

**“She stimulates us to supply what is not there”: Expanding Jane
Austen’s World Through Fandom**

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Summary

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that online Austen fanfiction and professionally published (profic) texts are valuable forms of readers response and cultural criticism and therefore merit serious consideration.¹ The study of such texts informs the growing area of scholarship on Austen adaptations and Austen reception more generally.

Enquiry into fanfiction inspired by a literary figure like Austen also addresses a gap in fan studies criticism, which has focused primarily on fanfiction inspired by film and television fandoms. The thesis has a specific focus on *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), as this novel inspires substantially more fanfiction than Austen's other novels and it is also the text most strongly associated with the author in popular culture. My project is distinguished from other studies of fanfiction by my decision to combine analysis of online fanfiction with an examination of profic texts and commercial adaptations as a way of contextualising Austen fandom and of highlighting the intertextuality of fan responses to *Pride and Prejudice*. I approach fanfiction from an Austen studies perspective, but draw on research from fan studies, cultural studies, reader response and reception criticism, and studies of imaginary worlds in fiction to inform my approach.

Surges in *Pride and Prejudice* fanfiction and profic coincide with broader cultural and industrial trends. These texts therefore illuminate readers' cultural, social, and literary preoccupations for us. The thesis situates *Pride and Prejudice* fanfiction within particular cultural moments, illustrating how it responds to readers' needs and intersects with socio-political and cultural events. The first major peak in the production of *Pride and Prejudice* fanfiction came in the mid-1990s, following the release of Andrew Davies's now iconic serial adaptation of the novel. His 1995 Darcy-centric adaptation is often credited as being the main inspiration for *Pride and Prejudice* fanfiction. Yet, *Pride and Prejudice* had already inspired more sequels than any other Austen novel *before* the release of Davies's adaptation, though these sequels focused on Elizabeth Bennet. Chapter One explores Elizabeth's special significance to the Janeites and also considers how the fairy tale qualities of *Pride and Prejudice* have contributed to its adaptability and cultural longevity. Chapter Two looks at the change in emphasis from heroine to hero-centred fanfiction in the mid-1990s, arguing that Darcy took over as the imaginative centre of the novel because of the favourable cultural conditions of

¹ Online fanfiction is circulated for free within a community of readers while 'profic' texts are professionally published texts based on characters originally created by another author. See Sheenagh Pugh, *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context* (Bridgend: Seren, 2005), 11.

reception in which Davies's adaptation was received. Chapter Three explores the influx of zombie and vampire-infused profic and fanfiction texts produced following the 2008 financial crash, when the undead were endowed with symbolic significance as the 'monsters of the recession'. Chapter Four concludes by looking at *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (dir. Bernie Su; 2012-13), a digital adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that was produced in collaboration with fans and which offers insight into a specific media-technological cultural moment whilst also resonating with established patterns of "Janeite" reception.²

Research into contemporary *Pride and Prejudice* fanfiction also reveals continuities in Janeite reading practices that persist despite changes in the cultural context and changes in how Austen's work is marketed, produced, and received. Austen's contemporary fans and the historical Janeites share a playful and appropriative approach to reading Austen, where her characters and the world they inhabit are treated 'as if' they were real. This style of reading is stimulated by the author's own confidential writing style and narrative gaps. The historical Janeites would fill in these gaps by writing sequels to novels like *Pride and Prejudice* and by building on her world by going on pilgrimages to what they called 'Austenland', an imaginary world that Austen's readers have been communally inhabiting since the nineteenth century. Michael Saler argues that the practice of inhabiting textual imaginary worlds is part of the literary pre-history of virtual reality. Saler's arguments, and those of virtual reality theorist Marie-Laure Ryan inform my exploration of the lineage between Austen's textual world and the virtual ones that fans develop in forums like *The Republic of Pemberley* (1996) and *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild* (1998) and immersive digital texts like *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Members of these online fan communities and writers who work within the commercial Austen industry are predominantly American. The thesis demonstrates that for these writers 'Austenland' is often appropriated as a mythic version of America and that 'England's Jane' is therefore transposable to different national contexts. The thesis concludes by looking at the implications of my findings and by gesturing towards more work that could be done in the areas of Austen fanfiction and the study of imaginary worlds.

² "Janeite" is a term used to describe Austen's fans. It was coined by George Saintsbury in an 1894 preface to *Pride and Prejudice* to refer to devotees of Austen who love the author and her works with a "personal love". George Saintsbury, quoted in Brian Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, Vol.2, 1870-1940* (London: Routledge, 1987), 215.

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Introduction: ‘She stimulates us to supply what is not there’: Expanding Jane Austen’s World through Fandom

[Jane Austen] stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader’s mind...

- Virginia Woolf, 1925³

[W]e feel the need to expand on the world, the characters and the stories, that she created. There just is not enough of Jane Austen's own words to read, so we write our own.

- *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, 1997⁴

Jane Austen’s style ‘is famously elliptical and spare’.⁵ She omits detailed descriptions and explicit exposition in favour of an indirect and allusive narrative style that seems to call for supplement from the reader. Online fanfiction and ‘profic’ texts based on Austen’s novels are clear expressions of how her work expands in the reader’s mind. Fans prolong her novels through sequels, imagine afterlives or alternative storylines for her characters, and fill in ‘missing scenes’ with their own imaginative speculations. Austen scholars have frequently expressed amazement or even consternation at the appetite of Austen’s devotees, the Janeites. For example, Roberta Grandi points out that ‘[a]n apparently unceasing productivity surrounds Austen’s characters, plots and themes’, while Deidre Lynch complains that although Austen practised an ‘exquisite economy’ of style, ‘through a strange twist of fate she appears to be the cause of verbiage in others’.⁶ *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) offers a characteristic example of Austen’s economy of style.⁷ In the author’s own words, it was ‘lopt & cropt’ before

³ Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader: Volume 1*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Vintage, [1925] 2003), 138.

⁴ “The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, 1996, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://web.archive.org/web/19980214221828/http://pemberley.com/derby/index.html>. This is an archived version of the ‘Derbyshire Writers’ Guild’ fanfiction repository hosted by *The Republic of Pemberley* from 1997-1998. The website was archived by Wayback Machine, a service that aims to preserve and provide access to old versions of websites.

⁵ Katie Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers, 1786-1945* (London: The Anthem Press, 2012), 7.

⁶ Roberta Grandi, “Web Side Stories: Janeites, Fanfictions, and Never Ending Romances,” in *Internet Fictions*, ed. Ingrid Hotz-Davies et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 24; Deidre Lynch, “Sequels,” in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 160.

⁷ Hereafter, *Pride and Prejudice* will be referred to in an abbreviated form as *P&P*. This abbreviation is commonly used in online Austen fandom, where fans use a ‘P&P adaptation notation convention’ as a means of distinguishing between different versions of P&P: P&P (Austen’s novel); P&P0 (1940 MGM

publication to achieve a taut, refined, significantly shorter text.⁸ Although *P&P* was crafted by Austen carefully cutting away at the text, this novel has ironically been transformed by readers into an ‘ever-expanding (text) universe’ comprised of a collective of interrelated texts.⁹ This thesis will have a specific focus on the prolific responses to *P&P*, as this novel is the one most often reread, reimagined, and repurposed by fans.

Rather than lamenting the productivity of Austen's fans, the thesis will explore *why* Austen's brevity generates such verbosity in others by looking at the ways in which her style draws readers in and seems to invite them to expand on the ‘world’ that she created through writing and consuming fanfiction and profic. My research will look at Austen fandom in a literary context by focusing on the fiction Austen's readers produce as a means of gaining further insight into Janeite reading practices. The study of Austen's reception by her readers *has* become an increasingly topical subject within Austen studies in recent years. Yet, these studies tend to concentrate on the historical Janeites, largely comprised of male members of the literati, rather than Austen's predominantly female online fanbase. Even the small, but growing, number of studies which attempt to engage with contemporary Austen fandom have been more interested in the *fan*, rather than *fanfiction*, meaning that these records of reader response have yet to receive meaningful critical attention.

My approach to Austen fanfiction will draw on reader response and reception theory, arguing that as a form of writing that is essentially about reading, fanfiction can be characterised as a creative form of ‘rereading’. These texts have the potential to illuminate continuities in Janeite reception by highlighting patterns of behaviour that have remained consistent over time, such as: a desire for intimacy with Austen and her characters; a love of in-jokes and intertextual references as a means of forming community bonds; and of course, the insatiable Janeite appetite for *more* that stimulates readers to build on her world. The thesis will draw on studies of imaginary worlds and virtual reality theory to establish a connection between the practices of historical

film with Greer Garson & Laurence Olivier); *P&P1* (1980 BBC television miniseries with Elizabeth Garvie & David Rintoul); *P&P2* (BBC/A&E mini-series with Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth); *P&P3* (2005 StudioCanal/Working Title Films production with Keira Knightley & Matthew Macfadyen. See “F.A.Q.,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Jan 31, 2018, http://pemberley.com/?page_id=11744.

⁸ Jane Austen, “Letter to Cassandra Austen January 29, 1813”, in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 210.

⁹ Anette Svensson, “Pleasure and Profit: Re-presentations of Jane Austen's Ever-Expanding Universe,” ed. Laurence Raw and Robert G. Dryden, *Global Jane Austen: Pleasure, Passion, and Possessiveness in the Jane Austen community*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 203.

Janeites who would imaginatively map out ‘Austenland’, and those of contemporary fans who, in the words of Janeite Myretta Robens, attempt to ‘insinuate the [nineteenth] century into the world of technology’ by communally inhabiting a virtual version of her world online.¹⁰ This style of reading, where Austen’s world and her characters are playfully treated ‘as if’ they were real, is a ‘tranhistorical’ mode of Janeite response that has persisted from the early days of the fandom.¹¹ A consideration of the significance of this transhistorical mode of interpretation will be combined with a cultural studies approach which will take the texts’ cultural context into account.

P&P profic and fanfiction texts are influenced by contemporary popular fiction, as well as film and television adaptations of the novel, as much as they are by Austen’s original novel, and can therefore provide insight into the relationship between these texts and broader cultural production trends. The chapters will revolve around surges in profic and fanfiction production and will consider what they can tell us about readers’ cultural preoccupations during a particular time and place. Fanfiction’s relationship to technology and the marketplace will also be considered as technological developments influence the kinds of texts that fans produce, and how they interact with them. By situating fanfiction and profic texts within their popular cultural milieu and considering their relationship to technology, as well as to Austen’s work, I aim to produce research that will lead to a deeper understanding of Austen’s popular readership than studies that have commented usefully on the Janeites, but failed to engage critically with this ‘interpretive community’s’ main literary output.¹²

I look at fanfiction from an Austen studies perspective, but draw on fan studies research to inform my approach and to address ‘exclusionary discourses’ across a

¹⁰ Myretta Robens, “About Me,” *Myretta Robens- Historical Romance*, accessed July 30, 2016 <http://myrettarobens.com/about-me/>.

The term “Austen-land” was first used by Constance Hill to describe places associated with the author and her characters in *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends* (1902). “Austenland” continues to be used by fans to describe Austen’s world. For example, *Austenland* is the title of a 2007 profic novel by Shannon Hale, where the desire to get lost in Austen’s world is treated satirically.

¹¹ Matt Hills, “Sherlock ‘Content’ Onscreen: Digital Holmes and the Fannish Imagination,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 45, no. 2 (2017): 69, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01956051.2017.1319200>. Hills explores the transhistorical (mode-based) versus ‘contextual’ (moment-based) interpretive approaches in relation to the study of Sherlock Holmes as a character. These two scholarly approaches are relevant to Austen studies as well.

¹² The concept of ‘interpretive communities’ stems from reader response criticism and is most associated with critic Stanley Fish. Fan studies critics use the phrase ‘interpretive communities’ to refer to the way fan communities read texts according to shared interpretive conventions, guidelines, and practices of reception. See Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 88.

number of intersecting disciplines.¹³ Thus far, the Austen fanfiction phenomenon has not been adequately tackled by Austen studies, fan studies, or popular literature criticism. Following the ‘Austenmania’ of the 1990s, Austen critics explored her place in popular culture through the lens of film and television adaptations of her work. These studies referred to the films as creative ‘readings’ or ‘recreations’ of the novels and critics argued that the ‘scriptwriter and filmmakers [should] be understood as readers’.¹⁴ The value of these adaptations was that they made ‘viewers return to the text and reconsider it anew’.¹⁵ Online fanfiction flourished in response to these adaptations, as well as to Austen’s novels. Yet, Austen critics have not taken into account the status of fanfiction as a form of rereading or considered the extensive archives of fanfiction as valuable sources of reader response. Critically engaging with fanfiction is important as these texts are written by fans and for fans and can therefore tell us more about what readers want (and get) from *P&P* than film or television adaptations that are produced for fans, but not necessarily, *by* them.¹⁶

Austen fanfiction is underrepresented in fan studies due to a preference within the field for television and film-based fandoms and a reluctance to engage with high cultural literary figures like Austen. As fan scholar Roberta Pearson points out, ‘while fan studies has extensively engaged with the popular and even occasionally with the middle-brow, it has almost entirely refused to engage with the high’.¹⁷ Of course, Austen’s status as a high cultural author is complicated by the fact that she is also an icon of popular culture. She is a contested figure who cannot be easily fixed in place or claimed by any one cultural camp; consequently, certain aspects of her cultural legacy have also been overlooked by popular culture and popular literature critics. This thesis will seek to address this oversight by critically engaging with fanfiction, an obvious manifestation of her popularity and one that has the potential to illuminate a ‘playful,

¹³ Matt Hills, “Implicit Fandom in the Fields of Theatre, Art, and Literature: Studying “Fans” Beyond Fan Discourses,” in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, 477. Hills notes that ‘fan studies’ failure to investigate high cultural fandom has been mirrored in other disciplines, leading to ‘fandom having a marginal presence in art and literary theory’ as well.

¹⁴ John Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 5.

¹⁵ John Mosier, “Clues for the clueless,” in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 228.

¹⁶ *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) director Ang Lee, for example, openly declared himself an ‘anti fan’, stating in reference to Austen that: ‘I know her novels exist and they’re there but I consider them girly stuff and never want to read them. *Pride and Prejudice* is for girls.’ Ang Lee quoted in Emily Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 281.

¹⁷ Roberta Pearson, “Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, and Sherlockians,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 98.

receptive, and sometimes appropriative' form of Janeite response, whilst also providing insightful cultural criticism.¹⁸ This Introduction will clearly define the area of study by outlining the type of texts that will be covered and justifying their inclusion.

Area of Study: Fanfiction and Profic

The thesis will explore fanfiction from formative message board-based online fan forums *The Republic of Pemberley* (1996) and the *Derbyshire Writers' Guild* (1998) as well as professionally published texts based on *P&P* such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), among others. I will largely limit my study of *P&P* profic to texts published after the release of Andrew Davies's now iconic television adaptation (dir. Simon Langton; 1995). The mid-late 1990s marks the first significant peak in *P&P* profic production and as this thesis will demonstrate, many of these texts are written in dialogue with the television series as well as Austen's novel. The growth of online fandom is also very obviously indebted to Davies. *Pemberley*, the first online fan community dedicated to Austen, expressly states that it formed 'for those addicted to the 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.'¹⁹ As this adaptation has had a significant impact on the expansion of contemporary Austen fandom, a critical analysis of the television series will form part of the discussion. The thesis will also address the more recent 'transmedia' text *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (dir. Bernie Su; 2012-13), a commercially produced digital adaptation of *P&P* created with the collaboration of fans that evolved across various social media sites over the course of a year.²⁰

Fanfiction based on *P&P* is profoundly intertextual. It draws inspiration from Austen's novel but also references *P&P* adaptations, as well as other fanfiction and profic texts. In these texts 'the large number of Austen quotations and in-jokes' and other forms of 'cross-referencing' can be interpreted as 'a wink at the knowing reader': in other words, they are written for informed Janeites.²¹ Given the referential nature of

¹⁸ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 150.

¹⁹ "About us," *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed February 20, 2015
http://pemberley.com/?page_id=11874.

²⁰ A 'transmedia' adaptation involves 'the adaptation and expansion of narratives across several media formats' Scott Cady, "Fan Media and Transmedia: Jane Austen in the Digital Age," *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 44.

²¹ Marina Cano López, "In Flesh and Blood: Jane Austen as a Postmodern Fictional Character," in *Pleasure, Passion, and Possessiveness in the Jane Austen Community*, ed. Robert G. Dryden and Laurence Raw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 157.

fan responses to *P&P*, the thesis will explore the possibility that *P&P* can be most usefully considered, not as a single novel, but as an entire “archive” of work. The idea of the ‘*P&P* archive’ is drawn from the work of fanfiction theorist Abigail Derecho, who expands the definition of fanfiction to include any writing she calls *archontic*, a term borrowed from Jacques Derrida’s description of archives as ‘ever expanding and never completely closed’.²² Derecho’s approach emphasises intertextuality, she describes a text’s archive as ‘a virtual construct surrounding the text, including it and all texts related to it.’²³ Thus, the *P&P* archive ‘contains not only Austen’s novel, but...the hundreds of other stories based on Austen’s novel that have appeared in print both officially (issued by publishing houses) and unofficially (issued in zines and Web sites).’²⁴ Readers, writers, and adapters continually make withdrawals from the *P&P* archive to create new texts, then they deposit their selections back into the archive thereby ensuring that it is constantly growing, changing, and expanding.

As my thesis will draw on a wide range of popular response to *P&P* as a means of contextualising Austen fandom, I will be using an expansive definition of fanfiction as a genre. Sheenagh Pugh defines fanfiction broadly as any ‘writing, whether official or unofficial, paid or unpaid, which makes use of an accepted canon of characters, settings and plots generated by another writer or writers.’²⁵ This definition of fanfiction is most applicable to the Jane Austen fandom because it is one of the oldest literary fandoms and her works have long been in the public domain.²⁶ Consequently, in contrast to fandoms based on currently copyrighted work, commercial *and* non-commercial sequels, prequels, and continuations have a long history in this particular fandom and her novels are considered ‘fair game’ by her fans.²⁷ Any study of Austen’s cultural afterlife as evinced through fandom *must*, therefore, consider commercial texts

²² Abigail Derecho, “Archontic literature-A definition, a history, and several theories of fan fiction,” *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New essays*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2006), 61.

²³ *Ibid*, 65.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 65.

²⁵ Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 25.

²⁶ For *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Mansfield Park* the copyright expired in 1839, 1841, and 1842 respectively. The copyright of *Emma* was extended until 1857 and that of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* until 1860 because of the 1842 Act, which introduced a long copyright (42 years or the life of the author plus 7 years). See Annika Bautz, *The Reception of Jane Austen and Walter Scott: A Comparative Longitudinal Study* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 79.

²⁷ “Contributor Guidelines,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, last modified June 23, 2008, accessed 10 Oct, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/phorum/read.php?5,2413,2413#msg-2413>. The contributor guidelines at *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild* state that ‘Jane Austen is out of copyright and is fair game.’

as well as online fanfiction works in order to fully engage with her legacy in popular culture.

The application of the term ‘fanfiction’ to ‘official’, ‘paid’ writing, or professionally published texts, is deeply contested within fan studies as fanfiction is most often defined ‘as *non-profitable, non-commercial* texts based on other fictional texts (series, movies, and books) and written by their fans’.²⁸ The origin of the term ‘fanfiction’ is often traced to science fiction fandom, ‘where *fan* fiction was defined against *professional* fiction, and originally meant nothing more than original science fiction stories written in a nonprofessional or semiprofessional context’.²⁹ Given the origins of the term, Francesca Coppa argues that fanfiction must be understood as ‘fiction created outside of the literary marketplace’.³⁰ Indeed, she sees the distinction between fanfiction (writing ‘done for love’) and fiction written from within the marketplace (‘work done for money’) as being ‘essential’ to the fanfiction genre, which she defines as ‘creative material featuring characters that have previously appeared in works whose copyright is held by others’.³¹ However, some theorists locate the origins of fanfiction much earlier than the science fiction fandom, justifying the choice to embrace a more expansive definition of the genre.

Alexandra Edwards argues that ‘the science fiction version of fandom’s origin...[is] based on an exaggerated reality’.³² She presents an ‘alternate history of the birth of US media fandom’ to the one put forth by Coppa, ‘one that takes into account the many ways that the periodical press, both literary and pulp, helped shape fans and fandom.’³³ For Edwards, practices that took place from the 1880s through the 1930s and 1940s like ‘scrapbooking, writing letters to the editor, and submitting stories to magazine contests made literature participatory in a variety of rich and complex ways’

²⁸ Daria Pimenova, “Fan Fiction: Between Text, Conversation, and Game,” in *Internet Fictions*, ed. Ingrid Hotz-Davies, Anton Kirchhofer, and Sirpa Leppänen (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 44. (emphasis mine).

²⁹ Francesca Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader: Folktales for the Digital Age* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 1; See also Jeff Prucher, *Brave New Worlds: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 57. The use of ‘fanfiction’ to refer to ‘amateur’ science fiction can be traced back to 1939. However, the modern understanding of fanfiction as an expression of fandom and fan activities was not popularised until the 1960s following the advent of *Star Trek* fanfiction published by fans in ‘zines’ or fan produced magazines.

³⁰ Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 2.

³¹ Ibid, 3 and 6; See also Francesca Coppa, “Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performance,” in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New essays*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2006), 226.

³² Alexandra Edwards, “Literature Fandom and Literary Fans,” *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, ed. Paul Booth (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 51.

³³ Ibid, 47.

and helped to shape the fan culture which emerged in the early twentieth century.³⁴ Anne Jamison suggests that fanfiction has an even longer literary history, arguing that while the term ‘fanfiction’ is relatively new, fanfiction is ‘an old story’.³⁵ She notes that ‘[r]eworking an existing story, telling tales of heroes already known to be heroic, was *the* model of authorship until very recently’ and she traces the prehistory of fanfiction to Aristotle and Chrétien de Troyes.³⁶ In the foreword to *Fic*, Lev Grossman notes that fictional characters and worlds were once considered ‘shared resources’ and writers frequently wrote from sources.³⁷ Therefore, it can be argued that for ‘all its radically new implications and subversions... fanfiction also represents the swinging back of the pendulum toward that older way of thinking.’³⁸ If we understand fanfiction as a form of writing that ‘asserts the rights of storytellers to take possession of characters and settings from other people’s narratives and tell their own tales about them – to expand and build on the original’, then online Austen fanfiction has ‘plenty of forerunners’.³⁹

The practice of exploring the afterlives of Austen’s characters through fiction goes back to the nineteenth century and was even encouraged by the author herself. According to James Edward Austen-Leigh’s account in *A Memoir of Jane Austen and other family recollections* (1869; second edition in 1871), the author’s nieces and nephews would question their Aunt about her characters’ extra-textual existence and Austen would indulge her relations’ curiosity by relating ‘many little particulars about the subsequent career of some of her people.’⁴⁰ The first piece of writing that could be called Austen fanfiction is a letter addressed to Georgiana Darcy written by Austen’s niece Fanny Knight circa 1813. Knight wrote the letter hoping to elicit a response from her aunt in character as Darcy’s sister. However, Austen declined to respond, explaining that she ‘should not feel at all sure of the sort of Letter that Miss D.[arcy] would

³⁴ Ibid, 47 and 51. Edwards suggests that nationality plays a role in determining the origins of fandom. She notes that: ‘Though British scholars often take the works of Jane Austen and Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories as common fandom origin points, Americans tend to trace the beginning of fandom back through the 1960s *Star Trek* television show to science fiction magazines of the late 1920s and early 1930s, and focus heavily on white male authors and white male fan communities in those interwar decades.’

³⁵ Anne Jamison, “Why Fic?,” in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, ed. Anne Jamison (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), 17.

³⁶ Ibid, 18. Jamison treats this irreverent prehistory of fanfiction in a semi-playful manner, juxtaposing it with a more ‘serious’ history of the birth of media fandom.

³⁷ Lev Grossman, “Foreword,” in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, ed. Anne Jamison (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), xiv.

³⁸ Ibid, xiv.

³⁹ Ibid, xii.

⁴⁰ J.E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and other family recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119.

write'.⁴¹ This response is interesting as it implies that Austen did not envision her characters as being entirely under her control. Indeed, she was known to playfully talk of them as if they were 'real' people with their own private lives and personal tastes unknown to her. For example, in a letter to her sister Cassandra she wrote of seeing a portrait of Jane Bingley at an Art exhibition, declaring that Mrs Bingley's green dress 'convinced me of what I had always *supposed*, that green was a favourite colour with her.'⁴² After the author's death, Austen's family carried on the tradition of expanding her characters' stories.

Austen's niece, Anna Austen Lefroy, began a continuation of her Aunt's unfinished novel *Sanditon* in the 1830s, though she failed to complete the work. The author's relations later began branching out into commercially produced texts. Her niece Catherine Hubback based her triple-decker novel *The Younger Sister* (1850) on Austen's abandoned novel *The Watsons*. Her great grand-niece, Mrs. Francis Brown (née Edith Charlotte Hubback) wrote a completion of *The Watsons* in 1928 as well as two other novels, *Margaret Dashwood, or Interference* (1929) and *Susan Price, or Resolution* (1930). Writers outside of Austen's family also expanded on the author's novels from within the literary marketplace. In 1975 Marie Dobbs (pen name Anne Telscombe) published *Sanditon, by Another Lady*. Notable examples of early *P&P* sequels include Sybil Brinton's 1913 sequel entitled *Old Friends and New Fancies*, T.H. White's *Darkness at Pemberley* (1932), "The Darcy's of Rosings" by E. Barrington (Lily Adams Beck) in *The Ladies!* (1922), and D.A. Bonavia Hunt's *Pemberley Shades* (1949), to name a few.⁴³ Jamison argues that literary texts similar to the ones outlined here could be seen as part of the 'prehistory of fanfiction.'⁴⁴ However, she stresses that these earlier literary practices are '[not] *exactly* the equivalent of what

⁴¹ Jane Austen, "Letter to Cassandra Austen May 24, 1813", in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 222. Fanny Knight's original letter has not survived; however, we do have a letter from Austen to her sister Cassandra in which she references Fanny's letter.

⁴² Jane Austen, "Letter to Cassandra Austen May 24, 1813," in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 221, (emphasis mine).

⁴³ For a bibliography of *P&P* completions, continuations, and adaptations from 1895 to 1999 see Rolf Breuer, "Jane Austen etc.: The Completions, Continuations and Adaptations of Her Novels," 1999, accessed Feb 27, 2018, <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/breuer/biblio.html#comple>.

⁴⁴ Anne Jamison, "A Prehistory of Fanfiction," in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, ed. Anne Jamison (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), 26-37. Jamison's account of the prehistory of fanfiction includes references to child writers like the young Jane Austen, George Eliot, and the Brontës who wrote fiction based on the works of other writers as a form of literary apprenticeship, as a means of honing their own writing skills by borrowing the creations of other writers and inserting them into new stories. Eliot wrote historical romance fanfiction based on the work of Walter Scott, Austen wrote pastiche of the sentimental novel, and the Brontë children wrote Duke of Wellington stories.

we understand as fanfiction today'.⁴⁵ One of the key differences, she argues, is that what we now call fanfiction is 'no longer just writing stories about existing characters and worlds – it's writing those stories for a *community of readers* who already want to read them, who want to talk about them, and who may be writing them, too.'⁴⁶ Yet, I would argue that this idea of a communal response has always been an important aspect of Janeite reception and profic writing practices.

Austen critics often comment on the familial nature of Janeite response. For example, in her study of Janeite reception, Laura Fairchild Brodie describes historical and contemporary popular responses to Austen as a "'family circle" mode of response'.⁴⁷ Brodie points out that: '[w]hether describing Austen as a "friend" or "Aunt," the Janeites came increasingly to resemble an extended family circle with all of the affection and exclusivity implied therein.'⁴⁸ She contends that Austen promotes this familial intimacy partly because of her awareness of her audience. The author began her writing career by writing parodic sketches to entertain her family, and these stories were full of 'family jokes' and were dedicated 'to intimates who knew the books she sent up'.⁴⁹ Brodie argues that she continued to construct a private audience for her works after becoming a published author by 'textualizing a community of real respondents through her transcription of their comments into two relatively obscure manuscripts – "Opinions of *Mansfield Park*" and "Opinions of *Emma*."⁵⁰ These records of reader response compiled by Austen record the opinions of a predominantly female popular audience, rather than the expert reviews of male critics. For Brodie, these readers 'represent an expansion of the intimate family circle in which Austen's reception history originated and which currently survives in the Janeite "tribe."⁵¹

Brodie thus sees a parallel between the 'enclosed, familial nature of the "Opinions"' and contemporary fans' 'tribal tendencies', arguing that:

Austen's entire reception history resembles a long chain of family circles – from the immediate Austen family, to the extended community in the "Opinions," followed by the Victorian family reading circles targeted by James Edward

⁴⁵ Ibid, 35.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 36. (emphasis mine).

⁴⁷ Laura Fairchild Brodie, "Jane Austen and the Common Reader: 'Opinions of Mansfield Park,' 'Opinions of Emma,' and the Janeite Phenomenon," in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 37 (1995): 55.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 55.

⁴⁹ Rachel Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?* (New York: Columbia University Press), 183.

⁵⁰ Brodie, "Jane Austen and the Common Reader" 55-56.

⁵¹ Ibid, 56.

Austen-Leigh's *Memoir*, and finally culminating in today's community of Janeites, who continue to embrace Austen as a close companion.⁵²

The act of writing sequels, prequels, and reworkings of Austen's novels appears to be motivated by a desire to bond with Austen *and* with other readers who share a love of Austen. The earliest examples of Austen profic were written by members of Austen's family, and by continuing to write and consume profic texts contemporary fans participate in this family circle mode of response. This thesis will demonstrate that the most popular of profic texts are typically written by knowledgeable Austen fans for an 'insider audience' of initiated Janeites.⁵³ As Robert G. Dryden observes, most of 'these efforts by Austen fans and family [to continue on Austen's novels] are not examples of enterprise, capitalism, or opportunism', they are 'more loving than opportunistic'.⁵⁴ Given that these profic texts demand the complicity of other Janeites, like online fanfiction, they can be seen as a 'large body of collected, interactive, related narratives' written for a community of self-aware Janeites 'rather than fixed, isolated stories'.⁵⁵

Of course, not all profic writers identify as *fans* of Austen and not *all* Austen profic texts are written in a spirit of devotion. The selling power of Austen's name raises questions about the potentially exploitative aspects of the Austen industry, questions that will be addressed within the thesis.⁵⁶ Indeed, the tension between commercial exploitation and fannish devotion in the Austen industry actually lends further incentive to engage with profic. A consideration of economic power, and who wields it, cannot be left out of a discussion of a form of fiction that is ostensibly produced for the people. As David Glover and Scott McCracken point out that: '[f]or anyone trying to make sense of the "popular", this tension between what is genuinely a manifestation of popular taste or will and what is imposed upon people by those for whom culture is a business constitutes the central historical dynamic of modern popular

⁵² Ibid, 65.

⁵³ Phrase taken from Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 48.

⁵⁴ Robert G. Dryden, "Inventing Jane: Pleasure, Passion, and Possessiveness," in *Pleasure, Passion, and Possessiveness in the Jane Austen Community*, ed. Laurence Raw and Robert G. Dryden (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 107.

⁵⁵ Anne Jamison, "Introduction," in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, ed. Anne Jamison (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), 13.

⁵⁶ Chapter Three will explore the Austen/monster 'mashup' trend of the late noughties, in which writers who often professed not to like Austen's works, capitalised on her brand name to survive a precarious publishing industry following the 2008 economic crash.

culture'.⁵⁷ Engaging with Austen profic inevitably invites an important analysis of the power relations between those producers of profic for whom Austen is an 'infinitely exploitable global brand' and the popular audience for these texts, for whom Austen is a beloved 'friend'.⁵⁸

The real boom in Austen fanfiction came in the mid to late 1990s after the popularity of the author's work was renewed by film and television adaptations of the novels, leading to the formation of online communities. In contrast to the texts that form part of the Austen industry, *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* follow a 'gift economy' model of exchange by sharing stories for free online as a means of further fostering communal bonds.⁵⁹ The principle of the gift economy was theorised by French sociologist Marcel Mauss in his 1925 study *The Gift*.⁶⁰ Mauss's book focuses on how the reciprocal exchange of objects between groups was used to build relationships in archaic societies. Fans and fan studies scholars have adopted the term 'gift economy' to describe how the free exchange of fanfiction online is used to cement social bonds within fan communities. Fans give back to their community by writing fanfiction based on the text or show they admire and in return other fans offer feedback on the fiction and help to circulate the content. The process of exchange within fan communities is therefore 'made up of three elements related to the gift: to give, to receive, and to reciprocate.'⁶¹ The poem below is an illustrative example of a text that was written as a token of appreciation for the work of fellow fanfiction writers within the Austen community.

⁵⁷ David Glover and Scott McCracken, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction*, ed. David Glover and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3.

⁵⁸ Phrase 'infinitely exploitable global brand' comes from: Claire Harman, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2009), xvii.

⁵⁹ For an overview of the gift economy see Tisha Turk, "Fan Work: Labor, Worth, and Participation in Fandom's Gift Economy," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 15 (2014), accessed March 28, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0518>.

⁶⁰ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York, Norton, 1967).

⁶¹ Karen Hellekson, "A Fannish Field of Value: Online Fan Gift Culture," *Cinema Journal* 48 (2009): 113–18, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cj.0.0140>.

An Ode To The Honorable Writers Of Pemberley

Computer keys they click and clack
With endless stream of stories,
Bring all the JA characters back,
From Lizzy to Aunt Norris.

The gaps that dear Jane had left,
They fill and fill with pleasure:
Love, duels, honor, balls and theft
And every line a treasure!

They keep me in suspense all day:
What happens to Katrina?
How will turn out Kitty's stay?
How's Wickham, our sinner?

I laugh and cry, mourn and rejoice,
For all those phantoms dear.
It all a haunting magic voice
That keeps me always here.

So I would like to thank you all,
Who've often made my day
I hope with my heart and soul,
You'll never go away.⁶²

A text such as the example above is understood by fans as a labour of love, rather than labour for profit. As one fan commentator explains in an account of gift exchange within the fan community, '[i]n a Gift Economy, the *thing* -- in this case, the story -- isn't just valuable for itself alone, but is significant as part of a *relationship*, embedded in a network of relationships.'⁶³ Of course, if gift exchange solidifies a community, it is logical that re-gifting fan-made products for monetary gain can lead to dissent and division within many fan communities. The recent success of E.L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011-2017) series escalated concerns around the consequences of publishing fanfiction for profit. James's first novel began as online *Twilight*-inspired fanfiction, which the author wrote in collaboration with the readers who read, commented on, and suggested ways to improve her work. James's readers

⁶² Marsha, "Ode to Our Pemberley Writers," "Fantasia Gallery," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, Sept 2, 1998, accessed Feb 12, 2018, <https://www.dwiggie.com/derby/olda/marsha11.htm>.

⁶³ Doctor Science, "50 shades of fandom: publishing. Part IIb," *Obsidian Wings*, May 16, 2012, accessed 20 May, 2017, http://obsidianwings.blogspot.com/obsidian_wings/2012/05/50-shades-of-fandom-publishing-part-ii.html.

were active participants in the creative process: fans stating that: '[a]s much as she fed us, we fed her with our comments AND suggestions'.⁶⁴ By changing the characters' names and re-branding her fanfiction as 'original', James disappointed *Twilight* fans who felt that what had started as a process of fair exchange had turned into an exploitative arrangement. Bethan Jones elaborates that 'James's use of fannish resources, coupled with her failure to acknowledge that support, is, for some fans, an exploitation of fandom.'⁶⁵ As published fanfiction violates the ethos of the gift economy, many fan studies critics and fans justly question whether such texts can be classified as fanfiction.⁶⁶

Although for some writers Austen means 'money', as noted, many successful Austen profic writers envision their novels as tributes to their favourite writer. Furthermore, they often work within the supportive framework of the online fan community and 'incorporate the cultural texts as part of their self-identity'.⁶⁷ In other words, their response to Austen is both commercial *and* communal. Online fanfiction is recognised as a form of homage and appreciation: as numerous online fan communities make clear, the primary motivation for writing these texts is to pay tribute to 'the immortal Jane Austen' because fans 'wish that she had lived longer and written more' and consequently 'feel the need to expand on the world, the characters and the stories that Miss Austen created.'⁶⁸ Similarly, very many Austen profic writers have cited a love for Austen and her characters as their reason for writing. For example, Austen profic writer Jane Odiwe explains that: 'I write for those who cannot get enough of Jane's wonderful characters. She only wrote six complete books, and for some people, that just isn't enough'.⁶⁹ Profic writers frequently interact with the online fan community in order to receive feedback on their work and they acknowledge the value of this 'dialogue'.⁷⁰ For example, *Austen Variations*, a website run by a group of Austen

⁶⁴ AlwaysLucky1 quoted in Bethan Jones, "Fifty Shades of Exploitation: Fan Labor and Fifty Shades of Grey," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 15, (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0501>.

⁶⁵ Jones, "Fifty Shades of Exploitation."

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the future of fandom's gift economy and its intersections with commodity culture, see Suzanne Scott, "Repackaging Fan Culture: The Regifting Economy of Ancillary Content Models," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 3 (2009), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0150>.

⁶⁷ Pearson, "Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, and Sherlockians," 101/102.

⁶⁸ Quote taken from 'The Derbyshire Writers' Guild' archive. "Archived Fanfiction Stories: 1997-1998," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://web.archive.org/web/19980214221828/http://pemberley.com/derby/index.html>.

⁶⁹ Jane Odiwe, quoted in "Fan appreciation no. 3, Jane Odiwe, Author and Illustrator," in *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Chicago: Intellect Books, 2015), 108.

⁷⁰ Odiwe, quoted in *Ibid*, 108.

profic writers, provides ‘a place for readers and writers of Austen-inspired fiction to connect’, to discuss new stories, and share their ‘love of Jane Austen.’⁷¹ In the Austen fandom, not all writers create fiction ‘*outside* the market’, but most do produce fiction ‘*inside* the community and within the culture of fandom’.⁷² Engagement with community is an integral aspect of fandom: ‘fanfiction is not just any continuation or interpretation of a story, but one that happens within, because of, and for a particular community.’⁷³ Writing for profit is thus more readily accepted within Austen fandom partly because online and profic writers are frequently envisioned as writing from within the same community and as sharing a common goal.

Some of the biggest names in the Austen profic industry got their start in online fan communities; for example, ‘Pamela Aidan of the *Fitzwilliam Gentleman* series, Marsha Altman of the *Darcys and Bingleys* series, and Sharon Lathan of the *Darcy Saga* series, to name a few’.⁷⁴ While James provoked outrage when she published her online fanfiction *Master of the Universe* as the *Fifty Shades* series, Aidan, a denizen of *Pemberley*, received support and encouragement when she expanded what started as a five-page fanfiction story entitled ‘Be Not Alarmed Madam’ into the bestselling *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman* (2003-2010) series.⁷⁵ Aidan thought ‘it could be very interesting to show the first proposal scene from Darcy’s point of view’ and ‘got so much positive feedback, [she] decided to try to tell the whole story from his perspective’ and continued to publish chapters on *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* for ‘about a year.’⁷⁶ She then decided to self-publish the first book in the series having been encouraged by the ‘incredible’ love and support she received from her ‘built-in audience’ in the *Pemberley* community.⁷⁷ Indeed, fans were so eager for the release of the first book in the series that some even volunteered their design skills to help Aidan

⁷¹ “About,” *Jane Austen Variations*, accessed 30 March, 2017, <http://austenvariations.com/about/>.

