

"This is an uncommonly intelligent film, smart and amusing too, and anyone who thinks it is not faithful to Austen doesn't know the author but only her plots." – Roger Ebert

Competence Statements

- F-11: Can design and produce a significant artifact or document that gives evidence of advanced competence.
- F-12: Using Jane Austen's novel *Pride & Prejudice* and its film adaptations as a basis, can understand and explain the relationship between literature and film, and how viewing films can deepen our understanding of literature.

Advanced Project Scope

My Advanced Project explored the relationship between novels and film using Jane Austen's novel *Pride & Prejudice* and several of its adaptations as a foundation. As outlined in my AP contract, my expected learning outcomes were:

- 1) To understand the process of adapting novels to film with a view to more critical film analysis;
- 2) To actively apply concepts learned to adaptations of the novel *Pride & Prejudice*; and
- 3) To understand how films can be used – whether in a classroom or in a book group – to enhance understanding of written texts.

Learning Activities included:

- 1) Reading *Pride & Prejudice* and viewing several film adaptations, incorporating activities and concepts from film studies resources;
- 2) Hosting a *Pride and Prejudice* book and film discussion in order to gather wider impressions on the films, and test ideas found in film studies resources;

- 3) Conducting research on topics explored in the project: current scholarship on “Jane Austen in Film”; film study as it applies to literary adaptations; and film study as a tool for literary studies; and
- 4) Reflecting on concepts and ideas that emerged from learning activities; synthesizing reflections into a final paper.

Background and Overview of Literature & Film

Prior to completing Advanced Project, my primary experience with literature and film was as a student and casual movie goer. As a literature lover and English major, films based on literature have always held special appeal for me. In high school, our English Literature class viewed Roman Polanski’s adaptation of *Tess* after reading the novel. Many years later I took a non-credit course at the University of Chicago Graham School called “Jane Austen and Film” that covered three of Austen’s novels and the adaptations then available: *Sense & Sensibility*, *Pride & Prejudice* and *Persuasion*. All of the films we viewed in this class are now considered “heritage” films, a traditional adaptation style made famous by Merchant & Ivory’s films based on *Remains of The Day*, *Howard’s End*, *A Room With a View* and *The Bostonians* – to name a just few. In simplest terms, heritage firms take the fidelity to the written text and period detail of BBC serialized television dramas and apply them to the big screen, though there is fairly wide variety within this category.

Outside of school, I particularly enjoyed Kenneth Branagh’s Shakespeare adaptations, along with films that adapt works more cleverly, such as *Shakespeare in Love* or *The Knight’s Tale*, which is based loosely on Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. Among the Jane Austen adaptations, films such as *Clueless*, the 1999

adaptation of *Mansfield Park*, and *Becoming Jane* are excellent examples of a more loosely adapted film that either transports the story to another time and place (as *Clueless* does with *Emma*), combines elements from the novel with other texts to create a hybrid adaptation (*Mansfield Park*) or writes a new story entirely based on the author's life and works (*Becoming Jane*).

While these viewing experiences were valuable, ultimately they represent a more casual activity that rarely results in reflection beyond "The book was better than the film." They certainly helped me visualize the stories in the written texts, but I never explored the relationship between the films and the written texts in any depth. This was partially due to time constraints: in literature classes, novels are justifiably given priority over films. In addition, formal "adaptation study", particularly of Jane Austen's novels, was still emerging, largely in response to the proliferation of adaptations then appearing.

The Resurgence of Jane Austen and Film

Between 1995 and 1999 five of Jane Austen's novels were adapted for television, cinema, or both. In 1995, BBC released its now famous six-hour *Pride & Prejudice* mini-series for television; in addition, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion* were both released on film. The following year saw two versions of *Emma*: a mini-series for television and a film; finally in 1999, *Mansfield Park* was released on film. This quick succession of adaptations brought about a flurry of analysis and speculation as academics and cultural commentators alike marveled at the sudden fascination with Jane Austen – was it purely nostalgia, or something deeper? What meaning and relevance could a late 18th Century author have for a modern audience?

Along with these questions, the quality of the adaptations received considerable attention. Initially “quality” referred primarily to fidelity to the written text, or how closely the film followed the novel. While Austen’s plots translated very well to screen, many critics considered the more literary aspects of her novels patently unfilmable: how do you translate an omniscient narrator or a character’s internal dialogue to the screen? Over time “analysis” began to ask more sophisticated questions such as: What makes Austen novels so appealing for adaptation? How, exactly, is film used to convey various aspects of her novels? How accurately do the films portray the novels? Do the films accurately portray their time and culture, ours – or both? Whichever side of this debate you happen to be on, there is widespread agreement on one thing: “One of the best results of the [films] is that they have inspired discussion of both the novels and the films, and discussion keeps a novelist alive” (Parrill 8).

Literature & Film Study Come Together

For many years advances in adaptation study remained largely within the domain of Film Studies departments, with very little crossover into English classrooms. Eventually this too changed, with growing interest in English departments to explore how film could be used more effectively to help students understand the written texts. The advent of VHS and DVR technology, followed closely by the rise of Internet streaming and YouTube, created endless opportunities for on-demand film viewing, with students especially taking advantage of these viewing modes – though primarily outside the classroom.

Inside the classroom it remained largely business as usual, but thanks to some excellent resources now available to teachers, it is possible to combine film and literature study to create an extremely enriching learning experience, which in John Golden's view, promotes true 21st Century Literacy by teaching the ability to analyze not just written texts, but multimedia "texts" as well (4). In fact, Golden asserts, our culture has become so saturated with visual media that students are fairly adept at film analysis, often doing so instinctively, without even realizing it:

Although they may treat it chiefly as passive entertainment, students can be sophisticated interpreters of sound and image. They know – often without knowing they know – that a close-up of an actor's face signifies something different emotionally from a long shot of an actor across a distance, or that certain kinds of music indicate that a dramatic event is about to happen (6).

