in the case of *Lost in Austen* (2008) or *Persuasion* (2022), and as mash-ups like,

- *Bride and Prejudice*

Alternate Timeline, Space and Ethnicity in the movieverse

- *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*

Alternative Universe

Pastiche and generic crossover Regency romance/ horror. (Voigts-Virchow, 2012, p. 43)

As for interpreting some adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* that use different adaptation techniques, it can be seen that they are mostly doubly adapted when transformed to the screen: once from Austen's novel and then from the re-visiting novel. Austenites who are fans of hers, specifically her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, demand the

world of Austen, and there are many works called fan fiction that emerge as spin-offs, sequels, and mash-ups. *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) is directed by Gurinder Chadha and shot mostly in English, adapted into Bollywood style as a musical comedy. Suitable for the Austen world, there is no kissing, which also appeals to the conventions of Bollywood cinema; this movie becomes a medium to represent “a clash of cultures rather than ... class confrontation” (Cartmell, 2010, p. 101). At the beginning of the movie, while we see Darcy complaining about the unknown world of India, Lalita (Elizabeth) utters to her mother: “All mothers think that any single guy with big bucks must be shopping for a wife” (as cited in Cartmell, 2010, p. 55).

The plot takes place in India, where Lalita meets Will Darcy, a wealthy American who is Balraj’s friend. Balraj is affected by Lalita’s sister, Jaya. The movie transforms the story when Darcy leaves his first-class seat to be with Lalita in economy class. This way, the plot is modernised yet remains parallel to the original. The deviation related to the cultural differences concerning the neo-colonial features leads the main characters to have “pride” and “prejudice,” this time directly tied to their nationality and authentic culture.

Lalita- You said yourself that you’re used to the best. I’m sure you think India’s beneath you.

...

Darcy- Don’t you want to see more investments, more jobs?

Lalita- Yes, but who does it really benefit? You want people to come to India without having to deal with Indians.

...

Lalita- Isn’t that what all tourists want here? Five-star comfort with a bit of culture thrown in? Well, I don’t want you turning India into a theme park. I thought we got rid of imperialists like you. (Chadha, 2005)

Lalita preserves prejudices about Darcy, a Westerner and wealthy young man. They both carry their Indian and American pride. This contextual digression is also similar to the existing cultural clashes in real life:



Chadha explained some of her hybrid choices regarding the film ... Neither Eurocentric nor Indocentric, she 'operate[d] in [a] global cultural paradigm.' Wanting her theme to reach 'the Diasporic, cosmopolitan, global audience around the world,' she chose 'a story they're going to be familiar with' as well as one that fits 'contemporary Indian society.' (Kasbekar, 2021, n. p.)

Being an American but following the footsteps of the authentic Darcy, this time in a multi-cultural atmosphere, Darcy's transformation signifies a cultural synthesis: "He has not gone native [I shudder at the expression], but he has learnt to combine east and west successfully". That is why a new understanding of the neo-colonial perception makes sense in the contemporary multi-cultural world. Lalita, too, "exemplifies an ideal fusion of Eastern and Western values" (Kasbekar, 2021, n. p.) in her loyalty to Indian traditions and her personal preferences.

In *Austenland* (2013), directed by Jerusha Hess, which is adapted from Shannon Hale's novel *Austenland*, the inspiration point is women wanting romantic adventures who thought their possible suitor should resemble Darcy of Colin Firth in 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*, which is a very current appeal for modern spectators – especially women – who are in search for romantic love. As the title indicates, *Austenland* presents a place for a holiday that includes the theme of Austen's world of *Pride and Prejudice*, "In *Austenland* the economic imperative of this literary tourism is also clearly and comically exposed" (Wardle, 2018, p. 256). This shows again how, in our (post)/postmodern world, we want to consume everything, even classical novels, by being a part of them. Similarly, in recent attempts at commercialising such experiences, Netflix offers "live experiences for *Bridgerton*, *Money Heist*, *Stranger Things*, *Squid Game*, and *Netflix Bites*, Netflix House [which] will . . . create an unforgettable venue" (Goldblatt, 2024, n. p.). This shows how present consumers want to experience these fantasy worlds by actively participating in them:

The country house asserts its pastoral credentials in the first long-shot where it is shown perched on a hill, framed by trees, fronted by a lake and bathed in sunshine. In addition, the film audience hears a classical music score inviting further comparisons with previous filmic constructions. The film thus deliberately crafts its location from the tropes of classic literary adaptations and biopics, and yet at the same time these conventions are commandeered to become part of a parody or pastiche of those films. (Wardle, 2018, p. 256)