⁷² Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 7. (emphasis mine).

⁷³ Ibid, 9.

⁷⁴ Laurel Ann Nattress, “Jane Austen 101: Fan Fiction Web Sites,” *Austenprose – A Jane Austen Blog*,” Dec 5, 2010, accessed Feb 22, 2018, <https://austenprose.com/2010/12/05/jane-austen-101-fanfiction-web-sites/>.

⁷⁵ “At An Assembly Such As This...”, “Derbyshire Writers’ Guild,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, 1997-1998, <http://web.archive.org/web/20010205014100/http://www.pemberley.com/derby/pamt2.htm>. “Be Not Alarmed” is no longer available in the archive; however, “At An Assembly Such As This...”, an expanded version of the story, is still accessible.

⁷⁶ Pamela Aidan, interview by Karen Holt, “What was Darcy thinking? Interview with Pamela Aidan,” *JaneAusten.nl*, accessed October 6, 2016, <https://www.janeausten.nl/de-leeszaal/what-was-darcy-thinking-interview-with-pamela-aidan/>.

⁷⁷ Deborah Yaffe, *Among the Janeites: A Journey Through the World of Jane Austen Fandom* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2013), 88.

produce a cover for the book.⁷⁸ Aidan reportedly made an average of \$30,000 a month selling her Austen profic from her own website and was eventually offered a lucrative publishing deal by Simon & Schuster.⁷⁹ Austen fan blogger Laurel Ann Nattress interprets the move by fanfiction writers from internet forums to commercial publishing as ‘encouragement enough to opine that the fan fiction boards are producing quality work with great potential.’⁸⁰ The stark contrast between the censure James endured and the support Aidan enjoyed, illustrates the differing attitude towards published fanfiction in the Austen community to that in other online literary fandoms.

Given the unique relationship between commercial and non-commercial texts in this community, profic texts are obviously an important aspect of the Austen fandom that should not be overlooked. Furthermore, it is important to note that even critics who worry about fandom’s gift economy being exploited concede that a ‘commitment to gift culture’ can be problematic because it keeps certain groups of people, who may already be underrepresented in official commercial culture, locked out of this area.⁸¹ Jamison notes that the majority of fanfiction ‘writing is written by women, or if not by women, then by people who are willing to be (mis)taken for women.’⁸² Fanfiction is consequently often characterised as a ‘female genre’. It participates in a long cultural tradition of devaluing women’s works that dates back to Austen’s own time when novels ‘had a very low cultural status in the literary hierarchy’ largely due to their association with female writers and readers.⁸³ The emphasis on the gift economy prevents fanfiction writers from being paid for their labour, from gaining economic and cultural credit, and also arguably results in fanfiction being devalued as a ‘female craft’ like quilting or sewing.⁸⁴ Jamison thus argues that the trend of disapproving of women who want to profit from their creative labour plays into ‘a long tradition of shaming women for wanting compensation for work [for example domestic work] that social norms dictate should be done only out of love’.⁸⁵ Therefore, she argues:

⁷⁸ Aidan, interview by Holt, “What was Darcy thinking?”

⁷⁹ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 89.

⁸⁰ Nattress, “Jane Austen 101: Fan Fiction Web Sites.”

⁸¹ Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 11.

⁸² Jamison, “Why Fic,” 18.

⁸³ Robert Irvine, *Jane Austen*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), 17.

⁸⁴ Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 11.

⁸⁵ Anne Jamison, “The Briar Patch”, in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, ed. Anne Jamison (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), 285.

If a writer, with the help and support of a community, manages to do that incredibly unusual thing – come up with a story that connects with tens or even thousands of readers – and they can legally profit from it...I do not believe that writer – or any writer – should be shamed for pursuing that opportunity.⁸⁶

In the Austen fandom, the supportive community that Jamison envisions already exists. It is fruitful to engage with all aspects of it, rather than dismissing the labour of those writers who publish for profit as not being ‘authentic’ simply because they expect monetary compensation for their time, effort, and skill.

Methodology

This thesis will focus on Austen profic that has entered bestseller lists, like the *New York Times* bestseller *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), or that has been written in dialogue with bestsellers, like the *P&P* vampire romance novels inspired by Stephenie Meyers bestselling *Twilight* series (2005-2008). Commenting on the cultural significance of bestsellers, John Sutherland states that a ‘#1 novel may be seen as a successful literary experiment – as short-lived as a camera flash, and as capable of freezing, vividly, its historical moment.’⁸⁷ For example, *Bridget Jones’ Diary* (1996), which was based on Austen’s *P&P* and Davies’s adaptation, can be seen as a ‘snapshot’ of Britain in the 1990s that can ‘tell new generations about what our society cherished, celebrated or felt strongly about’ at this particular time and place.⁸⁸ As novels must resonate with the cultural concerns of a readership to achieve bestselling status, bestselling profic obviously has much to tell us about the cultural moment in which it was received.

Like the profic texts, online fanfiction texts will be chosen because they are representative of specific trends during peak phases of *P&P* fanfiction production. The online fanfiction texts will be taken from the archives of *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* because these are the oldest and most influential online Austen fan communities. As these two sites operate by contrasting community guidelines, they provide insight into the diversity of the Austen fandom and the generic range of Austen fanfiction. In 1996

⁸⁶ Ibid, 284.

⁸⁷ John Sutherland, *Bestsellers: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

⁸⁸ Christine Berberich, “Introduction: The Popular – Literature versus literature,” in *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*, ed. Christine Berberich (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 3.

Pemberley began hosting the first online fanfiction archive dedicated to Austen: it was entitled the ‘Derbyshire Writers’ Guild’. Initially, this archive accepted two categories of fanfiction: sequels set in the Regency period and fanfiction that fell into the ‘fantasy category, or modern-day retellings’.⁸⁹ In 1998, an internal conflict led to the ‘Derbyshire Writers’ Guild’ splitting from the *Pemberley Estate* to become an independent fanfiction community. *Pemberley* renamed their fanfiction depository ‘Bits of Ivory’, removed all fantasy stories and contemporary retellings, and set up new rules aimed at constraining experimental stories and alternative readings. Fans were subjected to restrictions designed to ensure that their stories and posts were not ‘incompatible with the tone of [the] site.’⁹⁰ Writers were instructed to ‘present Jane Austen’s characters behaving as she wrote them in scenes we might wish she had an opportunity to write herself’, and were warned that stories ‘must take place within the same historical era as Jane Austen’s novels.’⁹¹ Additionally, fans were cautioned that stories ‘must have no profanity, violence or “adult” content.’⁹² Contributors were informed that: ‘If you resonate with the tone, visiting the site will be all the more fun for you. If you don’t, just don’t come; it’s not your kind of place.’⁹³ Pugh argues that *Pemberley*’s ‘rigid criteria work against creativity and quality in its fan fiction’ because ‘if you are simply writing pastiche, every perceived departure from the idiom will jar your readers ferociously and convince them that they would be better reading the real thing.’⁹⁴

Pemberley’s prescriptive rules encourage conformity to a conservative reading of Austen, ‘a “right way” of reading...that dictates how members should approach the object of fandom, and within this, what forms of interaction are deemed normative and acceptable.’⁹⁵ The creation and implementation of rules to create norms and manage difference is not unique to *Pemberley*. As Rhiannon Bury points out in her analysis of message board fan forums, establishing communal practices is important to community formation and development, because ‘exclusion necessarily goes hand in hand with

⁸⁹ “Derbyshire Writers’ Guild,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, 1997-1998, <http://web.archive.org/web/19980214221828/http://pemberley.com/derby/index.html>.

⁹⁰ “Contributor Guidelines,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed August 21, 2010, <http://www.pemberley.com/derby/guidenew.html>.

⁹¹ “Vision Statement,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed August 21, 2010, <http://www.pemberley.com/derby/guidenew.html>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ “Frequently asked questions,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Aug 21, 2010, <http://www.pemberley.com/faq.html>.

⁹⁴ Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 39.

⁹⁵ Lucy Bennett, “Tracing Textual Poachers: Reflections on the development of fan studies and digital fandom,” *Journal of Fandom Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 13.

inclusion'.⁹⁶ Bury relates online communities to Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopic spaces', which are 'not freely accessible like a public space': to get in 'one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures.'⁹⁷ Rules are necessary for stabilising a community and establishing order. However, when rules are too rigid they can hinder creative expression and 'shore up and confine interpretations', a criticism often levelled at *Pemberley*.⁹⁸

Unfortunately, because *Pemberley* is the oldest (and for many years was the biggest) online Austen fan community, critics have tended to take this site as representative of all Austen fan communities. Consequently, a distorted view has emerged of Austen fandom: it is characterised as a seemingly 'democratic' culture that in reality closes down avenues of interpretation. For example, after discussing 'the particular corner of cyberspace' where Austen fandom flourishes, Lynch comes to the conclusion that *Pemberley* is among the institutions that promulgate the 'worrying' proposition that '[Austen] and her works present few interpretive or political challenges, that the culture has already got her number.'⁹⁹ Likewise, in her reading of 'Austenian Subcultures', Mary Ann O'Farrell cites *Pemberley* as a fan community that is limited by its celebration of 'not just Austen, but particular readings of her'.¹⁰⁰ O'Farrell even suggests that *Pemberley* is somewhat sinister, noting that 'this community constantly reconstitutes itself – and enlists us for its citizenry by enscripting us within its borders'.¹⁰¹ Even the forum's 'welcome' message ('your haven in a world programmed to misunderstand your obsession with things Austen') is interpreted as both welcoming and exclusionary as it implies that not everybody will find solace in this apparent refuge, as not everybody reads Austen or her works in the 'right' way.¹⁰²

Engaging with *Pemberley* is necessary and profitable given its status as the longest-running online Austen fan community. However, to present a more rounded

⁹⁶ Rhiannon Bury, *Cyberspaces of their Own: an ethnographic investigation of fandoms and femininities* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 15.

⁹⁷ Michel Foucault quoted in *Ibid*, 179. Bury argues that private message-boards created by and for women, offer an alternative to male-dominated public spaces and therefore equate to the 'counter-sites' defined by Foucault as heterotopic.

⁹⁸ Darryl Jones, *Jane Austen* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 94.

⁹⁹ Deidre Lynch, "Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors," in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deidre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3 and 5.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Ann O'Farrell, "Austenian Subcultures," in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 483.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 483.

¹⁰² "Frequently asked questions," *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Aug 21, 2010, <http://www.pemberley.com/faq.html>.

view of Austen fandom, this thesis will avoid taking the *Pemberley* 'Bits of Ivory' archive as the normative standard by which to judge all online Austen fanfiction. In the Austen fandom, as in all fandoms, fans 'don't speak with one voice'; therefore, it is necessary to engage with fanfiction from different communities to appreciate the diversity of creative responses to *P&P*.¹⁰³ *Derbyshire*, the faction of *Pemberley* that seceded from the estate in 1998, deliberately leaves the guidelines for contributors 'quite vague' so that they are free to exercise their own interpretive judgements.¹⁰⁴ This fanfiction archive hosts two main collections: 'Epilogue Abbey', which 'contains stories that stay within the historical period in which Jane Austen lived', and 'Fantasia Gallery', which is exclusively for stories 'that stray from the historical time period in which Jane Austen's characters lived or contain irreverent or silly elements.'¹⁰⁵ By also looking at texts from *Derbyshire*, the thesis will be able to provide a more multifaceted view of fans' creative output.

It is noteworthy that *Derbyshire*'s fanfiction archives have continued to flourish while the heavily policed *Pemberley*'s 'Bits of Ivory' archive closed to new content in 2008, suggesting that putting limits on innovation and experimentation is detrimental to fan creativity. *Pemberley* has had to unexpectedly downsize a number of times in recent years, resulting in the loss of large quantities of fanfiction. Unable to continue financing the site on a large scale, in September 2014 the managers made the decision to move to a smaller platform and to consolidate or cut out much of the content that fans had collectively archived over the years.¹⁰⁶ Analysing texts from *Pemberley* therefore presents methodological challenges, as much fanfiction is no longer archived on the live site. In order to access *Pemberley*'s formative fanfiction archives, the thesis will avail of

¹⁰³ Jamison, "Introduction," 20.

¹⁰⁴ "Contributor Guidelines," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed June 24, 2010, <http://www.dwiggie.com/phorum/read.php?5,2413,2413#msg-2413>.

¹⁰⁵ "Epilogue Gallery," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed July 25, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/toc/index.php?id=E&page=1>.

"Fantasia Gallery," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed July 25, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/toc/index.php?id=F&page=all>.

¹⁰⁶ Myretta Robens, "Important Site Announcement," accessed September, 10, 2014, www.pemberley.com. 'Our advertising income is down 40%...purchases from the Shoppe have fallen 60% since this time last year...and perhaps most importantly,...contributions from Pemberleans are also down 40% from this time last year. The committee has debated the pros and cons of simply shutting down the site (undoubtedly the simplest option) and ended up searching for a way to keep parts of Pemberley viable.'

Wayback Machine, a service that preserves and provides access to old versions of websites.¹⁰⁷

The thesis will focus mainly on online fanfiction from the mid-late 1990s and the late noughties because Austen adaptations and Austen profic dominated the mainstream marketplace during these periods. A consideration of online fanfiction alongside profic raises interesting questions about how these cultural products intersect with each other. The thesis will consider how online fanfiction responds to and comments on popular production trends in mainstream culture, and also how these stories differ to commercial publications, sometimes offering stories that mainstream culture does not provide. As the *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* archives are based on older message board forums, the fanfiction stories cannot be searched or filtered by story 'tag', like 'Archive of Our Own' or fanfiction.net.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, stories from relevant years have been printed out and manually organised by theme in order to identify recurring trends and popular sub-genres of *P&P* fanfiction, such as fairy tale fictions, romance sequels, or crossover stories etc.

Like Anne Jamison's recent anthology *Fic*, my research favors a literary approach to fandom, by concentrating primarily on examining the 'fiction, not the fandom dynamics'.¹⁰⁹ The choice to situate *P&P* fanfiction in its literary and cultural context contrasts to foundational studies of fandom, which often adopted an 'ethnographic' approach where fan activities were observed either from outside or inside the fan community.¹¹⁰ Some fan studies critics have advocated a return to the ethnographic approach of first-wave fan studies criticism, arguing that a 're-centering of ethnographical observations and the voice of fans within contemporary fan scholarship may be timely and useful' given the changes that the media landscape has undergone

¹⁰⁷ "The Derbyshire Writers' Guild," The Republic of Pemberley, 1996, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://web.archive.org/web/19980214221828/http://pemberley.com/derby/index.html>.

¹⁰⁸ A tag is a keyword or phrase that fanfiction writers add to their works to make them easier to find. On *Archive of Our Own*, for example, tags are used for the majority of the information (metadata) attached to works. Category, Warnings, Rating, Fandom, Characters, Relationships, and Additional Tags (Freeforms) are all treated as tags. "FAQ," *Archive of Our Own*, accessed Aug 28, 2018, https://archiveofourown.org/faq/tags?language_id=en#whatisatag.

¹⁰⁹ Jamison, "Introduction," 7.

¹¹⁰ In *Enterprising Women* (1992), for example, Camille Bacon-Smith took an ethnographic approach to researching her chosen community of female *Star Trek* fans, recording what she observed of the community's behaviour from an outsider's perspective. By contrast, Henry Jenkins took an 'insider's' approach in *Textual Poachers* (1992), positioning himself as occupying the dual identities of academic and fan. His research played an important role in developing a more participatory ethnographic study of fan culture.

since the introduction of new technologies.¹¹¹ Austen critics studying contemporary Austen fandom such as Juliette Wells have usefully incorporated a social-scientific questionnaire-based approach into their research to better understand Austen fans' motivations for engaging in Janeite activities like literary tourism.¹¹² Ethnographic work into online Janeite communities would also clearly be beneficial, but such an approach would be tangential to the main aims of this particular thesis.

Although interested in critically engaging with 'the voice of the fan,' I aim to focus on the fiction itself as a means of gaining further insight into Janeite reception, rather than through focusing on ethnographic analysis. Wells notes that 'the idea of reception is flexible enough to address, in addition to reading itself, actions taken as a result of reading', meaning that reception can include fanfiction, an activity that is inspired by reading.¹¹³ Thus far, the focus in Austen reception has been on the Janeites' role as readers, rather than as writers, but research into fanfiction can deepen our understanding of how the Janeites respond to their reading. The thesis aims to demonstrate that fanfiction is as valid a form of reader response as letters or diary entries and as valuable a form of cultural criticism as the Austen film adaptations. Therefore, analysing fanfiction for its insight into how readers respond to Austen and to their cultural moment, answers the aims of my thesis more effectively than a sociological or interview-based approach. Furthermore, by focusing on fanfiction's cultural, critical, and literary significance, my research will offer a much-needed corrective to accounts of online fanfiction and profic texts within Austen studies that have dismissed the genre because of its perceived lack of aesthetic worth.

Preliminary accounts of fanfiction by Austen scholars and even members of Jane Austen societies took the prevailing view that fanfiction was a derivative genre devoid of originality and lacking any artistic merit. For example, in 1986 JASNA (Jane Austen Society of North America) member and children's book author Marilyn Sachs adopted a censorious stance towards sequel writers and confidently asserted that 'Jane Austen would certainly not approve.'¹¹⁴ Likewise, in her 1989 review of Austen-inspired

¹¹¹ Bennett, "Tracing Textual Poachers," 11.

¹¹² Juliette Wells, *Everybody's Jane: Austen in the Popular Imagination* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2011), 103-141.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹⁴ Marilyn Sachs, "The Sequels to Jane Austen's Novels," in David J. Grey, ed. *The Jane Austen Handbook: with a Dictionary of Jane Austen's Life and Works*, ed. David J. Grey (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 376. Interestingly, twenty years after condemning Austen profic novels, Sachs wrote one of her own: *First Impressions* (2006).

fiction, JASNA member Kathleen Glancy took a particularly vitriolic view of those authors ‘rash’ enough to attempt sequels.¹¹⁵ Glancy declared that she could probably sum up the *Mansfield Park* sequel *Gambles and Gambols- A visit with Old Friends* (1983) in one word. However, she lamented, ‘the word is not one suitable to be spoken in any gathering dedicated to Jane Austen’, therefore, she requested the reader to ‘[p]lease direct your thoughts to a large pile of the waste product from the digestive systems of male bovines, and it will convey the idea.’¹¹⁶ Similarly, in a scathing review featured in the *New York Times*, James R. Kincaid called spin-offs ‘rat-bottom awful’, while Austen scholar Judy Simons employed the slightly more measured term ‘reductive renditions’ to refer to Austen fanfiction.¹¹⁷ Lynch criticised the formulaic nature of Austen fanfiction by highlighting the apparently unvarying ingredients in the recipe: ‘take “three or four families in a country village” somewhere in the south of England, some time during the Regency; arrange for strangers to arrive in that neighbourhood, marriageable young men whose ways are vexingly inscrutable; add narrative twists and turns by sending your heroines to balls or Brighton; end with at least one marriage.’¹¹⁸ These accounts make value judgements about the perceived lack of quality of profic and fanfiction texts and do not engage with fans’ interpretive output in a significant analytical way. Often the quantity of Austen-inspired texts is mentioned, but individual texts are rarely subjected to close readings. Indeed, the critics quoted here could be accused of ‘scholarly “distant reading”’, where ‘academics write in a cursory, nondetailed, and dismissive manner about...[texts] they feel an aesthetic distaste for.’¹¹⁹

Rather than cursorily dismissing an ‘entire enterprise of writing in response to Austen’, or only concentrating on one aspect of Austen fanfiction such as the oft-derided Regency-era sequel, this thesis will perform close readings of a wide range of Austen fanfiction and profic from a number of generic categories.¹²⁰ It will also

¹¹⁵ Kathleen Glancy, “What Happened Next? or The Many Husbands of Georgiana Darcy,” *Persuasions* 11 (1989): 110.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹¹⁷ James R. Kincaid, “You Jane? A Modern-day Writer Completes an Unfinished Austen Novel,” *New York Times*, December 3, 2000, accessed June 8, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/books/00/12/03/reviews/001203.03kincait.html>.

Judy Simons, “Classics and trash: reading Austen in the 1990s,” *Women’s Writing*, 5 (1998): 36.

¹¹⁸ Lynch, “Sequels,” 161.

¹¹⁹ Matt Hills, “Media Academics as Media Audiences: Aesthetic Judgements in Media and Cultural Studies,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 41.

¹²⁰ Juliette Wells, “New Approaches to Austen and the Popular Reader,” in *Uses of Austen: Jane’s Afterlives*, ed. Gillian Dow and Clare Hanson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 88.

consider the different connotations of words used to denote fanfiction, and how these words affect perceptions of the genre. Fan-produced texts have frequently been dismissed as ‘uniformly derivative’ within Austen studies, but fan studies critics have attempted to rebrand such fiction as ‘transformative’.¹²¹ Coppa points out that there is an important distinction between ‘derivative’ and ‘transformative’, especially when it comes to arguing for the legitimacy and legality of fanworks.¹²² Calling a piece of fiction ‘derivative’ suggests it is a hackneyed copy of an original work that duplicates elements from the source but does not attempt to take the narrative in new directions. It invokes a hierarchy, ‘a ranking of the two texts according to quality and classifies the secondary text as the lesser one.’¹²³ By contrast, the understanding of fanfiction as ‘transformative’ signifies that it adds ‘new insights or meaning to the original work’ or brings ‘out in the open what was present in the subtext or context’ of the source material.¹²⁴

In a legal context, even the reuse of copyrighted material is permitted as a form of ‘fair use’ so long as it is for a ‘transformative purpose’.¹²⁵ Texts are found to be transformative if they make ‘overt that which was present in the original text covertly’, in other words, ‘transformative fair uses make subtext text’.¹²⁶ For example, Alice Randall’s *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), a retelling of Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (1936) told from the point of view of a slave, passed the transformative use test in a legal setting. After the book’s release, the Mitchell estate sued Randall and her publishers Houghton Mifflin for copyright infringement. However, a ‘federal court of appeals held that Randall’s book was likely to be a fair use, largely because of the ways in which it criticized the racism of the original.’¹²⁷ Fan studies critics have argued that all fanworks are ‘core fair uses’ that ‘add new meaning to the original text.’¹²⁸ For

¹²¹ Phrase ‘uniformly derivative’ is from Lynch, “Sequels,” 161.

¹²² Francesca Coppa, “An Archive of Our Own,” in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, ed. Anne Jamison (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), 306.

¹²³ Derecho, “Archontic literature,” 64.

¹²⁴ Rebecca Tushnet, “Copyright Law, Fan Practices, and the Rights of the Author,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 61/62.

¹²⁵ In the UK exceptions to copyright law are referred to as ‘fair dealing’. Fair dealing is more restricted than the American concept of ‘fair use’ or ‘transformative use’. The concept of fair dealing only applies in the following tightly defined situations: Research and Private Study; Criticism, review, quotation and news reporting; Caricature, parody or pastiche; and Illustration for instruction.

¹²⁶ Tushnet, “Copyright Law, Fan Practices, and the Rights of the Author,” 68.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹²⁸ “What We Believe,” *Organization for Transformative Works*, accessed August 30, 2016, http://www.transformativeworks.org/what_we_believe/. To protect fan culture and advocate for the legitimacy of fan-produced works, fans and fan studies critics formed the *The Organization for*

example, Jenkins argues that ‘all or at least most fan fiction...involve[s] some form of criticism of the original texts upon which it is based’.¹²⁹ This thesis will seek an approach to Austen fanfiction between ‘two related forms of aesthetic judgement underpinning academic work: celebratory scholar-fandom’, where scholars justify paying attention to a text because of their own enthusiasm or personal liking for it, and ‘critical scholar-anti-fandom’, where texts are dismissed by scholars because of an aesthetic distaste.¹³⁰ Fanfiction texts will be explored as critical and creative responses to Austen’s novels, Austen adaptations, and to their cultural context. Fans’ own methods of evaluating fanfiction and profic will also be explored.

Fanfiction, Emotion, and ‘Testimonies of Faith’

I am a Jane Austenite, and, therefore, slightly imbecile about Jane Austen...One reads and rereads, the mouth open and the mind closed. Shut up in measureless content, one greets her by the name of most kind hostess, while criticism slumbers. The Jane Austenite possesses none of the brightness he ascribes to his idol. Like all regular churchgoers, he scarcely notices what is being said.

- E.M. Forster, 1924¹³¹

An additional incentive for embracing ‘fanfiction’ as an umbrella term is a desire to tackle the stigma surrounding the word ‘fan’ in Austen studies, and to challenge the idea that fans are uncritical thinkers who ‘have given [Austen] a bad name’ with their ‘dogged narratives of wish-fulfillment’.¹³² The ‘fan’ causes such discomfort in this field that the word is virtually unsayable, as evidenced by the lengths Austen critics go to in order to avoid articulating the ‘fan’ in *fanfiction*. For example, in an early account of the Austen fan phenomenon Lynch refers circuitously to fan-produced texts by mentioning

Transformative Works (OTW) in 2007 ‘to provide access to and preserve the history of fanworks and fan cultures.’

¹²⁹ Henry Jenkins, “Fan Fiction as Critical Commentary,” *Confessions of an Aca-Fan: The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins*, September 27, 2006, accessed May 29, 2015, http://henryjenkins.org/2006/09/fan_fiction_as_critical_commen.html. By ‘criticism’ Jenkins refers to ‘interpretation and commentary’ rather than ‘negative statements’ made about the work in question as he argues critical commentary ‘can embrace the ideas included in the original work as well as take issue with them’.

¹³⁰ Hills, “Media Academics as Media Audiences,” 42.

¹³¹ E.M. Forster, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, Vol. 2*, 280.

¹³² Hilary Mantel, “Jane Austen,” in *Literary Genius: 25 Classic Writers Who Define English and American Literature*, ed. Joseph Epstein (Philadelphia, PA: Paul Dry, 2007), 75-76.

the deluge of Austen-related ‘sequels, prequels, retellings and spin-offs’.¹³³ Lynch elects to ‘use “sequel” to label those works which, in either prolonging a novel’s action or renarrating it from different perspectives, also transfer their characters into a different generic register’.¹³⁴ Lynch’s choice is an odd one, for of course, a sequel is a continuation of the story. Therefore, texts which tell the chosen story from a different perspective, or which translate the novel into a new generic register, *instead of* continuing the story from where Austen finished, are manifestly not sequels. The examples highlighted by Lynch fall into recognisable fanfiction categories outlined by Jenkins such as *refocalization*, described as fanfiction which ‘shift[s] attention away from the...central figures and onto secondary characters’, and *genre shifting* fanfiction, which imagines the story through the filter of ‘alternative generic traditions’.¹³⁵

More recent criticism on Austen fanfiction also avoids the term ‘fanfiction’. Juliette Wells uses the term ‘hybrids’ to characterise fanfiction, a term borrowed from Julie Sanders’ definition of hybridity as ‘a blend, fusion, or compound of influences at the level of both language and form’.¹³⁶ Amanda Gilroy refers to ‘sequels, prequels, and rewrites, or “post-texts,” the collective name that [she] find[s] most useful for these productions’.¹³⁷ Even writers of professionally published Austen fanfiction appear uncomfortable with the term, often preferring ‘Austen Sequels’ or ‘Austen Variations’.¹³⁸ When asked if she had a name for the genre that she worked in, prolific author Amanda Grange responded by stating:

I don’t really have a name for it. It doesn’t really fit into the Jane Austen fanfiction or Austenesque fiction mould because it sticks so closely to the originals. On my website I call it Jane Austen fiction but I think of it more as a kind of literary archaeology: a piecing together of fragments scattered throughout the novels to create a different, previously unseen, side to each character.¹³⁹

¹³³ Lynch, “Sequels,” 160.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹³⁵ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 165 and 169.

¹³⁶ Julie Sanders quoted in Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 197.

¹³⁷ Amanda Gilroy, “Our Austen: Fan Fiction in the Classroom,” *Persuasions On-Line* 31 (2010), <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol31no1/gilroy.html>.

¹³⁸ See for example, the *Jane Austen Variations* website run by writers of Austen profic. “Jane Austen Variations,” accessed 30 March, 2017, <http://austenvariations.com/about/>.

¹³⁹ Amanda Grange, “Fan appreciation no.1: Amanda Grange, Novelist,” interview by Gabrielle Malcolm, in *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 36/37.

Grange's elaborate description of 'literary archaeology' illustrates the evasiveness that characterises even the responses of self-confessed Janeites to fanfiction.

Of course, it could be argued that the word 'fanfiction' is avoided to maintain a distinction between profic texts and online examples. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that the word 'fan' is not articulated because for some Austen critics and even Janeites:

The fan still constitutes a scandalous category in contemporary culture, one alternately the target of ridicule and anxiety, of dread and desire. Whether viewed as a religious fanatic, a psychopathic killer, a neurotic fantasist, or a lust-crazed groupie, the fan remains a 'fanatic' or false worshipper, whose interests are fundamentally alien to the realm of 'normal' cultural experience and whose mentality is dangerously out of touch with reality.¹⁴⁰

Jenkins points out that there is nothing in the etymology of the word 'fan' that necessitates the inclusion of a concept of *excessive* religious zeal. The word fan is derived from the Latin word 'fanaticus' meaning 'of or belonging to the temple, a temple servant, a devotee.'¹⁴¹ Initially the term implied a temperate and justified devotion; however, the word 'quickly assumed more negative connotations'.¹⁴² It changed from signifying moderate worship to an implication that the devotee was excessive in his or her beliefs and blind to the true merits of the idol being worshipped. Janeitism in particular has long been associated with uncritical thinking, blind adulation, and forms of religious excess.

Lynch notes that 'testimonies of faith', where fans have identified themselves as Austen worshippers, have been 'staples of Janeite discourse' since about 1870.¹⁴³ After that, Austen's readers began to be identified as 'a cult,' and by 1901 W. D. Howells could declare with confidence that 'the readers of Austen are hardly ever less than her adorers: she is a passion and a creed, if not quite a religion.'¹⁴⁴ Just as the term 'fan' has perhaps 'never truly escaped its earlier connotations of religious...zealotry', the contemporary Austen fan has not fully escaped the 'false worshipper' label.¹⁴⁵ The Austen fan is thus often characterised as 'someone at once overzealous and

¹⁴⁰ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 15

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 12.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 12.

¹⁴³ Deidre Lynch, "Cult of Jane Austen," in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 114.

¹⁴⁴ W.D. Howells, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, Vol.2*, 227.

¹⁴⁵ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 12.

undersophisticated, who cannot be trusted to discriminate between the true excellence of *Emma* and the ersatz pleasures of *Bridget Jones* or Barbara Pym or a Regency Romance'.¹⁴⁶ Rachel Brownstein even argues that fans' 'increasingly giddy' interpretive efforts have 'lowered the level of the conversation around [Austen]' and goes on to conclude that in the Janeite sphere 'simplifications trump complexity; writing has driven out reading; Jane-o-mania has gone on too long'.¹⁴⁷ Given this lack of faith in fans' critical faculties, it is little wonder that Austen scholars find it challenging to grapple with the 'fan' in fanfiction.

The fan, as numerous fan studies critics have pointed out, is typically gendered as female or as a 'degendered' male and, as noted, fanfiction is often characterised as a 'female genre'.¹⁴⁸ Anna Wilson argues that part of the prejudice against fanfiction stems from the fact that we have internalised ideological assumptions that associate a cold, critical, objective reading style with masculinity, while 'physical, imaginative reading is still associated with women' and is 'still considered embarrassing'.¹⁴⁹ As a female gendered genre, fanfiction is perceived to be connected to emotion and the body rather than to criticism and the mind. If fanfiction is characterised principally as an emotional, rather than a critical, response to Austen's literature, then it calls into question the validity of fanfiction as a form of reader response worthy of study. Therefore, even when academics or profic writers acknowledge that 'a new understanding of Austen's work can be gained by the unorthodox method of writing pastiche', they carefully and deliberately avoid the term *fanfiction* to authenticate the endeavour.¹⁵⁰ One of the problems that my thesis must therefore tackle is the distrust of Austen's fans, the Janeites, as readers and interpreters.

The Literature Review Chapter which follows will present a history of the Janeites as a means of orientating the reader and of providing a context for the chapters to follow. This chapter will also outline existing research in the areas of Austen adaptation, Austen reception, and fan studies so that my original contribution to these fields can be better appreciated. Additionally, it will address Austen's singular place in popular culture as a canonical author with a large fan following and will consider how

¹⁴⁶ Lynch, *Janeites*, 12.

¹⁴⁷ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 13 and 145.

¹⁴⁸ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 19.

¹⁴⁹ Anne Wilson, "Full-body reading," *Aeon*, Nov 10, 2016, accessed May 30, 2017, <https://aeon.co/essays/how-a-medieval-mystic-was-the-first-creator-of-fanfiction>.

¹⁵⁰ Diana Birchall, "Eyeing Mrs. Elton: Learning Through Pastiche", *Persuasions On-Line* 30 (2010), <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no2/birchall.html>.

the author's exceptionalism has contributed to the dearth of criticism on fanfiction. In other words, the chapter will concentrate on tackling the question 'why *not* Jane Austen'? Why has Jane Austen fanfiction not been adequately addressed by Austen critics, fan studies critics, and cultural studies critics? The subsequent chapters will then open up the 'why Jane Austen' question? Why does her work, specifically *P&P*, inspire such large volumes of fanfiction?

Critics attempting to account for the novel's popularity often cite its 'fairy tale' qualities as a major contributing factor to its adaptability and cultural dominance. Therefore, Chapter One will explore the fairy tale elements of *P&P* and will consider how the utopian appeal and wish-fulfilling aspects of this novel have contributed to its cultural afterlife. The chapter will also examine how Austen herself has become 'fairytale-ised' by being conflated with the heroine of *P&P*, Elizabeth Bennet. Chapter Two will look at the shift in focus from fanfiction centring on Elizabeth to texts revolving around Darcy following the release of Davies's Darcy-centric adaptation of *P&P*. The chapter will place the adaptation in its cultural context and will look at how different audiences interpreted the text depending on their own socio-cultural backgrounds and their prior relationship to Austen's novel. Fanfiction from the archives of virtual manifestations of Austenland like *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* will be drawn on as records of reader response. Additionally, the chapter will look at representative profic texts and will examine how these texts comment critically on *P&P* and on the cultural conditions of the time.

Chapter Three will examine how Austenland went from being a fairyland to a Zombieland in the late noughties following the invasion of *P&P* by legions of the undead. The chapter will look at profic texts that form part of the paranormal romance and zombie horror publishing trends and will consider how these (overwhelmingly) American texts respond to the cultural climate of post-crash America, where zombies and vampires were conceptualised as the 'monsters of the recession'. In addition to looking at profic texts, Chapter Three will consider the lasting influence of the *P&P* mini-series on the *P&P* archive by looking at stories from *Derbyshire* that comment on the resurrection powers of Davies's Darcy. Chapter Four will conclude by looking at recent developments in digital Austen fandom. In contrast to the previous chapters, which discuss a variety of popular responses to *P&P*, the final chapter will focus on one text: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. This adaptation marks a significant change in fanfiction's relationship to technology and commercial culture and therefore warrants

special consideration. The series utilises digital technologies to tell a new kind of story that is part online fanfiction, and part commercial production, and that actively involves the audience in the creation, interpretation, and financing of that story. Although the *LBD* relies on new technologies and is aimed at the digital generation, the series also resonates with established patterns in Janeite reception and is therefore an appropriate concluding case study for the thesis as a whole.

Literature Review: ‘One Half of the World Cannot Understand the Pleasures of the Other’: Understanding Janeites, the “Other” Reader



Figure 1: Carl Rose, ‘The Two Camps of Jane Austen Devotees,’ *New York Times*, Oct 23, 1949

In scholarly analogies, ‘Janeite’ is not a neutral term for Austen’s admirers. Rather this term is often used to constitute ‘the Other Reader’, a reader whose pleasure in attending Regency Balls, in speculating about characters’ extra-textual lives, and in gushing over Austen screen adaptations, causes bemusement and even discomfort in academic circles. As Lynch argues, ‘Janeite’ is ‘used exclusively about and against *other* people’, as a means of separating academic readers’ serious interest in Austen from fans’ obsessive zeal.¹⁵¹ Jane Austen’s very name has been used to erect a symbolic partition between her fans and her academic readers where the difference between the ‘homely quaintness’ of ‘Jane’ and ‘the cool elegance’ of ‘Austen’ is used to symbolise the distinction between fannish familiarity and academic objectivity.¹⁵² ‘Jane’ is, of course, associated with the *Janeites* who, Wells observes, ‘generally use her first name, as if she is a friend or even a family member’.¹⁵³ By contrast, ‘Austen’ is utilised by scholarly readers who maintain an appropriately chilly distance from the object of their study. The perception is that Janeites envision *their Jane* as an intimate acquaintance with

¹⁵¹ Lynch, *Janeites*, 15.

¹⁵² Lionel Trilling, “Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen,” in *Jane Austen, Emma: A Casebook*, ed. David Lodge (Nashville/London: Aurora Publishers Incorporated, 1970), 148. Trilling remarked that Jane Austen’s name is an unusually ‘charged one’ because the ‘homely quaintness of the Christian name, the cool elegance of the surname, seem inevitably to force upon us an awareness of her sex, her celibacy, and her social class’. In contemporary culture, ‘Jane’ and ‘Austen’ force upon us an awareness of Austen’s dual appeal to scholars and fans.

¹⁵³ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 3.

whom they feel an intensely personal connection while academics have a detached interest in *Austen* as an author.

Long before the Internet gave Janeites a very visible platform, Lionel Trilling identified critics who sought ‘to rescue Jane Austen from coziness and nostalgia by representing her as a writer who may be admired for her literary achievement, but who *is not to be loved*’.¹⁵⁴ Although George Saintsbury coined the term as ‘a badge of honor’ in 1894, when Austen’s novels were canonised in the 1930s and 1940s ‘Janeite’ began to develop negative connotations and was associated with readers guilty of admiring Austen ‘for the wrong reasons and in the wrong language’.¹⁵⁵ The Janeites were disparagingly characterised by critics like F.R. Leavis and D.W. Harding as readers who turned to Austen because ‘she provided a refuge for the sensitive when the contemporary world grew too much for them’.¹⁵⁶ In his landmark essay ‘Regulated Hatred’, Harding famously argued that Janeites were ‘precisely the sort of people whom [Austen] disliked’.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Leavis took issue with readings of the author that suggested her appeal was escapist, partly because he had a vested interest in representing her as ‘the inaugurator of the great tradition of the English novel’ with ‘an intense moral preoccupation’.¹⁵⁸

In *The Great Tradition* (1948), Leavis boldly declared that the ‘great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad’, but tellingly, Austen is the only author mentioned in the opening line to whom he does not devote a chapter.¹⁵⁹ Leavis does not elaborate on the ‘special reasons’ behind his decision not to conduct a full study of Austen, but it is implied that he was uncomfortable with her appropriation by the Janeites.¹⁶⁰ Within the monograph he expressed his frustration with Janeite Lord David Cecil’s account of Austen which, in Leavis’s view, attributed the author’s appeal to the fact ‘that she creates delightful characters...and lets us forget our cares and moral tensions in the comedy of pre-eminently civilized life’.¹⁶¹ Rather than being seen as Austen’s protectors, her ‘squires’ as Saintsbury termed them, Janeites

¹⁵⁴ Trilling, “Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen,” 149-150. (emphasis mine).