He highlights the similarities between literary and film analysis that make them suitable for studying together:

Contemporary thinkers on media literacy have argued that the same habits that a good reader brings to a written text are those that a critical viewer brings to a visual text: enhancing one effortlessly enhances the other. In both, a critical thinker predicts, makes connections, infers, asks questions, and interprets. In both, meaning is made through the details of character, theme, plot, mood and symbolism. For both, we must guide students to be active interpreters (6).

Ellen Belton expands this idea in her analysis of several adaptations of *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*:

In approaching an Austen adaptation, the viewer is encouraged to ask the following questions: What does the adaptation tell us about the novel? What does it tell us about the culture that produced it? Have the filmmakers found a way of reimagining the original that speaks to a contemporary audience while enriching its understanding of the prior text? (177).

Obviously, analyzing film requires learning some new terminology, but this need not be daunting, and it has parallels in literary study: while the individual "unit" for a written text is the word, in films this

becomes the “shot”. Just as writers string individual words together to tell a written story, film editors string together individual camera shots to tell that story visually. Literary elements such as setting, character, theme and plot are all conveyed visually using different types of camera shots carefully chosen by the director and then arranged by the film editor. Other factors such as sound track, costume design and lighting also come into play, but the basic “unit” of film – the camera shot – pulls these things together to create the visual “text” we know as film.

Fidelity to the Text

The notion of “fidelity to a text” is hard-wired in film viewers: how many times have you dismissed a film for “not being as good as the book” – whether a classic or popular novel? In reality “absolute fidelity” to a text is extremely difficult to achieve. There are several reasons for this, starting with the written text itself. Using *Pride and Prejudice* as an example, Jane Austen’s original version of this book, *First Impressions*, was initially rejected by publishers and later substantially revised and retitled before its publication in 1813. That Jane Austen frequently revised her texts in this manner is widely recognized:

Despite a published canon of only six novels, Austen’s literary career is a complex one, spanning four decades that witnessed much drafting and re-drafting of her oeuvre (Mandal 42).

In addition, the practice of openly borrowing or emulating previous authors’ works previously noted in my Chaucer ILP was still commonplace at this time, and Jane Austen used it freely:

Jane Austen discovered her own voice in dialogue with her predecessors. Her early parodies especially resemble imitation, which depends upon readers recognizing the relation between copy and archetype...Thus the onscreen versions of Jane Austen stand to her in the same intertextual relationship as she stood to her predecessors. These are texts which allude to other texts (Harris 54).

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Among the adaptations I viewed, the most blatant example of this is the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation: "Screen Play by Aldous Huxley and Jane Murfin, Based upon the Dramatization of Jane Austen's Novel written by Helen Jerome" (Opening Credits). In family parlance, this makes the 1940 screenplay a 3rd generation written text, undoubtedly influenced by Jerome's script *and* Austen's novel. Given this "intertextuality", how does one define "fidelity", or judge an adaptation primarily on how faithful it is to a particular text? The answer is, you don't; the more valuable exercise, scholars suggest, is to "hold both texts simultaneously in mind" (Harris 53; Cutchins 88) in order to enhance the understanding of both.

Translation From Text to Film

Finally, just as translation from one written language to another is fraught with complications, often resulting in elements lost in translation, so too is translation from written text to film: they are, in essence, different languages. Dennis Cutchins illustrates this point in the classroom by asking two students who speak the same foreign language to translate the same Emily Dickinson poem. The first student leaves the room while the remaining student translates the poem from English to the other language. After returning to the room, the first student re-translates the poem back to English, but is not given the original English version to work with. Inevitably, certain words or ideas expressed in the poem get lost in translation. As Cutchins observes, "translating" from novel to film will also result in losing certain elements (an omniscient narrator being one example). However, even when loss occurs, meaning is still created in the new translation and there is value in comparing the two: the new text

opens our eyes to what is lost. When translating literature to film, the adaptations inevitably “send us back to the written texts” (91).

Why Adapt Jane Austen’s Novels to Film?

Jane Austen’s novels may be classics, but they also enjoy an enormous widespread popular appeal. Critics cite many reasons for this, ranging from good old-fashioned nostalgia – our desire to escape to a simpler time – to good old fashioned romance: Austen heroines may encounter serious obstacles to happiness, but they always live happily ever after. More serious Austen scholars are quick to point out that romance and nostalgia are hardly sufficient to explain 200-plus years of popularity, reminding us that despite their happy endings, Jane Austen’s novels deal with the serious issues of her time, most notably those pertaining to women: property rights, marriage, and their role in the public sphere: “However much society has changed, Austen’s heroines...deal with the believable, timeless obstacles of class, money and misunderstanding, which makes her works adaptable to any era” (James 3).

Pride & Prejudice on Film

Of Jane Austen’s six novels, *Pride and Prejudice* is the most frequently adapted, including a stage play in 1936, Hollywood films in 1940 and 2005, a Broadway musical in 1959, and six serialized versions for BBC between 1952 and 1995. This impressive list reflects almost as many adaptations as all of the other Austen novels combined, so many in fact, that “its main characters are known by name even to many who have never thought to open the book itself” (Carroll & Wiltshire 162). While its Cinderella-story qualities may be largely responsible for this, Austen scholars insist that this popularity proves that *Pride*

and Prejudice “has not just retained its power to amuse and delight, it has seemed to demonstrate something *our culture* finds powerful and true” (Carroll and Wiltshire 162, italics mine). This may be true, however, Troost and Greenfield caution that “our culture” is not a fixed concept, but one that changes with each succeeding generation, and that:

The film and television adaptations are attuned to one cultural moment as Austen novels have proven themselves not to be. Every generation needs a film or video remake of *Pride and Prejudice* whereas Austen novels have fit a succession of cultural moments for nearly 200 years. That is the reason they form part of the literary canon. The films get remade because they do not inhabit a long sweep of time comfortably (9).

Even the most casual viewing of the three adaptations chosen for this project powerfully attests to this statement. A closer look reveals three widely divergent adaptations from extremely different cultural moments that not only tell us about the novel and their particular moment, but serve as very clear examples of “texts that allude to other texts” as noted above.