Jane, the protagonist, is obsessed with Colin Firth's Darcy version, and she saves money to go to an Austen theme resort where there are male actors who would give you the feeling of romance, but no touching is allowed. She is in her 30s and explains her status, "I am single because all the good men are fictional" (Taylor, 2013, n. p.). Jane attempts to find the love that she needs, and this resort proposes that they will either grant her romance or she will get rid of her delusional tie with the story of *Pride and Prejudice*. Taken by a Rolls Royce, American tourists attracted by the Austenian world, seeking romance, which is expressed as "LC – life-changing experience ... get to play the heroine of your very own Austen history" (Wardle, 2018, p. 257), which is the motto of the travel agency. Perceiving the pretence of role-playing, she soon realises that she wants to experience real love. Jane has the copper package related to her economic situation, a significant aspect of modern life that blends high and low, serving the consumerist mentality of popular culture. Involved in several acts with the paid actors, with specific roles dedicated to specific visitors, they pretend to be involved in romantic plots. However, with some comic elements, romance is parodied via conventional depictions of previous romance adaptations. In the movie, we see "...an unsurprising duel for Jane's affections between a Wickhamishly devious groundskeeper ... and Mr Nobley, a Darcy-esque grump..." (Taylor, 2013, n. p.), through which Jane also begins to question whether it is worthwhile to experience a fake love rather than an authentic one. While Nobley confesses her true love to Jane, she realises Martin's steps to romance with Jane are scripted. Later, it is revealed that Nobley is in love with Jane, and she accepts him. Thus, the movie emphasises that authenticity in love is preferable, not pretension, even in contemporary times. While parodying the appeal of present-day spectators to Austenique material, this movie, at the same time, delves into both the classic Austen text as well as its adaptations, as Linda Hutcheon asserts about "the modern use of parody:"

does not seem to aim at ridicule or destruction. Parody implies a distance between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new work, a distance usually signalled by irony. But the irony is more playful than ridiculing, more critical than destructing... (1978, p. 202)

*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016) is an adaptation of the novel with the same title. It was written by Seth Grahame-Smith and parodied *Pride and Prejudice*, providing both comedy and horror. Directed by Burr Steers, this movie adapts the original Austen plot, but in this version, England is occupied by zombies, which is why even the girls are armed. This world is different from the world of Austen. This time, another question

arises: Why remember the Austenian world via romance that includes a zombie invasion, which is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century monster? (Biajoli, 2016, p. 5):

Two antithetical, distinctly marked, generally crystallized genres collide in pastiche - ... the Austen canon vs. zombie canon... These texts both re-produce Austen as pastiche (*Pride and Prejudice*...) and at the same time re-situate and actualize Austen texts in a confrontational popular horror environment (... *and Zombies*). (Voigst-Virchow, 2012, p. 48)

Transformed into a place of zombie invasion; this time, conflicts arise because of zombie-human encounters. For instance, Darcy's stabbing of Wickham in the chest, thinking that he is not dead, is one of the examples. Thus, in this version of *Pride and Prejudice*, surviving in a world filled with zombies is the most important struggle, not the marriage issue for both men and women. Yet, there is a parallelism between zombie survival and coping with the strict rules of the Regency-era marriage market. The novel version begins similarly: "It's a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p. 7). By merging Regency-era romance features borrowed from Austen's original text and providing a popular, exciting form of horror movies about zombies, this movie turns out to be an extraordinary version of *Pride and Prejudice*. To minimise the gender boundaries of the romance genre by carrying the plot into a zombie threat, this version creates a male world, inserting action as well (Voigst-Virchow, 2012, p. 44). This version proves that Austen mash-ups are preferable for current spectators. It has become "a graphic novel as well as a computer game... [it] made it to third place on the *New York Times* bestseller list and 27<sup>th</sup> place on amazon.co.uk's bestseller list" (p. 46). In this way, by blending several styles, genres, and/or mediums, the world Austen devises continues to be presented and fantasised.

## Conclusion

The repulsion from certain societal restrictions of Regency or stereotypical gender roles creates a continuing attraction to Austenique Regency romances. This is why adaptations and appropriations achieved by deviations continue to be produced in large numbers and using varied methods. As Jim Collins (2013) has also asserted, Austen fans are involved in producing stories and creating a "transauthorial, transmedial and transnarrative universe" (p. 647), which proves how recent Austen adaptations have become transcoded versions of Austenmania. It is also observed that as a result of the

fans' conscious and continuous demands for Austenique in general, and *Pride and Prejudice* specifically, adaptations contribute to the new meaning creations of the classic text. This is achieved mostly through newly handled material concerning both the thematic and style-wise issues of the novel re-visited with spin-offs, sequels, or mash-ups that use different cultures and presentist perspectives and introduce different genres. As seen in the specific appropriations of *Pride and Prejudice* discussed in this article: "Bride" reinforces the idea of marriage in Indian culture, "land" is about the cultural commodity that people want to consume the Austenique, and the insertion of the "zombies" contributes to alternate worlds by mixing up genres. This shows the idea: 'It is a truth universally and timelessly shown that every modern spectator who desires to have some romantic involvements should be in want of a neo-adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*'.

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