¹⁵⁵ Lynch, *Janeites*, 13; Trilling, “Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen,” 149.

¹⁵⁶ D.W. Harding, “Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen,” *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Austen*, ed. Monica Lawlor (London: The Athlone Press, 1998), 5.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁵⁸ F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd, [1948] 1962), 7.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 5-6.

were characterised as effeminate men who were incapable of appreciating Austen's bold, subversive style because they used (or misused) her novels as a means of escaping from the world.¹⁶²

Trilling offered a tentative corrective to such readings of the Janeites, arguing that we cannot deal with 'this unusual – this extravagantly personal – response to a writer simply in the way of condemnation'.¹⁶³ He famously contended that 'the opinions which are held of her work are almost as interesting, and almost as important to think about, as the work itself.'¹⁶⁴ Notwithstanding the qualifying 'almost', his assessment of the worth of reader response has often been used to validate the study of the 'opinions' of Austen's popular readers. Yet, he still took care to separate himself from those readers guilty of an 'unusual and questionable relation, with the author, a relation that does not consort with the literary emotions *we* respect.'¹⁶⁵ The 'we' in this statement refers to academic readers. Trilling was indulgent of Austen's other readers but was careful not to be mistaken for one of them. Contemporary critics have continued to fight to preserve Austen's reputation as a 'serious' author by responding to the problem of her fannish appeal 'with a gallant effort to rescue the writer from the heritage industry or the Janeites'.¹⁶⁶ Here the struggle for ownership of Austen is figured as a battleground, with Austen scholars on one side and Janeites on the other. Lynch states that the term 'Janeites' is 'pressed into service' by academics 'whenever they need to personify and distance themselves from particular ways of reading, *ones they might well indulge in themselves*'.¹⁶⁷ This statement is interesting as it both erects a barrier between academic readers and the Janeites, and simultaneously suggests common ground.

When Lynch draws attention to academic readers' *own* hidden reading indulgences, it implies that they too are guilty of harbouring the 'illicit' love for Austen that Trilling argued carried the reader 'outside the proper confines of literature'.¹⁶⁸ This suggestion raises the possibility that Janeites' devotion may be unnerving because of its similarity, rather than its difference, to academic reading practices. Rather than viewing the pleasures of the "other" reader with embarrassment, it might be more useful to consider how academic criticism and fan response overlap. As Hills reminds us, the

¹⁶² Saintsbury 1894, quoted in Southam, ed., *The Critical Heritage. Vol.2*, 65.

¹⁶³ Trilling, "Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen," 150.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 148.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 148. (emphasis mine).

¹⁶⁶ Robert Miles, *Jane Austen* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2003), 2.

¹⁶⁷ Lynch, "Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors," 14. (emphasis mine).

¹⁶⁸ Trilling, "Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen," 150.

‘literary scholar is an “ordinary” reader as well as a scholar’ and there may be a benefit to ‘moving towards an acknowledgement that present-day scholarship can no longer be “set apart” from the culture and ideology it studies, but is rather “set in relation” with these contexts.’¹⁶⁹

The link between academic and fan practices was early explored by Joli Jensen in an essay in the fan studies anthology *The Adoring Audience* (1991). Jensen argues that the kind of ‘controlled intellectual aggression’ evinced by scholars is really a form of ‘respectable rowdiness’ that approximates to a form of ‘disguised and legitimated fandom.’¹⁷⁰ Fans are perceived as loving excessively while scholars esteem rationally. However, Jensen contends that anyone in academia, ‘especially those who have written theses or dissertations, can attest to the emotional components of supposedly rational activity.’¹⁷¹ Fans and scholars share a similar obsessive interest in Austen although they typically express this interest through different writing forms. While academic criticism takes the form of ‘non-fictional argument’, fanfiction responds to the work in question through ‘the construction of new stories’ and is therefore a creative form of critical commentary.¹⁷²

Interestingly, some academics have made their own fanfiction contributions to the ever-expanding *P&P* archive. For example, *Jane Austen in Boca* (2003), a contemporary version of *P&P* focusing on the romantic exploits of five retired Jewish women living in Florida, is written by English professor Paula Marantz Cohen. The text is ‘peppered with allusions to academia and the lit crit industry, including a seminar on *Pride and Prejudice*, which forms a wry, self-reflexive comment on Austenian reception and the academy.’¹⁷³ Just as academics have contributed to fan culture, researchers working outside the academy have made significant contributions to Austen scholarship. For example, Deirdre Le Faye, a retired civil servant, ‘has become a legendary figure in Austen scholarship’ for her biographical research into Austen’s

¹⁶⁹ Hills, “Media Academics as Media Audiences,” 46.

¹⁷⁰ Joli Jensen, “Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization,” in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 21.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 21. Jensen goes on to point out that when conducting academic research, a ‘figure or topic can become the focal point of one’s life; anything even remotely connected to one’s research interests can have tremendous impact and obsessive appeal.’

¹⁷² Jenkins, “Fan Fiction as Critical Commentary.”

¹⁷³ Judy Simons, “Jane Austen and Popular Culture,” *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2012), 471.

life.¹⁷⁴ Le Faye argues that conducting and sharing Austen research is the duty of all her readers, rather than the prerogative of academically trained ones:

[W]hether we are inside or outside academia, professional scholars or amateur enthusiasts, is not important—we should all join our respective Jane Austen Societies, and by so doing keep in touch with latest research and be able to share our collective knowledge with the ever-growing numbers of her readers throughout the world.¹⁷⁵

Contributing to Austen scholarship *and* contributing to Austen fan culture can be viewed as collective processes that are shared by *all* of Austen's readers.

As well as acknowledging the ways that academic and fan responses overlap, it is also important to interrogate the broad generalising statements often made about the Janeites and academics and their different relationships to Austen. Journalist and Janeite Deborah Yaffe is the author of *Among the Janeites* (2013), an ethnographic account of the Austen fan community written from an insider's perspective. As a Janeite who admits to having 'always thought of [Jane Austen] as [her] own private possession', one would expect Yaffe to refer to 'Jane' on intimate terms in order to signal her closeness to the author.¹⁷⁶ Yet, Yaffe declares that:

I almost never refer to our author as "Jane" – like the characters in *The Jane Austen Book Club*, I find that "more intimate, surely, than Miss Austen would wish," and perhaps a bit condescending too, as if Austen deserves less deference than the male members of the literary pantheon.¹⁷⁷

By contrast, academic critics have on occasion come under criticism for using 'an oddly diminishing "Jane"' to refer to the author.¹⁷⁸ The actual practices of academics and fans demonstrate that the perceived gulf between professional and amateur readers, like the

¹⁷⁴ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 238. Harman notes that retired civil servant David Gilson has also conducted extensive research into different editions, translations, continuations, adaptations, and critical essays based on Austen's novels for inclusion in his monumental bibliography of Austen, first published in 1982 and subsequently revised. Brian Southam, another figure working outside the academy, helped to establish Austen reception studies with his indispensable *The Critical Heritage* volumes.

¹⁷⁵ Deirdre Le Faye, "'Three or Four Families?': Suggestions for New Directions in Biographical Research," *Persuasions On-line* (Jane Austen Society of North America) 30, no. 2 (2010): <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no2/lefaye.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, xiii.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹⁷⁸ Neil Hegarty, "Jane Austen, The Secret Radical review: familiar territory revisited," review of *Jane Austen: The Secret Radical*, by Helena Kelly, *The Irish Times*, January 7, 2017, accessed 9 Feb, 2017, <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/jane-austen-the-secret-radical-review-familiar-territory-revisited-1.2910433>.

conceptual divide between ‘Jane’ and ‘Austen’, is not as wide as is commonly assumed. As Wells argues, it is productive to try to ‘bridge the gap between amateur and scholarly readers’, rather than exclusively highlight differences.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, it is worth noting that even the critically reviled *Pemberley* fan forum grew out of an email discussion list, entitled the ‘AUSTEN-L list’, that was actually started by academic scholars.

The AUSTEN-L list was set up by academic Jacqueline Reid-Walsh who ‘envisioned the list as a forum for the kind of civil, academic discussions that she had so enjoyed in her classroom.’¹⁸⁰ In other words, the discussion groups were modelled after scholarly tutorials. The list membership started off small but the numbers soon ‘swelled to more than eight hundred’.¹⁸¹ The members included academic scholars who wished to conduct literary debates and fans who wanted to ‘gush over Colin Firth’.¹⁸² One such fan, Amy Bellinger, decided to set up a new list called P&P2BB where ‘Firth-gushing would be welcomed’ because she felt that some fans were inhibited by the academic tone of the AUSTEN-L group and were therefore ‘holding back *a lot*’.¹⁸³ When this bulletin board crashed due to excess traffic, fans found a new home in May 1997 at the *Pemberley* website set up by Amy Bellinger and Myretta Robens.

Although this new site was created to allow for the expression of personal response, the lingering influence of the academic tutorial model is still evident in *Pemberley*’s ‘Group Reads’ discussion groups.¹⁸⁴ Wells notes that the ‘Group Reads’, which are structured around prescribed Austen novels, are distinguished from typical informal book clubs in that contributors are instructed to support their opinions with direct quotes from the novel under discussion.¹⁸⁵ She argues that ‘[i]n this respect, the *Pemberley* participants share common ground with academic readers, for whom accurate references to a text and close readings of it remain of paramount importance (but who would speak of “arguments” rather than “opinions”).’¹⁸⁶ In keeping with the original academic impetus of the site, *Pemberley* strives to be a repository of

¹⁷⁹ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 7.

¹⁸⁰ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 185/186.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 185/186.

¹⁸² “Frequently Asked Questions,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Aug 21, 2010, <http://www.pemberley.com/faq.html>.

¹⁸³ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 185/186.

¹⁸⁴ “Group Reads,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://pemberley.com/forum/index.php?10>.

¹⁸⁵ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 78.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 78.

information about Austen useful to both fans and scholars. Pages like the ‘Jane Austen Information Page’ and ‘L&T Knowledge Base’ provide annotated lists of critical and biographical works on Austen as well as contextual information about the writer’s historical era.¹⁸⁷

The *Pemberley* discussion boards allow for ‘gushing’ celebration of the Austen movies, but they are also intended to provide a forum for serious interpretation of the novels, meaning that this fan forum is not as far removed from the sphere of scholarship as first appearances might suggest. Although the fan commentary can seem ‘gossipy’ at times, particularly when characters are discussed like real people, the informal tone is beneficial for fostering a sense of community. As Patricia Meyer Spacks has argued, ‘serious’ gossip ‘exists only as a function of intimacy...[i]t provides a resource for the subordinated...a crucial form of solidarity’.¹⁸⁸ Promoting social bonds is extremely important in the Austen fan community. Online fan communities typically allow fans to preserve their anonymity by using aliases. Austen fan forums are different in that they usually require that contributors use their “real” names precisely because it leads ‘to greater intimacy’ among community members.¹⁸⁹ Fan gossip not only helps to promote Janeite intimacy, it also grants fans the opportunity to effectively bypass academic institutional authority and to offer ‘unlicensed’ interpretations of literature online.¹⁹⁰ Gossip, as a form of critical commentary, can be characterised in a positive light, as ‘something to relate that is entertaining and profitable, something that makes one know one’s species better’.¹⁹¹ The consideration that emotional investment could complement serious criticism is particularly appropriate in the realm of Austen studies given that Janeiteism was actually foundational to Austen studies as an academic discipline.

¹⁸⁷ “Jane Austen Information Page,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed May 30, 2017, <http://pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeinfo.html>.

“L&T Knowledge Base,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed May 30, 2017, http://pemberley.com/?post_type=encyclopedia.

¹⁸⁸ Patricia Meyer Spacks, “In Praise of Gossip,” *The Hudson Review*, 35 (1982): 5-6.

¹⁸⁹ “F.A.Q.,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed April 1, 2017, http://pemberley.com/?page_id=11744.

‘Use your own name. We find it helps to keep things friendly, civil and accountable when people can’t hide behind aliases. Just be yourself — we have never found it to be a problem here.’

“Contributor Guidelines,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, accessed April 1, 2017, <https://www.dwiggie.com/phorum/read.php?5,2413,2413#msg-2413>.

‘We do not allow aliases because we believe that a real name leads both to greater intimacy among dwiggies [slang term for Derbyshire members] as well as a greater accountability on the part of the poster. Think of it this way: you wouldn’t walk into someone’s living room wearing a mask, nor should you wear one here.’

¹⁹⁰ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 84. Jenkins argues that gossip grants women the means ‘to speak about controversial concerns in a forum unpoliced by patriarchal authorities’ who ignore such exchanges because gossip is viewed ‘as frivolous and silly’ due to its association with women.

¹⁹¹ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics), 139.

Claire Harman observes that ‘Austen’s adoption by the educational establishment would not have followed very naturally if the academy had not been stuffed with Janeites during the early years of the new century, just as the discipline of English was being introduced to British universities.’¹⁹²

As noted, Saintsbury was the first literary critic to come out of the closet and declare himself ‘an Austen Friar’ or Janeite.¹⁹³ Southam insists that: ‘These postures may be tiresome; yet they were not... inimical to sound criticism.’¹⁹⁴ Saintsbury treated Austen’s characters as if they were real people, claiming that he wanted ‘to marry’ Elizabeth Bennet.¹⁹⁵ Yet, this personal response did not preclude him from being able to write an astute critical analysis of her character highlighting ‘how Elizabeth is drawn to engage the reader.’¹⁹⁶ Even the author E. M. Forster, who propagated the conception that being one of Austen’s followers entails loving her unconditionally and reading her uncritically, disproved his own theory by conducting numerous critical appraisals of her works. Indeed, in the same essay where he made his famous claim about reading Austen ‘with the mouth open and the mind closed’ he simultaneously praised the Chapman edition of *P&P* for containing textual notes designed to spark the reader’s critical imagination, thereby demonstrating that ‘being shut up in measureless content’ did not prevent him from being able to critically engage with Austen’s novels.¹⁹⁷

Perhaps the most noteworthy example of an Austen critic who combined astute criticism with fannish enthusiasm was the Shakespearean scholar A.C. Bradley, whose lecture on Austen, published in *Essays and Studies* (1911), is ‘generally regarded as the starting-point for the serious academic approach to Jane Austen.’¹⁹⁸ Bradley treated Austen as a worthy subject for academic criticism; however, he also considered himself to be one of ‘the faithful’, in other words a *fan*.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, Bradley’s passion for Austen extended to her characters: he declared of Elizabeth Bennet that ‘I was meant to fall in love with her, and I do.’²⁰⁰ Good criticism is supposed to be detached and impersonal but ‘Jane Austen can get even the loftiest of Professors to unbend, abandon, for a time,

¹⁹² Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 201.

¹⁹³ Saintsbury, quoted in Southam, ed., *The Critical Heritage*, Vol.2, 65.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 218.

¹⁹⁵ Saintsbury quoted in *Ibid*, 218.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 65.

¹⁹⁷ E.M. Forster, quoted in *Ibid*, 280.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 233.

¹⁹⁹ A.C. Bradley, quoted in *Ibid*, 79.

²⁰⁰ A.C. Bradley, quoted in Brian Southam, “Janeites and Anti-Janeites,” in *The Jane Austen Handbook: with a Dictionary of Jane Austen’s Life and Works*, ed. David J. Grey (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 240.

his academic ways and speak from the heart.²⁰¹ The intensely personal yet critically engaged responses that typify early Austen criticism demonstrates that ‘loving Jane’ is not necessarily an impediment to serious scholarly analysis.

Austen in Fan Studies

In order to combat the distrust of fan interpretation, the following chapters will draw on critical approaches to the fan as reader from fan studies and cultural studies. Pioneering works of cultural studies and fan studies criticism have largely debunked the myth of the mindless mass audience and have painted a portrait of a sophisticated interpretive community of readers and writers who manipulate and control cultural products rather than passively consuming them. Nevertheless, the notion of a cultural hierarchy still exerts power in some academic circles when it comes to assessing who has the right to adjudicate in matters of cultural taste, largely due to the prevailing influence of high cultural theorists like the Leavises.

Q.D. Leavis published ‘the first serious work of literary sociology’, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), in which she assessed the reading habits of the British reading public and made value judgments about the type of texts that readers enjoyed.²⁰² She argued that literary texts ‘can deepen, extend, and refine experience by...giving [the reader] access to a finer code than his own’, while popular novels ‘substitute an emotional code which...helps to make a social atmosphere unfavourable to the aspirations of the minority’.²⁰³ In other words, she associated reading popular literature with an emotional rather than a critical response and even regarded the mass readership for popular texts as a threat to the ‘minority’ of readers who did possess the skills to appreciate ‘good’ literature. F.R. Leavis likewise argued that readers of popular fiction were incapable of forming coherent critical opinions because they were bombarded by too many mass produced texts and they lacked the prerequisite critical reading skills to cope with this ‘concourse of signals so bewildering in their variety and number.’²⁰⁴ For Leavis, the ‘critically adult public...is very small indeed: they are a very small minority

²⁰¹ Southam, ed., *The Critical Heritage. Vol.2*, x.

²⁰² John Sutherland, “Introduction,” in Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Pimlico, 2000), xi.

²⁰³ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Pimlico, 2000), 74.

²⁰⁴ F.R. Leavis, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 16.

who are capable of fending for themselves amid the smother of new books'.²⁰⁵

Although the Leavises' 'position of unashamed cultural élitism' has courted controversy, 'their opinions and writings have, effectively, led to the division of literature into 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow': literature appreciated and understood by only the few, a distinction often related to the level of education (and, and by extension, inevitably to class background) versus the writing enjoyed, uncritically, by the (unenlightened) many.'²⁰⁶

The view that mass readers are incapable of active reading was echoed by numerous leading intellectuals of the '40s and '50s, most notably Theodor Adorno who compared consumers of popular culture to 'howling devotees of the stadium' rather than to 'sportsmen'; to passive recipients of cultural products rather than active participants in the creation of popular culture.²⁰⁷ For Adorno, mass cultural products were imposed on the people from above as a means of controlling and pacifying them, rather than being something that arose spontaneously from the people themselves. In the 1960s and 1970s, the 'Birmingham School' of cultural studies critics played a crucial role in reshaping elitist attitudes towards consumers of popular culture, laying the groundwork for the emergence of fan studies as a discipline in the early 1990s. Cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall was particularly influential in challenging the characterisation of the mass audience as consumers passively caught in a 'loop' or 'circulation circuit'.²⁰⁸ In 1973, Hall developed the encoding/decoding model of communication which postulated that audiences decoded the messages encoded in television and other media in different ways depending on their own socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.²⁰⁹ He rejected the 'sender/message/receiver' model of mass communication and posited instead a four stage theory of communication: 'production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction'.²¹⁰ He theorised that there were three positions that people could potentially take when decoding a media message: the dominant/hegemonic position, where the consumer decodes the message in the way that the encoder intended the

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 16.

²⁰⁶ Christine Berberich, "Twentieth-Century Popular: History, Theory and Context," in *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*, ed. Christine Berberich (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 39.

²⁰⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, "The schema of mass culture," *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1990), 90.

²⁰⁸ Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andy Lowe and Paul Willis (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1980), 128.

²⁰⁹ Hall developed the encoding/decoding model in 1973 in a paper called 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse'. Hall also presented his encoding and decoding model in "Encoding/Decoding" in *Culture, Media, Language* in 1980.

²¹⁰ Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," 128.

meaning to be interpreted; the negotiated position, where the consumer accepts the intended message to an extent but also modifies elements of that message in accordance with their own interests; and the oppositional position, where the consumer understands yet ultimately rejects the text's code.²¹¹ This theoretical framework takes account of the consumer as an individual shaped by his or her own personal experiences rather than figuring the consumer as an undifferentiated member of a mass.

Hall's emphasis on reception and reader response in the 'reproduction' phase reconceptualised mass communication and was influential on subsequent scholars such as Michel de Certeau who likewise argued that consumers can create different meanings from the same text depending on their own social, cultural, and personal background. De Certeau characterised readers as 'poachers', moving across the literary landscape 'like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves.'²¹² In other words, readers take elements from texts that they find useful or relevant and promote their own alternative means of consumption. Therefore, readers are not merely *recipients* of cultural products and authorial knowledge, rather they are *producers* of meaning. Jenkins, appropriated De Certeau's phrase in his seminal study *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992). Jenkins too characterises fans as 'poachers' who take the elements that they want from a text and 'refit prefabricated materials to consumer desires' in order to create products that are tailored to their own specifications.²¹³ Jenkins also makes use of Hall's characterisation of the dominant, negotiated, and oppositional reader though he suggests that Hall's identification of three distinct reading positions is perhaps too absolute as it suggests that 'each reader has a stable position from which to make sense of a text rather than having access to multiple sets of discursive competencies'.²¹⁴

Jenkins favours De Certeau's model of 'poaching' as it 'emphasizes the process of making meaning and the fluidity of popular interpretation'.²¹⁵ He points out that 'fans promote their own meanings over those of producers' but that this does not mean that they are necessarily oppositional readers as they gravitate towards texts that 'seem to hold special potential as vehicles for expressing the fans' pre-existing social

²¹¹ Ibid, 136-138.

²¹² Michel de Certeau, "Reading as Poaching," *The Practice of Everyday Life* (London: University of California, 1984), 174.

²¹³ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 52.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 34.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 34.

commitments and cultural interests'.²¹⁶ In other words, fans may embrace some of the ideas in the original text even while constructing alternative perspectives through fanfiction because 'there is already some degree of compatibility between the ideological construction of the text and the ideological commitments of the fans'.²¹⁷ By reconstructing fans as 'active producers and manipulators of meaning', fan studies critics were able to combat pejorative assumptions that characterised them as 'cultural dupes, social misfits, and mindless consumers'.²¹⁸

Fan studies has developed a rich body of research on fanfiction based on television shows and contemporary popular fiction. However, there is relatively little analysis of fiction inspired by high cultural texts like *P&P* within this field. As Pearson states of the Janeites, 'no other...literary fandom has attracted such sustained academic attention, albeit just not from fan studies scholars'.²¹⁹ So, why has the Austen fandom, arguably the oldest literary fandom, been underexplored in a field dedicated to the study of fanfiction as a valid form of cultural response and transformative use? The canonical status of Austen's novels constitutes one reason for their exclusion from fan studies discourses. As John Tulloch states, although the 'academic literature on fandom is both extensive and central within popular cultural studies...there is little comparable analysis of fans of high-culture entertainment'.²²⁰ The continuing influence of pioneering studies of media fandom affects the kinds of texts studied within fan studies. *Textual Poachers* concentrated on fandoms that revolved around television programmes and examined how fans used these shows as a basis to create their own stories. Sam Ford argues that *Textual Poachers* was so influential on subsequent work in the field that research conducted over the last two decades has focused almost exclusively on 'similar fan communities and their engagement with complex primetime television series and film franchises'.²²¹ Fan studies critic Francesca Coppa even argues that *all* fanfiction is

²¹⁶ Ibid, 34.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 34.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 13.

²¹⁹ Roberta Pearson, "Janeites and Sherlockians: Literary Societies, Cultural Legitimacy, and Gender," in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, ed. Paul Booth (Basingstoke: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 497.

²²⁰ John Tulloch, "Fans of Chekhov: Re-Approaching 'High Culture'," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 110.

²²¹ Sam Ford, "Fan studies: Grappling with an 'Undisciplined' discipline," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 61.

media-based, not literary-based, because it ‘develops in response to dramatic, not literary, modes of storytelling’, a definition which inevitably excludes Austen.²²²

Coppa compares the act of writing fanfiction to that of staging a play. She argues that fanfiction ‘directs bodies in space: readers come to fan fiction with extratextual knowledge, mostly of characters’ bodies and voices, and the writer uses this to direct her work.’²²³ Theatre can generate an infinite number of different productions from one script while fandom can produce an infinite number of scripts from one film or television source. For Coppa, ‘it’s only when stories get embodied’ by actors ‘that they seem to generate truly massive waves of fiction’, and even fandoms based on literary material such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* ‘grew exponentially only after film versions appeared’.²²⁴ Coppa’s narrow definition of fanfiction as media-inspired material is problematic as Austen-inspired fiction goes back to the nineteenth century and therefore cannot be said to be generated only in response to film and television adaptations. Yet, online Austen fan communities did form as a direct response to a television adaptation of *P&P* and Myretta Robens, one of the founders of *Pemberley*, concedes that the majority of fanfiction hosted on the site is heavily influenced by actors’ portrayals of Austen’s characters: ‘If you were to ask our authors about their characters, I think you would find many of them visualising Jane Austen’s heroes and heroines as they have been portrayed in recent adaptations’.²²⁵ Her statement would seem to give some credence to Coppa’s argument that large quantities of fanfiction are produced only ‘when stories get embodied’ by actors.

The viewpoints expressed by Austen critics would likewise seem to support Coppa’s theory. The general consensus amongst reviewers and critics of Austen adaptations is that the BBC/A&E *P&P* was a success because ‘it has given Darcy “a body”’.²²⁶ In his 1995 review of the series, Louis Menand argued that the series gave ‘Darcy a physical presence that Austen has not’ through added scenes such as the lake scene where Darcy’s body is used to express his inexpressible desire.²²⁷ Cheryl L. Nixon agrees with Menand’s assessment arguing that ‘adaptations of Austen are

²²² Coppa, “Writing Bodies in Space,” 225.

²²³ Ibid, 225.

²²⁴ Ibid, 229.

²²⁵ Myretta Robens, “Words of a ‘Janeite,’” *At the Back Fence*, Aug 15, 2001, accessed Feb 16, 2015, <http://www.likesbooks.com/123myretta.html>.

²²⁶ Louis Menand, “What Jane Austen Doesn’t Tell Us,” *The New York Review of Books*, Feb 1, 1996, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1996/feb/01/what-jane-austen-doesnt-tell-us/>.

²²⁷ Ibid.

successful because they, quite literally, “flesh out” her male characters.²²⁸ More recently, Brownstein concurs with earlier critics by arguing that Darcy is a compelling character because Firth portrayed ‘a *fleshier* type of the Byronic than the earlier screen Darcies’.²²⁹ Nevertheless, I maintain that ‘Darcy’s body’ did not create the impetus to write fanfiction. It would be more accurate to claim that Davies’s adaptation initiated a *change in focus* in fanfiction, while the internet brought greater *visibility* to the kinds of fanfiction writing activities that Janeites had been engaging in since the nineteenth century.

While previous responses to *P&P* were published sporadically over a long period of time, the mid-1990s saw the production of a concentrated burst of large quantities of fanfiction texts, which were easily accessible thanks to the internet, and of profic texts, which were highly publicised in commercial culture. Austen-inspired novels became a burgeoning publishing trend that has grown at an exponential rate. For 1994, the year preceding the ‘Austenmania’ period, Barry Roth’s Jane Austen bibliography listed three Austen profic titles.²³⁰ Now, as Emily Auerbach notes, there is ‘an entire industry’ based on *P&P* alone, comprised of hundreds of novels.²³¹ Furthermore, there was a marked shift in focus from heroine-centred fiction to texts revolving around the character of the hero of *P&P*, Mr. Darcy. In his statistical analysis of contemporary *P&P* profic, Ben Dew remarks that ‘of the 200 adaptations consulted, a third contain references to Darcy in their title, while only 5 per cent mention Elizabeth’.²³² By contrast, as Devoney Looser points out, most of the early *P&P* sequels ‘centred on Elizabeth’ while the subplots were about finding matches for Austen’s unmarried female characters.²³³ For example, *Old Friends and New Fancies* (1913) by Sybil Brinton is set six months after Elizabeth’s marriage to Darcy and is largely considered to be a sequel to *P&P* as most of the key characters are from this novel. Yet,

²²⁸ Cheryl L. Nixon, “Balancing the Courtship Hero: Masculine Emotional Display in Film Adaptations of Austen’s Novels,” in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 23.

²²⁹ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen*, 48. (emphasis mine).

²³⁰ Barry Roth, *An Annotated Bibliography of Jane Austen Studies 1984-94* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1996), 291-318.

²³¹ Emily Auerbach, “Pride and proliferation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 189.

²³² Ben Dew, “Rewriting Popular Classics as Popular Fiction: Jane Austen, Zombies, Sex and Vampires,” in *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*, ed. Christine Berberich (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 283.

²³³ Devoney Looser, “The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 182.

it also incorporates characters from Austen's five other novels and relates the courtships of Georgiana Darcy, Kitty Bennet, and Mary Crawford. Austen's relative Edith Charlotte Brown, also known as Mrs. Francis Brown, also created heroine-centric fiction by moving the younger sisters of Austen's original heroines from supporting roles to central positions in the novels *Margaret Dashwood: Or Interference* (1929) and *Susan Price, or, Resolution* (1930).

Although the change in focus from heroine to hero-centred fanfiction was obviously influenced by the adaptations, Davies is not the first Austen adapter to give Darcy a more central role. In her recent monograph *The Making of Jane Austen* (2017), Devoney Looser advocates the importance of conducting research into the stage adaptations which preceded the Austen film adaptations of the 1990s, arguing that these stage adaptations 'once played a similarly foundational, reputation-altering role, a century and more ago.'²³⁴ Stage adaptations of *P&P* are particularly valuable for the insight they give us into how these adaptations 'changed the extent and kind of emphasis on Darcy versus Elizabeth over time.'²³⁵ As Chapter Two will demonstrate, a study of theatrical adaptations of *P&P* reveals that earlier adapters lay the groundwork for Davies's portrayal of a romanticised and amplified Darcy. Likewise, on screen, Laurence Olivier had already played a smouldering Darcy in the 1940 MGM adaptation to critical and popular acclaim while the BBC had already made *five* adaptations of *P&P* before Davies's series. In other words, 1995 *does not* mark the first time that *P&P* became 'embodied' as a story, or the first time that Darcy was given an amplified or romanticised role by adapters. Consequently, Darcy as embodied by Colin Firth cannot be the main stimulant for *P&P* fanfiction, though Davies's reinterpretation of Darcy as a more emotionally expressive hero was certainly important as the adaptation was released during a period of time when 'emotion' had special cultural currency. This thesis will explore the possibility that the 'Darcymania' fanfiction phenomenon is related to the favourable cultural conditions of reception in which the adaptation was released, rather than simply the fact that Davies gave Darcy 'a body'.

There has been a recent attempt by literary critics to address the comparative lack of research into literary fandoms, compared to media-based ones, though Austen is

²³⁴ Devoney Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017), 75.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 80.

still often underrepresented.²³⁶ As noted, Jamison's *Fic* looks at fanfiction in a literary context and because she views fanfiction as being in many ways, 'an old story', she takes into account literary fandoms that predate the coinage of the term.²³⁷ Yet, despite the long lineage of Austen fanfiction she does not conduct a case study of this fanfiction writing community and instead posits the *Sherlock Holmes* fandom as the 'first fanwriting fandom'.²³⁸ Jamison argues that the very name 'Janeites' precludes this fanfiction writing community from being considered as a true example of a literary fandom: Janeites 'display a reverence around the author herself, "the Divine Jane," whereas Sherlock Holmes fans are "Sherlockians"', they worship the character that Arthur Conan Doyle created.²³⁹ For Jamison, fandom proper is character-driven; therefore, a fandom that revolves around an author is not a 'real' fanfiction writing community.²⁴⁰

Jamison's concept of what constitutes a 'real' fanfiction writing community is potentially problematic, and her assessment raises questions about who has the authority to specify which fan groups are authentic. The concept of the fan is constantly evolving in mainstream culture; indeed, Kristina Busse points out that fans themselves police their own communities, often replicating 'negative outsider notions of what constitutes fannishness'.²⁴¹ For example, fans who are 'too attached, too obsessed...too invested' and, it is implied, 'too girly', are frequently dismissed as not being 'real' fans or 'good' fans because of internalised gendered concepts.²⁴² Hierarchies exist within the Janeite fandom as well. Pearson notes that Janeites 'may themselves be internally policing inappropriate responses', arguing that the 'supposedly girly or juvenile affect of some in

²³⁶ Pugh's *The Democratic Genre: fanfiction in a literary context* (2005) took a literary approach to Austen fanfiction. However, Pugh's analysis of Austen fanfiction was confined to message board-based fanfiction forums popular in the 1990s. Fans have since started to migrate from these forums to social media platforms that allow for greater networking opportunities between fans and greater visibility for fan works. How Austen fans utilise these new digital technologies to create different kinds of texts merits further investigation.

²³⁷ Jamison, "Why Fic?," 17.

²³⁸ Anne Jamison, "The Sherlock Holmes Material: A Study in Fanfic," in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, ed. Anne Jamison (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), 39.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁴⁰ Jamison, "Introduction," 8. See also Pearson, "Janeites and Sherlockians," 496. 'JASNA coheres around Jane Austen, the author, while the BSI coheres around Sherlock Holmes, the character.'

²⁴¹ Kristina Busse, "Geek hierarchies, boundary policing, and the gendering of the good fan,"

Participations Journal of Audience Reception Studies 10, no. 1 (May 2013): 73.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 74 and 76. She elaborates that 'certain negatively connotated fannish activities', like *Twilight* fangirls' public displays of emotion, 'are considered specifically female', and are therefore dismissed as inauthentic, because of 'the gender bias that not so subtly pervades much cultural conversation surrounding fan discourses'.

the community may be causing tensions among the Janeites.²⁴³ For example, Pearson observes that fans who love the adaptations are accorded a lower status than fans who admire Austen's novels.²⁴⁴ Clearly, attempts to authenticate fan activities from *outside* fandom are difficult considering the differing *internal* hierarchies of value ascribed to given fan activities.²⁴⁵ Jamison's attempt to differentiate between what she interprets as 'real' character-driven fanfiction writing communities, like the *Sherlock* fandom, and fandoms that revere an author, like the Janeites, is also complicated by the fact that, as she herself points out, to many fans Arthur Conan Doyle is a figure with quasi-religious connotations much like Austen. Additionally, Austen, like Conan Doyle, is fictionalised by fans and can therefore, I would argue, be interpreted as a 'character'.



Figure 2: Image of Sherlock Holmes worshipper taken from 'The Immortal Crusader,' *The Mail on Sunday*, May 14, 1989

Numerous Austen critics have conceded that, as Jamison suggests:

Austen fans are different from other fans of literary figures. Austen fans are passionate about their favourite author, they derive immense and varied pleasures from her, and you might agree that they are possessive of their *friend*, Jane Austen.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Pearson, "Janeites and Sherlockians," 499.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 499.

²⁴⁵ Busse, "Geek hierarchies," 78. Busse cites 'erotic versions of *Star Trek* where all the characters are furies' as an example of a form of fanfiction with a low cultural status. Hierarchies of value also exist within the Austen fandom. For example, in the *Republic of Pemberley* fanfiction situated in the Regency era is considered to be more 'authentic' than contemporary rewritings of Austen's novels.

²⁴⁶ Dryden, "Inventing Jane: Pleasure, Passion, and Possessiveness," 103. (emphasis mine).

Yet, there is notoriously little biographical information about Jane Austen the historical person. The ‘Jane Austen’ that readers seek a connection with is therefore in large part a *fictional* construct. She is an ‘invention’, ‘a screen onto which the desires, fantasies, and passions of her audience members are constantly projected.’²⁴⁷ Indeed, John Wiltshire has pointed out that for many biographers, the ‘main source for information about [Austen’s] emotional life is the novels themselves’, making Austen biography ‘a hybrid form, a compromise formation between fact and make-believe’.²⁴⁸ Biographers fill in gaps in Austen’s life with fictional material, most often drawn from *P&P*, and Austen has become increasingly conflated with her heroine Elizabeth Bennet as a result.²⁴⁹ Biography can thus be ‘understood as a form of imaginative identification’ and ‘of all writers in the canon, Jane Austen is the one around whom this fantasy of access, this dream of possession, weaves its most powerful spell.’²⁵⁰ Throughout the thesis I will argue that fans’ fantasies of personal access to Austen are stimulated by the author’s own confiding writing style and the desire to fill in gaps in her novels (as well as in her life story) with imaginative speculation. Like biographers, fans write fanfiction partly as a means of entering into conversation with her and forming an intimate connection. My thesis will therefore complicate the theory that the Austen fandom revolves around the author by arguing that ‘Jane Austen’ the author, ‘Divine Jane’ the idol, and ‘Jane’ the heroine, all constitute different ‘versions’ of Austen and that it is the latter ‘fictionalised’ representations of Austen that inspire fannish devotion and fanfiction works.

Although still extremely underrepresented in the field of Austen adaptation studies, responses to Austen as expressed through fanfiction have recently started to attract some attention. For example, the anthology *Internet Fictions* (2009) contains an essay on the ‘web side stories’ produced by the Janeites, who are described as ‘genuine experts of the canon, creative non-professional writers and a precious source of critical observations’.²⁵¹ Kylie Mirmohamadi’s monograph *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen: Janeites at the Keyboard* (2014) is a more extensive exploration of ‘the modes, nature and cultural impulses of contemporary online Austen fandom’.²⁵² These studies

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 105.

²⁴⁸ John Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.

²⁴⁹ The connection between Austen and Elizabeth Bennet will be explored further in Chapter One.

²⁵⁰ Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, 33.

²⁵¹ Grandi, “Web Side Stories: Janeites, Fanfictions, and Never Ending Romances,” 22.

²⁵² Kylie Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen: Janeites at the Keyboard* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.

offer a valuable starting point for scholars wishing to further explore the way Austen and her work are reproduced online. Mirmohamadi's focus is on how 'Austen fandom produces and participates in new as well as continuing modes of literacy and ways of reading and writing'.²⁵³ Her examination of fanfiction considers the relationship between digital and traditional publishing practices and therefore pays attention to 'the screen on which the text flickers and scrolls as well as to the words themselves'.²⁵⁴ My research will aim to bring Austen further into the conversation on digital fandom by expanding the scope of available criticism and adding my own original contributions. Like Mirmohamadi, I will pay attention to how technological developments have affected the type of texts being produced and 'accelerated a change in modern reading habits', as fans move from message board-based forums to new digital platforms.²⁵⁵ My work will be distinguished from Mirmohamadi's monograph, which focuses exclusively on online fanfiction, by my choice to combine analysis of online texts with criticism of profic and other commercial adaptations as a way of contextualising Austen fandom and of highlighting the intertextuality of fans' responses to *P&P*.

Adapting Austen

Continuing research into Austen fanfiction also has the potential to inform the growing area of scholarship on Austen that concerns the study of adaptations and the reception of Austen in popular culture. To better understand how research into fanfiction can complement existing research in this area, it is pertinent to outline the field so far. One of the earliest critical reviews of Austen adaptations was conducted by Andrew Wright in 1975. In his essay, 'Jane Austen Adapted', Wright looked at 'representative adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*' including abridged versions of the novel, notable dramatic adaptations including plays and musicals from 1906 onwards, and the 1940 MGM film adaptation.²⁵⁶ For Wright, any 'tinkering' with the words of Jane Austen meant 'a change for the worse' as 'no one writes Jane Austen so well as Jane Austen'.²⁵⁷ Consequently, adaptations that translated Austen's words 'verbatim' were

²⁵³ Ibid, 2.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 3.

²⁵⁵ Simons, "Jane Austen and Popular Culture," 472.