The 1940 *Pride & Prejudice* Adaptation: Film in Cultural Context

The 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation, starring Laurence Olivier as Mr. Darcy and Greer Garson as Elizabeth Bennet, is notable for much more than just the complex origin of the screenplay discussed earlier. This is a pure Hollywood adaptation in the screwball comedy style so popular during this era. Where heritage films make every effort to capture authentic period details and stay relatively true to the written text, Hollywood adaptations make no such promises – and offer no apologies. The cultural moment of this film is critical: the outbreak of World War II. In this context, *Pride and Prejudice* is refashioned into a light romantic comedy that showcases the special relationship between America and England to convince American audiences that England was worthy of America’s support in the war. In

“Once Upon a Time” fashion, the opening frame announces: “It happened in Old England...” immediately evoking sympathy for the British cause.

The film’s setting is moved to the 1840s; 18th Century Regency fashion is replaced with costumes inspired by *Gone With the Wind*, on prominent display right from the film’s opening scene. Mrs. Bennet, Jane and Elizabeth are shopping for fabric, and Elizabeth laments that “her muslin has been worn for three years” – a reference not lost on audiences living in world of fabric rationing (Jones & Lane 50). Dancers at the ball (an interesting conflation of the Assembly and Netherfield Balls) enjoy waltzes and polka-mazurkas. In addition to fairly extensive cutting of the novel’s subplots, departures from the text reflect an effort to present Jane Austen’s story in a language that resonates with American film viewers. Mr. Darcy’s snub of Elizabeth at the Assembly Ball is an outstanding example of this. In the novel, Mr. Darcy refuses to dance with Elizabeth, telling Mr. Bingley:

She is tolerable, I suppose, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humor to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men (Austen, *Pride & Prejudice* 8).

In the 1940 adaptation, this is revised to express class difference in terms American audiences will quickly understand:

She is tolerable enough. But I’m in no humor tonight to give consequence to the middle classes at play.

Unlike the novel, where Mr. Darcy struggles mightily to resist his growing attraction to Elizabeth, Laurence Olivier’s Mr. Darcy overcomes his reservations easily, progressing quickly from indifference to romance to a “Happily Ever After” ending. The visit to Pemberly – essentially the turning point in the

novel – is eliminated entirely, as it highlights the class difference between Elizabeth and Darcy, making him appear too aristocratic in a film emphasizing middle class values and family unity. In line with this is a character re-shaping that renders most Austen purists speechless: far from trying to prevent Darcy's marriage to Elizabeth, Lady Catherine de Bourgh (easily the haughtiest character in all of English literature) actually advances his cause, gleefully chirping: "She's right for you Darcy...What you need is a woman that can stand up to you. I think you've found her." Coming from the woman in the novel who rudely chastises Elizabeth for aspiring to marry Darcy, this is nothing short of astonishing:

The upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections or fortune. Is this to be endured! But it must not, it shall not be. If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere, in which you have been brought up. (Austen, *Pride & Prejudice* 272).

This is hardly a cosmetic change, and it deserves a closer look. Ellen Belton suggests that:

This extraordinary transformation of the only titled character of real importance in the film is hard to read as anything less than the *capitulation* of the British aristocracy to democratization and social equality. Such an attempt to reconcile the British class structure with American *egalitarianism* is an essential ingredient for the US-British alliance (183, italics mine).

The British aristocracy capitulates to American egalitarianism? Really? Given the film's wider context, this is perhaps one interpretation, but something about the concept of Britain "capitulating to American egalitarianism" in order to gain support in the war rings false, and suggests a darker side of American society.

My first encounter with Hollywood's attempt to smooth class differences in film was during the SNL Course "Race and Identity in American Theater" taught by Fred Wellisch. One of my final papers for this class explored the relationship between Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* and the 1961 film

starring Sidney Poitier. While this was unquestionably a groundbreaking film at the time, my research revealed that the social elements of the story (in this case race relations) had been downplayed or eliminated in the film, primarily to make it more palatable for Hollywood producers and by extension, white audiences.

Lorraine Hansberry, excited about the opportunity of translating a script from stage to screen, created additional scenes for her characters in the outside world (the stage version takes place entirely in the Younger apartment). She also added several white characters in order to illustrate the grim realities of race relations. All of this was cut by Hollywood executives under the guise of budget constraints, but ultimately in fear of alienating white audiences. The result is a film in which Younger family does not seem quite so poor, and the most racially charged scenes have been polished or eliminated entirely.

Most notably, only one white character from the play appears in the film, Mr. Linder, the president of the Clyborne Park Welcoming Committee – the white neighborhood where the Youngers are buying a house. Mr. Linder's real purpose in visiting is to dissuade the Youngers from moving to Clyborne Park at all, or perhaps from *quitting the sphere in which they were brought up*.

Taken separately, these changes seem like simple Hollywood adjustments made to very different films from very different eras to accommodate contemporary audiences. Taken together, they suggest a trend: stated bluntly, while the American Dream is certainly built upon the premise of equality, and advocates upward social mobility for all, class distinctions do exist in America, and they are often ugly.

The video of Mitt Romney's infamous "47%" remarks offers a glaring present-day example: for Mr. Romney, the backlash was fast and furious, and perhaps marked the turning point of his presidential campaign. If only Hollywood could have softened his remarks, they might not have appeared so divisive and discriminatory. While viewing the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation it occurred to me that Darcy sounded a bit like a 1940 version of The 1%. Perhaps Hollywood edits such as these speak more to the fact that class divisions may exist in American society, but Americans don't like to be reminded of them – either in a covertly filmed YouTube video or on the big screen.