²⁵⁶ Andrew Wright, "Jane Austen Adapted," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30, no. 3 (1975): 424.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 423.

deemed to be ‘faithful’ and therefore ‘superior’ adaptations.²⁵⁸ By contrast, the ‘mutations’ that presumed to ‘innovate freely’ were seen as proof ‘that the perils of making free with Jane Austen are grave indeed’.²⁵⁹ Having examined his chosen texts, Wright arrives at the conclusion that when it comes to adaptation ‘the closer the rendering to the words of Jane Austen the better’.²⁶⁰

In adaptation theory, the approach favoured by Wright, where the source novels are privileged over adaptations, is called ‘fidelity criticism’, described by Brian McFarlane as depending ‘on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct “meaning” which the film-maker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with’.²⁶¹ This approach to adaptation is no longer seen as the most conducive way to evaluate an adaptation’s worth as a film is ‘automatically different and original’ by virtue of a change in medium, and because the directors and screenwriters will inevitably interpret the same material in different ways depending on their own preferences.²⁶² An adaptation is now more commonly understood as ‘a “reading” of the novel, one which is inevitably partial, personal, conjunctural’ and ‘just as any literary text can generate an infinity of readings, so any novel can generate any number of adaptations’.²⁶³ Following the Austenmania of the mid-1990s, Austen critics moved away from Wright’s assessment that ‘a large degree of faithfulness to the original...is the hallmark of successful adaptation’ and looked at the films’ critical and cultural significance instead.²⁶⁴

Austen critics were quick to critically engage with the deluge of 1990s film adaptations in comprehensive studies such as: *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (1998; second edition in 2001) edited by Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield; *Recreating Jane Austen* (2001) by John Wiltshire; *Jane Austen on Film and Television* (2002) by Sue Parill; *Jane Austen and Co.* (2003) edited by Suzanne Pucci and James Thompson; and *Jane Austen on Screen* (2003) edited by Gina and Andrew McDonald. The adaptations were valued for encouraging rereadings of the novels and were often compared to critical essays. For example, Gina and Andrew McDonald argue that ‘filmmakers are simply

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 430 and 432.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 421, 428, and 430.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 439.

²⁶¹ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 7.

²⁶² Robert Stam, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 3.

²⁶³ Ibid, 4.

²⁶⁴ Wright, “Jane Austen Adapted,” 436.

doing what critics do, but in a more creative form.²⁶⁵ Likewise, Sue Parrill quotes film studies critic Neil Sinyard who argues that ‘like the best criticism’, a film adaptation of a novel ‘can throw new light on the original’.²⁶⁶ Austen critics concluded that rather than denouncing changes made to Austen’s works in the process of adaptation, we must simply accept that ‘[e]very cultural creation...has an afterlife, unpredictable, uncontrolled by its original architect, when another era, another cultural configuration, turns it, adapts it, to its own uses.’²⁶⁷

As noted, Austen fans respond both to the film adaptations and to Austen’s novels through the creative and interpretive act of writing fanfiction. Like the film and television adaptations, fanfiction can be ‘transformative, parodic, [and] critical’ and can prompt a re-evaluation of the source material.²⁶⁸ Therefore, an analysis of online fanfiction can complement existing research on the Austen adaptations by considering how her work and adaptations of her work are actually received by her readers in the ‘reproduction’ phase of reception. These texts are especially attuned to Austen’s readers because they are written by them, as opposed to films that are made by producers and directors who make assumptions about who Austen’s readers are and what they want. Troost and Greenfield point out that producers of Austen adaptations seem to assume that the viewership for Austen is introduced to her novels through films, ‘so they picture an audience with less time, less knowledge, and less patience than the reader of Austen possesses.’²⁶⁹ By contrast, fanfiction writers trust their readers to be familiar with the entire Austen archive and they rely on them to draw on their encyclopaedic knowledge to contextualise information. As this thesis will show, Austen fanfiction is littered with in-jokes, intertextual references, and allusions to both Austen’s novels and to adaptations of her work intended for the reading pleasure of a very informed community of Janeites.

Wells argues that of all the critical works on Austen adaptations, *Jane Austen in Hollywood* was perhaps the most influential in terms of setting ‘the standard for subsequent analysis of the 1990s Austen-based films’ because it investigated the

²⁶⁵ Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald, “Introduction,” in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

²⁶⁶ Neil Sinyard quoted in Sue Parrill, *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of Adaptations* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2002), 9.

²⁶⁷ Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, 2-3.

²⁶⁸ Jamison, “The Briar Patch,” 274.

²⁶⁹ Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield, “Introduction: Watching Ourselves Watching,” *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, eds. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 9.

adaptations' cultural as well as critical significance.²⁷⁰ Troost and Greenfield argue that while Austen's novels have a timeless appeal, 'the film and television adaptations are attuned to one cultural moment'.²⁷¹ Consequently, they 'tell us more about our own moment in time than about Austen's writing' and that '[i]n watching them, we watch ourselves.'²⁷²

As argued in the introduction, this thesis will focus on bestselling Austen profic. Like the films, profic texts and fanfiction texts can provide insight into their cultural moment. Such texts have additional value because they can also be used to trace the wider cultural impact of adaptations like the 1995 *P&P* mini-series. Although Austen critics regarded the adaptations as being culturally significant, they were sceptical about their durability, arguing that the films were too rooted in their cultural moment to continue to be relevant outside of the original context in which they were received. For example, Troost and Greenfield predicted that the films would 'suffer from being so fully attuned in their texture to our present tastes and imaginations that this texture will not always appeal so easily to future audiences', and so they did not envision that Davies's adaptation would have a lasting afterlife in popular culture.²⁷³ Similarly, Roger Gard declares that 'however much one enjoys this or that filmed piece with a title from Jane Austen (like the BBC's 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*), and however excited one temporarily gets at there being a large public out there doing the same, isn't it unfortunately the case that none of them remains in the mind as even a minor work of art?'²⁷⁴ However, more than twenty years after the mini-series first aired, Davies's adaptation is still a major source of inspiration for film adaptations as well as profic and fanfiction and has even become an alternative canonical source to Austen's novel, testifying to the fact that the cultural impact of this particular adaptation has not been transitory. As we will see, the infamous 'lake scene' where Darcy dives into the water to quench his desire for the seemingly unattainable Elizabeth has been incorporated into almost every subsequent adaptation of *P&P*, as well as numerous profic and fanfiction texts, demonstrating that this vivid scene has not suffered from the 'artistic paucity of mere looking'.²⁷⁵ Clearly, a study of fanfiction has much to add to the study of Austen

²⁷⁰ Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 13.

²⁷¹ Troost and Greenfield, "Introduction: Watching Ourselves Watching," 9.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷³ Troost and Greenfield, "Introduction: Watching Ourselves Watching," 11.

²⁷⁴ Roger Gard, "A few sceptical thoughts on Jane Austen," in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina Macdonald and Andrew Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

adaptations in general. Austen's reception in popular culture is also a topical area of study in Austen studies, and the study of fanfiction promises to enrich this related area of research as well.

Austen's Reception and Readership

Austen critics are increasingly recognising that works of great literature do not derive meaning exclusively from what academic critics, their 'official' interpreters, make of them; they are also given significance by what they awake in the most anonymous of readers. Consequently, as Claudia Johnson argues in her influential essay 'The Divine Miss Jane', 'Austen's reception and readership merits substantial consideration'.²⁷⁶ Numerous recent works of Austen criticism have conducted robust analyses of different phases of Austen's reception, though again, fanfiction is under-addressed. For example, *Jane's Fame* (2011) by Harman seeks to explain 'how Jane Austen conquered the world' by tracing the growth of Austen's reputation from anonymous author (by a Lady), to idol of worship (the Divine Jane), to stalwart of the canon and candidate for canonisation (Austen the Author and Saint Jane), to global brand (Jane Austen™). The chapter 'Jane Austen™' is devoted to Austen's celebrity in the realm of contemporary popular culture and looks at the impact of the Austen film adaptations and at how the internet made 'mass intimacy with Austen available at the click of a mouse'.²⁷⁷ However, Harman does not examine online archives for records of reader response and profic texts are commented on, rather than critically analysed.²⁷⁸

Everybody's Jane: Austen in the Popular Imagination (2012) by Wells presents a thorough and thought-provoking account of Austen in popular culture, covering topics ranging from fan pilgrimages, to Austen societies, to Austen 'hybrids', Wells' term for profic novels. Although the chapter on Austen hybrids is insightful, the primary focus of the book is Austen herself and her place in the popular imagination. Only a small portion of the book is given over to a discussion of the ever-expanding Austen archive because, as Wells explains, 'it would be impossible to offer a fully comprehensive, up to date account of popular responses to Austen's writings' within the scope of her

²⁷⁶ Claudia Johnson, "The Divine Miss Jane: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies," in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deidre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 26.

²⁷⁷ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 276.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 266-270.

project.²⁷⁹ In her penetrating monograph *Why Jane Austen?* (2013), Brownstein concentrates on the different constructions of Austen in popular culture as heroine, moralist, satirist, and author, but fanfiction is peripheral to the main subject matter of the study, possibly due to Brownstein's disdain for the 'wrongheadedness and banality' of 'Jane-o-mania'.²⁸⁰

The study of Austen's reception in popular culture 'gained credence and momentum in the 1990s, just as – and in part because – Austen's popularity crested during these years.'²⁸¹ Lynch's anthology *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees* (2000), conducts strong and sympathetic readings of the 'Janeites', asking interesting questions about why Austen is popular among fans rather than simply lamenting that this is the case. The aim of this collection of reception history case studies is to initiate 'an examination that ranges widely and does not respect unduly the borders of periodization or the boundaries between academic writing and other ways of talking about Jane Austen', moving from the nineteenth century to the modern Cineplex.²⁸² Yet, the primary focus of the anthology is on the early Janeites and there is comparatively little critical engagement with Austen's contemporary fanbase.²⁸³ Indeed, an online review of the book by an Austen fan criticises the anthology for demonstrating a bias towards the 'opinions of critics and other literary figures' from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries over those of 'lay readers' from sites like *Pemberley*.²⁸⁴ Recent academic accounts of Austen's ordinary readers have been similarly focused on Austen's historical readers.

Katie Halsey addresses the views of 'ordinary' readers, defined as readers who are not professional literary critics, in her book *Jane Austen and Her Readers, 1786-1945* (2012).²⁸⁵ Halsey examines readers' responses from different historical time periods as expressed through their letters, journals, memoirs, and other writings. The

²⁷⁹ Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 5. Although Wells does not focus on Austen fanfiction or profic in her monograph, her short essay on Austen and the popular reader does claim a 'place within the Austen field for the serious consideration of contemporary popular texts'. See Wells, "New Approaches to Austen and the Popular Reader," 77-92.

²⁸⁰ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 247.

²⁸¹ Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 9.

²⁸² Lynch, "Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors," 14.

²⁸³ All the essays in the anthology have a historical focus with the exception of Roger Sales' essay, which discusses the representation of servants in the 1995 adaptation of *Persuasion*. Roger Sales, "In the Face of All Servants and Spies in Austen," in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deidre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 188-206.

²⁸⁴ juglicerr, "Review of *Janeites*," *LibraryThing*, October 10, 2007, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://www.librarything.com/work/808920/reviews/22059365>.

²⁸⁵ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 4.

book's aim is 'to show not only how the responses of Austen's readers can help to explicate Austen's works, but also how their reactions to Austen's works can illuminate her readers and their social, cultural and literary preoccupations for us'.²⁸⁶ Halsey's study shows that records of reader response can reveal how Austen's 'reputation is affected by the appropriation of generations of readers.'²⁸⁷ However, contemporary fandom is absent from this historical account meaning that Halsey does not discuss 'films, television adaptations, prequels, sequels, spin-offs or other manifestations of creative responses to Austen's works.'²⁸⁸

In *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures* (2012), Johnson's stated aim 'is not so much to trace Jane Austen's reputation as it is to ponder what loving her has meant to readers from the nineteenth century to the present'.²⁸⁹ Johnson examines Austen's reading communities through an analysis of four critical stages in Austen reception history: the Victorian Era, the First and Second World Wars, and the establishment of the Austen House and Museum. Her study of Austen's readers aims to enable us to 'read through their eyes and see in Austen's novels properties and possibilities we rarely if ever suspected were there', thereby enriching the reading, or rereading experience.²⁹⁰ Her work provides an invaluable historical background for understanding Austen's admirers but as the monograph has an historical focus, recent changes in Austen's readership are not traced. Studies by Austen critics focusing on the author's 'ordinary' readers illustrate that inquiry into Austen's readership is a productive enterprise that can help to clarify the enduring appeal of the author and her works. However, attempts to excavate the historical reader are frustrated by the fact that only sparse and highly selective records of reader response exist in the form of diary extracts, selections from letters, and notes scribbled in the margins of books. As Halsey remarks, 'the act of reading is rarely recorded... and even if recorded, the evidence may not survive'.²⁹¹ By contrast, critics studying online fandoms can draw on extensive records of reader response in the form of fan commentary on message boards, fan-run blogs and websites, and a wealth of responses to the source text expressed through fanfiction.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 3.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 5.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 5.

²⁸⁹ Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012), 14.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 14.

²⁹¹ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 9.

While Janeitism in the nineteenth century was an enthusiasm principally shared by middle-aged scholarly men, Janeites in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are typically female, perhaps because, as Johnson states, ‘we now live in a cultural environment when it can be assumed that literature written by women is literature written for women’.²⁹² A 2008 survey of the Janeite community, conducted online and via a paper survey on behalf of the JASNA, revealed that ‘[r]espondents were overwhelmingly female (96%) with a median age of 40’.²⁹³ Austen has since been embraced by a new generation of much younger, though still predominantly female, digitally literate fans. The *Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, for example, is notable for appealing to a new demographic of female fans aged between 18 and 24.²⁹⁴ Fanfiction can offer an insight into how Austen and her work has remained relevant for these new generations of Janeites and the ways in which reading experiences have changed as new technologies reshape the way in which we interact with texts. Despite changes in age and gender demographic and changes in the way texts are produced and received, this thesis will show that a playful and often possessive style of Janeite reception has remained the same, allowing us to characterise the Janeites as a distinct group. As Johnson notes, despite ‘the magnitude of the gender shift’ from the nineteenth century to the present, ‘Janeites on both sides of the gender divide share a presumption of – or is it an aspiration to? – intimacy’ with Austen who is alternately figured as a real friend or a fictional heroine.²⁹⁵

Halsey draws attention to another limitation to the historical approach to reader response, pointing out that ‘[s]cholars are dependent on the survival of records of reading that are skewed in terms of gender’, as the letters and diaries of men have more often been deemed to be worth preserving.²⁹⁶ With the exception of Brodie’s essay ‘Jane Austen and the Common Reader’, which uncovers the voices of female ‘enthusiasts’, historical reader response criticism has been focused on the male Janeite literati, meaning that “reception history” quickly becomes a recitation of excerpts from famous reviews, a reinscription of one critical canon.²⁹⁷ Indeed, it is possible that the

²⁹² Claudia Johnson, “Austen Cults and Cultures,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 234.

²⁹³ Jeanne Kiefer, “Anatomy of a Janeite: Results from The Jane Austen Survey 2008,” *Persuasions On-Line* 29 (2008) <http://jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol29no1/kiefer.html>.

²⁹⁴ Bernie Tumbles, *Tumblr*, September 22, 2014, accessed April 3, 2017, <https://berniesu.tumblr.com/post/98194334453/hi-im-in-a-graduate-level-class-about-new-media>.

²⁹⁵ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 10.

²⁹⁶ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 9.

²⁹⁷ Brodie, “Jane Austen and the Common Reader” 56.

male Janeite literati are accorded a higher status in Austen reception studies because, like the scholarly *Sherlock Holmes* fans of the nineteenth century, they ‘were eminent [male] professionals who couldn’t be dismissed as...dreary escapists’ or ‘batty women’ like contemporary female fans.²⁹⁸ Pearson makes this point in her comparative analysis of Sherlockians and Janeites, arguing that while Austen’s contemporary female fans ‘cohere around culturally valorized texts, the media tend to devalue them by virtue of gender; by contrast, the BSI [Baker Street Irregulars] coheres around less valorized texts, but the media have often celebrated them, sometimes implicitly by virtue of their gender and social position.’²⁹⁹ This thesis will attempt to combat gender-based misconceptions about Austen’s female fans by showing that historical Janeites and contemporary fans engage in very similar practices, like talking about Austen’s characters as if they were real and the author fictional. They do this by engaging what Michael Saler calls ‘the ironic imagination’, a form of double-consciousness that allows readers to knowingly embrace ‘illusions while acknowledging their artificial status.’³⁰⁰

As Austen’s contemporary fanbase is largely female, studying fanfiction opens up the question of what it means to understand fanfiction writing as a gendered practice.³⁰¹ As numerous fan studies scholars have pointed out, women are underrepresented as producers, writers, and directors in creative industries. Fanfiction therefore provides a valuable outlet for women to express themselves creatively or to rewrite narratives that they find frustrating.³⁰² Consequently, fan studies critics have often characterised writing fanfiction as ‘a subversive act’ undertaken by women ‘under the very noses of husbands and bosses who would not approve’ and ‘as a form of resistance to mainstream narratives.’³⁰³ Readers’ responses to Austen as expressed through fanfiction might be devalued because of the writers’ gender, but for these fans writing fanfiction is not necessarily an act of rebellion. Women are certainly not

²⁹⁸ Michael Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123; Phrase ‘batty women’ comes from Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 10.

²⁹⁹ Pearson, “Janeites and Sherlockians,” 498.

³⁰⁰ Saler, *As If*, 30 and 13.

³⁰¹ *The Republic of Pemberley*, for example, once described itself as ‘an imaginary women’s nation’ because ‘the Republic’s citizenry is at least 92 percent women.’ “Frequently asked questions,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Aug 21, 2010, <http://www.pemberley.com/faq.html>. Additionally, on *Derbyshire*, 87% of the fanfiction writers profiled in the fanfiction writers’ biography section identify as female. “Baronetage,” *The Derbyshire Writers Guild*, accessed August 21, 2016, <https://www.dwiggie.com/baronetage/>.

³⁰² See for example, Jamison, “Introduction,” 19.

³⁰³ Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women*, 3; Wilson, “Full-body reading”.

underrepresented in Austen's heroine-centric novels, and in fact female readers' 'appreciation of her novels stems in part from her depictions of women's lives'.³⁰⁴ Readers are more likely to be frustrated with her novels because the endings are undercut and unsatisfactory, or the depiction of romance too understated, or simply because there are not more of them to read. Fanfiction allows readers to explore the story beyond the 'happily ever after' and to amplify the romance by writing the kind of explicitly romantic scenes that Austen did not. Therefore, Austen's female readers 'do not "talk back" to her so much as converse with her', through fanfiction.³⁰⁵ Their creative responses to her novels reveal a lot about the elements of the source material that readers want "more of" and the ones that they want "more from".³⁰⁶

Interestingly, Austen fans have proven more adept at exploring their own fandom in a critical context, than Austen scholars. They have theorised the growing phenomenon of Austen fanfiction in books such as *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen* (2015), a collection of essays featuring 'material *about* the fans, *for* the fans, *by* the fans'.³⁰⁷ This study encompasses key moments in the history of Austen fandom, including Austen's viral afterlife online, and is a valuable resource for insight into the culture surrounding Austen's novels as expressed through fanfiction. Likewise, Yaffe's *Among the Janeites* is a highly informative account of the diversity of contemporary Janeitism told from an insider's perspective. Yaffe presents a witty and incisive account of aspects of Austen fandom such as Austen tourism, the practice of rereading and rewriting Austen's novels in fan culture, and the origins and growth of 'Jane.net'. It would be timely and beneficial for Austen critics to add their own contributions to this growing area of critical enquiry.

On the Boundary Between Worlds: Austen's Place in Popular Culture

As the previous sections have made clear, while Austen critics have engaged with many aspects of the author's popularity, they have struggled to adequately address fanfiction, which has a lower cultural status than the Austen adaptations and inspires significantly more aesthetic distaste. Conversely, fan studies scholars find Austen's high cultural and

³⁰⁴ Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 16.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

³⁰⁶ Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 19.

³⁰⁷ Malcolm, *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 5.

literary associations problematic, with critics often struggling ‘to find a point of – if not compatibility – convertibility’ between the aims of literary theory and those of fan studies.³⁰⁸ Pearson attempts to address the lack of criticism on high cultural figures within fan studies in her essay on fans of Shakespeare and Bach. She draws distinctions between the practices of high cultural fandoms, and those revolving around popular culture sources, noting that while fans of popular culture or middlebrow texts have labels like ‘Trekkies’ and ‘Sherlockians’, ‘[a]dherants of high culture don’t have nicknames’, and are categorised as ‘enthusiasts’ or ‘devotees’ rather than by potentially derogative labels like ‘Bachies’, ‘Bardies’ or even simply ‘fans’.³⁰⁹ She then adds in a footnote that ‘the single exception’ to this general rule is ‘the Jane-ites or Jane Austen fans’.³¹⁰ As is often the case, Austen is held up as the exception that proves the rule. To fully understand the issue of why Austen fanfiction is yet to be critically analysed within disciplines in which such engagement would be immensely relevant, it is necessary to address Austen’s singular position in literary culture.

The deficiency of research on Austen fanfiction is largely due to the fact that Austen ‘straddles the divides between high and low culture, and between the canon and the cineplex’ and is therefore a problematic figure defying easy categorisation.³¹¹ Whether people ‘*could* or *could not* appreciate Miss Austen’s merits’ was early characterised as ‘a new kind of test of ability’ that, it was suggested, only those with exceptionally refined tastes could possibly pass.³¹² However, as critics studying Austen’s reception have consistently noted, Austen is now a universal brand with widespread appeal and is worshipped and adored on a mass scale; she is therefore ‘everybody’s Jane’ rather than the cultural property of an elite band of admirers.³¹³ Harman notes that Austen’s popularity is unique because ‘unlike many candidates for global celebrity Austen is a genuinely great artist as well as a popular one’.³¹⁴ It is possible that Austen fanfiction has yet to be adequately addressed because it is not clear

³⁰⁸ Cornel Sandvoss, “The Death of the Reader? Literary Theory and the Study of Texts in Popular Culture,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 20.

³⁰⁹ Roberta Pearson, “Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, and Sherlockians,” 98-99.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

³¹¹ Lynch, “Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors,” 5.

³¹² J.E. Austen-Leigh paraphrasing his friend R.H. Cheney’s ‘test’ of Austen appreciation, quoted in J.E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, ed. Sutherland, 105.

³¹³ The phrase ‘everybody’s Jane’ is taken from a modified version of an oft-quoted comment made by Henry James about Austen’s wide-reaching appeal. See Henry James, 1905 in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, Vol.2, 230.

³¹⁴ Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 4.

what discipline has the right to define this aspect of her popularity. Fanfiction is not often considered a worthy topic of study from a high cultural perspective and Austen does not fit straightforwardly into the category of popular fiction, meaning that Austen fanfiction has been underexplored in Austen studies and fan studies. The difficulty in placing Austen has also proven a persistent problem for critics of popular literature, or popular culture more generally, attempting to differentiate between the fields of ‘Literature’ and ‘popular literature’.

When classifying bestselling authors in his seminal study *Bestsellers: Popular Fiction since 1900* (2002), Clive Bloom encounters issues with Austen. Bloom states that ‘Jane Austen was perhaps never a true bestseller but she has proved a steady seller...and by degrees and *imitation* has been elevated to bestseller status as Britain’s (and America’s) favourite author (*if imitators are considered.*)’³¹⁵ The qualification that Bloom added at the end of the previous sentence is noteworthy. He states that ‘Austen’s best-seller status rests with *Pride and Prejudice*’ but contends that readers’ interest in the book has less to do with the content of the novel itself, than with how ‘imitators’ reshaped this content by rewriting the story and repackaging *P&P* ‘as if it were “chick lit”’.³¹⁶ The imitators Bloom refers to include romance, chick-lit, and profic writers who recognise the commercial benefits of reusing a plot that, as Helen Fielding states, has been subject to ‘several hundred years of market testing’.³¹⁷ Bloom attempts to separate Austen’s art from the fiction it inspires, to remove the taint of popularity from the original author’s works, ascribing it to the work of her imitators instead. He states that: ‘Austen has always been serious literature (even if her writing inadvertently gave rise to romantic fiction).’³¹⁸ Here, Austen ‘inadvertently’ occupies multiple roles in high *and* popular culture. She is at once a ‘serious’ author and a bestselling writer who wrote a timeless classic that nevertheless has (through no fault of Austen’s own, Bloom insists) given rise to ‘ephemeral’ works of romance, chick-lit, profic, and online fanfiction.

In Ken Gelder’s study of popular fiction, *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field* (2004), Austen is once again an obstacle to easy classification and must be discussed as a ‘special case’. Gelder offers strict opposing

³¹⁵ Clive Bloom, *Bestsellers: Popular Fiction Since 1900s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1. (emphasis mine).

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹⁷ Helen Fielding, quoted in Sarah Van Boven, “The Bridget invasion: a London diary hits home,” *Newsweek*, May 4, 1998, accessed January 3, 2017, http://bridgetarchive.altervista.org/bridget_invasion.htm.

³¹⁸ Bloom, *Bestsellers*, 2.

definitions of popular fiction and Literature, arguing that ‘popular fiction is best conceived as the opposite of Literature’.³¹⁹ For Gelder, popular fiction is about entertainment while Literature is about Art, popular fiction is conventional, sensuous, and excessive while Literature is original, cerebral, and restrained, popular fiction is generic while Literature is self-contained, and popular fiction is aimed at a mass audience that attracts fans while Literature is aimed at a niche audience that attracts specialists.³²⁰ Gelder further distinguishes between these two categories by arguing that ‘Literature is enmeshed with the art world; by contrast, popular fiction...is a “craft”’.³²¹

Austen is a craftsperson who diligently reworked her novels before publication.³²² She is also a gifted artist whose mastery of innovative literary techniques such as free indirect speech led to her inclusion in a list of ‘great English novelists’ defined by Leavis as capable of changing ‘the possibilities of art for practitioners and readers’.³²³ Her work has been read as escapist, entertaining, and formulaic as well as subversive, scholarly, and rich in interpretive challenges; in short, her novels are both popular and literary. Therefore, Austen immediately presents a problem for Gelder as her work crosses categories, threatening to undercut or even dissolve the lines that he draws between ‘popular fiction’ and ‘Literature’. Gelder initially advocates Austen’s writing as an example of Literature but then concedes that Austen has ‘certainly been popular’.³²⁴ He attempts to resolve the problem of Austen’s destabilising boundary-crossing appeal by including her among a handful of authors who write ‘Popular Literature’, with a capital ‘L’, rather than ‘Literature’ or ‘popular fiction’.³²⁵ Gelder argues that there is a difference between fiction that adheres to popular generic conventions to sell, and fiction that is ‘*literary* in character or aspiration’ and just

³¹⁹ Ken Gelder, *Popular fiction: the logics and practices of a literary field*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 11. Although Gelder draws distinctions between Literature and popular literature, arguing that popular fiction is the opposite of Literature, he rejects ‘easy, patronizing kind[s] of distinction[s] between *readers* of Literature and popular literature.’ Gelder argues persuasively that ‘readers of popular fiction are careful discriminators of the field – and careful readers of the work they process, often in exquisite detail.’ (36).

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 160. Gelder acknowledges that there ‘are always composites, blurrings and hybrids of one kind or another’ that undercut distinctions between Literature and popular fiction; however, he concludes that ‘on the whole, popular fiction and Literature inhabit different worlds.’

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

³²² For a discussion of Austen’s publishing history and composition methods see Kathryn Sutherland, “Chronology of composition and publication,” in *Jane Austen in Context*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12-23.

³²³ Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 1 and 2.

³²⁴ Gelder, *Popular fiction* 11. See also 159.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-60. Charles Dickens, Raymond Chandler, and Patricia Highsmith are also included as representative examples of Popular Literature authors capable of transcending their generic limits.

happens to also be popular and generic.³²⁶ Austen is popular, then, but she did not *mean* to be.

The proposition that Austen was motivated by ‘Art’, rather than the literary marketplace, comes dangerously close to the myth perpetrated by Henry Austen that ‘[n]either the hope of fame nor profit mixed with [Austen’s] early motives’.³²⁷ Of course, Austen’s letters reveal that she took a keen interest in profit. Having sold *P&P* and *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen wrote to her brother Frank about her financial gains and expressed her hope of earning more money from subsequent sales: ‘I have now written myself into £250. – which only makes me long for more.’³²⁸ Austen carefully recorded the amounts that her novels earned and she was involved in the negotiations for copyright sales.³²⁹ She was interested in fame as well as fortune, or in her own words, although she liked ‘praise as well as anybody’ she appreciated ‘*Pewter* too.’³³⁰ The novels were published anonymously during her lifetime and Austen did not broadcast her literary accomplishments outside the family. However, when word began to spread that she was the author of *P&P* and *Sense and Sensibility*, due in part to the well-meaning boasting of her family members, she became resigned to her fame and playfully declared that she intended to profit as much as possible from her growing celebrity: ‘the Secret has spread so far as to be scarcely the Shadow of a secret now - & that I beleive [sic] whenever the 3^d appears, I shall not even attempt to tell Lies about it. – I shall rather try to make all the Money than all the Mystery I can of it. – People shall pay for their Knowledge if I can make them.’³³¹

As well as being interested in the commercial value of her novels, Austen’s use of the formulaic courtship plot, her knowledgeable manipulation of generic conventions, and her intertextual references to the works of popular novelists such as Ann Radcliffe and Frances Burney ‘suggests that she conceived of her novels in the

³²⁶ Ibid. 59.

³²⁷ Henry Austen, “Biographical Notice of the Author,” Dec 13, 1817, in J.E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and other family recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 140.

³²⁸ Austen, “Letter to Francis Austen July 3-6, 1813,” in *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 226.

³²⁹ Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 68. The publisher John Murray wanted to buy the copyright to *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* in 1815. When her brother Henry became too ill to represent her, Austen took over the negotiations with Murray.

³³⁰ Jane Austen, “Letter to Fanny Knight Nov 30, 1814,” in *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 300.

³³¹ Jane Austen, “Letter to Francis Austen Sept 25, 1813,” in *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 241.

context of current fiction, as part of popular literature, and designed her novels to reach audiences who were reading contemporary novels'.³³² Austen did not situate herself in the 'field of restricted production' identified by Pierre Bourdieu as the domain of 'creative artists' aiming to reach elite audiences; rather, she wrote with an awareness of the marketplace and what kinds of books would sell.³³³ As a member of a family of unabashedly 'great Novel-readers' she had, as Harman notes, 'a highly developed *consumer's* understanding of her favourite form' which allowed her to create marketable fiction.³³⁴ It is clear that her intention was to write novels that would please readers and encourage them to buy, rather than borrow, her novels.³³⁵ Indeed, as Judy Simons notes, the 'divide between "high" and popular culture was not so sharp in Austen's day as in our own: a pantomime was considered an appropriate coda to a Shakespearean tragedy' and Austen could 'read the Romantic poets and a spoof of the Gothic novel on successive days with equal pleasure.'³³⁶ Though she 'came to maturity as a writer during the period when questions about individual discernment and cultural hierarchies were being articulated', she herself would judge individual texts on their own merits 'and could be as delighted by a sparkling performance of a low comedy as wearied by a classic if poorly acted.'³³⁷

The tendency to attribute Austen's popularity to her appropriation by readers who read her in the 'wrong way', rather than to the author's own design, has led to Austen being classified qualitatively, rather than definitively, as a popular fiction writer within Popular Culture Studies. As a result, she is most often mentioned as an anomaly, as an 'inadvertently' popular writer, rather than as a representative example, as in the case with Gelder and Bloom, or is left out of discussions of popular culture altogether, as in cultural historian Dominic Sandbrook's *The Great British Dream Factory: The Strange History of our National Imagination* (2015). In this account of British popular culture, Sandbrook argues that as British imperial and industrial power has declined, the

³³² Barbara M. Benedict, "Sensibility by the numbers: Austen's work as Regency popular fiction," in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deirdre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 64.

³³³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans., Randal Johnson (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1993), 39.

³³⁴ Austen, "Letter to Cassandra Austen December 18-19, 1798," in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27; Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 33.

³³⁵ Austen, "Letter to Fanny Knight November 30, 1814," 300. Austen wrote: 'People are more ready to borrow & praise, than to buy – which I cannot wonder at; - but tho' I like praise as well as anybody, I like what Edward calls *Pewter* too.'

³³⁶ Simons. "Jane Austen and Popular Culture," 467.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, 467 and 486.

country's importance as a popular culture powerhouse has increased and Britain has 'embraced a new identity as the world's great dream factory'.³³⁸ Consequently, Britain increasingly celebrates the popular culture products of its 'well-developed cultural and creative industries'.³³⁹ Sandbrook argues that this shift in Britain's power was reflected in the 2012 British Olympics Opening Ceremony where director Danny Boyle celebrated British literary characters like Peter Pan, Harry Potter, and James Bond to show that even though Britain's 'industrial importance has diminished', the country is still 'very good at all things cultural'.³⁴⁰ Boyle stated that his intention was to showcase British 'heritage' by celebrating stories that have become so deeply ingrained in the national imagination that they become like 'an invisible fingerprint that everybody carries, whether you ever sit down and watch it, or not'.³⁴¹ As one of the British heritage industry's most lucrative exports and the creator of one of the nation's best loved books, Austen would seem to be an ideal candidate to represent the best of British literary culture and heritage.³⁴² However, Austen was notably absent from the Olympic celebrations, just as she is absent from Sandbrook's book. Although he has a whole chapter dedicated to the appeal of the 'idealized, supposedly timeless paradise' represented by the British country house, a symbolic realm that is now synonymous with Austen, the author is mentioned only briefly in an aside and does not form part of the overall discussion.³⁴³

Austen clearly looms large in the popular imagination; yet, critics are reluctant to define her conclusively as an exemplar of a popular fiction writer. If Austen's popularity with the 'wrong readers' brings her reputation as 'one of the truly great' representatives of the canon into question, then it makes sense that some cultural critics still seek to 'rescue Jane from the Janeites' or refuse to acknowledge fanfiction.³⁴⁴ However, a more fruitful question raised by Austen's liminal identity on the boundary between high and low culture is whether the hierarchal distinctions between 'Literature' and 'popular literature' are necessary at all? Perhaps, a culturally eclectic approach like

³³⁸ Dominic Sandbrook, *The Great British Dream Factory: The Strange History of Our National Imagination* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), xxv.

³³⁹ Ibid, xxii.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, xxiv.

³⁴¹ Ibid, xiv.

³⁴² "BBC – The Big Read – Top 100 Books," April, 2003, accessed April 4, 2017,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/top100.shtml>. *P&P* came second in a survey of the Britain's best loved books carried out by the BBC in 2003.

³⁴³ Sandbrook, *The Great British Dream Factory*, 152.

³⁴⁴ Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 5; Boyd Tonkin, quoted in Lynch ed., "Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors," 8.

the one practised by Austen herself would be more productive, where texts drawn from a number of sources are studied on their own merits? These are questions that will be further explored throughout the thesis.

England's Jane vs. America's Jane

[H]er faithful followers...do not want to share their pleasure with their neighbours. It is too intimate and too individual.

- Agnes Repplier³⁴⁵

This literature review has highlighted the tug-of-war over Austen between academic readers and fans, and between adherents of high culture and popular culture enthusiasts, none of whom have exclusive interpretive control over Austen. The shared custody of the author is an uneasy arrangement because fans and scholars often read Austen in different ways and can be reluctant to submit to another's interpretation of 'their' Jane Austen, or more importantly to admit to the similarities in their approaches. A remaining issue to be addressed is the struggle over ownership of Austen between English and American readers. Austen is often characterised as the quintessential English writer, as 'England's Jane' in the words of Rudyard Kipling.³⁴⁶ However, in the realm of contemporary Austen fandom it would be more accurate to say that she is now 'America's Jane', as most fanfiction and profic texts are written by American writers.

Formative fan sites such as *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* were founded by Americans and while these online communities are open to contributors from anywhere in the world, their citizens are overwhelmingly American.³⁴⁷ *Derbyshire*, for example, includes a section called 'The Baronetage' which showcases the profiles of 'Dwiggies from around the world.'³⁴⁸ The information supplied by contributors reveals that the majority of fanfiction writers in the *Derbyshire* community are from North America.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Agnes Repplier, 1931, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, Vol. 2*, 214.

³⁴⁶ Rudyard Kipling, "The Janeites," in *Debits and Credits*, ed. Sandra Kemp, (New York: Penguin, 1987), 120.

³⁴⁷ *Pemberley* was co-founded by Myretta Robens and Amy Bellinger, who are both American. American Ann Haker founded *Derbyshire*.

³⁴⁸ "The Baronetage," *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed August 21, 2016,

<https://www.dwiggie.com/baronetage/>. Dwiggie is a term that members of the *Derbyshire Writers' Guild* use to refer to themselves. The name 'Baronetage' is a reference to Austen's *Persuasion* where Sir Walter Elliot is described as 'a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage.'

³⁴⁹ The breakdown of countries in each category is as follows: North America: (America 147; Canada 11; Mexico 2; Panama 1); Europe: (Ireland 2; UK 20; German 8; Italy 2; France 5; Spain 1; Sweden 2; Netherlands 7; Finland 1; Malta 1; Greece 1; Austria 2) Australia/Oceania: (Australia 16; New Zealand 1)

(See Table 1.) High-profile Austen blogs such as *Austenprose* and *Laughing with Lizzie*, which keep the Austen fan community informed about upcoming profic texts and film adaptations, are run by American bloggers, further demonstrating the influence of American fans in online Austen fandom.³⁵⁰ Additionally, ‘The Jane Austen Survey 2008’ conducted by the JASNA was open to Janeites from all over the world: the results revealed that 90% of the Janeites surveyed came from English-speaking nations: ‘68% from the U. S., 6% from Canada and 16% from the U. K., Australia/New Zealand and Ireland combined.’³⁵¹

Austen profic publishing is also largely an American industry. The *Austen Authors* blog provides an illustrative example of the dominance of American writers in the Austen profic sphere. The website contains short biographies of twenty-three writers who publish Austen profic ‘as an homage to one of the world’s greatest writers of fiction’: twenty-two of these writers are from America and one is from Canada.³⁵² The most popular Austen profic series are by American authors; for example, *The Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman* (2003-2010) series by Pamela Aidan, the *Jane Austen Heroes* (2005-2011) series by Amanda Grange, and *Jane Austen Mysteries* (1996-present) by (former CIA agent!) Stephanie Barron have been featured on bestseller lists. Additionally, Austen publishing production trends, like the Austen/monster trend in the late noughties which will be explored in Chapter Three, are ‘unmistakably an American phenomenon.’³⁵³ Given the predominance of American writers in online fanfiction writing communities, as well as the Austen profic industry, most of the texts that will be examined in this thesis are unavoidably American. Indeed, American readers have long contributed to Austen fandom and have played a significant role in shaping the author’s reputation.

Asia: (Philippines 1; India 2; China 1; Israel 1); South America: (Argentina 1; Brazil 1); Do not Specify: 33 people do not cite their country of origin on their profile. “The Baronetage,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, accessed August 21, 2016, <https://www.dwiggie.com/baronetage/>.

³⁵⁰ *Austenprose*, <https://austenprose.com/>. 16,520 followers as of April 4, 2017.

Laughing with Lizzie, <http://laughingwithlizzie.blogspot.ie/>, 181 followers on the blog and 11,365 on Facebook as of April 4, 2017. Sophie Andrews, the young American woman who runs the site, is an ambassador for the Jane Austen Literacy Foundation.

³⁵¹ Kiefer, “Anatomy of a Janeite: Results from The Jane Austen Survey 2008.”

³⁵² “Austen Authors Index,” *Austen Authors*, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://austenaauthors.net/auau-index/>.

³⁵³ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 178.

Table 1: 'The Baronetage' Biographical Profile Nationality Results, *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, Accessed Aug 21, 2016

Continent	Numbers
North America	161
Europe	52
Do not Specify	33
Australia / Oceania	17
Asia	5
South America	2
Africa	0
Total	270

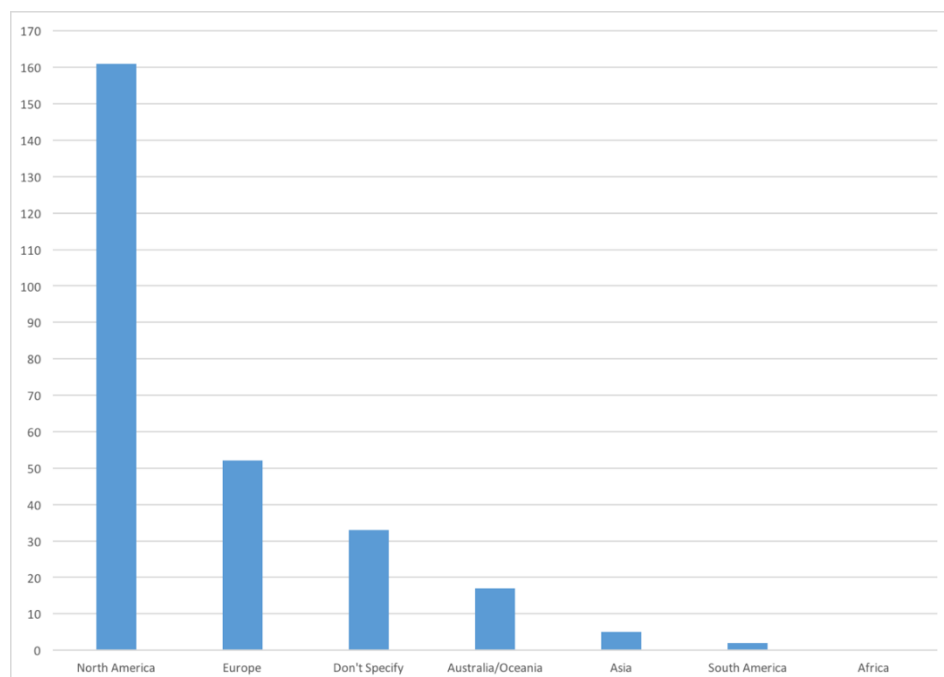


Figure 3: Graph illustrating the results from Table 1

Historic American Janeites were responsible for acquiring and bequeathing many of the ‘sacred’ objects that can now be visited by Janeites undertaking Austen pilgrimages. For example, the affluent American heiress Alberta H. Burke (1907-1975) was in her own words ‘a most ardent “Janeite” and a collector of all things pertaining to Jane Austen’.³⁵⁴ She collected Austen-related materials ‘because Jane Austen [was] “St. Jane” in [her] private hagiology’ and she wished to form a connection with her through

³⁵⁴ Alberta Burke quoted in Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 35. Burke dedicated her life to amassing an astonishing collection of rare manuscripts and original letters written by Austen, scholarly books about Austen, and popular material relating to Austen such as radio programs, and theatre and film reviews.

acquiring items related to her.³⁵⁵ Her most famous contribution to the temple of St. Jane was her gift of a lock of Austen's hair to the English branch of the Jane Austen Society on July 23, 1949. Burke was in England to attend the opening of the Jane Austen House Museum (informally known as Chawton Cottage) and was in the audience when Mr. Thomas Edward Carpenter, who had acquired the house, complained of Austen 'relics' leaving England and falling into the hands of Americans.³⁵⁶ In his diatribe, Carpenter made particular reference to the recent purchase of a lock of Austen's hair at Sotheby's by 'an American'. Upon hearing Carpenter's complaint, Burke reportedly 'muttered under her breath, "I will give them the damned hair"', before rising and offering to give her piece of Saint Jane to the Jane Austen House Museum as a gift.³⁵⁷ Despite the generosity of this gift, and the gifts of other American collectors like J. Pierpont Morgan and Charles Beecher Hogan, 'there was a sense of slight desperation at the relative ease with which Americans, with their money and hunger for cultural emblems, could acquire Austen memorabilia and remove them from the country.'³⁵⁸ As Harman notes, England was not 'used to feeling the sharp end of cultural colonisation, being the looted rather than the lootee.'³⁵⁹

The struggle over ownership of Austen illustrated by the example of the 'hair' has numerous parallels in contemporary culture. For example, Sandy Lerner, an American millionaire and devoted Janeite, undertook the costly restoration of Chawton House partly because she was incensed by comments made by the British writer Nigel Nicolson to an audience of American Austen fans at a 1992 JASNA conference in California.³⁶⁰ Nicolson was involved in plans to establish a Jane Austen Centre in Bath and scoffed at the notion that Chawton House would be a more appropriate location for the centre, reportedly claiming that anybody who opposed his opinion was a 'stupid old cow'.³⁶¹ Like Burke, Lerner responded to the disrespect shown to Austen's American enthusiasts by shaming the English with her generosity and turning Chawton House into a library devoted to the study of women's writing from 1600-1830.³⁶² Lerner had

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 43.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 54.

³⁵⁷ Henry Burke quoted in Ibid, 55.

³⁵⁸ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 225.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 225.

³⁶⁰ Chawton House is the former manor home of Austen's wealthy brother Edward Knight. He gifted Chawton Cottage (now the Jane Austen House Museum), a cottage on his estate, to his mother and sisters in 1809, five years after their father's death.

³⁶¹ Lerner paraphrasing Nicolson quoted in Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 54.

³⁶² Lerner had amassed a fortune after founding Cisco Systems, a multinational technology conglomerate, in 1984. She used this money to restore Chawton House.

expected her proposed project to be met with enthusiasm and approbation. However, her altruistic endeavours were instead greeted with animosity and resentment and rumours started circulating that ‘the library of women’s writing that she claimed to be planning was a front for a lesbian commune.’³⁶³

This struggle over ownership of Austen continues to escalate. For example, in 2012 American popstar and Austen fan Kelly Clarkson bought a turquoise ring formerly owned by Austen at an auction for £152, 450, outbidding the Jane Austen House Museum. However, Clarkson was prevented from taking the ring to America when the British Culture minister Ed Vaizey imposed an export ban on what he deemed to be a ‘national treasure’ that should be ‘saved for the nation’.³⁶⁴ The Jane Austen House museum launched a ‘Bring the Ring Home campaign’, encouraging Austen lovers to donate money to purchase the ring back from Clarkson. The campaign was successful and Clarkson relinquished the ring with a good grace, stating that she was ‘happy to know that so many Jane Austen fans will get to see it at Jane Austen’s House Museum.’³⁶⁵ The examples above show that the author is a valuable cultural export to America, but that her international appeal can cause problems when the English, having sold Austen to America, attempt to buy her back. As always, the author’s devotees are reluctant to share *their* Jane Austen with their neighbours.

Contemporary ‘Austen appreciation in the US’ is, as Wells notes, ‘exceptionally wide and varied – and has yet to be investigated in depth’.³⁶⁶ However, Mary A. Favret has explored American Austen appreciation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and her work offers a valuable starting point for the exploration of the subject. Favret argues that even though Austen is synonymous with British, or more aptly, with English national identity, her nationality is ‘pliable or even eradicable’ because of the way that American readers and writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries accepted Austen as part of their own ‘Americanness’.³⁶⁷ For Favret, Austen appreciation in the late nineteenth century was not motivated by simple Anglophilia; rather, for these readers, Austen represented ‘freedom and the pursuit of happiness’.³⁶⁸

³⁶³ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 56.

³⁶⁴ “Jane Austen ring goes on display after Kelly Clarkson row,” *BBC News*, February 14, 2014, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hampshire-26173791>.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 5.

³⁶⁷ Mary A. Favret, “Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America,” in *Janeites: Austen’s Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deidre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 167.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

American realist writers and romantic revivalists often highlighted different aspects of Austen's works but were united in responding to the appeal of the alternative world offered by Austen's novels:

These three notes- the possibility of a new, better something; the desire for distance from emotional or social demands; and the creation of another, more leisurely world - ...ring loudly and distinctly in the records of other American readers of Jane Austen, bestowing on her work a particularly American sound.³⁶⁹

The 'utopian sort of "elsewhere"' produced by Austen's novels, and best encapsulated by the hopeful *P&P*, is tantamount to a 'mental America' because the idea of the 'New World' and 'the pursuit of happiness' are such seductive concepts in American culture.³⁷⁰ This thesis will build on Favret's argument by exploring how Austen's contemporary fans continue to figure her world as an American 'refuge' or 'lost world' in *P&P* profic and fanfiction texts. These texts, which are often set in America or in a mythic version of America, indicate 'Austen's ability to transcend geographical distance and national boundaries', as well as boundaries between high and low culture.³⁷¹ The thesis will draw on theories of imaginary worlds by Michael Saler, Marie-Laure Ryan, and Mark J.P. Wolf when exploring 'Austenland', the utopian (frequently Americanised) imaginary world that Austen fans have been collectively building since the nineteenth century.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 168, 170, 171. Favret argues that the author's focus on 'the common' and 'the everyday' allied her to American realist writers seeking to distinguish themselves from the English Romantic tradition, while the association between leisure and pleasure in her novels paradoxically appealed to the 'romantic revival' writers in America. Interestingly, Favret points out that James Fenimore Copper, the 'founding father of the American masculine literary tradition', started his literary career by publishing *Precaution* (1820), which was a rewriting of Austen's *Persuasion* (1818).

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 176-177.

³⁷¹ Simon, "Jane Austen and Popular Culture," 473.

Chapter One: ‘Light and Bright and Sparkling’ – *Pride and Prejudice* and the Enchantment of Fairy Tales

This chapter will address a central question of my thesis, ‘why *P&P*?’ Why is this Austen’s most popular novel? Fanfiction archive statistics quickly reveal the supremacy of *P&P* as a source for online fanfiction stories.³⁷² (See Table 2.) *P&P* also inspires substantially more profic than Austen’s other novels. *Inspired by Austen*, a fan website that categorises Austen profic, lists 286 titles under the category *P&P* compared to 29 each for *Emma* and *Sense & Sensibility*, 15 for *Mansfield Park*, 13 for *Northanger Abbey*, and 32 for *Persuasion*.³⁷³ Indeed, the novel has proven to be eminently adaptable in almost every medium and has been retold through radio, film adaptations, theatrical productions, graphic novels, musicals, social media, and more.

For twenty-first century readers, *P&P* is a ‘transmedial’ and ‘transauthorial’ narrative, that is no longer known exclusively, or even primarily, through Austen’s novel.³⁷⁴ Indeed, one fan on the *Derbyshire* site claims to have been introduced to the novel through the *P&P* board game, though Davies’s 1995 mini-series has been a more typical point of entry for contemporary fans.³⁷⁵ *P&P* is now so pervasive in popular culture that it has even infiltrated reality television. For example, *P&P* was used as a template for the reality television show *Regency House Party* (2004) in which ‘five aspiring Mr Darcys and five Miss Bennets try to live and find love by the rules of the great age of romance’ whilst confined in a Regency-style house.³⁷⁶ Comparisons have also been drawn between TV’s ubiquitous Kardashian clan and the Bennets, with reviewers of the series arguing that the reality TV show featuring five daughters and

³⁷² In archives lacking statistics, numbers were counted manually. *Fanfiction.net* and *Archive of Our Own* host fanfiction from a range of fandoms, while the other archives listed are dedicated Austen archives.

³⁷³ *Inspired by Austen*, 2012, accessed May 2, 2017, <http://inspiredbyausten.com/>. The *Inspired by Austen* profic archive is compiled by an American Austen fan who started the website in 2012 as part of a graduate school project. It strives to be as comprehensive as possible, but because ‘there are so many books out there’ it does not list every Austen profic title ever published. Jenn, Email message to author, May 5, 2015.

³⁷⁴ Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 267. In ‘transmedial’ narratives the world of the text becomes ‘less tied to its medium of origin, giving it greater independence as more media windows are available through which to experience it’. The authorship of such narratives ‘often extends beyond the originator of the world, expanding into concentric circles of authorship’, making such narratives ‘transauthorial’ as well as ‘transmedial’.

³⁷⁵ Emi, “The Baronetage,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, accessed June 14, 2017, <https://www.dwiggie.com/baronetage/view.php?user=1401>.

³⁷⁶ Tagline for *Regency House* (2004) quoted on *Channel4*, accessed Aug 9, 2015, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/regency-house-party>.

their match-making ‘momager’ (manager/mother) resonates with viewers in part because it reuses the recognisable premise of Austen’s novel.³⁷⁷ *P&P* is available for consumption in many additional unexpected forms such as the *Little Miss Austen: Pride and Prejudice* (2011) ‘BabyLit’ book by Jennifer Adams and the *Pride and Prejudice: Hidden Anthologies* (2012) adventure game app.³⁷⁸ The plot of *P&P* has also been recycled in numerous romance novels and romantic comedies throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, further expanding the story’s hold on the popular imagination. The adaptability and popularity of Austen’s *P&P* demands explanation and this chapter aims to explore answers.

Table 2: Fanfiction Archive Statistics, Accessed August 21, 2016

Novel	Fanfiction Archive					Total
	<i>Bits of Ivory</i>	<i>Epilogue Abbey</i>	<i>Fantasia Gallery</i>	<i>FanFiction.net</i>	<i>Archive of Our Own</i>	
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	25	44	57	175	46	347
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	311	1331	971	3,555	564	6732
<i>Mansfield Park</i>	18	59	54	61	72	264
<i>Emma</i>	22	63	100	304	57	546
<i>Persuasion</i>	22	74	103	139	102	440
<i>Northanger Abbey</i>	8	21	41	40	40	150

³⁷⁷ See celebrity culture critic Anne Helen Peterson for a discussion of the parallels between the Kardashians and the Bennets. Anne Helen Peterson, “A Scandalous History of Hollywood Gossip,” *Stuff Mom Never Told You*, April 14, 2014, accessed August 9, 2015, <http://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/podcasts/a-scandalous-history-of-hollywood-gossip/>. See also Hanna Flint, “Are The Kardashians The Modern Day Bennets?” *Huffington Post*, Oct 10, 2012, accessed May 4, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hanna-flint/are-the-kardashians-the-m_b_1953450.html. Flint analyses the similarities between Austen’s society of manners and contemporary celebrity culture, commenting: ‘And what was Polite Society of those times if not the reality show of ours, with men and women constantly under the spotlight, being scrutinised for every fashion choice, every comment and every relationship for the ultimate prize of social status.’

³⁷⁸ *Pride and Prejudice: Hidden Anthologies*, accessed Feb 21, 2018, <http://www.hiddenanthologies.com/>.

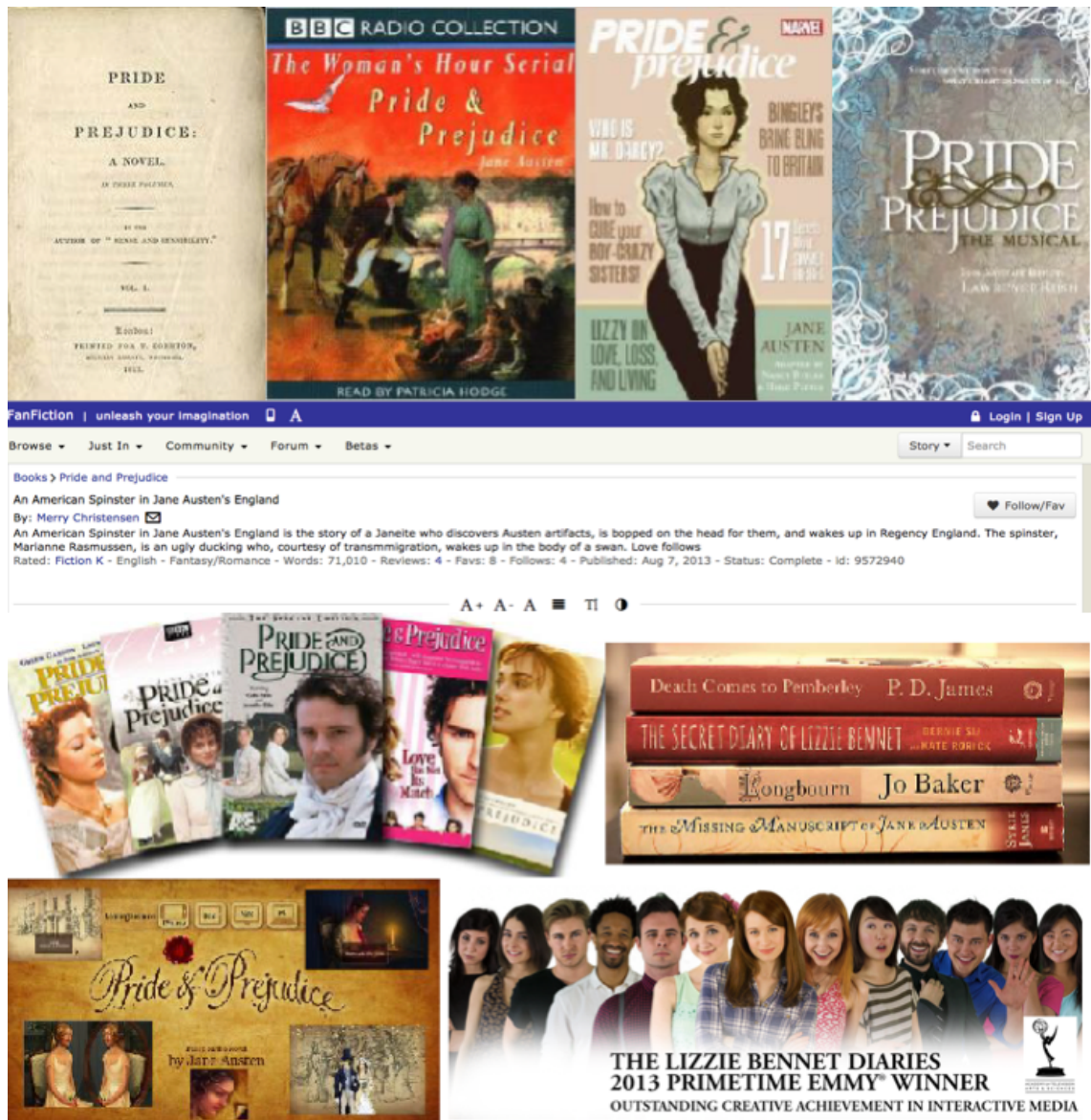


Figure 4: *Pride and Prejudice* in Different Media

Although *P&P* has ‘reached near ubiquity, having become a long-term “media event”” in the ‘past century and a half of popular literature, film and culture’, the novel was not always so popular.³⁷⁹ Indeed, Harman notes that Austen and her representative novel were ‘practically overlooked for thirty or forty years after her death’.³⁸⁰ Halsey also points out that ‘perceptions of the relative value of Austen’s different works’ have varied in different time periods and that *P&P* was not always the most beloved of her novels.³⁸¹ For example, in the early nineteenth century *Mansfield Park* was championed as the novel that ‘[e]verybody likes’ and was ‘ranked as her best for some

³⁷⁹ Looser, “The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author,” 174.

³⁸⁰ Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 1-2.

³⁸¹ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 148.

nineteenth-century readers'.³⁸² The early popularity of *Mansfield Park* would surprise Austen's contemporary fans: it is now considered to be one of her least appealing works while *P&P* easily surpasses the other novels in fans' affections.³⁸³ (See Figure 5.) Nevertheless, the appeal of the novel is not timeless, rather *P&P* has had surges of special significance for different readers at discrete cultural and historical moments and therefore 'functions more like a cultural Rorschach test than a "universal" work of fiction'.³⁸⁴

As demonstrated in the Literature Review, the novel was popular amongst literary Janeites in the nineteenth century who worshipped the Divine Jane like one of her heroines, alternating between articulating their love for Austen and expressing a desire to wed Elizabeth. Devoney Looser notes that 'the widely held belief that Austen and her signature novel were the rightful property of educated males held force from before the turn of the century to after the Second World War.'³⁸⁵ During World War I *P&P* took on a therapeutic role by providing 'literary sustenance for men in the trenches, trying to make order and find humour in their chaotic world'.³⁸⁶ Similarly, during World War II 'sales of all "classic" English novels were up, but none more so than Jane Austen, whose *Pride and Prejudice* sold three times as many copies in 1940 as in 1939.'³⁸⁷ Later, the novel would take on new meaning for first wave feminists who appreciated 'Austen's satire, social criticism and professional success as much or more than her artistry and good taste.'³⁸⁸ Between the 1890s and 1970s, *P&P* was popularised by the increasing number of adapters who translated the novel into new mediums and by readers who expanded the story through writing continuations.³⁸⁹

³⁸² Reference from 1831 letter by Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859). Looser, *The Making of Jane*, 40. See also comment by Arthur Henry Hallam (1811-1833): 'many people' 'vote [*Mansfield Park*] the best', quoted in Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 148.

³⁸³ Results of favourite Jane Austen novel taken from the 'Baronetage' section of the *Derbyshire* website, which contains short profiles of the members, including information on members' favourite JA novel and favourite JA adaptation. "The Baronetage," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed June 15, 2017, <https://www.dwiggie.com/baronetage/view.php?user=859>.

³⁸⁴ Looser, "The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author," 183.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 176.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 177.

³⁸⁷ Johnson, *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures*, 128.

³⁸⁸ Looser, "The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author," 178.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 179.

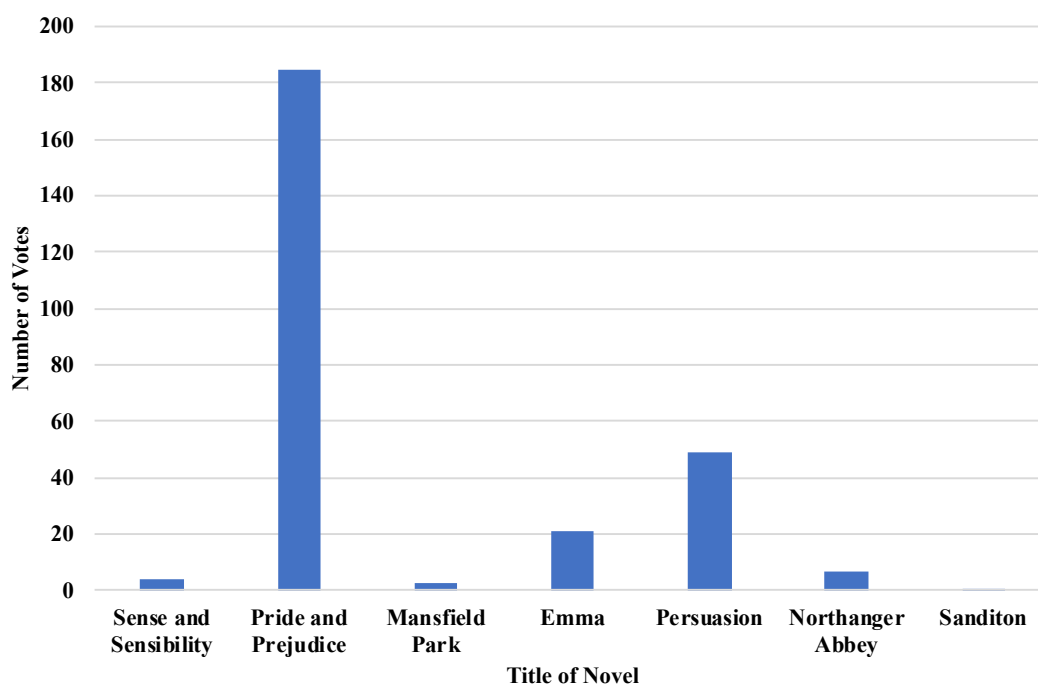


Figure 5: Ranking of Favourite Jane Austen Novel, 'The Baronetage,' *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, Accessed June 15, 2017

Of course, the novel’s popularity reached peak levels during the Austenmania of the mid-1990s, when six Austen adaptations were released between 1995 and 1996, including Davies’s now iconic mini-series, which inspired the formation of the first online fan communities devoted to Austen. *P&P* had always been what Blooms calls ‘a steady seller’, but it ‘topped the *bestseller* lists during the weeks that it was serialised on BBC television.’³⁹⁰ As noted, Davies’s adaptation also ‘marked the moment that Darcy became for many readers and viewers the imaginative centre of *P&P*, taking over that role from Elizabeth.’³⁹¹ This change in focus registers in the Darcy-centric online fanfiction and profic published from the mid-1990s onwards. Prior to this point, Austen sequels ‘centred on Elizabeth.’³⁹²

Davies’s adaptation has certainly had a significant impact on the growth and direction of contemporary *P&P* fanfiction. However, as established in the Literature Review, he is not responsible for the novel’s popularity, nor did he create the impetus to prolong the pleasure of the text through writing and consuming sequels. In her review of

³⁹⁰ Bloom, *Bestsellers*, 1; Simons, “Classics and trash: reading Austen in the 1990s,” 29. (emphasis mine).

³⁹¹ Looser, “The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author,” 183.

³⁹² *Ibid*, 182.

Austen continuations in 1986, Marilyn Sachs notes that *P&P* is the ‘novel with the greatest number of sequels’, meaning that this novel was already the most popular source of inspiration before Darcy took his infamous plunge in the lake.³⁹³ Furthermore, *P&P* had already inspired more theatre, film, and television adaptations than Austen’s other works before Davies’s adaptation caused the novel’s wave of popularity to crest.³⁹⁴ Indeed, as Laura Carroll and John Wiltshire note, ‘[a]lmost as many visual adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* have been made...as of all the other Jane Austen novels put together.’³⁹⁵ As the desire to reimagine and reinterpret *P&P* predates the novel’s cultural ‘watershed moment’ in 1995, it is important to explore other factors that have contributed to its extraordinary adaptability, before looking more closely at Davies’s contributions to the *P&P* archive.³⁹⁶ This chapter will look specifically at the novel’s often remarked upon ‘fairy tale’ qualities and at Elizabeth’s significance to the Janeites so that Davies’s later impact on *P&P* can be better appreciated.

As a novel with fairy tale elements, *P&P* can most usefully be classed as type ‘AT 510’: the ‘Cinderella’ tale.³⁹⁷ Although it is a courtship novel grounded in social realism, this does not preclude *P&P* from being considered as a version of the ‘Cinderella’ tale. As Norma Rowen states:

[T]he Cinderella story doesn’t cease to be told when the conventions of realism take hold; rather...it goes underground, often acting as a hidden element of structure in the new stories, a shaping spirit of themes and motifs that ensures that underneath the new surface, and tempered by the new attitudes, the old forms of narrative remain.³⁹⁸

In accounting for the popular appeal of Austen’s *P&P*, Austen critics have frequently drawn attention to its ‘fairy tale’ allure and its use of the ‘Cinderella’ tale as an underlying structure. For example, Darryl Jones states that the ‘first thing to say about *Pride and Prejudice* is that it is a fairytale’, arguing that it is ‘this fairytale element that has led to *Pride and Prejudice* being the most enduringly popular of all Jane Austen’s

³⁹³ Sachs, “The Sequels to Jane Austen’s Novels,” 374.

³⁹⁴ Looser, “The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author,” 179.

³⁹⁵ Laura Carroll and John Wiltshire, “Film and Television,” in *The Cambridge Companion to *Pride and Prejudice**, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 162.

³⁹⁶ Looser, “The cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its author,” 182.

³⁹⁷ Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1961), 175.

³⁹⁸ Norma Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” in *Functions of the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. Joe Sanders (London: Greenwood Press, 1995) 29.

novels.³⁹⁹ Similarly, Johnson points out that the attraction of the ‘markedly fairy tale-like quality’ of *P&P* accounts for much of ‘the novel’s enduring popular success’.⁴⁰⁰ Roberta Grandi also highlights the wish-fulfilling aspects of the novel, observing that Mr. Darcy ‘appears to have replaced Prince Charming in the Janeites’ imagination’ and that the ‘plot and characters of *Pride and Prejudice* seem to appeal to the core of these readers’ fantasies and embody the basic stuff that “dreams are made on”.⁴⁰¹ There appears to be a consensus amongst Austen critics that ‘[o]f all her novels, *Pride and Prejudice* departs most thoroughly from the probabilistic fiction with which Jane Austen has been credited’ and that it is this escape into fantasy that has long appealed to readers in popular culture.⁴⁰²

Of course, it has been theorised that the novel form, particularly the domestic novel, essentially emerged from fairy tales, meaning that fairy tale elements cannot be said to be unique to *P&P*. For example, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) Northrop Frye explored the archetypal structure of literary texts, arguing that myths are ‘displaced’ through the four modes of literature: romance; high mimetic (tragedy); low mimetic (comedy); and ironic literature. For Frye, Austen fits into the ‘low mimetic’ category of domestic comedy which, employs ‘the Cinderella archetype’ where an individual rises from a low place in society to a new social position ‘ushered in with a happy rustle of bridal gowns and banknotes’.⁴⁰³ Contemporary romance criticism has also often identified ‘the repetition of archetypes and topoi typical of the fairy-tales in romance novels, including Jane Austen’s works’.⁴⁰⁴

Although many novels, and *all* of Austen’s novels, employ an underlying fairy tale structure, Austen’s *P&P* has had particular resonance.⁴⁰⁵ This chapter will demonstrate that Austen’s repetition of fairy tale elements has contributed to the novel’s adaptability, but I will argue that it is her *revision* of the ‘Cinderella’ tale in *P&P* that distinguishes it from her other novels and has led to it being the most resonant of her

³⁹⁹ Jones, *Jane Austen*, 93.

⁴⁰⁰ Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women Politics and the Novel* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 74.

⁴⁰¹ Grandi, “Web Side Stories: Janeites, Fanfictions, and Never Ending Romances,” 21.

⁴⁰² Janet Todd, “The Romantic Hero,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 153.

⁴⁰³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 44.

⁴⁰⁴ Grandi, “Web Side Stories,” 39.

⁴⁰⁵ See Glenda A. Hudson, *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen’s Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 97. Hudson points out that at ‘the core of all Austen’s novels lies the Cinderella story, or, rather, several mutations of the popular fairy tale. Each novel tells of a provincial girl who falls in love with and eventually marries a worthy man’.

fairy tale fictions. As numerous Austen scholars point out, Austen ‘does not resignedly reproduce the Cinderella story;’ rather ‘she retains the outlines but then recolours or repaints the canvas of the Cinderella story’ by transforming ‘the novelistic paradigm of the fairy tale into an original artistic pattern’.⁴⁰⁶ In *P&P*, Austen’s most significant revision of the source narrative is her creation of Elizabeth Bennet, a character who, this chapter will argue, is a parody of the fairy tale heroine. Austen’s unique characterisation of Elizabeth is important as she was the central attraction of the novel for many readers before Darcy. This chapter will therefore consider her special status in the Austen fandom amongst the author’s heroines. Austen’s transformation of the courtship plot into a story of mutual education, where ‘the prince must establish that he is as meritorious as the heroine’, is also a significant part of the tale’s appeal.⁴⁰⁷ The novel also makes use of an especially transformative fairy tale ending, which contrasts with most of her other works where the retreat into the family home often creates a ‘sense of stasis’ at the end.⁴⁰⁸

To understand how the fairy tale elements of *P&P* have contributed to its adaptability, the chapter will first explore how the repetition of familiar fairy tale patterns leads to regeneration and renewal. The chapter will then look at the relationship between the novel and the fairy tale in the context of feminist fairy tale scholarship to better appreciate Austen’s reshaping of ‘Cinderella’ and the part this revision has played in the novel’s cultural afterlife, giving special consideration to Elizabeth and her significance to Janeites. The chapter will also look at the utopian appeal of the novel, and how the wish-fulfilling ending stimulates fanfiction through a combination of fascination and frustration.

***Pride and Prejudice* and its Relationship to ‘Cinderella’**

‘Cinderella’ has been ‘told for over a thousand years, passed on from voice to text and back again, over and over again’ and therefore has exceptional cultural resonance.⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, it is so deeply embedded in popular culture that the term ‘Cinderella’ has passed into ordinary speech as an adjective used to describe ‘one suddenly lifted from obscurity

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 97 and 98.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 105.

⁴⁰⁸ Julia Prewitt Brown, “The Victorian Anxieties of Mansfield Park,” *Jane Austen’s Novels: Social Change and Literary Form*, (Chicago: Harvard University Press, 1979), 99.

⁴⁰⁹ Maria Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: on Fairy Tales and their Tellers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 202-203.

to honour or significance’ or to signify an ideal state or desired outcome such as a ‘Cinderella wedding’.⁴¹⁰ Like all fairy tales, ‘Cinderella’ does not have a definitive source text.⁴¹¹ Fairy tales have their roots in oral culture and they existed in a constant state of flux because they were modified by different storytellers in response to the audience’s needs and to the particular historical moment. These tales were then preserved as ‘a “proper” genre’ thanks to improvements in printing that allowed fairy tales to be recorded in literature around the end of the seventeenth-century.⁴¹² ‘Cinderella’ is believed by some scholars to have originated in China around 860, while the first literary European version of the story was published in Italy by Giambattista Basile in 1634 and was retold, with some variations, by Charles Perrault in his *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697).⁴¹³ Another well-known European version of the tale was published by the German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm as ‘Aschenputtel’ in the nineteenth century. ‘Cinderella’ thus belongs to a ‘many-tongued genre’, bearing the marks of numerous storytelling voices from both oral and print culture.⁴¹⁴ To write in dialogue with ‘Cinderella’, a tale that has thousands of variants throughout the world, Austen must first have become acquainted with the fairy tale tradition and with a specific *version* of ‘Cinderella’.

According to family accounts, Austen would create her own original fairy tales. James Edward Austen-Leigh wrote that his Aunt Jane ‘would tell us the most delightful stories, chiefly of Fairyland, and her fairies had all characters of their own.’⁴¹⁵ These tales were spontaneous creations which, he maintains, were moulded in accordance to the audience’s needs. Austen-Leigh writes that ‘[t]he tale was invented, I am sure, at the moment and was continued for two or three days if occasion required – being begged for on all possible and impossible occasions.’⁴¹⁶ Austen-Leigh’s anecdote casts Austen in the role of Mother Goose, spinning tales to entertain the children that comprise her ‘circle of listeners’.⁴¹⁷ It is not known if Austen ever wrote any of these tales down, and

⁴¹⁰ *The Merriam Webster Dictionary*, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Cinderella>.

⁴¹¹ Andrew Teverson, *Fairy Tale* (London: Routledge, 2013), 4.

⁴¹² Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 18.

⁴¹³ Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 203.

⁴¹⁴ Andrew Teverson, *Fairy Tale* (London: Routledge, 2013), 5.

⁴¹⁵ Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir*, 72.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*, 73.

⁴¹⁷ Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 17. In her account of the female storytelling tradition, Warner quotes the Czech writer Karel Čapek who argues that the circle of listeners is an essential part of the fairy tale: ‘A true folk fairy tale does not originate in being taken down by the collector of folklore but in being

certainly no fairy tales told by Austen survive today. However, we do have access to three tales known to have been narrated by Austen's brother Edward Austen Knight, which Johnson speculates Jane Austen must have heard too.⁴¹⁸ Johnson argues that these tales have import because 'they contribute...to our sense of the Austen family culture in Austen's time and after'.⁴¹⁹ Through recourse to the Austen family tales, we know that telling and retelling fairy tales was part of 'the Austen family culture' and that to invent their own fairy tales, Austen and her siblings must first have developed a thorough knowledge of fairy tale conventions from having access to literary versions.

Unfortunately, we do not have any records of what fairy tale collections the Austen family were reading. However, Glenda Hudson speculates that 'Austen must have read (or have read to her) as a child' Robert Samber's 1729 English translation of Charles Perrault's 1697 version of the 'Cinderella' tale 'since it was probably the only complete translation of the fairy tale available to her'.⁴²⁰ As Hudson reasons, '[t]he Grimms' collection was published in German in 1812; therefore, it is unlikely that she read their version of the story'.⁴²¹ Consequently, throughout this chapter I will consider Austen's version of the 'Cinderella' tale in light of its relationship to Perrault's tale. This version of 'Cinderella' fits the 'persecuted heroine' template outlined by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson in their folktale classification system.⁴²² The heroine meekly submits to the abuse of her stepmother and stepsisters.⁴²³ Though they degrade and humiliate her by making her perform the 'meanest work of the house', Cinderella 'bore it all patiently and dared not tell her father, who would have rattled her off; for his wife governed him entirely'.⁴²⁴ She is self-effacing and self-sacrificing, and even 'offered her services' to prepare her stepsisters for the ball, though she knew she was not allowed to attend herself.⁴²⁵ At the end of the tale the Cinder girl, with the help of a fairy godmother, transforms her situation by marrying the prince. She remains a paragon of

told by a grandmother to her grandchildren...A real fairy tale, a fairy tale in its true function, is a tale within a circle of listeners.'

⁴¹⁸ Johnson, *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures*, 187. These fairy tales were passed down through the Austen family and later transcribed by Marcia Rice (1868-1958), niece of Edward's granddaughter Caroline Cassandra Rice. The three tales are entitled: 'Three Dane Court Stories as Told by Grandmama'.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, 187.

⁴²⁰ Hudson, *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen's Fiction*, 104.

⁴²¹ *Ibid*, 104.

⁴²² Aarne and Thompson, *The Types of Folktale*, 175.

⁴²³ Charles Perrault, "Cinderella; or, The Little Glass Slipper," in *Histories, or tales of passed times. With morals. Written in French by M. Perrault, and Englished by R. S. gent*, third edition, trans. Robert Samber (London: R. Montagu, 1796), 69.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid*, 71.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, 72.

virtue even after attaining wealth and power: instead of punishing her stepsisters for their misdeeds she ‘forgave them with all her heart’ and then rewards them with marriage to ‘two great Lords of the court.’⁴²⁶

P&P follows the plot structure of ‘Cinderella’ by telling the story of ‘an attractive young woman (virtually penniless) [who] meets a handsome and rich gentleman (practically a prince) who falls in love with her.’⁴²⁷ The novel utilises a fairy tale pattern in terms of characterisation, as well as plot, as many characters within *P&P* perform recognisable character ‘functions’ from Perrault’s ‘Cinderella’. In his research on the fundamental components of the folktale, Russian formalist critic Vladimir Propp argues that characters in Russian wonder tales perform identifiable ‘functions’, which are repeated throughout different tales. Propp defines ‘function’ as ‘the action of the character from the point of view of its significance for the progress of the narrative.’⁴²⁸ In other words, functions constitute the actions that characters must perform to advance the story. The repetition of these functions means that although tales ‘appear superficially diverse... underlying this diversity of realisation is a remarkable consistency in the functions that each incident will fulfil in the plot of a fairy tale’.⁴²⁹ Zipes argues that many of the functions of the wonder tale identified by Propp, can be usefully applied to all fairy tales.⁴³⁰

In *P&P*, Darcy fulfils the function of the heroic Prince Charming figure. By embarking on a quest to locate and save Lydia, he undertakes the recognisably heroic ‘function of performing a difficult task as part of a courtship’, and at the end of the novel he lives up to his fairy tale counterpart’s namesake by providing Elizabeth with ‘[e]very thing that is charming’⁴³¹ Darcy also carries out the function of the fairy godmother.⁴³² In ‘Cinderella’, the fairy godmother performs the function of *helper* by

⁴²⁶ Ibid, 83. Cf. In the Grimms’ version the stepsisters’ eyes are pecked out by birds as punishment for their mistreatment of Cinderella.

⁴²⁷ Laura Carroll and John Wiltshire, “Film and Television,” 162.