The overall aim of the 1940 *Pride & Prejudice* adaptation is to portray family unity (in Austen's novel, the Bennets are not quite the cozy, nuclear family presented on screen, where all of the sisters get happy endings) and provide comic relief and romance during a time of darkness. In this, the film succeeds, despite drastic changes to Austen's novel. One fascinating (and ironic) way that this adaptation remains true to Austen lies in Mrs. Bennet's line alluding to the Battle of Waterloo. Jane Austen did not openly portray the wars that occurred during her lifetime in her novels; in *Pride & Prejudice* the presence of the militia is one subtle reference to war. The film's reference to Britain's victory over Napoleon served to remind British audiences of England's victorious military past (Dow 4).

Other than myself, only one other discussion group participant was familiar with this adaptation. She observed that while she knew it took great liberty with Austen's novel, in her view this was just a preview of what Hollywood would produce later, with films like *Clueless*, which transforms *Emma* into a story about a teenaged girl living in modern day Los Angeles. She expressed surprise that Laurence

Olivier chose to play Mr. Darcy since he'd just finished playing Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, and noted the contrast in these characters, an observation that would surface again when we discussed the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation.

Modern Adaptations of Pride & Prejudice: A Case Study in Intertextuality

The 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice* mini-series ushered in a new era of Austen adaptations, raising the bar for every adaptation to follow in its considerable wake. For many, including every member of my discussion group, this adaptation is “the one to watch” – and we never tire of watching. “Colin Firth IS Mr. Darcy” declared the group. Indeed, we cannot credit Laurence Olivier with inspiring “Darcymania”, but in the interest of “intertextuality”, a side-by-side comparison of production stills invites us to consider whether Laurence Olivier’s Mr. Darcy inspired Colin Firth’s.

That this adaptation got everyone hooked on Darcy is no accident; it was the expressed intent of director Andrew Davies, and reflects what many deem a key ingredient in the success of this and subsequent Austen adaptations: it’s where the boys are:

I wanted to emphasize the men in this story, especially Darcy himself. I wasn’t trying to dumb it down, but I wanted to show that all of this was in Jane Austen as well, in addition to a beautiful literary style. Jane Austen made rather too strict rules for herself: she would never write a scene with a man on his own or two men without a woman present, because she said ‘I’ve never been present in such a scene and I wouldn’t presume to imagine how they would talk.’ Of course she would have been able to do it, she was a terrific dramatist. But I thought that what this means is that we never really get to know very much about the men, except from the point of view of the girls, so a lot of it is speculation, or happens when they are in the room with the women (1995 Adaptation, Davies Interview, Blu Ray Special Feature).

This narrative balancing is evident from the opening scene, which Davies created for this adaptation. Darcy and Bingley gallop on horseback across an open field, stopping to admire Netherfield, the estate Bingley intends to lease. Their brief conversation about Netherfield foreshadows the one in the novel at the Assembly Ball, where Darcy snubs Elizabeth (echoes are in italics):

Bingley: A fair prospect.

Darcy: It's pretty enough I grant you. (*but not handsome enough to tempt me...*)

Bingley: It's nothing to Pemberly I know, but I must settle somewhere.

Darcy: You'll find the society quite savage. (*any savage can dance...*)

Bingley: Country manners? I think they're charming!

Darcy: Then you'd better take it.

Bingley: Thank you, I shall close with the attorney directly!

The gentlemen race off, unaware that Elizabeth Bennet, out for a walk, has been spying on them while they spy on Netherfield. It's a very brief scene that appears nowhere in Jane Austen; however, in just a few short lines and camera shots it invokes Jane Austen's authority and tells us not only who this story is about, but also something about each of the characters that is very true to Austen's portrayal of them. During this scene we learn that Darcy is a bit of a snob, Bingley is a bit too impressionable, and Elizabeth - whose character is conveyed entirely by the camera - is lively, energetic, and possesses an intelligent expression that Darcy will come to appreciate as her "very fine eyes". For Andrew Davies, this, in a nutshell, is the magic of film:

Andrew Davies taught literature for many years and has a thorough understanding of the structure of the novel, but when it comes to television and film, he is a full advocate of the 'show, don't tell' approach to scriptwriting. In other words, the camera can tell you a great deal that a narrator would, but in a different and quicker way (Birtwistle & Conklin 2).

Andrew Davies weaves these scenes into the narrative so expertly that the viewer actually forgets that Jane Austen didn't write them. This of course, is by design, but Cheryl Nixon suggests that something deeper than simply filling in the male perspective is happening here:

While the success of the current adaptations reveals a timeless love of Austen, they also reveal what we, the late twentieth-century audience, do not like about Austen – or at least what the filmmaker predicts the average filmgoer will not like about Austen. Most tellingly, it is what Austen's heroines fall in love with that we do not like: the male hero. What was good enough for her female heroines is obviously not good enough for us; the films must add scenes to add desirability to her male protagonists...each film's physical additions are shorthand for its emotional additions. The films use a visual, *indeed bodily, vocabulary* to express what is essentially an emotional *redefinition* of each character. (23, italics mine).

The problem with this, Nixon suggests, is that providing Darcy with a "bodily vocabulary" undermines Jane Austen's characterization of him as a man who struggles internally with his feelings for Elizabeth, badly botches his initial attempts to express them, and ultimately proves his worth by achieving the correct balance between emotional expression and restraint as dictated by the rules of 18th Century courtship. In Nixon's view:

The films prematurely resolve rather than heighten these conflicts; masculine emotional display makes the final pairing of a hero and heroine obvious, removing the narrative suspense of a relationship hindered by social restraint (25).

This is certainly true of the film versions: in the 1940 adaptation, Darcy's struggle is virtually non-existent; in 2005 it takes places in the context of a barely concealed attraction. (Indeed, as we will later see, this adaptation takes the notion of Darcy being "bewitched" and runs with it.)

Only in the 1995 mini-series do we see Darcy's feelings evolve on screen, in his interactions with Elizabeth, with the other characters, and in the added scenes featuring Darcy alone. While we can see Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth deepen, this does not feel rushed; and while we are privy to Darcy's feelings via additional scenes, they are inserted at appropriate times, and support rather than undermine the scenes in the novel which illustrate Darcy's inner struggle. Perhaps most importantly, although we know that Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth are changing, *she* does not (or she cannot accurately interpret them) – and this is extremely true to Austen, who illustrates Darcy's struggle via his internal dialogue, his interactions with Elizabeth (dancing, conversation, letter writing), or in his interactions with other characters:

Occupied in observing Mr. Bingley's attentions to her sister, Elizabeth was far from suspecting that she was herself becoming an object of some interest in the eyes of his friend. Mr. Darcy had at first scarcely allowed her to be pretty; he had looked at her without admiration at the ball; and when they next met, he looked at her only to criticise. But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she hardly had a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure in the perfect symmetry of her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness. Of this she was perfectly unaware; to her he was only the man who made himself agreeable nowhere, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with...He began to wish to know more of her, and as a step towards conversing with her himself, attended to her conversations with others (Austen, *Pride & Prejudice* 16).

In the novel, Darcy's inner struggle escalates to a boiling point, culminating in what is surely the most insulting marriage proposal in literature. Categorically rejected, Darcy storms off to spend the evening composing a letter to Elizabeth in response to her accusations. Screen writer Andrew Davies and director Simon Langton then join forces to create a voice-over narrative of Darcy reading the letter

aloud while we view Elizabeth reading it on screen. A series of shots consisting of scenes from his history with Wickham, Elizabeth's reaction, and her painful recollection of scenes involving her family appear in rapid succession on screen. This is followed by one of Andrew Davies' very "quick" inserted scenes which shows Darcy fencing, his physical exertion a reflection of his inner state, his only line of dialogue "I shall conquer this!" coming after he loses the match, violently slashing his sword at the air.

The luxury of time, in a serialized adaptation, allows the screenwriter and director to let the story unfold much as an author would; the time constraints of a film adaptation require them to determine what to leave in, take out, compress or add – while still conveying the essence of the story. For Carroll and Wilshire, this contradiction means that film and literature will always remain at odds, with film providing a "less aesthetically or psychologically equivalent experience" than the novel they "seek to reproduce" (173). In keeping with the idea of film being closer to translation than reproduction, Dennis Cutchins sees this contradiction as something to be embraced and explored, and describes similar frustration with the premature revelation of a character while viewing an adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* starring Mia Farrow as Daisy. Reviews of Farrow's performance were less than favorable, which Cutchins concludes has less to do with Mia Farrow than it does with Daisy herself, as Fitzgerald portrays her in the novel:

While Fitzgerald manages to hide his Daisy's true nature for much of the novel, Clayton (the director) is forced to put his actress on screen, and Farrow's first words...reveal more or less completely, the kind of person Daisy is. Although I had read the novel several times earlier, as I compared it carefully to the film I finally began to understand a little bit of Fitzgerald's genius. His choice of point of view and his slow reveal of Daisy came into sharp focus as I constantly moved between the two texts (89).

Much like John Golden, Cutchins extols the advantages of utilizing this dual-text analysis technique in the classroom:

Students engage with film adaptations of novels much more deeply and immediately than they do with scholarly essays. Thus I have found that adaptations, even adaptations considered failures by viewers and critics, can train my students in that skill of negative capability that is so central to literary studies (90).

Putting it all Together: An Evening with Mr. Darcy

Many of the concepts and ideas uncovered in my research were supported in my *Pride & Prejudice* film discussion group, which took place early in the research process. When I asked the participants to share something specific about their favorite adaptation, comments and reflections confirmed that modern audiences (and students) are highly visually oriented, and are extremely adept at analyzing film without even realizing they're doing it. One woman emphatically observed "2005 is my favorite, because you can really see Darcy fall in love with Elizabeth" – which supports the idea that modern audiences respond to emotional expression in male characters.

We proceeded to explore "Darcy and Elizabeth falling in love" by comparing key scenes from the 1995 and 2005 adaptations, comparing them to each other, and in relation to the novel. Scenes viewed and discussed included: The Assembly Ball, The Netherfield Ball, Darcy's two proposals and the Pemberley visit. We considered not only the portrayals of Darcy and Elizabeth, but other elements such as setting, camera work – How were characters framed? What types of shots were used? – and costumes,

especially since the same participant noted above found Darcy's "ruggedness" in 2005 particularly appealing.

We agreed to set aside our preference for Colin Firth as Darcy, which though done in tongue and cheek fashion illustrates just how much "intertextuality" matters in adaptation study. With his portrayal of Mr. Darcy (and subsequently Mark Darcy in *Bridget Jones's Diary*), Colin Firth has come to epitomize Darcy, to such an extent that any actor who follows him in this role now wrestles with not only how to portray Jane Austen's Darcy, but how to differentiate himself from Colin Firth's. The two Darcys are forever linked in most viewers' and readers' minds. While researching this project I posted a photo montage on Facebook of three actors playing Darcy: Laurence Olivier, Colin Firth and Matthew McFadyen. The most frequent comment on that post was "Colin Firth is the best." This ground rule established, we began comparing scenes from the two films. At this point, it is helpful to note that of the 6 participants, only 1 had not read *Pride & Prejudice*, 2 had seen the 1940 film, everyone had seen the 1995 BBC mini-series, and 5 had seen the 2005 film.

Pride & Prejudice General Comments

General comments about the adaptations veered naturally toward comparison of the 1995 and 2005 adaptations, despite the fact that one is a film and the other a much longer mini-series. The term most frequently applied to the 1995 version was "gorgeous": highly stylized in terms of costumes, locations, homes – everything "perfect". Long shots linger over the English countryside, much like a tourism brochure; many critics feel this diverts the audience's attention from the novel's serious themes.

Andrew Davies seamlessly weaves Austen's dialogue with his own, resulting in a language sounding equally polished, and dialogue that Jennifer Ehle, who played Elizabeth, considered more difficult to learn than Shakespeare (Birtwistle & Conklin 13).