⁴²⁸ Vladimir Propp, *Theory and History of Folklore*, trans. Ariadna Y. Martin and Richard P. Martin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 74.

⁴²⁹ Teverson, *Fairy Tale*, 99.

⁴³⁰ Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: the Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 49.

Cf. Teverson, *Fairy Tale*, 103-104. Although Zipes argues that Propp’s system can be applied to all fairy tales, Teverson is less convinced of the adaptability of Propp’s morphology to a range of tales as ‘when [Propp] constructs his morphology he consults *only narratives with male protagonists*, and so inevitably produces a system that analyses the structure of tales with male protagonists.’

⁴³¹ Propp, *Theory and History of Folklore*, 74; Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 2.

⁴³² Propp’s research shows that functions are not tied to one character type and multiple functions can be performed by one character. For example, the hero of the tale may carry out the function of the *helper* if a traditional helper figure such as a fairy godmother or magical animal is not present in the tale.

facilitating the ‘liquidation of misfortune’ through direct action.⁴³³ In *P&P*, Darcy’s actions are also heralded as ‘wonders’ by Elizabeth’s astonished father who points out that ‘Darcy did everything - made up the match, gave the money, paid the fellow’s debts, and got him his commission.’⁴³⁴ The potentially disastrous consequences of Lydia’s ill-considered elopement are therefore magically elided by Darcy’s ‘marvelous intervention’.⁴³⁵ Darcy also helps to bring about Elizabeth’s ‘transformation’ by presenting her with a letter that could be seen as tantamount to the ‘gifts’ that the fairy godmother figure presents to Cinderella. Darcy’s letter is the narrative element that causes Elizabeth and the reader to reread the events of the first half of the novel. As Jones notes:

Darcy’s letter has the status of an autonomous and co-existent text which effects a rewriting of much that has preceded it. As readers, in effect, Darcy’s letter causes us to read the first half of the novel *twice*.⁴³⁶

This act of rereading facilitates Elizabeth’s newfound insight into the hero’s character, and her own. Having reflected on the contents, she declares that: ‘I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself.’⁴³⁷ Darcy’s function in the novel therefore recalls both the roles of the *hero* and of the *helper*, of the charming prince who provides a new home for Cinderella and the fairy godmother who helps her to transform.⁴³⁸

Elizabeth’s real family plays the role of the stepfamily, ‘the false kin, with the mother...functioning as a stepmother, and Kitty, Lydia, and Mary as ugly sisters.’⁴³⁹ In *P&P*, ‘[t]he business of [Mrs. Bennet’s] life [is] to get her daughters married’, much like the goal of the stepmother in ‘Cinderella’.⁴⁴⁰ In Perrault’s fairy tale, the stepmother is only interested in securing homes and husbands for her own natural daughters and is unconcerned about the fate of Cinderella. While Mrs. Bennet is preoccupied with marrying off all of her five daughters, she does place greater value on two of her daughters in particular: Jane, because she is beautiful and therefore likely to make a

⁴³³ Propp, *Theory and History of Folklore*, 79.

⁴³⁴ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 289.

⁴³⁵ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 50.

⁴³⁶ Jones, *Jane Austen*, 101.

⁴³⁷ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 159.

⁴³⁸ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (Texas: University of Texas Press for the American Folklore Society, 1971), 81.

⁴³⁹ Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” 32.

⁴⁴⁰ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 3.

lucrative match, and Lydia, because she is most like Mrs. Bennet in character and is therefore her ‘favourite’.⁴⁴¹ Elizabeth, by comparison is, in Mrs. Bennet’s opinion, ‘not a bit better than the others;...she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia.’⁴⁴² Consequently, she is perfectly willing to sacrifice Elizabeth, ‘the least dear to her of all her children’ to the odious Mr. Collins, believing that ‘the man and the match were quite good enough for *her*’.⁴⁴³ Mrs. Bennet’s inability to empathise with her daughter or to recognise her value makes their strained relationship comparable to that of the stepmother and stepdaughter of the classic fairy tale.

In Perrault’s ‘Cinderella’, the stepmother, ‘the proudest and most haughty woman ever was seen’, is vilified for her single-minded fixation on marrying off her daughters.⁴⁴⁴ However, the father figure escapes criticism, a trait that Warner argues is common to fairy tales where ‘father figures tend to be excused responsibility’ and it is the mother, or more frequently the stepmother, that shoulders the blame for the victimisation of the child.⁴⁴⁵ The tale ‘consistently fails to ask, why did Cinderella’s father marry again so quickly, so unwisely?’ or, more crucially, ‘why does he allow Cinderella’s mistreatment at all?’⁴⁴⁶ Like Warner, Zipes argues that the father’s practice of ‘benign neglect’ makes him equally culpable, pointing out that ‘he contributes to the abuse by absenting himself from his daughter’s side.’⁴⁴⁷ The same criticism can be aimed at Mr. Bennet who is guilty of contributing to the distress of all of his daughters through the negligence that precipitates Lydia’s disappearance.⁴⁴⁸ He is a profoundly ineffectual father: instead of saving ‘an annual sum, for the better provision of his children’, Mr. Bennet spends his income and retreats from the problems of his household into the safe haven of his library.⁴⁴⁹ When Elizabeth tries to rouse her father into performing his paternal duty by ‘teaching [Lydia] that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life’, he refuses to engage with the problem as he knows he

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, 33.

⁴⁴² Ibid, 6.

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 79.

⁴⁴⁴ Charles Perrault, “Cinderella; or, The Little Glass Slipper,” 69.

⁴⁴⁵ Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 207.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, 207.

⁴⁴⁷ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 115.

⁴⁴⁸ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 180. Unlike the fairy tale father, Mr. Bennet does not *wholly* escape criticism. The reader sees him through Elizabeth’s eyes and is therefore encouraged to contemplate, along with the heroine, ‘the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents which rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife.’ Mr. Bennet may therefore represent Austen’s critique of the traditional fairy tale father figure, who is too often ‘excused responsibility’ for his inaction.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 233.

will have ‘no peace’ if Lydia is refused permission to travel to Brighton to flirt with soldiers.⁴⁵⁰ If Mr. Bennet had been more solicitous about the welfare and safety of his daughters, Lydia’s story might have had a happier ending. Instead, much like the father figure in ‘Cinderella’, ‘he does nothing to help or protect her’, at least not until it is too late.⁴⁵¹

Umberto Eco argues that a ‘pre-established and frequently reappearing narrative situation, cited or in some way recycled by innumerable other texts’ provokes ‘in the addressee a sort of intense emotion’ that is ‘accompanied by the vague feeling of a *déjà vu* that everybody yearns to see again’.⁴⁵² Like Eco, Zipes draws attention to how repetition can contribute to a text’s viral afterlife. He argues that the repetition of similar components throughout fairy tales helps them to ‘stick’ in readers’ minds and therefore ensures that they are passed on. He draws on the work of Propp to support his argument that the fairy tale structure ‘depends heavily on memory, repetition, and resolution’.⁴⁵³ For Zipes, archetypal situations and recognisable functions ‘facilitate recall’ for listeners and readers.⁴⁵⁴ Consequently fairy tales have a ‘deeply ingrained adaptability’ and ‘evolvability’ and people are disposed towards retelling these tales in myriad ways.⁴⁵⁵ Zipes’ theory that certain stories gain ‘cultural significance through repetition or special attraction’ and therefore become ‘almost “mythicized” as natural stories, as second nature’ is worth exploring so long as terms like ‘viral’ and ‘memetic’ are understood in a metaphorical rather than a literal sense.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, 176-177.

⁴⁵¹ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 114-115.

⁴⁵² Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, (London: Minerva, 1995), 200.

⁴⁵³ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 50.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 50.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, 92 and 94 and 4. While Propp’s approach has been described as formalist, Zipes’ approach to studying how fairy tales ‘evolve’ is an epidemiological approach and is somewhat controversial. Employing biological terminology, Zipes argues that the classic fairy tale is a ‘viral genre’ that has ‘become contagious and spreads like a meme in different strains’. The term ‘memetics’ comes from evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins’s concept of the meme as a unit of relevant information that is transmitted culturally by ‘being copied to another individual’s brain that will store and replicate it’. Zipes’s theory of the ‘meme as cultural replicator’ is best understood in the context of this chapter as a grand organising metaphor for the adaptability of the fairy tale genre, rather than as an objective scientific fact as there is no evidence that meme-receiving modules exist in the brain. See Robert Aunger, “What’s the Matter with Memes?” in *Richard Dawkins: How a Scientist Changes the Way We Think*, ed. Alan Grafen and Mark Ridley, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 178. Aunger points out that ‘no significant body of empirical research has grown up around the meme concept...nor has memetics made empirically testable propositions or generated much in the way of novel experimental or observational data’.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 12 and 1.

‘Cinderella’ finds ‘its Western canonical form’ in Perrault because it has been retold again and again and translated into new languages and new mediums.⁴⁵⁷ From the 1760s onwards ‘Samber’s translation or retellings based on it, steadily increased in popularity until they became the most widely read and told of all the translated French fairy tales.’⁴⁵⁸ The 1950 animated Disney film and the more recent 2015 live-action version of the same film, are both based on the English translation of Perrault’s variant of the tale. The multiple retellings and translations of Perrault’s ‘Cinderella’ into different mediums have helped this version of the tale to endure because it has gained ‘cultural significance through repetition’.⁴⁵⁹ Austen’s *P&P* evokes a pleasing sense of familiarity for readers because of its relationship to the well-known and much loved ‘Cinderella’ tale. The author’s use of the plot structure and recognisable character ‘functions’ from Perrault’s tale may therefore have contributed to the novel’s viral afterlife.

Carroll and Wiltshire demonstrate that the ‘fairy-tale quality’ of *P&P* has played a part in its transmedial spread, as ‘the need to recapture or remake its magic is what sends so many writers as well as film and television directors to the novel’.⁴⁶⁰ An analysis of *P&P* profic and fanfiction likewise suggests that the recognisable fairy tale functions and use of the plot structure from ‘Cinderella’ have contributed to the regenerative qualities of the novel. In her study of the repetition of fairy tale structures in *P&P* fanfiction, theorist Grandi draws attention to ‘the archetypal value of the central characters and plot’ of *P&P* which, she argues, offer ‘infinite possibilities of repetition and variation’ for fanfiction writers who ‘consciously or unconsciously’ follow the fairy tale ‘guidelines’ laid out in the novel.⁴⁶¹ Often the ‘Cinderella’ motif is used implicitly as it is in Austen’s novel; however, Grandi also identifies stories that very explicitly identify *P&P* with fairy tales.⁴⁶²

A search through the early archives of *Derbyshire* reveals that from the outset, fans on this forum consciously drew upon ‘Cinderella’ as an inspiration for their stories. For example, in ‘Crossing Paths’ by Cheryl K., fairy tale descriptors abound: ‘once

⁴⁵⁷ Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 203.

⁴⁵⁸ Gillian Lathey, *The Role of Translators in Children’s Literature: Invisible Storytellers* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 55.

⁴⁵⁹ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 12.

⁴⁶⁰ Carroll and Wiltshire, “Film and Television,” 162.

⁴⁶¹ Grandi, “Web Side Stories: Janeites, Fanfictions, and Never Ending Romances,” 39 and 40.

⁴⁶² Ibid, 40. For example, *Paging Mr Darcy* portrays Elizabeth as a Cinderella figure abused by her stepmother and sister Lydia while *Lizzirella* transports the characters to a fairy tale world where Darcy is deliberately remade as Prince Charming.

upon a time'; a hero who 'rescued the princess'; and a warning to Cinderella/Elizabeth to flee as the 'clock struck in the hall, twelve round crystal notes'.⁴⁶³ The fanfiction archive fanfiction.net also hosts numerous 'crossover' stories conflating *P&P* with fairy tales, most frequently 'Cinderella'. For example, *First Impressions* (2013) by GallifreyHasBeenFound is described by the writer as a '[g]ender swap of Cinderella and *Pride and Prejudice*', where the heroine has wealth and status and the Darcy character is admired for his fairy tale beauty.⁴⁶⁴ *Beauties Below Stairs* by Demonic Lissy is a *P&P*/'Cinderella' story where the implied stepfamily of Austen's novel become the real stepfamily of the fairy tale:

The Mrs. Bennet we all know is Mr. Bennet's second wife. She is jealous of his love for Jane and Lizzy, Mr. Bennet's daughters from his first marriage. When Mr. Bennet dies what will happen to Jane and Lizzy? And where do Bingley and Darcy come in?⁴⁶⁵

Likewise, *Once Upon a Time* by mpenguin15 combines 'Cinderella' and *P&P*, resulting in a highly sentimental account of Darcy and Elizabeth's fairy tale love.⁴⁶⁶

Recently published works of profic very consciously conflate *P&P* with classic fairy tales, suggesting that the association between this novel and the 'Cinderella' tale has grown stronger as the corpus of the *P&P* myth has expanded. For example, *Girl Lives Forever: A Pride and Prejudice Fairy Tale* (2014), rewrites Austen's famous opening line as a way of commenting on the stock fairy tale opening: 'It's a saying, universally spoken, that almost every fairytale begins with the words "Once upon a Time."' ⁴⁶⁷ *A Princess for Pemberley* (2015) by Elizabeth Watkins also reimagines the narrative of *P&P* as a fairy tale by transforming Elizabeth into a lovelorn aspirational princess, painfully aware of her lack of money and connections yet longing for a better life with the rich, handsome, and charming Mr. Darcy. *The Scandalous Stepmother* (2015) by Renata McMann and Summer Hanford refigures the character of the marriage-obsessed

⁴⁶³ Cheryl K., "Crossing Paths," in "Fantasia Gallery," *Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, last updated April 3, 1998, accessed June 3, 2017, <http://thedwg.com/derby/olda/cherk3.htm>.

⁴⁶⁴ GallifreyHasBeenFound, "First Impressions," *Fanfiction.net*, last updated April 23, 2013, accessed March 16, 2016, <https://www.fanfiction.net/search.php?keywords=pride+and+prejudice+cinderella&ready=1&type=story>.

⁴⁶⁵ Demonic Lissy, "Beauties Below Stairs," *Fanfiction.net*, last updated Nov 1, 2011, accessed March 28, 2016, <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/7512791/1/Beauties-Below-Stairs>.

⁴⁶⁶ mpenguin15, "Once Upon a Time," *Fanfiction.net*, Feb 16, 2013, accessed March 28, 2016, <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/9016624/1/Once-Upon-a-Time>.

⁴⁶⁷ C.M. Mitchell, *Girl Lives Forever: A Pride and Prejudice Fairy Tale*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014) 7.

Mrs. Bennet as a stepmother with a secret. The same authors have also written a novel featuring Caroline Bingley as a misunderstood fairy tale heroine entitled *Caroline and the Footman* (2015).

The *P&P*/'Cinderella' crossover stories are especially transformative examples of Austen fanfiction because, as fan studies scholar Natalia Samutina argues, such stories undermine the 'traditional preconceptions of how imaginary worlds can be built, inhabited and developed'.⁴⁶⁸ Here, fans are not just elaborating upon an existing world (the world of *P&P*), they are consciously crossing the border into another world, a fairy tale land. Fanfiction writers are, as Samutina argues, not just inhabitants of fictional worlds, 'but the active transformers of their borders and the concerned co-builders of virtual civilizations and imaginary lives.'⁴⁶⁹ *P&P* profic and fanfiction transforms the world of *P&P* by explicitly crossing into the fairy tale genre. These retellings amplify the fairy tale elements of Austen's novel, fortifying the link between *P&P* and 'Cinderella' so that 'Elizabeth Bennet's story has come to seem more and more like Cinderella's'.⁴⁷⁰

Lizzerella: The Fairy Tale Princess?

The repetition of familiar fairy tale patterns in *P&P* helps to create the feeling of *déjà vu* highlighted by Eco, that makes readers long for *more*. Yet, there must be something about *P&P* that differentiates it from the other Austen novels that also utilise the fairy tale theme 'of the princess brought up by unworthy parents but never losing the delicate sensibilities which are an inborn part of her'.⁴⁷¹ The purpose of producing a revised fairy tale, according to Zipes, 'is to create something new that incorporates the critical and creative thinking of the producer and corresponds to the changed demands and tastes of the audiences.'⁴⁷² Tales that carry what audiences consider to be 'culturally relevant' information are most likely to be 'reprinted and reproduced in multiple forms' and to consequently go through a 'process of mythicization'.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁸ Natalia Samutina, "Fan fiction as world-building: transformative reception in crossover writing," *Continuum Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 30, no. 4 (2016): 433.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 435.

⁴⁷⁰ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen*, 42. Brownstein is referring to screen adaptations, but the point can be made of fanfiction and profic as well.

⁴⁷¹ Harding, "Regulated Hatred," 16.

⁴⁷² Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*, 8.

⁴⁷³ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 1.

Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*, 5.

Zipes argues that ‘Cinderella’ ‘has spread and will continue to spread in different forms in the 21st century’ because it conveys significant information about ‘child abandonment, family legacy, sibling rivalry, and parental love’.⁴⁷⁴ Likewise, Liv Evers draws attention to how the tale has achieved cultural relevance through its exploration of ‘inheritance, displacement, and social position’.⁴⁷⁵ Perrault’s version of ‘Cinderella’ is especially resonant because of the attraction of his revisions to the tale, including the pumpkin, the introduction of the ‘glass’ slippers, and the fairy godmother.⁴⁷⁶ The fairy godmother is perhaps the most memorable addition. In other versions of the tale help is provided by less glamorous means such as a magical fish (in the Chinese tale), or a wishing tree (in the Grimms’ tale). In *P&P*, Elizabeth’s *story* of becoming princess of Pemberley is Cinderella-like. However, her *characterisation* is not, and as this next section will argue, Austen’s rewriting of the literary fairy tale heroine is one of the author’s most significant revisions and an element that has helped this version of the ‘Cinderella’ tale to ‘stick’.

Critics who have drawn attention to the use of ‘Cinderella’ as an underlying structure in Austen’s novels, most often identify *P&P*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Persuasion* as being the clearest expressions of the ‘Cinderella’ theme. Rowen identifies two main elements to the ‘Cinderella’ tale of the persecuted heroine: an ‘outer story’, which narrates the physical movement of ‘a poor and underprivileged girl’ from a low to a high social position in the world, as well as an ‘inner story’ which recounts ‘a psychological movement from emotional desolation to emotional fulfillment’.⁴⁷⁷ Both the passive Fanny Price and the patient Anne Elliot very clearly follow Cinderella’s emotional journey, transitioning from being ‘mired in penitential emotions and trapped by a sense of inadequacy and worthlessness’ to a place of ‘love, acceptance, and validation’.⁴⁷⁸ In *Persuasion*, Anne is portrayed as a martyr to familial duty and feminine patience: she rejects her suitor in obedience to the wishes of a family friend and must then endure the depreciation of her family for a further seven years before finally being rewarded with marriage to her prince. Fanny, the heroine of *Mansfield Park*, recalls the passive and persecuted Cinderella of Perrault’s tale even more

⁴⁷⁴ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 114 and 115.

⁴⁷⁵ Liv Evers, *Here Comes A Chopper to Chop Off Your Head- The Dark Side of Childhood Rhymes and Stories*, p. 202

⁴⁷⁶ It is possible that ‘glass slipper’ (*pantoufle de verre*) is a mistranslation of ‘squirrel fur slipper’ (*pantoufle de vair*).

⁴⁷⁷ Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” 29-30.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 30.

precisely than Anne. As a poor relation, Fanny has a marginal status in the family home and is consistently made to feel as if she is ‘the lowest and the last’.⁴⁷⁹ Yet, she submits to all ill-treatment, wanting only to be ‘of use’ to her family, especially her Aunt Bertram who Fanny feels ‘cannot do without [her]’.⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, it is Fanny’s priggish perfection that has caused her to be the most divisive of all Austen’s heroines in online fandom. An argument over the relative merits of Fanny even led to a long-running conflict in the Austen community known as ‘The Fanny Price Wars’,⁴⁸¹ suggesting that contemporary fans are not as responsive to the persecuted heroine template as Austen’s early nineteenth century readers, who were ‘delighted with Fanny’.⁴⁸² Elizabeth Bennet’s journey differs from those of both Anne Elliot and Fanny Price in highly meaningful ways.

P&P adheres to the outer story of ‘Cinderella’ by offering a narrative of transformation: it gratifies readers with the elevation of the novel’s deserving heroine from being one of five daughters living on an entailed estate to the mistress of the majestic Pemberley. Crucially however, Elizabeth does not see herself as being Darcy’s social inferior, despite lacking his wealth and status, and she does not follow Cinderella’s emotional journey from ‘inadequacy and worthlessness’ to ‘love, acceptance, and validation’.⁴⁸³ Indeed, her most remarkable attribute is her unflappable self-assurance and she consistently uses this quality to shield herself from attack. Lady Catherine disparages Elizabeth’s lowly family connections and lack of fortune and warns her not to ‘quit the sphere’ in which she has been brought up by attempting to form an alliance with Darcy’s ‘noble line’.⁴⁸⁴ Elizabeth confidently responds that: ‘In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman’s daughter; so far we are equal.’⁴⁸⁵ Elizabeth does not accrue value from other people’s estimations; rather, she derives value from her knowledge of her own ‘social and moral worth’.⁴⁸⁶ She can therefore respond to outside attempts to diminish her worth with stoicism and wit. For example, after Darcy’s

⁴⁷⁹ Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2008), 205.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 343 and 201.

⁴⁸¹ For a discussion of ‘The Fanny Price Wars’ see Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 185.

⁴⁸² Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 99. Halsey notes that Austen’s family were pleased with Fanny: ‘Austen’s brother Frank thought her “a delightful Character”, and her niece, Fanny Knight, was “delighted with Fanny”.’

⁴⁸³ Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” 30.

⁴⁸⁴ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 272.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁴⁸⁶ Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 26.

unceremonious rejection of her at the Netherfield ball, Elizabeth tells the story ‘with great spirit among her friends’, rather than wallowing in self-pity.⁴⁸⁷ Indeed, as Elizabeth archly suggests, it is her disinterest in Darcy’s approval that attracts the hero to her: ‘The fact is, that you were disgusted with the women who were always speaking and looking and thinking for *your* approbation alone. I roused and interested you because I was so unlike *them*.’⁴⁸⁸ Unlike Cinderella, Elizabeth’s ‘personal dower lies in her intelligence and wit’, what Darcy terms the ‘liveliness of [her] mind’, rather than her beauty and feminine self-effacement.⁴⁸⁹ Austen’s treatment of the ‘inner story’ is therefore one of the ways in which she revises the ‘Cinderella’ tale.

The unorthodox nature of Austen’s chosen heroine is highlighted further by the fact that the novel *does* contain a fairy tale heroine, one who is ‘all loveliness and goodness’, and yet whose story is subordinated to that of the transgressive and outspoken Elizabeth.⁴⁹⁰ Jane Bennet’s story of attaining her prince works in tandem with Elizabeth’s but of the two, ‘Jane’s story conforms more closely to the conventional Cinderella pattern.’⁴⁹¹ Just as Cinderella is marked out as ‘special’ by the prince because of her great beauty, at the Netherfield ball Jane is distinguished by the charming Mr. Bingley because she is ‘the *most* beautiful creature [he] ever beheld’.⁴⁹² He dances with her twice and she is ‘the only creature in the room that he asked a second time’.⁴⁹³ Even Darcy, the novel’s prince charming figure, deems Jane to be ‘the only handsome girl in the room’ and dismisses Elizabeth as ‘tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*’.⁴⁹⁴ Jane is not only faultless herself, she also ‘never see[s] a fault in any body’ and is quick to defend others from accusations of villainy.⁴⁹⁵ Even when she finds herself to have been deceived by the superficial affection of Bingley’s sisters, she forgives them for the part they played in separating her from her prince, just as Cinderella forgives her wicked stepsisters for their abuse. Indeed, Jane’s nature is so forgiving that at times it is comically hyperbolic, as when she struggles to absolve both Wickham and Darcy of blame upon hearing of the feud between the two

⁴⁸⁷ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 8.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 291. (emphasis Austen’s).

⁴⁸⁹ Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” 31; Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 291.

⁴⁹⁰ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 143.

⁴⁹¹ Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” 30.

⁴⁹² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 7. (emphasis mine).

⁴⁹³ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 10.

men. Although one of the men *must* be at fault, Jane is resolved ‘to think well of them both, to defend the conduct of each, and throw into the account of accident or mistake whatever could not be otherwise explained.’⁴⁹⁶ Clearly, Jane is a superlative fairy tale heroine. She is the *most* beautiful Bennet sister, she has the *most* generous heart, and, like Perrault’s Cinderella, the *most* forgiving nature.

While Jane’s fairy tale traits are emphasised and exaggerated, Elizabeth’s character is initially ‘de-emphasized’.⁴⁹⁷ Though she is later positioned as the protagonist of the novel, Alex Woloch observes that Elizabeth barely speaks in the opening two chapters and what little dialogue she has is relatively unremarkable, consisting only of a comment in the second chapter about the possibility of meeting Mr. Bingley at an assembly.⁴⁹⁸ Woloch notes that even the famous opening sentence of *P&P* sets *Jane* up as the heroine of the story, and not Elizabeth.⁴⁹⁹ The ‘single man in possession of a good fortune’ alluded to is Bingley, and the wife that he ‘must be in want of’ is Jane.⁵⁰⁰ The initial ‘ironic displacement of attention towards Jane’, and the subsequent elevation of Elizabeth, suggests that the heroine of *P&P* is intended to represent a parody of the fairy tale princess.⁵⁰¹

Austen’s Juvenilia reveals that parody, including parody of the perfect, passive, persecuted heroine, was part of her artistic process from the beginning. In an early satirical sketch entitled ‘Plan of a Novel’, Austen consciously mocks the prototype of the ‘faultless’ heroine. Austen derisively describes the heroine as ‘a faultless character herself – perfectly good, with much tenderness and sentiment, and not the least wit.’⁵⁰² While Perrault champions his heroine for being a creature ‘of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper’, Austen finds flawless heroines to be repellent.⁵⁰³ The author famously declared that ‘[p]ictures of perfection...make me sick and wicked’ and recommended that readers who sought out perfect heroines not ‘be obliged to read any more of my works’.⁵⁰⁴ Critics have often wondered how to read Fanny Price in light of

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, 64.

⁴⁹⁷ Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 78.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid, 64.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 78.

⁵⁰⁰ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1.

⁵⁰¹ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 78.

⁵⁰² Jane Austen, “Plan of a Novel, according to hints from various quarters,” *Catharine and Other Writings*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Douglas Murray, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 230.

⁵⁰³ Charles Perrault, “Cinderella; or, The Little Glass Slipper,” 70.

⁵⁰⁴ Jane Austen, “Letter to Fanny Knight March 23, 1816,” in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 350.

this comment, with some concluding that Austen treats Fanny to a sustained ironic treatment throughout *Mansfield Park*. For example, Margaret Kirkham argues that Austen could not have created a heroine like Fanny ‘without an ironic intention of some kind’.⁵⁰⁵ By contrast, Elizabeth is unambiguously endorsed by the author. Austen declared of Elizabeth that ‘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.’⁵⁰⁶ Rather than following the ‘faultless’ heroine template, Elizabeth closely resembles the *anti-heroine* of Austen’s youthful ‘Plan of a Novel’ sketch, described as a young woman of ‘Talents and Shrewdness’ who also possesses ‘a considerable degree of Wit’.⁵⁰⁷

While I argue Elizabeth represents a parody of Cinderella, Rowen contends that Jane and Elizabeth represent Cinderella ‘split in two’: Elizabeth ‘carries her assertive and enterprising side,’ while Jane ‘embodies her tendency to self-sacrifice and self-effacement.’⁵⁰⁸ Rowen’s reading of Cinderella as a heroine with two sides, a passive self-effacing side and an assertive determined side, draws from the work of Huang Mei, who speculates that the contradictions in Cinderella’s character ‘derive from Perrault’s efforts to make the tale more acceptable to the middle class by grafting into the old folktale, with its much harder heroine, Christianizing values of humanity and passive suffering’.⁵⁰⁹ It has been speculated, and indeed demonstrated, that the passive heroines popularised by literary fairy tales were preceded by ‘assertive, confident, and courageous’ heroines from folk tales.⁵¹⁰ Traces of the enterprising folktale heroine can be seen in Perrault’s Cinderella, who demonstrates a degree of self-interest when she keeps her experiences at the Ball a secret from her sisters, thereby indicating that she harbours ambitions of attaining the prince for herself.⁵¹¹ Rowen believes that Elizabeth embodies this ‘wilful side’ of the fairy tale heroine. However, I would argue that if

⁵⁰⁵ See Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), 102.

See also Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 94. Johnson argues that the moralistic *Mansfield Park* is ‘self-consciously experimental’.

⁵⁰⁶ Jane Austen, “Letter to Cassandra Austen January 29, 1813,” in *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 210.

⁵⁰⁷ Austen, “Plan of a Novel, according to hints from various quarters,” 231.

⁵⁰⁸ Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” 30.

⁵⁰⁹ Rowen paraphrasing Huang Mei in *Ibid*, 30.

⁵¹⁰ Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 80. See for example ‘The Grandmother’s Tale’, an oral story told in many parts of Medieval Europe which preceded ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, in which the clever heroine outwits the wolf.

⁵¹¹ Rowen, “Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale,” 30.

Perrault's Cinderella was indeed 'split in two' she would not be equal parts self-effacing and assertive.

Cinderella's moment of rebellion is too mild to affect the overall perception of her passivity. As Teverson argues, Perrault's Cinderella remains a 'self-sacrificing model of virtue and chastity who triumph[s] because of [her] willingness to conform to the patriarchal order'.⁵¹² Elizabeth, by contrast, was interpreted as shockingly unorthodox and even 'vulgar' by some of Austen's early readers, 'revealing the extent to which her behaviour courts risk'.⁵¹³ Lady Jane Davy (1780-1855), for example, drew attention to Elizabeth's 'vulgar' behaviour and even ardent Janeite Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855) charged Austen with an 'entire want of taste' for creating 'so pert, so worldly a heroine as the beloved of such a man as Darcy', arguing that 'Darcy should have married Jane'.⁵¹⁴ When compared to Cinderella's tame dissent, Elizabeth's 'outrageous unconventionality' seems too pronounced to be anything other than deliberate parody.⁵¹⁵ Therefore, I maintain that Elizabeth is intended to be a conscious contrast to Jane, and by extension, to Cinderella, rather than embodying a 'side' of the fairy tale heroine.

Drawing attention to the unorthodoxy of the novel's central figure by setting up a more 'conventional' supporting heroine as a deliberate contrast is an artistic strategy that Austen uses for parodic effect in other novels, lending further evidence to the theory that the author was aiming for purposeful parody in *P&P*. For example, in the gothic parody *Northanger Abbey*, the protagonist Catherine Moreland is not 'born to be an heroine'.⁵¹⁶ More specifically, she is not born to be a *gothic* heroine of the type depicted in books like Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which centres around a delicately built and unusually beautiful and sensitive young orphan woman, who is persecuted by a tyrant and cruelly kept from the man she loves. As a happy and healthful girl from a large, average family Catherine's 'situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her'.⁵¹⁷ By direct contrast, Catherine's friend Eleanor Tilney has all the trappings of a conventional gothic heroine. She is confined in a gothic prison by a tyrannical

⁵¹² Teverson, *Fairy Tale*, 58.

⁵¹³ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 12.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, 12

⁵¹⁵ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women Politics and the Novel*, 75.

⁵¹⁶ Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (London: Penguin Classics, 1995), 1.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*, 15.

patriarchal figure; she is unjustly separated from her worthy suitor; and in keeping with gothic tradition, she ‘always wears white’.⁵¹⁸ As numerous critics have shown, Austen’s parody of gothic conventions in *Northanger Abbey* prompts the reader to consider the parallels between the imprisonment of the gothic heroine in the castle and woman’s confinement in the domestic home.⁵¹⁹ Therefore, as Johnson argues, ‘Austen does more than debunk novel-istic formulas and have done’; rather, her parody of familiar conventions ‘obliges us to slow down and to consider more carefully the realities they conceal’.⁵²⁰ Contrasting Catherine, the anti-heroine, with Eleanor, the gothic heroine, encourages readers to look at the familiar trope of the gothic heroine in a new light. Likewise, contrasting Elizabeth with Jane encourages readers to re-evaluate and even reject the ‘persecuted’ fairy tale heroine.

Austen’s revisionist treatment of the fairy tale and the fairy tale heroine has been seized upon as subversive, particularly in the context of second-wave feminist criticism. Feminist critics in the 1970s ‘fixed on fairy tales as condensed expressions of social expectations for women and as dangerous myths that determined their lives and hopes’.⁵²¹ In this feminist context, Austen’s reading of the fairy tale was interpreted as a means of undermining the patriarchal values inherited from the ‘dangerous myths’ of the male literary tradition. For example, in a volume dedicated to Austen’s bicentenary, Joseph Wiesenfarth examined Austen’s ‘radical’ use of the ‘Cinderella’ story, arguing that Austen wrote from a revisionist angle by redressing ‘the balance in favor of women’.⁵²² The argument that Austen’s use of ‘Cinderella’ as an underlying structure in her novels was ‘subversive’, was most fully developed by feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their seminal study of nineteenth century female novelists, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Here, Gilbert and Gubar argued that female novelists like Austen reworked the fairy tale in an attempt to subvert, challenge, and

⁵¹⁸ Ibid, 87.

⁵¹⁹ For an analysis the Gothic home as the seat of patriarchal power, see Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

⁵²⁰ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 30.

⁵²¹ Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *Twice upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 13.

Karen E. Rowe, for example, referred to mass market romance novels as the ‘[d]egenerate offspring of fairy tales’, arguing that such novels enslaved and subordinated female readers because, like fairy tales, they glorify ‘passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a heroine’s cardinal virtues’, thus contributing to a culture that depends ‘upon a woman’s acceptance of roles which relegate her to motherhood and domesticity’. Karen E. Rowe, “Feminism and fairy tales,” *Women’s Studies* 6 (1979): 237 and 239.

⁵²² Joseph Wiesenfarth, “Emma: point counter point,” in *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. John Halperin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 216.

negotiate with the male literary tradition.⁵²³ Gilbert and Gubar argued that female writers like Austen writing within this male literary tradition had to learn to ‘examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of “angel” and “monster” that male authors have generated for her’; in other words, women had to ‘kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been “killed” into art.’⁵²⁴ In *P&P* Austen utilised an archetypal fairy tale structure but also undermined the limiting and debilitating representation of female characters in the male literary tradition by encouraging identification with a heroine who ‘courts risk’.

Austen encourages this identification with Elizabeth through the use of free indirect speech, where we are given access to a character’s private thoughts through the filter of a third person narrator. Although, Elizabeth’s character is initially ‘de-emphasized’, she comes to ‘engulf the entire form of the narrative’ as her thoughts are increasingly filtered through the narrating voice.⁵²⁵ Indeed, Brownstein notes that the heroine’s wry voice becomes ‘so finely blended with the narrator’s’ that at times it is unclear who is speaking.⁵²⁶ The narrator weaves in and out of the heroine’s mind, ensuring that we see the other characters from her unique perspective. Adopting Elizabeth’s point of view is potentially subversive as the reader is encouraged to closely identify with a heroine that could have seemed villainous in a different context or viewed from an alternative perspective. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Mary Crawford (the anti-heroine of *Mansfield Park*) is, like the heroine of *P&P*, characterised as ‘lively and affectionate’.⁵²⁷ Yet, Mary’s attractiveness is diminished from seeing her through Fanny disapproving eyes.⁵²⁸ She becomes associated with ‘evil’ and is eventually vilified for the kind of ‘feminine lawlessness’ which marks Elizabeth out as special.⁵²⁹ In fairy tales, feminine lawlessness, or wilfulness, is treated as dangerous: ‘the monster-

⁵²³ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Tradition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 46. In this inherited tradition, Gilbert and Gubar argued, female characters are reduced to the ‘vexed and vexing polarities of angel and monster, sweet dumb Snow White and fierce mad Queen’, the angelic heroine representing a male ideal of female passivity and the monstrous Queen giving expression to male fears concerning female wilfulness and agency.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵²⁵ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 78 and 64.

⁵²⁶ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 43.

⁵²⁷ See Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 376. Fanny believes that ‘Miss Crawford’s style of writing, lively and affectionate, was itself an evil.’

⁵²⁸ See Jones, *Jane Austen*, 118. Jones notes that ‘Mary’s “lively” discourse, continually subverts the novel’s tendency towards propriety, offering remarks which the narrative, always written from Fanny’s point of view, figures as scandalous and counters by condemning Mary as immoral.’

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 376.

woman...embodies intransigent female autonomy...the sacrilegious fiendishness of...the “Female Will”.⁵³⁰ In *Mansfield Park*, Mary’s assertiveness leads to her being figured as an Eve-like temptress who has taken the hero down ‘a very serpentine course’.⁵³¹ In other words, she is a fairy tale ‘monster’ who must be expelled at the novel’s end. By contrast, in *P&P* we are encouraged to see traits like ‘impertinence’ and ‘liveliness’, both adjectives used to describe the heroine, in a positive light because, as Woloch states, ‘the narrative becomes indistinguishable from what Elizabeth is thinking’ and our sympathies therefore lie with her.⁵³²

In contrast to the ‘monstrous’ Mary Crawford who is rejected in favour of the fairy tale heroine Fanny Price, the witty and wilful Elizabeth is amply rewarded for ‘replacing her angelic sister’ in the plot.⁵³³ A successful fairy tale ending is defined by Zipes as one that ‘leads to marriage; the acquisition of money; survival and wisdom; or any combination of these three.’⁵³⁴ In *P&P* the heroine is rewarded by a combination of all three key ingredients in the recipe for happiness: Elizabeth marries Darcy, acquires a fortune through her lucrative match, and gains the wisdom to overcome her former prejudices. Mr Darcy is Austen’s wealthiest hero. Indeed, with an income of 10,000 a year, he ‘is effectively the richest man in England’.⁵³⁵ Upon first seeing the grounds of the hero’s grand estate, Elizabeth remarks to herself that ‘she had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste’ and she indulges in a fantasy of becoming its ‘mistress’.⁵³⁶ At the end of the novel, this fantasy becomes a reality. Despite the unlikelihood of Elizabeth even encountering a man of Darcy’s status in her limited social circle, this proud and unyielding man falls so ‘ardently’ in love with her that he overlooks the ‘inferiority’ of her connections and proposes not once, but twice.⁵³⁷ As Mrs. Bennet declares, Jane’s match to Bingley ‘is nothing to [Elizabeth’s] – nothing at all’.⁵³⁸

Following on from Gilbert and Gubar, numerous scholars working within Austen criticism continue to investigate ‘the intertextual role of classic tales’ in Austen’s works, arguing again that Austen challenges the conventions of the fairy tale

⁵³⁰ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 819.

⁵³¹ Ibid, 376.

⁵³² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 291; Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 78.

⁵³³ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 819.

⁵³⁴ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 50.

⁵³⁵ Jones, *Jane Austen*, 93.

⁵³⁶ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 185.

⁵³⁷ Ibid, 145.

⁵³⁸ Ibid, 290.

whilst still exploiting the fantasy elements.⁵³⁹ Donald Hasse argues that such studies into the work of nineteenth century English female novelists like Austen have, in general, ‘confirmed that these novelists used fairy-tale intertexts – in particular the well-known story of Cinderella – as subversive strategies to contest the idealized outcomes of fairy tales and their representations of gender and female identity.’⁵⁴⁰ Hasse cautions that ‘[i]t would not be accurate, however, to understand the relation of these women writers to the fairy-tale tradition simply as a unilateral rejection of it.’⁵⁴¹ In her study of nineteenth century female novelists’ negotiations with the Cinderella dream, Huang demonstrates that these novelists had a complex relationship with the fairy tale because ‘the Cinderella theme is itself essentially ambiguous and dialogic, with a constant tension built on the desire/self-denial, passion/reason dichotomy.’⁵⁴² Female novelists thus have a multi-layered response to Cinderella because the Cinderella myth ‘romanticizes woman’s subordinate and domesticated role within patriarchy’ whilst simultaneously arousing in women ‘a sense of individual dignity and an urge for self-realization’.⁵⁴³ Like Huang, Warner rejects the characterisation of ‘Cinderella’ as ‘an oppressor’s script for female domestication’, arguing instead that fairy tales ‘open spaces for dreaming alternatives’.⁵⁴⁴ For Warner, ‘fairy tales are not passive or active; their mood is optative – announcing what might be.’⁵⁴⁵ Contemporary fairy tale criticism demonstrates that female novelists’ negotiations with the ‘Cinderella’ tale are more multifaceted than second-wave feminist scholarship suggested.

Rather than ‘a unilateral rejection of the ‘Cinderella’ myth, then, *P&P* could perhaps be interpreted as a ‘complex’ fairy tale, defined by Elizabeth Wanning Harries as a tale that reimagines ‘well-known and more conventional fairy-tale patterns and motifs’ and insists ‘that their audiences constantly keep “compact” or “traditional” or

⁵³⁹ Donald Hasse, ed., *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 20. See for example, Hudson, *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen’s Fiction*, 97 and 98. Hudson argues that Austen defamiliarises the ‘Cinderella’ tale by twisting the components ‘in order to highlight the misconceptions and false expectations to which they give rise’.

See also Janice C. Simpson “Fanny Price as Cinderella: Folk and Fairy-tale in *Mansfield Park*,” *Persuasions* (Jane Austen Society of North America) 9 (1987): 26, accessed June 7, 2017, <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number9/simpson.htm>. Simpson argues that rather than ‘slavishly imitating any one fairy-tale pattern’, Austen ‘manages the mythic and fairy-tale elements’ of her work ‘in such a way that they effectively serve her own artistic purpose’.

⁵⁴⁰ Hasse, ed., *Fairy Tales and Feminism*, 20.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁴² Huang Mei, *Transforming the Cinderella Dream: From Frances Burney to Charlotte Brontë* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 28.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁴⁴ Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, xiv and xvi.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xvi.

“classic” versions in mind as they read or listen, reflecting on the differences between them’.⁵⁴⁶ Harries identifies the classic tales of Perrault and Grimm as examples of “compact” tales, arguing that:

Because the tales written by Perrault and by the Grimms had become the dominant, canonical fairy tale-mode, women writers of fairy tales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often wrote against that canon, defining their work as subversive and oppositional.⁵⁴⁷

However, she argues that ‘play and critique have actually been part of the genre of the literary tale almost from the beginning.’⁵⁴⁸ Therefore, revisionist, self-referential readings, what Harries calls “complex tales”, are a well-established part of the fairy tale tradition. As a complex fairy tale, *P&P* thus participates in a long history of revisionist writing that goes back at least until the seventeenth century, when female conteuses like Madame d’Aulnoy and Marie-Jeanne L’Héritier de Villandon ‘dominated the field of fairy tales’.⁵⁴⁹ The recovery of a female fairy tale tradition allows us to interpret Austen as writing from *within* a female storytelling tradition, as well as writing *against* a male one.

Contemporary fairy tale criticism demonstrates that female novelists’ negotiations with the ‘Cinderella’ tale are more multifaceted than second-wave feminist scholarship suggested; ‘women novelists embrace the story’s individualizing thrust while struggling to feminize the traditional patriarchal narrative’.⁵⁵⁰ Austen embraces the story’s ‘individualising thrust’ in the novel’s utopian ending which ‘ultimately exploits the crucial elements of fantasy’.⁵⁵¹ However, she feminizes the narrative by also drawing attention to women’s circumscribed choices and by reminding readers that marriage does not always lead to a ‘happily-ever-after’; rather, ‘happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance’.⁵⁵² This feminization of the narrative is achieved most

⁵⁴⁶ Harries, *Twice upon a Time*, 16.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 17. See also Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, xii. Warner’s work also draws attention to the ‘female origin’ of fairy tales: she points out that ‘[i]n the eyes of posterity, Charles Perrault (1628-1703) has become the most famous pioneer teller of fairy tales. But he was greatly outnumbered, and in some instances, also preceded, by women aficionados of *contes de fées* whose work has now faded from view.’

⁵⁵⁰ Hasse, ed., *Fairy Tales and Feminism*, 20.

⁵⁵¹ Hudson, *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen’s Fiction*, 97.

⁵⁵² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 16.

effectively through the tale of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, which constitutes the novel's 'once upon a time' scenario.

Commenting on fairy tale marriages, Warner argues that while the dominant image of marriage taken from the fairy tale is that of the harmonious union at the end, the rest of the story invariably tells a different story:

The unhappy families of fairy tale typically suffer before a marriage takes place which rescues the heroine; but her situation was itself brought about by unions of one kind or another, so that when critics reproach the fairy tale for the glib promise of its traditional ending- 'And they all lived happily ever after'- they overlook the knowledge of misery within marriage that the preceding story reveals in its every line. The conclusion works a charm against despair, the last spell the narrating fairy godmother casts for change in her subjects and her hearers' destinies.⁵⁵³

Just as the mismatched marriage of the heroine's parents is the starting point of most fairy tales, Darcy and Elizabeth's union is preceded by the story of the Bennets. The first chapter paints a bleak portrait of a marriage between a nervous woman of 'mean understanding', and her long-suffering husband who derives pleasure in her company only because her 'ignorance and folly' contribute to his amusement.⁵⁵⁴ We are reminded that had 'Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing opinion of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort.'⁵⁵⁵ The prosaic marriage depicted between Charlotte and Mr. Collins, and the lustful one between Lydia and Mr. Wickham, also testify to 'the knowledge of misery within marriage'. For many readers the ending of *P&P* 'works a charm against despair' because we are left with an image of Darcy and Elizabeth's fortuitous union that tempers our knowledge of the misery of unsuitable matches, the injustice of property laws, and the horrors of the marriage market. Nevertheless, as Johnson warns, 'we should not let our own rather modern preference for ideological conflict predispose us to undervalue Austen's achievement in *Pride and Prejudice*'.⁵⁵⁶ The ending of the novel does offer an escape into fantasy; however, 'the novel as a whole certainly does not evade or neutralize social criticism', just as fairy tales do not evade social criticism.⁵⁵⁷ The ways in which the complex ending of *P&P* stimulates fanfiction will be explored later in the chapter,

⁵⁵³ Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 217.

⁵⁵⁴ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 3 and 180.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 180.

⁵⁵⁶ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, 74.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 75.

but first it is pertinent to look at why Austen's characterisation of the singular Elizabeth Bennet has given this novel such special status in the Austen fan community.

Inventing Jane Austen by Becoming Elizabeth Bennet

[T]he realms of pleasure, passion, and possessiveness in the Austen world are all possible because, to a great degree, Jane Austen is an invention.⁵⁵⁸

Though Elizabeth's unconventional behaviour shocked some early readers, she was identified with both the novel and the novelist from the outset and was a central point of interest. For example, in 1813, one of the very first reviewers of *P&P* declared that: 'On the character of Elizabeth, the main interest of the novel depends'.⁵⁵⁹ Indeed, such was her centrality for readers that the first American edition of the novel, published in Philadelphia in 1832, was entitled *Miss Elizabeth Bennet*.⁵⁶⁰ A.A. Milne also used this title for his 1936 stage adaptation of *P&P*. Milne's original intention was to write a biographical play about 'the divine and incomparable Austen'.⁵⁶¹ However, he realised when attempting to create dialogue for Austen that 'it was just Miss Elizabeth Bennet speaking' and '[s]o the play, then, had to be about Elizabeth Bennet', it had to 'be a dramatization of *Pride and Prejudice*'.⁵⁶² This close association between Austen and Elizabeth has led to the author becoming fictionalised (or 'fairy tale-ised') in popular culture and it is an integral aspect of the novel's popularity. If the 'Jane Austen' that readers reverence is 'an invention', then she has been created using raw materials from her 'signature' novel. As this section will demonstrate, readers searching for Austen often find her within the pages of *P&P*, making this novel peculiarly gratifying for readers who feel it is not enough 'to know her books – in some cases almost by heart. They desire to know herself also, they seek after a more intimate acquaintance with their unseen lifelong friend, Jane Austen.'⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁸ Dryden, "Inventing Jane," 103.

⁵⁵⁹ 1813 review quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, Vol. 1, 1811-1870* (London: Routledge, 1968), 46. See also Anthony Mandal, "Composition and Publication," *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 52. Mandal notes that early reviews of *P&P* in the *British Critic*, *Critical Review*, and *New Review* all 'agreed that Elizabeth Bennet was perfectly executed, although Darcy seemed to some reviewers a little two-dimensional in his transformation from indifferent snob to passionate lover.'

⁵⁶⁰ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 42.

⁵⁶¹ A.A. Milne, "Introduction," *Miss Elizabeth Bennet: A Play From Pride and Prejudice*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), vii.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, vii.

⁵⁶³ Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh, *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013 [1920]), 64.

As indicated in the Introduction, a desire for intimacy with Austen is the driving force of Janeitism. Historical Janeites frequently praised Austen as a ‘friend who has charmed us for so long – charmed away dull hours, created neighbours and companions for us in lonely places, and made harmless mirth.’⁵⁶⁴ This tendency to think of Austen as a friend persists in contemporary fandom, as explored in the 2017 BBC documentary on Austen fandom appropriately titled ‘My Friend Jane’.⁵⁶⁵ The ‘truth’, suggests Katherine Mansfield of Jane Austen, is ‘that every true admirer of the novels cherishes the happy thought that he alone- reading between the lines – has become the secret friend of their author’.⁵⁶⁶ This longing for a personal relationship with the author is largely stimulated by Austen’s writing style. Her use of free indirect speech creates a ‘companionable voice’ that invites the reader into the text and promotes a feeling of intimacy between reader and writer.⁵⁶⁷ The ‘narrative confidence’ of her novels has in turn something to do with their ‘origins in family entertainment, and the ready expectation of a responsive audience’.⁵⁶⁸ In her study of the ‘Jane Austen Friendship’ phenomenon, Mary Ann O’Farrell draws attention to a key problem with seeking an identification with an author about whom, so little is known:

To want to know what Jane Austen was like – to want to personify – is to want something in excess of what historicist contextualisation or biographical detail might yield; such knowing demands a relationship that includes me, that ultimately is about me.⁵⁶⁹

To want to know what Austen is like is to want a personal relationship with her, a ‘friendship’, but ‘personal love requires a person as its object’ and we have access to very little biographical information about this ‘beloved but fundamentally absent’ author.⁵⁷⁰ Because so little is known of Austen the historical person, she has become the ‘ideal heroine’ because she is ‘someone a writer can work upon’.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁴ Anne Thackeray, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage. Vol.2*, 170.

⁵⁶⁵ *My Friend Jane*, Television Documentary, prod. Richard George (London: BBC, 2017).

⁵⁶⁶ Katherine Mansfield, quoted in Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen*, 290.

⁵⁶⁷ Thomas Keymer, “Narrative,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 8.

⁵⁶⁸ Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, 16.

⁵⁶⁹ Mary Ann O’Farrell, “Jane Austen’s Friendship,” in *Janeites: Austen’s Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deidre Lynch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 45.

⁵⁷⁰ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 45; Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 2.

⁵⁷¹ Cano López, “In Flesh and Blood: Jane Austen as a Postmodern Fictional Character,” 145.

The ‘story of Austen-as-character is long’ and her family were arguably the first to contribute to the transformation of Austen the historical person into ‘Jane’ the heroine.⁵⁷² In his sentimental biographical notice of 1818, Austen’s brother Henry, anxious about his sister’s reputation, utilised highly selective extracts from her letters to create an idealised portrait of the author stressing her modesty, sweetness, and generally ‘faultless’ nature.⁵⁷³ The bulk of Austen’s letters were destroyed by her sister Cassandra, ‘who burned many and expurgated others that she believed reflected badly on Jane or other family members’.⁵⁷⁴ As Robert Dryden argues, ‘from the moment of Austen’s death, these acts of erasure initiated a process of fictionalization or invention of the author’.⁵⁷⁵ The most influential of these ‘fictionalizations’ is Austen-Leigh’s *Memoir* (1869; second edition in 1871), which very effectively transformed Austen into a heroine for her readers. Like Henry Austen’s account, Austen-Leigh’s portrait of his Aunt is a fabrication, this time designed to appeal to readers in the late Victorian era. He described Austen as a saintly figure who was ‘as far as possible from being censorious or satirical’ and then proceeded to use bowdlerised extracts from her letters to support this claim.⁵⁷⁶ Additionally, the image of the author that adorns the frontispiece of the *Memoir* was an invention commissioned by a local artist who was asked to create a softer and more palatable version of Austen than the formidable looking woman in Cassandra’s original sketch of the author.⁵⁷⁷ The fictionalised portrait prompted reviewers to visualise Austen as a version of one of her heroines. In her 1871 review of the *Memoir*, Anne Thackeray stated that ‘Anne Elliot must have been Jane Austen herself’ and that Austen like Anne, ‘is the bright-eyed heroine of the earlier novels, matured, chastened, cultivated’.⁵⁷⁸ Other reviewers likewise interpreted the portrait as ‘a verification of the theory we have always cherished – that Miss Austen’s personal character was a sort of medium between the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet, and the heroine of *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot’.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷² Ibid, 143.

⁵⁷³ Henry Austen, “Biographical Notice of the Author,” 139.

⁵⁷⁴ Dryden, “Inventing Jane,” 109.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, 109.

⁵⁷⁶ Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir*, 172. Emily Auerbach notes, for example, that Austen’s ‘censorious and satirical’ comments about her neighbours’ bad breath were perfumed. Austen wrote in a letter that: ‘I was as civil to them as their bad breath would allow me’, this was amended by Austen-Leigh to: ‘I was as civil to them as *circumstances* would allow me’. Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen*, 5.

⁵⁷⁷ Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 146.

⁵⁷⁸ Anne Thackeray, quoted in Southam, *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage. Vol.2, 1870-1940*, 167.

⁵⁷⁹ Richard Holt Hutton’s 1869 review of the *Memoir*, quoted in Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 147.



Figure 6: (Left) Portrait of Austen based on Cassandra's sketch by Mr. Andrews of Maidenhead (1869), (Right) Cassandra's sketch of Austen (circa 1810)

Marina Cano López suggests that '[t]he Victorians may have felt the need to bury Austen's biting satire under oppressing domesticity,' and some readers therefore gravitated towards conceptions of Austen as a version of Anne Elliot, rather than Elizabeth Bennet, as Anne fits the Victorian ideal of womanhood better than Elizabeth.⁵⁸⁰ However, not all of the author's admirers saw Austen in Anne, readers who challenged the image of the sweet maiden Aunt conjured up by Austen-Leigh began championing the author for her biting satire instead. In an 1870 article Margaret Oliphant praised Austen for her 'exquisite sense' of the 'ridiculous' and her 'fine stinging yet soft-voiced contempt.'⁵⁸¹ In his 1870 review of the *Memoir*, Richard Simpson also questioned the sweetness ascribed to the writer, arguing that Austen's strengths lay 'in the critical spirit [that] lies at the foundation of her artistic faculty.'⁵⁸² Oliphant and Simpson were not alone in their observations. In 1862, before the *Memoir* was even published, the novelist Julia Kavanagh praised Austen's satirical power, rendered with 'a touch so fine that we often do not perceive its severity.'⁵⁸³ Favret notes that 'Austen's satire gained a special appeal for American readers, who enjoyed assigning to her this description of Elizabeth Bennet: "She dearly loved a laugh."⁵⁸⁴ Just as the acerbic author felt it 'indispensable' to be allowed to 'relax into laughing at

⁵⁸⁰ Cano López, "In Flesh and Blood: Jane Austen as a Postmodern Fictional Character," 147.

⁵⁸¹ Margaret Oliphant, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol. 1*, 216.

⁵⁸² Richard Simpson quoted in *Ibid*, 242.

⁵⁸³ Julia Kavanagh, quoted in *Ibid*, 177.

⁵⁸⁴ Favret, "Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America," 175.

[herself] or other people’, Elizabeth is described as being diverted by ‘[f]ollies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies’.⁵⁸⁵ Cano López argues that for readers who ‘revel in [Austen’s] wit and light-hearted humor as reflective of their own’, Elizabeth provides a more fitting fictional template than Anne.⁵⁸⁶ Consequently, ‘the disappointing dearth of biographical data about Jane Austen and the sparkle of the novel itself have led people – long before the movies – to read Elizabeth Bennet, who scorns conventional admiration and...refuses prudential marriage as a self- portrait of the author.’⁵⁸⁷ This reading of Austen as Elizabeth is evident in the majority of biographical accounts of the author, which followed the example of Austen’s family by relying on fiction to supplement the lack of material necessarily accompanying a life that ‘was not by any means a life of event’.⁵⁸⁸

Parson Austen’s Daughter (1949) by Helen Ashton was the first biographical account to be written explicitly as a *novel* featuring ‘Jane’ as the heroine. In the novel, the reader is encouraged to see the similarities between Jane’s ‘obstinate’ rejection of Harris Bigg-Wither and Elizabeth’s ‘headstrong’ refusal of Mr Collins.⁵⁸⁹ Austen’s story, like Elizabeth’s story, has also been read as a version of the ‘Cinderella’ tale. For example, in Ashton’s biographical fiction Jane is described as being her bookish father’s ‘favourite child’ while the narrator stresses that she was not as dear to Mrs Austen, thus recalling Elizabeth’s relationship with her parents the Bennets, as well as the one between Cinderella and her stepmother.⁵⁹⁰ Tom Lefroy, a man whom Austen had a brief flirtation with in her youth, is often recast in biographical accounts as a Darcy/Prince Charming figure. Elizabeth Jenkins’s *Jane Austen: A Biography* (1938) takes Austen’s brief encounter with Lefroy as a creative writing prompt and bolsters the incident with romantic details. The scene is imagined as taking place in a ballroom with ‘high-piled fires’, ‘the magic radiance of candlelight’, and ‘Jane in her rose-coloured silk dress’.⁵⁹¹ Similarly, in David Nokes’s *Jane Austen: A Life* (1997), Wiltshire notes that ‘Jane becomes a Cinderella figure, her happiness at the ball tragically cut short’

⁵⁸⁵ Jane Austen, “Letter to James Stanier Clarke,” April 1, 1816,” in *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 326; Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 43.

⁵⁸⁶ Cano López, “In Flesh and Blood: Jane Austen as a Postmodern Fictional Character,” 147.

⁵⁸⁷ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 42.

⁵⁸⁸ Henry Austen, “Biographical Notice of the Author,” 137.

⁵⁸⁹ Helen Ashton, *Parson Austen’s Daughter* (Ann Arbor: Collins, [1949] 1967), 193.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 and 21. Likewise, critics like Hudson contend that Austen’s mother ‘favoured Cassandra over Jane’ and speculates that ‘[i]mproverished and neglected, [Jane] may have thought of herself as Cinderella.’ Hudson, *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen’s Fiction*, 115.

⁵⁹¹ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Jane Austen: A Biography* (London: Cardinal, [1938], 1973), 42-43.

when her Prince Charming is called away and her hopes turn to ‘ashes’.⁵⁹² *Becoming Jane Austen: A Life* (2003) by Jon Spence continues the tradition of fictionalising Austen’s love life by implying that her youthful dalliance with the haughty Lefroy was in fact a substantial love affair and that she wrote *P&P* as a compensatory romance for her failed relationship with him.⁵⁹³

Contemporary film and television adaptations have cemented the association between Austen and Elizabeth Bennet by remaking ‘Jane’ in the image of Elizabeth Bennet, ‘fey fetching, funny, and flirtatious’.⁵⁹⁴ Deborah Cartmell notes, that ‘[s]ince the very first adaptation [of *P&P*], there has been a desire to read her novels as a means of finding out something about the author.’⁵⁹⁵ Consequently, *P&P* has been reconfigured as ‘a concealed autobiography’ of Austen on screen and Elizabeth Bennet has been portrayed, in the words of Martin Amis, as ‘Jane Austen with added spirit, with subversive passion, and, above all, with looks.’⁵⁹⁶ *Becoming Jane* (2007), an adaptation of both Spence’s biography and of Austen’s *P&P*, inserts the author into the plot of the novel. *Becoming Jane* even reuses some of the costumes from Joe Wright’s feature film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), further strengthening the association between Austen and Elizabeth.⁵⁹⁷ Cartmell argues that both Wright’s *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bride and Prejudice* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2004) encourage the viewer to read Elizabeth as a portrait of the artist as a young woman. Both movies feature scenes where the twenty-year old heroine is actually in possession of *P&P*, the novel that Austen was writing at that age, establishing ‘a key connection between author and heroine’.⁵⁹⁸ In 2008’s *Lost in Austen*, Elizabeth is replaced in the story by an Austen fan, Amanda Price, and her ‘absence is explained by the fact that she’s away writing a book, a book which is inevitably, *Pride and Prejudice* itself.’⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹² Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, 33.

⁵⁹³ Jon Spence, *Becoming Jane Austen: A Life* (London: Hambleton and London, 2003).

⁵⁹⁴ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 34.

⁵⁹⁵ Deborah Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Close Study of the Relationship between Text and Film* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 109.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid, 109; Martin Amis, “Miss Jane’s Prime,” *The Atlantic* 265:2, 1990, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.martinamisweb.com/pre_2006/austen.htm.

⁵⁹⁷ Deborah Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations: Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Close Study of the Relationship between Text and Film* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 118.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, 112. The novel is given its original title, *First Impressions*, in scenes where Elizabeth is holding the book.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, 122.

As in biographical accounts of the author, these film adaptations read *P&P* as a ‘veiled autobiography’ and ‘the author is shown to be purely a work of fiction’.⁶⁰⁰ As noted in the Literature Review, Wiltshire contends that Austen biographers are engaged in ‘a form of imaginative identification’ with their subject, the representation of which is ‘involved as much with a figure of myth or collective fantasy as with a series of historical occurrences’.⁶⁰¹ Juliette Wells contends that this same impulse to imaginatively identify with Austen ‘drives both the creation and the consumption of...fictional versions of Austen [in profic and fanfiction texts]’.⁶⁰² *P&P* has special status among the Janeites because for many readers Elizabeth *is* Austen. Therefore, through Elizabeth, *P&P* perhaps delivers what Janeites want most – a closer relationship with their favourite author.

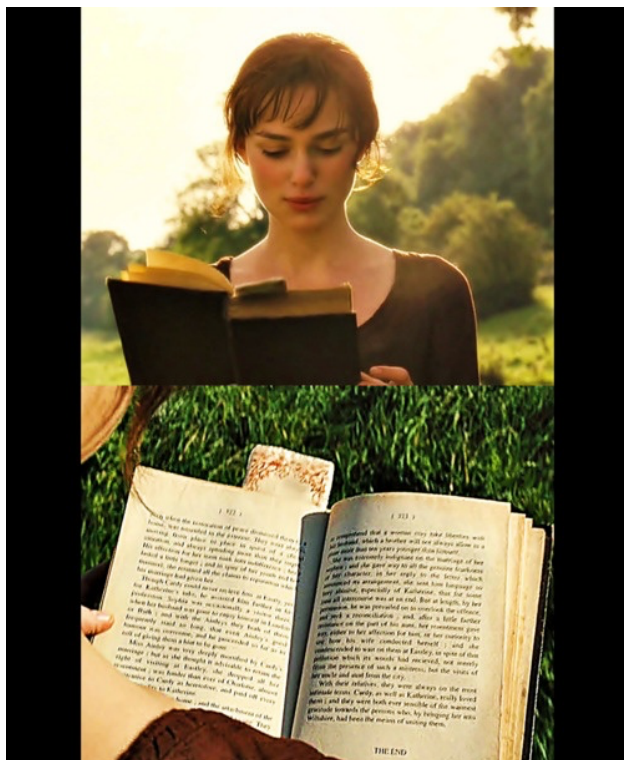


Figure 7: Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet reading *First Impressions* in a scene from *Pride and Prejudice* (dir. Joe Wright; 2005)

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, 112.

⁶⁰¹ Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, 17, 14.

⁶⁰² Juliette Wells, “Austen’s Adventures in American Popular Fiction, 1996-2006,” *Persuasions On-Line* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2010), accessed Feb 24, 2018, <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/online/vol30no2/wells.html#12>.

‘The happiest, wisest, most reasonable end![?]’: The Utopian Appeal of *Pride and Prejudice*

If Jane Austen is carried outside the proper confines of literature, if she has been loved in a fashion that some temperaments must find objectionable and that a strict criticism must call illicit... Perhaps a reason is... to be found in the work itself, in some unusual promise that it seems to make, in *some hope* that it holds out.⁶⁰³

- Lionel Trilling, 1957

A large part of the attraction of *P&P* is the creation of a heroine who does *not* conform to the fairy tale heroine ideal, a heroine who has become increasingly conflated with Austen, the imagined ‘friend’ of the reader. The popularity of *P&P* with the Janeite community could be also be attributed to ‘some hope’ that her work holds out, and this possibility shall be teased out further here. Of all Austen’s novels, *P&P* is her most happy and hopeful work; indeed, Austen playfully suggested that the novel might even be ‘too light and bright and sparkling’ and that it needed ‘shade’ to appease more serious-minded critics.⁶⁰⁴ In accounting for the novel’s ubiquity in popular culture, Austen critics have frequently drawn attention to *P&P*’s ‘remorselessly high spirits’.⁶⁰⁵ The novel has a recognisable utopian drive and ‘its readiness to ratify and to grant our happiness is almost shamelessly wish fulfilling’.⁶⁰⁶

Although fairy tale scholars stress the need to understand fairy tales in their cultural context, some critics identify the ‘impulse to imagine a better world’ as a fairy tale feature which remains ‘constant through all historical periods and all cultural contexts’, giving fairy tales ‘the capacity – even if it is not realised or acted upon – to be socially transformative’.⁶⁰⁷ For example, Marxist critic Ernst Bloch argues that the fairy

⁶⁰³ Trilling, “Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen,” 150. (emphasis mine).

⁶⁰⁴ Austen, “Letter to Cassandra Austen,” February 4, 1813, in in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 212.

⁶⁰⁵ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 73.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁶⁰⁷ Teverson, *Fairy Tale*, 130-133. Teverson points out that anthropological folklorists have been less convinced of the liberating capabilities of folk and fairy tales. They have questioned whether utopian fairy tales really encourage radical social change or whether they merely offer ‘consolation and compensation for lack of real power’. If fairy tales tell tales of transformation, but do not inspire social change in the real world, then they constitute a ‘symbolic form of resistance’ but ‘are not revolutionary texts.’ Although debate continues as to whether fairy tales are truly radical or whether they merely offer a compensatory power, it is evident that the most popular and well-known tales do contain what Zipes terms ‘a utopian kernel’. Teverson’s case studies demonstrate that the most familiar versions of ‘classic’

tale ‘narrates a wish-fulfillment which is not bound by its own time and the apparel of its contents’ and it therefore has liberating potential because it inspires readers to dream of alternatives to their own reality.⁶⁰⁸ Likewise, Zipes notes that ‘[t]he appeal of the fairy tale still has a great deal to do with utopian transformation and the desire for a better life’.⁶⁰⁹ He defines fairy tales as ‘survival stories with hope’, elaborating that people are drawn to them because ‘within the tales lies the hope of self-transformation and a better world’.⁶¹⁰ Like a fairy tale that offers the hope of transformation, *P&P* too seems to be ‘disposed towards happiness, hope, and harmony’.⁶¹¹ The emancipatory potential of the novel is best encapsulated by the happy ending, and it is this ending that most effectively differentiates *P&P* from Austen’s other novels.

While all of Austen’s novels ‘hasten towards perfect felicity’, a felicity represented by a happy marriage, the ending of *P&P* represents ‘the happiest, wisest, most reasonable end!’ because, as already demonstrated, this resolution most fully capitalises on the wish-fulfilling elements of fantasy.⁶¹² The fantasy element of Elizabeth’s wildly successful marriage is an important part of the novel’s appeal because, as Carroll and Wiltshire state:

However impossible in historical terms is this romance between a great landowner and a woman from the lesser gentry, what *Pride and Prejudice* does so remarkably is *convince* readers that this romantic love and its promises exist within reality.⁶¹³

Austen’s *revision* of the fairy tale romance leading to the happy ending, is perhaps the central attraction here, because her depiction of a harmoniously balanced courtship of equals is what convinces the reader that this fantastical ending is plausible.

Critics have often argued that Austen’s transformation of the plot of the domestic novel, a form that grew out of fairy tales, into a story of *mutual education*, was her

fairy tales work towards a happy end, suggesting that readers gravitate towards tales that offer the hope of transformation, even if this hope is not realised in their own lives.

⁶⁰⁸ Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988), 163.

⁶⁰⁹ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 106.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid, 27; Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, (Kentucky: The Kentucky University Press, 1979), xi.

⁶¹¹ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 99.

⁶¹² Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 233; Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 265.

⁶¹³ Laura Carroll and John Wiltshire, “Film and Television,” 162-163. (emphasis mine).

primary ‘innovation’ to the form.⁶¹⁴ As Joseph Crawford elucidates, late eighteenth-century courtship novels focus on the *heroine* learning to choose ‘the correct marriage partner’ while Austen’s novels ‘tell the stories of lovers who must educate and reshape each other, overcoming one another’s initial failures, misunderstandings and character flaws in order to establish the basis for a successful marriage’.⁶¹⁵ In *P&P*, it is crucial that Elizabeth does not accept her Prince Charming until he too has transformed and proven himself to be capable of ‘pleasing a woman worthy of being pleased’.⁶¹⁶ Elizabeth must overcome her prejudice of Darcy, and in so doing learn to better understand her own character as well as that of the hero, while Darcy must learn to recognise and overcome his pride, before a successful resolution can be achieved. Darcy’s transformation allows Elizabeth to make a good match and achieve financial security without compromising her principles. She can rebel against the status quo by refusing a wealthy but unworthy man yet still live happily-ever-after by accepting this same man once he has learned to behave ‘in a more gentleman-like manner’.⁶¹⁷ This conciliatory ending is a key constitutive element in what critics like Harman term the novel’s ‘feel good factor’.⁶¹⁸

The resolution of *P&P* makes this novel one of Austen’s greatest literary achievements in terms of artistic balance and symmetry of form. The novel is structured in such a way ‘that virtually every argument about it can be undercut with a built-in countervailing argument, a qualifying “on the other hand”’.⁶¹⁹ The narrator assures us that Elizabeth’s ‘ease and liveliness’ will counterbalance Darcy’s severe disposition and that the relatively sheltered heroine promises to benefit from the hero’s ‘judgement, information, and knowledge of the world’.⁶²⁰ Joseph Allen Boone demonstrates that the complementary balance of this relationship is fortified and reinforced by the ‘symmetrically balanced structure’ of the novel.⁶²¹ In *P&P*, the events of the first half of the novel, leading up to Darcy’s disastrous first proposal, are ‘paralleled and reversed’ by the events of the second half of the novel, which culminate in Darcy’s

⁶¹⁴ Joseph Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic? Vampire Fiction and the Rise of the Paranormal Romance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 22.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶¹⁶ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 290.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁶¹⁸ Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 95.

⁶¹⁹ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 73, 89, and 77.

⁶²⁰ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 237.

⁶²¹ Joseph Allen Boone, “Uniting Them’ Ever After: The Courtship Narratives of *Pamela* and *Pride and Prejudice*,” *Tradition counter tradition: love and the form of fiction* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 91.

successful second proposal delivered by a hero who is now deserving of his heroine.⁶²² For Boone, ‘every stage of Austen’s form so closely reinforces her themes that there is figuratively little space left to doubt the success of Elizabeth and Darcy’.⁶²³ In other words, Austen’s success in convincing the reader that two people as different as Darcy and Elizabeth could be perfectly suited to each other, is reinforced by the studied balance of the overall novel.

The novel’s drive towards consensus enhances the attractiveness of Austen’s hero and heroine for fans and has made Darcy/Elizabeth the most popular pairing in Austen fandom.⁶²⁴ (See Figure 8.) The popularity of ‘Elizabeth/Darcy’ and the comparative rarity of stories featuring non-canonical pairings, testifies to the fact that fans respond positively to the balance and harmony of a union of equals. The rarity of Austen ‘slash’ fiction further suggests that a key attraction of Darcy/Elizabeth for fans is that they represent an egalitarian relationship that is ‘to the advantage of both’.⁶²⁵ Slash fiction is characterised as fanfiction featuring same-sex pairings between characters that are canonically straight.⁶²⁶ The term ‘slash’ is used to designate these romantic pairings because of the typographic signifying the couplings, for example D/W for Darcy/Wickham or D/B for Darcy/Bingley.⁶²⁷ While slash fiction is extremely popular in many female dominated fandoms, fiction featuring non-canonical pairings between same-sex couples is unusual in the Austen fandom. The relative obscurity of Austen slash fiction is exemplified by the fanfiction archive *AustenSlash*, which was set up in 2005 to archive all Austen slash fiction in one place. Only 7 stories were posted in a period of six years and the site became dormant in February 2011.⁶²⁸ It has been theorised that slash constitutes a ‘reworking of the romance that rejects the role of passivity and subordination of the heroine’ in favour of ‘intimate relationships among equals’.⁶²⁹ In other words, writers are drawn to writing and consuming slash fiction because they want an alternative to the normative hegemonic romance, one where power struggles between the sexes is not an issue. Although Elizabeth is not equal to

⁶²² Ibid, 91.

⁶²³ Ibid, 91.

⁶²⁴ Relationship tag results taken from “AUSTEN Jane – Works,” *Archive of Our Own*, accessed March 9, 2016, <http://archiveofourown.org/tags/AUSTEN%20Jane%20-%20Works/works>.

⁶²⁵ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 237.

⁶²⁶ Busse, and Hellekson, “Introduction: Work in Progress,” 10.

⁶²⁷ The term ‘slash’ was first used to describe the pairing Kirk/Spock from *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1966-1969). The first slash fiction story based on K/S appeared in a 1974 fanzine called *Grup #3*.

⁶²⁸ “Austen Slash,” *Live Journal*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://austen-slash.livejournal.com/>.

⁶²⁹ Bury, *Cyberspaces of their Own*, 76.

Darcy in terms of wealth, as we have seen, she does not regard herself as being his social or moral inferior. Therefore, it is plausible that fanfiction rarely disrupts this particular pairing because the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth is already perceived to be a union of equals. Consequently, fans celebrate this harmonious fairy tale union in their fiction.

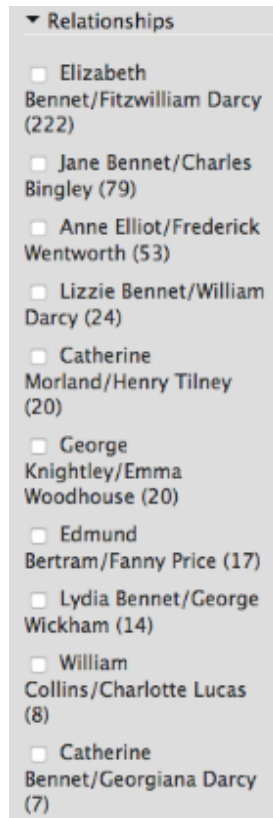


Figure 8: Jane Austen Fanfiction filtered by 'relationship tag', *Archive of Our Own*, Accessed March 9, 2016

The union of Darcy and Elizabeth is not only the *most* fairy tale-like of Austen's resolutions, it is perhaps the *only* one. Rowen points out that the very 'essence' of the Cinderella story is 'the daughter's journey *outward*', a movement from the neglectful parent's home to that of the loving husband in a kingdom far, far, away.⁶³⁰ It has been argued that Austen reverses this paradigm: in 'the fairy tale, the heroine breaks out from the family circle, but in Austen's novels the protection of the enclosed family is emphasized, particularly at the conclusion of her works.'⁶³¹ Austen often celebrates endogamous relationships that mirror a brother/sister dynamic. As Hudson argues, she 'constructs marriages on the foundation of sibling ties' and her heroines therefore

⁶³⁰ Rowen, "Reinscribing Cinderella: Jane Austen and the Fairy Tale," 34. (emphasis mine).

⁶³¹ Hudson, *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen's Fiction*, 102.

retreat further within the patriarchal home by marrying ‘brotherly lovers’.⁶³² For example, in *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility* we see a heroine paired with her brother-in-law. In *Emma* the heroine literally moves her husband into her father’s house at the novel’s end. *Mansfield Park* has a similarly static ending: in marrying her first cousin Edmund, a man who once referred to her as ‘my only sister’, Fanny becomes more deeply embedded in the family home.⁶³³ Such endings represent ‘a paralyzed retreat within the family’, rather than ‘a utopian image of a better life’.⁶³⁴

By contrast, Elizabeth transforms her circumstances by moving from Longbourn to the distantly located Pemberley. Her marriage to Darcy facilitates a blissful escape from that ‘society so little pleasing to either, to all the comfort and elegance of...Pemberley’.⁶³⁵ In other words, *P&P* does utilise a fairy tale ending because the heroine ‘breaks out from the family circle’. Therefore, although the fairy tale theme arguably finds its clearest expression in the ‘contrast between Fanny Price’s true nature and her squalid home at Portsmouth’ the ending of *P&P* delivers a more satisfying fairy tale transformation for the heroine than that of *Mansfield Park*.⁶³⁶ At the end of *P&P* Elizabeth can say with justice that she is ‘the happiest creature in the world’.⁶³⁷ Consequently, readers can celebrate her as being the happiest of all Austen’s heroines.⁶³⁸ Of course, if the ending of *P&P* delivers exactly what readers want, it raises the question as to why fans feel the need to rework this ‘flawless’ fairy tale through fanfiction.

⁶³² Ibid, 59, 60. For Hudson, Austen’s endogamous marriages are ‘therapeutic and restorative’. (35). Cf. Johanna M. Smith argues that the ‘incestuous’ marriages depicted in Austen’s novels are constrictive and narcissistic. Johanna M. Smith, “‘My Only Sister Now’: Incest in *Mansfield Park*,” *Studies in the Novel*, 19 (1987): 1. See also Julia Prewitt Brown, who argues that the retreat into the family home creates a ‘sense of stasis’ at the novels’ ends. Brown, “The Victorian Anxieties of *Mansfield Park*,” 99.

⁶³³ Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 412.

⁶³⁴ Prewitt Brown, “The Victorian Anxieties of *Mansfield Park*,” 99; Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 9.

⁶³⁵ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 294.

⁶³⁶ Harding, “Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen,” 16.

⁶³⁷ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 293.

⁶³⁸ Joseph Wiesenfarth, “Austen and Apollo,” *Jane Austen Today*, ed. J. Weinsheimer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 58. Wiesenfarth argues that *Persuasion* has a comparative fairy tale ending to *P&P*. Anne attains maximum freedom by moving from the ‘moribund’ society of the landed aristocracy to the ‘dynamic, natural and loving’ world of a sea captain’s wife. The satisfaction offered by this transformative ending may account for why fans vote this to be their second favourite Austen novel. It is possible that *Persuasion* does not have quite the same cultural reach and powers of regeneration as *P&P* because Elizabeth has usurped Anne as a surrogate for Austen and because, as Chapter Two will discuss, *Persuasion* has yet to produce a satisfactory screen adaptation.