In contrast, the 2005 film exhibits a more "realistic" look, as one discussion group member noted "the homes are left to be old". Longbourn is a working farm, complete with livestock wandering everywhere, including through the house. The Bennets' financial situation relative to the other characters in the novel is much more obvious in this film; costumes, hair and makeup exhibit a more natural feel. Home interiors and exteriors vary according to the wealth and social standing of the occupants, all of which is intentional. The realism aspired to in this adaptation extends to casting actors who were as close as possible in age to the characters in the novel, a response to criticism that in the only other film version starring Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson, the lead actors were considerably older – and perhaps too old – to play Darcy and Elizabeth (2005 Adaptation, Production Notes 7).

Finally, director Joe Wright deliberately sought to avoid the "picturesque tradition" of the 1995 adaptation, and indeed of many Jane Austen adaptations:

I believe that when people do period films they are reliant on paintings from the period, because there is no photography. But in a painting, everything is formally composed, it's not real life. Then they do wide shots to show off the period detail on the sets. I think that the detail is in the small things, like crumbs on a table, or flowers in a vase (2005 Adaption, Production Notes 6).

Wright was completely unfamiliar with *Pride & Prejudice* or any of the earlier adaptations prior to reading the 2005 screenplay, and confesses that, having a background in "television social realist drama"

he was even “a bit prejudiced against the material, regarding it as posh”. Reading the screenplay moved him to tears, and inspired him to read the novel, where he discovered Jane Austen to be “one of the first British realists” who in *Pride & Prejudice* “had written a very acute character study of a particular social group” (2005 Adaptation, Production Notes 4).

This is important to keep in mind when viewing the 2005 adaptation, especially in comparison to the 1995 version, because in his quest to avoid the trap of the picturesque, Wright used sophisticated camera techniques to create an equally stylized effect, although in a much different way. The result is often as distracting as the 1995 adaptation’s stylized scenes. Interestingly, these effects are frequently focused on Elizabeth Bennet. In contrast (and perhaps in response) to the 1995 version’s re-balancing of the narrative to give higher visibility to the male characters, this version tells the story primarily from Elizabeth Bennet’s point of view. As in the 1995 adaptation this is clear from the opening sequence, which follows Elizabeth as she walks around her home, and observes her family through windows and partially opened doors. One added scene complements Andrew Davies’ “Darcy fencing” scene nicely: Elizabeth, seated on a swing, twists the ropes and spins rather than swing back and forth, symbolizing her confusion and inner turmoil after several mixed encounters with Darcy.

The Assembly and Netherfield Balls

The group compared the two ball scenes – at the Assembly Hall and at Netherfield – in two ways: to each other, and as they appeared in the 1995 and 2005 adaptations. The Assembly Ball takes place in a public hall while the Netherfield Ball takes place in a private home; both adaptations take great pains to

make this distinction clear, primarily through costumes, music and differences in venue. The contrast is much clearer in the 2005 version, where the Assembly Ball has a much rowdier look and feel: this is truly a country dance. The arrival of The Bingleys and Mr. Darcy silences the crowd and stops all activity. This is Elizabeth and Darcy's first encounter, and sets the tone for the early phase of their relationship. In the novel, Darcy is extremely clear about his distaste for dancing, the ball itself, and Elizabeth as a partner. Colin Firth is a truly haughty, arrogant Darcy; he barely notices Elizabeth.

In the 2005 version Matthew McFadyen is haughty enough, however his eyes scan the room as the scene opens, and his eyes meet Elizabeth's. The camera singles them out among the other guests, a foreshadowing of what's to come.

At the Netherfield Ball Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance, during which they have a very strained conversation about Wickham. The 1995 adaptation treats this as the highly choreographed dance it is, emphasizing the near impossibility of achieving any sort of intimacy given the subject matter, which is highly charged. Darcy and Elizabeth exchange short, barbed lines, and are often cut off as the dance requires them to separate. In 2005 this scene is filmed with creative camera work. As the dance progresses, the dancers around Darcy and Elizabeth momentarily fade out, they freeze in mid-step, the only two people in the room – in their minds. They briefly contemplate each other in silence as the other dancers reappear and the music resumes. The symbolism is obvious, but as the discussion group concluded, this is hardly "realism" as the director described it in the production notes.

The First Proposal

The first proposal is a key scene in the novel. Jane Austen's challenge is formidable: she has to alienate Darcy from Elizabeth (and the reader), but not so badly that he is completely irredeemable (Jones & Lang 16). In the 1995 version the proposal takes place indoors, as in the novel. The room is extremely small, the atmosphere a bit claustrophobic. Darcy and Elizabeth are filmed in alternating point of view shots: Darcy speaks, Elizabeth reacts – the camera moves back and forth between them with close-ups, recording their expressions. Elizabeth is seated; Darcy is standing, pacing around the room. Very often he is not looking directly at her, but at her reflection in a mirror over the fireplace. At one point he listens with his back toward her, staring at the floor while he looks at her peripherally. There is no intimacy here, no affection. This scene as filmed is all Darcy, doing Elizabeth the tremendous honor of proposing to a woman so below his station, juxtaposed with her first incredulous, then furious reaction.

In yet another “stylized realistic” scene, the 2005 adaptation moves this proposal outdoors, in the pouring rain, using the Temple of Apollo's Stourhead Gardens as a backdrop (2005 Adaptation, Production Notes 14). Instead of point of view shots, Darcy and Elizabeth are both in frame the entire time, their faces moving closer together as the argument escalates until they almost – but not quite – kiss. When this occurred, one discussion group member observed “It's there” – meaning that in her view, Austen's text supports the sexual tension we viewed on screen. His proposal refused, Darcy stalks off in the rain.

As I told the group, for the longest time, I had absolutely no idea how to respond to this scene as filmed, which is clearly not in Austen's novel. In fact, I found it completely ridiculous, and certainly not realistic

– at least in terms of setting. The arguing, the intensifying emotion, and yes, the sexual tension – these were extremely realistic, and supported by the text. But the rain, coming down in buckets – that made no sense to me. Taking an intertextual approach, however, there is plenty of rain in Jane Austen, in the novels and in the films, and not just in *Pride and Prejudice*. And for Darcy in particular, there is Colin Firth’s infamous dip in the pond in 1995. One wonders if the 2005 director declared “You want a soaking wet Darcy? I’ll give you that, and add Elizabeth too!”

As the group discussed this, we compiled a short list of Austen scenes involving downpours. In *Pride & Prejudice*, Jane’s trip to Netherfield on horseback, which results in a very bad cold (and an extended stay at Netherfield) helps advance her romance with Bingley. The other favorite scenes were from Emma Thompson’s adaptation of *Sense & Sensibility*: Willoughby rescues Marianne after she falls in the rain; later, after discovering his betrayal, she takes a walk in the rain and nearly dies – of love, and a really bad fever. She emerges more receptive to the attentions of Colonel Brandon, who has been quietly in love with her for most of the novel; she later marries him. This concept of intertextuality across novels and adaptations underlies Deborah Cartmell’s excellent analysis of the *Pride & Prejudice* adaptations, which includes several examples like the one our group discussed:

This book has observed how the most recent adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* are, it would seem, as much dependent on previous film and television adaptations as they are on Jane Austen’s novel and rather than looking backward to an original text, point forward to future adaptations, based on the challenges each adaptation poses for its successor (126).

Pemberley Visit

Nobody can forget “the scene” in the 1995 visit to Pemberley – the one that created Darcymania – where Darcy takes a dip in the pond. What’s more interesting is that Andrew Davies’ intent here was really just to show Darcy in a completely new way: vulnerable. “It was simply meant to be an amusing moment in which Darcy tries to maintain his dignity while improperly dressed and sopping wet” (qtd. in James 4). Furthermore, the point was for Elizabeth to see him in a new way, and the timing of this scene matters: the encounter takes place immediately after she views his painting at Pemberley, and becomes consciously aware that her feelings for him are changing:

In the gallery there were many family portraits, but they could have little to fix the attention of a stranger. Elizabeth walked on in quest of the only face whose features would be known to her. At last it arrested her – and she beheld a striking resemblance of Mr. Darcy, with such a smile over the face, as she remembered to have sometimes seen, when he looked at her. She stood several minutes before the pictures in earnest contemplation, and returned to it again before they quitted the gallery...There was certainly at this moment, in Elizabeth’s mind, a more gentle sensation towards the original, than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance...Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character, and as she stood before the canvas, on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembered its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression (Austen, *Pride & Prejudice* 189).

In the 2005 adaptation Darcy’s painting is replaced by a marble bust; instead of gazing upon Darcy smiling, Elizabeth stares at a faceless, impenetrable, cold image of the man for whom her feelings are starting warm a bit at this point in the novel. The group seemed divided as to whether this substitution worked, but in terms of a realistic interpretation, we felt that the use of a painting here, as described in the novel, would have worked better. While the marble could symbolize Elizabeth’s feeling that Darcy

was lost to her, it is by viewing Darcy's painting that she becomes aware of her new feelings for him. Marble, the discussion group concluded, hardly seemed appropriate for this purpose.

The Second Proposal

The second proposal scene in the 1995 adaptation aligns very closely with the novel. Elizabeth and Darcy walk side by side, both visibly achieving Cheryl Nixon's appropriate balance between emotional expression and restraint. Worth noting is that in hindsight, Andrew Davies was not happy with the ending of this scene as filmed. Darcy turns to Elizabeth to propose, but they continue to walk while he speaks his lines. While they are both in frame the entire time, Davies later wished he'd had them stop walking to emphasize the importance of the moment (1995 Adaptation, Interview, Blu Ray Special Feature). Much like Jane Austen revised her novels many times, in film, the creative process doesn't end when filming stops: the director can always reimagine the scene.

The second proposal in the 2005 adaptation is the largest departure from Austen in this film. It takes place at dawn, once again in the open countryside, as Elizabeth wanders aimlessly in the early morning fog, after a sleepless night. Her makeup is haunting, and perfect. It feels wrong, but one cannot help but think of Charlotte Brontë's moors. As the scene unfolds, Darcy emerges from the fog, striding toward Elizabeth in his morning attire. As they come together, it's clear that these are not Charlotte Brontë's moors, but Emily's: Darcy and Elizabeth have become Cathy and Heathcliff, an effect not lost on my discussion group, who noted Darcy's "ruggedness". We were not the only ones to notice this:

The 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice* so emphasized their physical attraction that Darcy nearly became Heathcliff, a brooding Brontëan hero who fiercely declares his love

while standing in a windswept rainstorm. This *radically changes Austen...yet that spark helps make the romance more appealing to a modern audience* (James 4, italics mine).

Nature responds as Darcy proposes a second time, and Elizabeth accepts him: the fog lifts, and the sun rises in a beautifully captured time-lapse sequence. I know that filming the sun's movement is meant to avoid a painterly effect, yet something seems amiss. After several viewings, it hits me: I'm not watching a still shot, so this is not a traditional landscape painting. But watching the light and shadows change while the sun moves, I am reminded of another type of "landscape" painting: Monet's series paintings. Monet created his series paintings by painting the same scene on several canvases at once, moving between them as the light changed at different times of day. It occurred to me that time-lapse photography accomplished much the same thing, using film instead of paint as a medium; these paintings were, in effect, Monet's photography. Jane Austen was of course, unfamiliar with Monet, but the director certainly was not, and whether or not he realized it, his use of sophisticated photography had, in this viewer's mind, once again created the effect he'd worked so tirelessly to avoid. It's some consolation to find that I am not alone: in her analysis of the 1940 and 2005 film adaptations, Deborah Cartmell observes "Like the 1940 film, this production claims authenticity while breaking the illusion at the same time" (90).

Conclusion and Reflections

At the end of her analysis of the 1940 and 2005 film adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice*, Deborah Cartmell asks "How far can we travel away from *Pride & Prejudice* before it becomes a completely different text?" (92). This question follows her observation that the 2005 adaptation ends, not with Darcy and

Elizabeth's wedding, but with an added scene that imagines them on their wedding night. He calls her "My Dear", which she dislikes, as Mr. Bennet called her that when he was cross with her as a child. Darcy asks: "What endearments am I allowed? Mrs. Darcy?" To which Elizabeth replies "You may only call me Mrs. Darcy when you are completely, perfectly, and incandescently happy." There is no getting around it: for Austen purists, this is an extremely difficult scene to watch, and I was no exception. Furthermore, I was sincerely shocked to learn that this scene is actually an alternative ending filmed especially for American audiences:

While poor American audiences would be reaching for the sick bowl, British viewers were spared this ending and on the whole found this a very satisfying film adaptation (Cartmell 91).

That, in a nutshell, encapsulated my experience of this adaptation – at least until I completed this project. Initially I found this insulting: could British film makers take such a dim view of American audiences as to think such a radical change necessary? Did they think none of us had read the novel, seen the previous adaptations, or that we simply wouldn't care? I viewed the adaptation several more times while conducting research and preparing for the discussion group, and began to consider it in the context of other Austen adaptations. As I carefully watched and listened, I made several connections I had previously missed.

First, as misplaced (and unnecessary) as the honeymoon scene is in the film, the conversation between Darcy and Elizabeth about "endearments" – or "What he may call her" actually *does* exist in Jane Austen, but not in *Pride & Prejudice*. Shortly after he proposes to Emma, Mr. Knightley remarks that while growing up, she always called him "Mr. Knightley", which was appropriate given their relationship

and age difference, but seems too formal now that they are to be married: “I want you to call me something else, but I do not know what” (Austen, *Emma* 363). Emma is initially flustered by his suggestion, but “laughing and blushing” promises to once call him by his Christian name, but does not commit to *when* (Austen, *Emma* 363). The roles have reversed, and the dialogue is slightly altered, however the essence is the same: their relationship, initially closer to big brother/little sister – and very often father/daughter – has changed, and Knightley asks Emma to call him by a name that reflects this change. In similar fashion, Elizabeth rejects Darcy’s first “endearment”, which reminds her too much of her relationship with her father.

This is not the only scene in the 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* adaptation that alters the story by inserting a scene borrowed from another Jane Austen novel. As Jane and Elizabeth prepare to leave Netherfield following Jane’s illness, Darcy stuns Elizabeth by very quietly taking her hand and helping her into the carriage, turning to walk away before she can make eye contact. At this point in the novel, Darcy’s only thought is that it is fortunate that Elizabeth is leaving, as he recognizes his changing feelings and fully intends to suppress them:

Darcy had never been so bewitched by a woman as he was by her. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger (Austen, *Pride & Prejudice* 38).

News of Elizabeth’s departure comes as “welcome intelligence”:

Elizabeth had been at Netherfield long enough. She attracted him more than he liked...he wisely resolved to be particularly careful that no sign of admiration should now escape him, nothing that could elevate her with the hope of influencing his felicity (Austen, *Pride & Prejudice* 44).

As they depart, Austen makes no mention of any verbal leave taking, except between Jane Bennet and Caroline Bingley. Darcy's struggles are entirely private; he does not act. Recalling a question raised in the introduction, how does a screen writer or director adapt this scene, which actually combines an omniscient narrator and internal character dialogue? In this adaptation the answer is: you borrow from Jane Austen:

The walking-party had crossed the lane, and were mounting an opposite stile; and the admiral was putting his horse into motion again, when Captain Wentworth cleared the hedge in a moment to say something to his sister. – The something might be guessed from its effects. “Miss Elliot, I am sure you are tired,” cried Mrs. Croft. “Do let us have the pleasure of taking you home. Here is excellent room for three, I assure you”...Anne was still in the lane; and though instinctively beginning to decline, was not allowed to proceed...Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage...Yes, he had done it. She was in the carriage and felt that he had placed her there, and his hands had done it... (Austen, *Persuasion* 89).

Like Mr. Darcy, Captain Wentworth has been fighting his true feelings for Anne, who rejected his marriage proposal 8 years earlier. He has just learned that her rejection was not entirely her own, but that she was persuaded by family friend Lady Russell to refuse him because he had no fortune. He leaves, joins the Navy and returns a successful captain, complete with fortune. Upon at last hearing the truth, his feelings toward Anne begin to soften, as manifested in this subtle gesture.

In the novels, both scenes are narrated by an omniscient narrator, but in *Persuasion* there is at least an *action* - an outward expression of feeling that can be captured on film. It is hardly surprising that the carriage scene in the 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* adaptation mirrors its counterpart in the 1995 adaptation of *Persuasion*, from the swift, stealthy movement of the heroes to the astonished reactions of the heroines.

Prior to completing Advanced Project, I would have either glossed over these scenes or underestimated their significance. While director Joe Wright may claim ignorance of Jane Austen prior to filming, screenplay writer Deborah Moggach clearly cannot: in freely borrowing from Austen to adapt Austen, she demonstrates deep familiarity with Austen's novels and the ability to use them to tell a story in a highly sophisticated, creative way. Further, these scenes not only borrow from Austen, but they alter Austen in exactly the same way that Andrew Davies' all-male scenes do: they focus our attention on the men by highlighting male emotional expression.

Rather than view these differences as "what we got wrong about Austen", Cheryl Nixon believes that:

The differences reveal how we today use Austen to reveal ourselves to ourselves, at a most basic level, this seems to be exactly how Austen would wanted her readers to use her. Our revisions of Austen reveal our calculated, if not rational, determination to create "masculine balance" according to our own emotions-based criteria. And yet, our revisions reveal that we continue to look to Austen when we want help in creating our ideas of masculinity" (27).

I agree, and would only add that given that Jane Austen freely borrowed from her peers and predecessors to find her voice, borrowing from Austen to interpret Austen seems very clever indeed. It also presents an excellent opportunity in the classroom to get students "back to the text", in this particular instance three written texts and an impressive list of adaptations. This continued discussion of the novels and films, especially if it cultivates the true 21st Century Literacy espoused by "film in the classroom" advocates, is a very good thing. We can only hope Jane Austen would be pleased.

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