The Never-ending Story – *Pride and Prejudice* and Fanfiction

Even a cursory search through bibliographies of *P&P* profic compiled on Austen fan sites reveals that from the nineteenth century onwards, most of these texts have fallen into the category of sequels.⁶³⁹ Likewise, most of the earliest examples of online *P&P* fanfiction are sequels. For example, of the forty-two *P&P* stories archived for the year 1997 in *Derbyshire's* 'Epilogue Abbey', twenty-eight are sequels and eighteen of these sequels focus specifically on the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth.⁶⁴⁰ Deidre Lynch notes that: 'Busy lamenting the sequel writers' impudence and incompetence, their detractors have not got around to exploring why her works appear to have proven more hospitable to sequelisation than those of almost any other novelist.'⁶⁴¹ The ending of *P&P* is key to understanding why readers are inspired to look beyond the 'happily ever after'. The fairy tale ending, and its promise of enduring romance accounts a great deal for the attraction of the novel, but as we will see, the ending is paradoxically also the element that fans find most frustrating. Jenkins has theorised that fanfiction emerges from an interplay of fascination and frustration, such as the kind that Austen's *P&P* inspires. He notes that:

If the original work did not fascinate fans, they would not continue to engage with it. If it did not frustrate them on some level, they would feel no need to write new stories — even if the frustration comes from an inadequate amount of material.⁶⁴²

This theory is perhaps summed up most succinctly by Pugh who has argued that people write fanfiction because they want 'either "more of" their source material or "more from" it.'⁶⁴³

First, let us focus on the 'more of' element. Austen profic publisher Deb Werksman identifies the desire for more as the driving force of the Austen industry, stating that: 'Jane Austen simply didn't leave a big enough body of work...after reading

⁶³⁹ See "Bibliography of Jane Austen Sequels," *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Feb 27, 2018, <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/austseq1.html>. See also Rolf Breuer, "Jane Austen etc.: The Completions, Continuations and Adaptations of Her Novels," 1999, accessed Feb 27, 2018, <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/breuer/biblio.html#comple>.

⁶⁴⁰ "Epilogue Abbey," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/toc/search.php>.

⁶⁴¹ Lynch, "Cult of Jane Austen," 162.

⁶⁴² Jenkins, "Fan Fiction as Critical Commentary."

⁶⁴³ Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 19.

[her novels] fifteen times, you just begin to want *more*.⁶⁴⁴ This desire for ‘more’ is a transhistorical form of response, common to both Austen’s historical readers and contemporary fans, that was early identified by Rudyard Kipling as a defining characteristic of Janeitism. A ‘good Janeite’ Kipling states, brings ‘forth abundant fruit’.⁶⁴⁵ In other words, a good Janeite actively produces, rather than passively receives, by creating *more*. Austen’s contemporary fans continue to be fecund interpreters and writers, endlessly producing new stories, generating gossip and commentary about her characters, and striving to satisfy the desire for ever more Austen. In relation to *P&P*, the characters that readers want *more of* are Darcy and Elizabeth who, as demonstrated, represent an idealised union of equals and are considered by readers to be Austen’s most attractive romantic pairing. For fans left ‘bereft’ because they ‘hadn’t wanted the story to end’ fanfiction compensates for this loss by satisfying the professed desire ‘to know how Darcy and Elizabeth would navigate their married life’.⁶⁴⁶

As noted in the Introduction, Austen critics frequently highlight that the vertiginous volume of Austen-inspired texts represents ‘an excess that is strangely incongruous with the narrative economy of Austen’s fiction’.⁶⁴⁷ Yet, it is precisely Austen’s narrative restraint that stimulates readers who want more *from P&P* to write their own fiction. The ending of *P&P* meets the reader’s generic expectations, but it does not entirely satisfy them because Austen’s technique draws attention to the ‘artificiality rather than the *vraisemblance*’ of her conclusions.⁶⁴⁸ Her novels ‘have endings but no resolutions’ because the author is notoriously reluctant to dwell on romance and instead unceremoniously dismisses the happy couple as soon as they have been united.⁶⁴⁹ Readers can deduct from the self-conscious ‘tell tale compression of pages before them’ that the ‘perfect felicity’ ostensibly symbolised by the happy ending is a literary contrivance.⁶⁵⁰ Being reminded that the happy ending is a generic exigency means that the reader, as Wayne Booth argues, must ‘incorporate something like an ironic vision of the ending – even while pretending not to, even while enjoying the fairy

⁶⁴⁴ Deb Werksman quoted in Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 267.

⁶⁴⁵ Phrase taken from Kipling, “The Janeites,” 130.

⁶⁴⁶ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 22.

⁶⁴⁷ Rebecca Munford, “‘The Future of Pemberley’: Emma Tennant, and the ‘Classical Progression’ and Literary Trespassing,” in *Uses of Austen: Jane’s Afterlives*, ed. Gillian Dow and Clare Hanson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 61.

⁶⁴⁸ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 48.

⁶⁴⁹ Simons, “Classics and trash: reading Austen in the 1990s,” 40.

⁶⁵⁰ Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 233.

tale to the full'.⁶⁵¹ This ironic distance allows the reader to derive satisfaction from the joyful ending whilst also recognising its artificiality. Even the harmonious fairy tale marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy strikes a discordant note because Austen is characteristically succinct when describing scenes of romance between the hero and heroine. When Elizabeth accepts Darcy's second proposal we are told that he 'expressed himself as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do.'⁶⁵² However, we do not hear his actual words and the proposal scene quickly goes into reported speech.

Laurie Kaplan, former editor of the Austen journal *Persuasions*, early identified dissatisfaction with Austen's 'non-endings' as the creative spur to fanfiction writing.⁶⁵³ Austen's 'undercut or subverted' endings stimulate the reader's imagination because they leave 'readers with a potentially uncomfortable or potentially fruitful sense of some kind of omission or lack.'⁶⁵⁴ Her omissions are potentially fruitful because, as Virginia Woolf once pointed out, her spare style 'stimulates us to supply what is not there'.⁶⁵⁵ Reader response theorist Wolfgang Iser unpacks Woolf's observation, arguing that in Austen the 'unwritten aspects of apparently trivial scenes, and the unspoken dialogue...not only draw the reader into action, but also lead him to shade in many outlines suggested by the given situations, so that these take on a reality of their own'.⁶⁵⁶ In the Austen fandom, this kind of active reading leads to creative production in the form of fanfiction, as readers fill in the 'outlines' of *P&P* with their own imaginative speculations and romantic embellishments. As Janeite Ann Haker admits, '[t]he implicit nature of Austen's writing collides with our...desires for the explicit,...[a]s Jane Austen failed to write of these things, we feel compelled to do so in her place.'⁶⁵⁷ For fans, '[t]he lack of physical and emotional explicitness in Austen's novels and the ignorance of the male side of the story, instead of negative aspects, appear like the main trigger for the desire to rewrite', hence the popularity of *P&P* sequels.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵¹ Wayne C. Booth, *The Company we Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 435.

⁶⁵² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 368.

⁶⁵³ Laurie Kaplan, quoted in Pamela Licalzi O'Connell, "A World Without End for Fans of Jane Austen," *The New York Times*, Jan 13, 2000, accessed March 9, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/13/technology/a-world-without-end-for-fans-of-jane-austen.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁶⁵⁴ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 6.

⁶⁵⁵ Woolf, *The Common Reader*, 138.

⁶⁵⁶ Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," *New Literary History*, 3.2: 1972, 281.

⁶⁵⁷ Ann Haker quoted in O'Connell, "A World Without End for Fans of Jane Austen."

⁶⁵⁸ Grandi, "Web Side Stories," 40.

The proliferation of romance sequels in Austen fandom is interesting given the comparative rarity of sequels in mainstream romance novels, which until relatively recently have focused on ‘how romantic love is developed’ rather than on ‘how romantic love is sustained’ in the post-HEA (Happily Ever After).⁶⁵⁹ Romance as a genre has not traditionally accommodated sequels for both formal and thematic reasons. The happy ending is a defining feature of the romance genre: as Lynn Pearce states the HEA is ‘one of the most singular pleasures romance fiction trades in.’⁶⁶⁰ Romance readers are perceived to derive satisfaction from narrative *closure*, while serials are dependent on *delayed gratification*; sequels are therefore diametrically opposed to romance. Sequels are also rare in the romance genre because they would have to focus on the couple’s marriage, which is not deemed an appropriate subject for romance.

David Shumway states that: ‘Romance may describe chaste courtly love, it may revel in adulterous passion, or it may give an account of an extended courtship ending in a marriage made in heaven, but *it cannot tell the story of a marriage*.’⁶⁶¹ Shumway relates the lack of romance stories about marriage to the genealogy of the genre. He dates the rise of a discourse of romance back to twelfth-century medieval romances, where love was most often depicted as happening outside of marriage and having ‘no place between husband and wife’.⁶⁶² He argues that in ‘the nineteenth century romance became grafted onto marriage’ but because the characteristics of romance derive from adulterous love, ‘it has never been entirely at ease with the union’.⁶⁶³ Likewise, Anthony Giddens suggests that romance novels do not portray marriage because of the type of love that the institution represents. ‘Romantic love’ and ‘adulterous love’ can be depicted in romance novels because romantic love is related to ‘intimacy’ and ‘presumes a psychic communication, a meeting of souls which is reparative in character’, while ‘adulterous love’ has an ‘erotic or passionate character’.⁶⁶⁴ By

⁶⁵⁹ An Goris, “Happily Ever After...and After: Serialization and the Popular Romance Novel,” *The Journal of American Popular Culture 1900 to Present* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2013), http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2013/goris.htm.

⁶⁶⁰ Lynn Pearce, “Romance and Repetition: Testing the Limits of Love,” *The Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011), <http://jprstudies.org/2011/10/%E2%80%9Cromance-and-repetition-testing-the-limits-of-love%E2%80%9D-by-lynn-pearce/>.

⁶⁶¹ David R. Shumway, *Modern Love: Romance, Intimacy, and the Marriage Crisis* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), 21. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁶² Andreas Capellanus, author of the 12th century treatise *The Art of Courtly Love*, quoted in *Ibid*, 14.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid*, 21.

⁶⁶⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 45 and 39.

contrast, marriage deals with a ‘chaste’ love, that has neither the intimacy of romance or the passion of an extra-marital affair.⁶⁶⁵

Austen fans rewrite traditional romance narratives by showing that romantic love can be sustained after courtship. They have been denigrated for having ‘an incurable addiction to the fate of her characters’ but *P&P* sequels could be seen as a productive attempt to reconcile what Eva Illouz calls ‘the two competing cultural frames’ of ‘romantic love’ and ‘marriage’.⁶⁶⁶ The Darcy/Elizabeth stories overwhelmingly envision a happy, loving marriage for Darcy and Elizabeth. For example, ‘Treasures Lost Then Found Again’ characterises the love between the married couple as ‘a deep and steady love, founded in friendship, respect and mutual attraction’ that grows ‘stronger still’ as the years pass.⁶⁶⁷ Similarly, ‘Between Hope and Guilt’ by Dawn R. paints a picture of the newlyweds living in ‘a world of bliss, where nothing could touch them.’⁶⁶⁸ A number of the stories take place at significant anniversaries in the Darcys’ married lives. For example, an untitled story by Laura takes place on the one-year anniversary of the couple. She relates that: ‘[t]he bliss that the Darcy’s felt was immeasurable’ [sic] and that ‘[e]veryone in the parish noticed how Mrs. Darcy sparkled and lit the room.’⁶⁶⁹ ‘Christmas at Pemberley’ by Kat describes the couple’s first Christmas. In this story Darcy describes his married life as ‘a wonderful dream, filled with love, and warmth’.⁶⁷⁰ Many of the stories paint a picture of a marriage that is not only loving, but also demonstrably passionate. For example, ‘Keeping Secrets’ by Laura depicts Darcy as a man so passionately in love with his ‘most beautiful and engaging wife’ that he cannot contain his desire for her.⁶⁷¹ When Elizabeth announces that she has something to tell him, Darcy responds by undoing ‘the top three buttons to her gown’ and declaring that ‘[a]ny news you have can wait’ but ‘I cannot.’⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, 39.

⁶⁶⁶ Sachs, “The Sequels to Jane Austen’s Novels,” 3-4; Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 13.

⁶⁶⁷ Michele V., “Treasures Lost Then Found Again,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Dec 28, 1998, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://thedwg.com/derby/oldc/michelv1.htm>.

⁶⁶⁸ Dawn R., “Between Hope and Guilt,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Dec 3, 1998, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://thedwg.com/derby/oldc/dawnr4.htm>.

⁶⁶⁹ Laura, “Currently Untitled,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Sept 25, 1997, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://thedwg.com/derby/olda/laura1.htm>.

⁶⁷⁰ Cat, “Christmas at Pemberley,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, April 2 1997, accessed July 27, 2016, http://thedwg.com/derby/olda/kat1_1.htm.

⁶⁷¹ Laura, “Keeping Secrets,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Sept 29, 1998, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://thedwg.com/derby/oldb/laura8.htm>.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

These *P&P* sequels portraying a happy and passionate marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth amount to the ‘simple celebrations of ecstasy’ that Shumway deemed impossible in romantic discourse and they arguably provide a ‘model for the continuing expression of emotion’ post-HEA.⁶⁷³ This model is missing from courtship narratives, which focus on obstacles to marriage and encourage ‘emotional expression outside marriage’.⁶⁷⁴ An Goris notes that traditionally, the HEA ‘functions more as a narrative promise than a narrative actuality’ in so far as it ‘implies romantic love, stability, and happiness for its protagonists, but it does not include extensive actual representations of this happiness’.⁶⁷⁵ By striving to satisfy a desire for more Darcy and Elizabeth, *P&P* sequels arguably fulfil the promise of the romance by providing stories of ‘romantic marriage’ that are otherwise underrepresented in the discourse of romance.

Conclusion

Walter Burkert has argued that ‘[a] “tale “created” – that is, invented by an individual author – may somehow become ‘myth’ if it becomes traditional, to be used as a means of communication in subsequent generations, usually with distortions and reelaborations.’⁶⁷⁶ *P&P* has become ‘mythic’ in the sense that it continually renews itself by giving rise to new stories and is now known in multiple manifestations.⁶⁷⁷ As this chapter has demonstrated, there are multiple answers to the question of why *P&P* has become a mythic text. Firstly, the novel uses recognisable fairy tale functions, the repetition of which have contributed to its adaptability and transmedial spread. *P&P* is not the only Austen novel to use an underlying fairy tale structure. However, this novel contains revisions to the tale that are particularly appealing to readers, such as the portrayal of an independent and self-assured heroine who parodies the persecuted fairy tale heroine and who has become a surrogate for Austen in the popular imagination. Additionally, the ending of *P&P* capitalises on the wish-fulfilling elements of fantasy more fully than her other novels. It is a fairy tale ending where the heroine breaks free from the family circle, liberating herself from the restrictions and false happiness

⁶⁷³ Shumway, *Modern Love*, 15 and 24.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 24

⁶⁷⁵ Goris, “Happily Ever After...and After: Serialization and the Popular Romance Novel.”

⁶⁷⁶ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 2.

⁶⁷⁷ The Italian literary scholar Franco Moretti has in fact argued that *P&P* is one of the formative myths of modernity. See Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. Albert Sbragis (New York: Verso, 2000), 12.

represented by the seemingly merry town of Meryton and forming a new society with the hero in the far-away kingdom of Pemberley. This transformative ending contrasts with most Austen novels, which feature comparatively static endings where the hero and heroine typically become more entrenched in provincial family life. The ending of *P&P*, which attracts the reader with its fairy tale allure, yet frustrates the reader with its restraint, is at the core of *why* fans expand on this story. The emancipatory ending of *P&P* appeals to readers and they therefore celebrate the union of Darcy and Elizabeth by writing *more of* Darcy/Elizabeth fiction, while explicitly or implicitly following the fairy tale structure used by Austen. Fans who want *more from* Austen, fill in the gaps of her text with romantic scenes.

This chapter has dealt with aspects of the fairy tale that could ‘be regarded as universal characteristics of the genre’, such as the fairy tale’s utopian drive.⁶⁷⁸ Yet, the meanings of fairy tales can be best ‘understood in relation to the cultural context in which they have been produced and received’.⁶⁷⁹ As *P&P*, like the fairy tale, does ‘not have stable or universal meanings but mean[s] different things in different contexts’, it is essential to consider cultural context when attempting to understand why a version of a tale, like Davies’s version of *P&P*, may have had special resonance in a given time period.⁶⁸⁰ The following chapter will explore Davies’s Darcy-centric adaptation by placing it in the socio-cultural context in which it was released. Part of the aim of the following chapter will be to lay the groundwork for subsequent chapters, so that the continuing influence of Davies’s adaptation on the evolution and expansion of the *P&P* archive can be better appreciated.

⁶⁷⁸ Teverson, *Fairy Tale*, 132.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 124.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 124.

Chapter Two: Austenmania and Darcymania – *Pride and Prejudice* in the 1990s

Obsessed with sentimental nostalgia and the self-congratulatory pleasures of repetition, real profits, and ideal lovers...Jane-o-mania has come a long way from the novels, and for the most part has even lost them.⁶⁸¹

Austen's early critics appreciated the nostalgic enjoyment associated with the author's portrayal of 'a country dance, or the delights of a tea-table', a vanishing world that was, with 'every hour...becoming absolute historical pictures'.⁶⁸² By contrast, contemporary Austen critics have tended to dismiss Janeites' 'obsession' with Austen's Regency world as a repellent form of 'sentimental nostalgia', that moves readers further away from the incisive social commentary of the novels.⁶⁸³ Nostalgia for Austen's world reached a new level of intensity during the Austenmania of the mid-1990s, when fans of the novels indulged in 'the consolatory desire to protract the Austen experience' by consuming the deluge of Austen screen adaptations that were produced during this period.⁶⁸⁴ Critics studying these adaptations frequently accused the adapters of having 'appropriated the work of Jane Austen for the purposes of fulfilling a societal need for nostalgia',⁶⁸⁵ thereby celebrating a sentimentalized form of nostalgia that Austen's novels, which invite us to see the 'fissures and failures' of her social world, arguably resist.⁶⁸⁶ The changing critical attitude towards nostalgic readings of Austen illustrates the widening gap between historical and contemporary approaches to Austen, and between academic and popular

⁶⁸¹ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 247.

⁶⁸² Comment appearing in the *Literary Gazette* 1833, in response to the reissue of Austen's novels in Richard Bentley's series *The Standard Novels*, quoted in Nicholas Dames, "Nostalgia," in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia Johnson and Clara Tuite (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 414.

⁶⁸³ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 247.

⁶⁸⁴ Munford, "'The Future of Pemberley,'" 62.

⁶⁸⁵ Amanda Collins, "The Pitfalls of Postmodern Nostalgia," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 81.

⁶⁸⁶ Dames, "Nostalgia," 416.

responses to her work.⁶⁸⁷ Critics may have developed a strong distain for expressions of ‘incontinent nostalgia’, but Janeites love to get lost in ‘Austenland’.⁶⁸⁸

Heritage film critic Andrew Higson describes the Austen adaptations as ‘variants of the English heritage film’, a genre that is frequently perceived to encourage hyper-conservative nostalgic readings.⁶⁸⁹ Rather than contending that ‘[i]t is wrong to read Jane Austen nostalgically’, this chapter will defer to more interesting questions, such as what were audiences in the 1990s nostalgic for, and why?⁶⁹⁰ Were viewers drawn to the adaptations because, as is commonly suggested, they portray an idealized version of the past and therefore ‘provide a compensatory nostalgia for a time when [England] was great’?⁶⁹¹ Or did the Austen adaptations, which celebrate personal feelings and demonstrative expression, offer viewers a new vision of English national identity, one which challenges the ‘ethic of restraint’ traditionally associated with representations of the English national character?⁶⁹² ‘Austen’s England’ assumes different connotations again when American reception of the adaptations is considered. Cultural commentators have suggested that in America, ‘Heritage Britain’ is a ‘brand’, suggesting that nostalgia for Austen’s mannered world can be attributed to associations of high culture linked to this brand of Britishness (or more aptly in the case of ‘England’s Jane’, to this brand of *Englishness*).⁶⁹³ In the world of Austen fandom, the popularity of the adaptations can perhaps be explained by fans’ desire to immerse themselves further in ‘Austenland’, an

⁶⁸⁷ See Dames for a discussion of the divergence between ‘the historicist paradigms professional academic critics might employ and the persistently nostalgic appeal that Austen holds for a remarkably wide popular audience.’ Dames, “Nostalgia,” 416.

⁶⁸⁸ Phrase ‘incontinent nostalgia’ appropriated by James Thompson from Oliver Sacks to describe Austen nostalgia. James Thompson, “How to Do Things with Jane Austen,” *Jane Austen and Co.: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Suzanne Pucci and James Thompson (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003) 23.

⁶⁸⁹ Andrew Higson, “English Heritage, English Literature, English Cinema: Selling Jane Austen to Movie Audiences in the 1990s,” in *Janespotting and Beyond: British Heritage Retrovisions Since the Mid-1990s*, ed. Eckart Voigts-Virchow (Dischingerweg: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004), 38-39.

⁶⁹⁰ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 96.

⁶⁹¹ Mike Crang, “Placing Jane Austen, Displacing England: Touring Between Book, History and Nation,” in *Jane Austen and Co.: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Suzanne Pucci and James Thompson (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003) 112.

⁶⁹² Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad’s Army*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) 169.

⁶⁹³ A brand is defined as ‘the totality of the thoughts, feelings, associations, and expectations a prospect or customer experiences when exposed to a company’s trademark, or to any design representing the company or product.’ Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted and Kim Yungwook quoted in Barbara Selznick, *Global Television: Co-Producing Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 71. Austen is more strongly associated with *English* national identity than with British national identity. Where possible, this chapter will favour using ‘England’ or ‘English’ rather than ‘Britain’ or ‘British’ when exploring issues of national identity relating to Austen to avoid perpetuating the idea that English and British are synonymous.

imaginary world that, as this chapter will establish, Janeites have communally inhabited since the nineteenth century. It is also possible that some viewers were uninterested in representations of England, and were simply drawn to the adaptations because they were nostalgic for a world of courtship and ‘ritualized romance’.⁶⁹⁴ As remarked upon in Shannon Hale’s profic novel *Austenland* (2007), for some fans the attraction of Davies’s adaptation of *P&P* lay in the fact that ‘[s]tripped of Austen’s funny, insightful, biting narrator, the movie became a pure romance.’⁶⁹⁵ I would argue that all of these ‘uses of Austen’ formed part of Austen reception in the 1990s and that nostalgia for Austen is thus a multi-layered phenomenon that warrants further investigation.

To understand the complexity of nostalgic readings of Austen’s work, and of critics’ and fans’ views towards nostalgia, it is useful to interrogate what is meant by ‘nostalgia’. Just as attitudes towards ‘nostalgia’ have changed, the word itself has undergone numerous ‘conceptual and semantic shifts’ and means something different now than it did in previous periods.⁶⁹⁶ ‘Nostalgia’ was originally coined in 1688 as a medical term to designate a potentially fatal form of homesickness.⁶⁹⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century ‘nostalgia’ had come to mean a ‘vague, pleasurable, and commercially exploitable form of retrospect, available to everyone, not just to select sufferers’, while today it is defined, often pejoratively, as a ‘sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past’.⁶⁹⁸ ‘Nostalgia’ has frequently assumed negative connotations; however, the etymology of the word does not necessitate a view of the condition as harmful. ‘Nostalgia’ comes from the Greek *nostos* –return home, and *algia* –longing.⁶⁹⁹ Consequently, in her study of nostalgia, Svetlana Boym defines it simply as ‘a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed’.⁷⁰⁰ This chapter will explore *why* Austen’s fans are nostalgic for a world that no longer endures, and indeed which may never have existed outside of readers’ imaginations and fictional representations in print and on screen. As Lionel Trilling once argued, ‘Jane Austen’s England’, the land of ‘English verdure, English culture, English comfort’ that is portrayed in the novels, ‘was

⁶⁹⁴ Term taken from Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, 29.

⁶⁹⁵ Shannon Hale, *Austenland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 2.

⁶⁹⁶ Dames, “Nostalgia,” 418.

⁶⁹⁷ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 3.

⁶⁹⁸ Dames, “Nostalgia,” 418; Contemporary definition of ‘nostalgia’ taken from *Oxford Dictionary*, accessed August 20, 2017 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nostalgia>.

⁶⁹⁹ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiv.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, x.

not the real England', but an idyllic representation of England.⁷⁰¹ The chapter will also consider the difference between English and American nostalgic responses and between the responses of initiated fans and general viewers, to better appreciate how audiences' social and cultural backgrounds, as well as their prior relationship to the source text, affects how they receive Austen adaptations.

Davies' *P&P* was the most culturally significant of the adaptations in Austen fandom. *The Republic of Pemberley* fan forum started as 'a support group for people addicted to P&P'⁷⁰² and Davies's adaptation has been credited by fans as inspiring 'most of the [online] P&P fic out there'.⁷⁰³ Davies's original addition of the 'lake scene', where Darcy dives into the Pemberley pond to quench his desire for Elizabeth, is an integral part of the adaptation's cultural legacy. The importance of this scene to fans was evident from the early days of online Austen fandom, as illustrated by the graphic design of the original *Pemberley* site. The *P&P* discussion board featured an image depicting Darcy's lake dive, rather than a scene from Austen's novel.⁷⁰⁴ (See Figure 9.) In the two decades since the adaptation was released, the lake scene has been referenced and recycled so often by both commercial producers and by fans, that it has become essential to the conception of *P&P* in popular culture.⁷⁰⁵ In order to explore the cultural resonance of Davies's *P&P*, the chapter will take into account critical responses to the adaptation from Austen adaptation criticism and heritage film criticism. The chapter will also consider fannish interpretations of the adaptation expressed through fanfiction, to better understand the distinction between scholarly and popular culture readings of Austen's work.

⁷⁰¹ Trilling, "Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen," 163 and 167. Trilling takes a quote from Austen's *Emma*.

⁷⁰² "Frequently Asked Questions," *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed August 21, 2010, <http://www.pemberley.com/faq.html>.

⁷⁰³ imacartwright, "Pride and Prejudice: An Overview," *LiveJournal*, 2004, accessed August 1, 2016, <http://crack-van.livejournal.com/577874.html>.

⁷⁰⁴ Hilary Talbot, "Pemberley Site Map," accessed July 30, 2016, <http://spiritsdancing.com/pemberley/map/map.htm>.

⁷⁰⁵ The repetition of the lake scene in popular culture will be discussed further in Chapter Three.



Figure 9: Helen Talbot, *Pride and Prejudice* Discussion Board Header, 1997-2003

The chapter will focus particularly on *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and its sequel by English writer Helen Fielding. This prolific text started as a newspaper column commenting on Davies' *P&P* and therefore constitutes an explicit response to the adaptation. When writing *Bridget Jones*, Fielding very consciously 'stole the plot from *Pride and Prejudice*', but transported the action to 1990s London.⁷⁰⁶ As well as commenting on Darcy-mania, the bestselling novel provides critical and cultural commentary on the socio-political climate of 1990s England. Indeed, the popularity of *Bridget Jones's Diary* with book buyers in the 1990s is a good indicator of its cultural significance, as to become a bestseller, a novel must have the 'capacity to capture values and outlooks that are either dominant and widely institutionalized or widespread enough to become mainstreamed by a cultural medium'.⁷⁰⁷ Fanfiction from *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild* and *The Republic of Pemberley* will be explored for its insight into why the adaptation was so enthusiastically embraced by a (predominantly American) online fandom. Reader reception studies reveal that 'audiences in her homeland manufactured around Austen a complex but abiding English national identity' making her name synonymous with Englishness for many readers.⁷⁰⁸ Yet, for Austen fans, Austen's world does not necessarily represent the real England. Rather, 'Austenland' can be interpreted as an enchanted realm, an imaginary world that fans can communally inhabit, or even, as this chapter will show, as a utopian version of America.

⁷⁰⁶ Helen Fielding quoted in "News Review: Are You Bridget Jones?," *Daily Telegraph*, November 20, 1999.

⁷⁰⁷ Eva Illouz, *Hard-Core Romance: Fifty Shades of Grey, Best-Sellers, and Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 7.

⁷⁰⁸ Favret, "Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America," 166.

For Austen fans, inhabiting the Regency world can be therapeutic and restorative, as it allows them to engage in ‘the willing activation of pretence’, to live in an imaginary world, while still retaining their critical faculties.⁷⁰⁹ In the 1990s, Davies’s adaptation prompted Austen fans to transform the ‘imaginary world’ of *P&P* into a ‘virtual’ one by building on it in fan forums like *The Republic of Pemberley* and *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*. As well as expanding on Austen’s world by creating virtual country estates online, fans elaborated on this Austenland through fanfiction. As this chapter will show, *P&P* fanfiction from the Austenmania era frequently portrays American fans time travelling to Austen’s world. These fictions thus provide a uniquely American perspective on Austen’s exemplary Regency realm.

Sociologist Eva Illouz points out that ‘the success of a text has to do with the conditions of reception; that is, with the values, ideas, expectations, representations, and images that people develop prior to encountering the text’.⁷¹⁰ Likewise, Andrew Higson points out that every Austen adaptation ‘is assessed in part by its audiences in relation to representational traditions with which they are already familiar – and that won’t always be by reference to Austen’.⁷¹¹ The following section will place Davies’s adaptation in its cultural context to investigate how the socio-political climate and other representational traditions may have shaped audiences’ expectations prior to watching the series.

Between ‘Heritage England’ and ‘Cool Britannia’: Austen Adaptations in the mid-1990s

The viewing public was uniquely positioned to be receptive to a cultural product that both invites audiences to savour the aesthetic pleasures of ‘heritage’, and to resist traditional conceptions of the national character by celebrating ‘emotion’ over restraint, because of a series of value-shaping changes that occurred in the socio-political climate of England from the 1980s to the 1990s. The decade preceding the 1990s has been characterised by sociologists like Mark Garnett as a time of fear: the public was beset by anxieties ranging from apocalyptic fears of nuclear war, global warming, and AIDS, as well as everyday concerns that society was deteriorating due to anti-social behaviour,

⁷⁰⁹ Saler, *As If*, 28.

⁷¹⁰ Illouz, *Hard-Core Romance*, 16.

⁷¹¹ Higson, “English Heritage, English Literature, English Cinema.” 40.

unemployment, and violent crime.⁷¹² During this time of uncertainty, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) advocated what has been termed a cause of ‘aggressive nostalgia’.⁷¹³ Contemporary society was broken; therefore, the government encouraged citizens seeking a secure sense of national identity to look to the past. To restore stability during this time of uncertainty, Thatcher passed the National Heritage Acts of 1980 and 1983 to conserve (or reconstruct) aspects of England’s ‘great’ past. Following the heritage conservation effort, the ‘number of listed buildings doubled’.⁷¹⁴ As the heritage industry grew, nostalgia became ‘institutionalised in national and provincial museums and urban memorials’.⁷¹⁵ Thanks to these conservation efforts, the ‘past was no longer unknowable’; it could be recreated as ‘old monuments were restored in their original image.’⁷¹⁶ By visiting country houses on heritage tours, contemporary citizens could access the country’s great past meaning that history became ‘heritage’, a ‘private or collective mythology’ that could be revisited rather than something lost to the irreversibility of time.⁷¹⁷

During the Thatcher years, heritage films seemed to proliferate onscreen. Of course, Thatcher can hardly be accused of commissioning these films as part of the heritage agenda. Nonetheless, many film scholars claim that the ‘dominance and success’ of heritage films during the 1980s was ‘symptomatic of the crisis of identity through which England passed during the Thatcher years’.⁷¹⁸ Critics argue that these films used the spectacular opulence and clear hierarchal structure of country houses to provide a ‘compensatory fantasy of a stable and ordered British past at the very moment when the economic and social policies of the Thatcher government were not only eroding stability and order but also utilizing a rhetoric of national greatness in order to justify doing so.’⁷¹⁹ After Thatcher’s deposition in 1990, her successor John Major continued to promote nostalgia for a conservative construct of the past. In 1992, Major created the position of Secretary of State for National Heritage. Cultural and political

⁷¹² Mark Garnett, *From Anger to Apathy: The Story of Politics, Society and Popular Culture in Britain since 1975* (London: Random House, 2007), 119-165.

⁷¹³ Alwyn Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum Press Ltd, 2013), 150.

⁷¹⁴ Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 52.

⁷¹⁵ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 15.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid*, 15.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid*, xv.

⁷¹⁸ Cairns Craig, “Rooms Without a View,” in *Film/Literature/Heritage: A Sight and Sound Reader*, ed. Ginette Vincendeau (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2001), 3.

⁷¹⁹ Alistair Davies, *British Culture of the Postwar: An Introduction to Literature and Society 1945-1999*, ed. Alistair Davies and Alan Sinfield (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 121.

historian Alwyn Turner argues that Major created this post to cater for the ‘part of the British psyche that yearned for old certainties’ and to reflect the prestige of the National Trust.⁷²⁰ Continuing the tone set in the 1980s, under Major’s leadership the evocation of an exemplary English past was used as a balm to heal the wounds of the present. A series of high-profile violent crimes in the news and a perceived increase in anti-social behaviour⁷²¹ led Major to extol a ‘back to basics’ political policy which advocated a return to ‘traditional’ values like ‘neighbourliness, decency, courtesy’, traits described by Major as ‘the best of Britain’.⁷²²

An additional perceived threat to British national identity during Major’s term was the ‘meddling’ European Union, which was brought into existence in 1992 with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. Turner argues that ‘the concept of European harmonisation’ had less resonance for members of a former Empire that ‘hadn’t been invaded for over nine hundred years’, than for those countries whose borders had historically been less secure.⁷²³ Britain was ‘obsessed with preserving and venerating their history’, while the EU was concerned with ‘nations “burying their ghosts”.’⁷²⁴ Although some politicians tried to reassure people that acknowledging their European identity need not entail sacrificing their British national identity,⁷²⁵ Garnett points out that many people were nevertheless ‘genuinely frightened’ that the nation ‘might be losing its sovereignty to the European Community’.⁷²⁶

The 1980s and the first half of the 1990s was dominated by a backward-facing Tory government concerned with preserving a construct of the nation rooted in the past. However, by the mid-1990s, a large section of the public had become apathetic or even openly hostile towards the Tory government, partly because Thatcher was in power during a decade that started and ended with a recession. Major’s victory in the 1992 election left people who were frustrated with the political climate feeling even more

⁷²⁰ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 295; Higson likewise states that Major established the Department of National Heritage in order ‘to create and maintain the infrastructure necessary to promote a conservative vision of national identity’. Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, 54.

⁷²¹ Britain was perceived to be in a state of national decline during Major’s term; ‘people believed the country was becoming less healthy, less educated and less honest’ and that ‘behaviour was deteriorating’. 1996 *Daily Telegraph* survey results quoted in Turner, *A Classless Society*, 292.

⁷²² John Major, “Speech to 1993 Conservative Party Conference,” October 8, 1993, accessed June 16, 2016 <http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1096.html>.

⁷²³ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 170.

⁷²⁴ Ibid, 170. Turner quotes Tristan Garel-Jones.

⁷²⁵ Labour M.P. Roblin Cook stated that: ‘I do not accept that to acknowledge our European identity diminishes our Britishness’. Ibid, 319.

⁷²⁶ Garnett, *From Anger to Apathy*, 125/126.

defeated, this mood continued throughout Major's term in the 1990s, eventually precipitating a turning away from the Heritage England that Tory politicians had endorsed. The period of disaffection under Major's leadership would end with the election of Labour MP Tony Blair in 1997. Blair restyled his party as 'New Labour' and attempted to rebrand the national image to capitalise on people's eagerness for change. Rather than turning to past glories, Blair's government extolled the music, fashion, film, and artistic achievements of the modern United Kingdom. This era of increased pride in the nation's art and enterprise was dubbed 'Cool Britannia', described by Turner as 'the Swinging Sixties incarnate' because it constituted an attempt to recapture the energy of 1960s popular culture with Oasis substituting for the Beatles, the supermodel Kate Moss taking over Twiggy's mantle, and 1960s franchises like the *Bond* films relaunching for a new audience.⁷²⁷ While Major's government promoted a version of national identity rooted in the past, Blair intended 'to look forward, not back', albeit ironically by recapturing the spirit of a past decade.⁷²⁸ To signify the change in political focus from 'Heritage England' to 'Cool Britannia', Blair changed the name of the 'Department of Heritage' to the 'Department of Culture, Media and Sport'.

Cultural historians claim that Blair's new government constituted a 'repackaged version of Conservatism' and there was very little real change from within Westminster.⁷²⁹ Nevertheless, the ostensible emphasis the New Labour government placed on 'enterprise, on a modern, youthful, and energetic nation', seemed to appease the public.⁷³⁰ The willingness of the majority to embrace Labour and the change it seemingly represented is commented on in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999). Following the election, Bridget's mother, who had been a staunch Tory supporter all her life, proudly announces to Bridget: 'We've won, darling. Isn't that marvellous! A landslide! Imagine!'⁷³¹ A 'cold shudder' comes over Bridget when she mistakenly interprets her conservative mother's enthusiastic proclamation as evidence that the Tories have triumphed once again.⁷³² However, Mrs. Jones then goes on to say that she and her friends are having 'a Tony and Gordon Ladies' Night at the Rotary' in

⁷²⁷ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 128/129.

⁷²⁸ Tony Blair quoted in Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, 54.

⁷²⁹ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 6.

⁷³⁰ Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, 54.

⁷³¹ Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (New York: Viking Adult, 2000), 206.

⁷³² *Ibid*, 206.

celebration of a Labour victory.⁷³³ This passage comments on the extent to which even former Tories were seduced by ‘the spirit of Labour’.

For Blair, Britain was a brand, and as with all branding, there was a concern with ‘the creation of associations’ on the part of the consumer, between ‘names, trademarks, and designs and certain qualities’.⁷³⁴ ‘Cool Britannia’ was associated with ‘sexuality, fashion, style, pop culture, and irreverence’ and was ‘promoted by New Labour as a way of distinguishing itself from the stodgy old-fashioned image of the United Kingdom that was associated with Thatcherism and to some extent the “old” Labour party.’⁷³⁵ The changing conception of national identity from the early to the late 1990s is perhaps most potently charted by evolving attitudes towards the national flag of the United Kingdom. In the early 1990s, the Union Jack was a polemic symbol associated with old imperial values, nationalism, and ‘continuing colonial attitudes’.⁷³⁶ The problematic symbolism of the flag is touched upon in *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. Bridget considers throwing a party in celebration of the Victory in Europe Day commemoration but worries about ‘the problem of flags’, musing that the Union Jack is too loaded with patriotic and nationalist associations to be suitably ‘ironic’.⁷³⁷ She frets that her guests might ‘think the presence of Union Jacks meant we were expecting skinheads’.⁷³⁸ Towards the end of the decade the flag was reclaimed as a proud symbol of Cool Britannia by popular bands like Oasis and the Spice Girls who used the Union Jack as part of their iconography.⁷³⁹

Many successful British films released in the mid-1990s reflect a preoccupation with the complexities and dangers of contemporary society across the United Kingdom, and veer well away from nostalgia about a great English past. Culturally significant films like *Trainspotting* (dir. Danny Boyle; 1996), *Secrets & Lies* (dir. Mike Leigh; 1996), and *Beautiful Thing* (dir. Hettie Macdonald; 1996) deal with issues ranging from drug abuse, race, poverty, and homosexuality and are set firmly in contemporary society. Modern social comedies like *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (dir. Mike Newell; 1994) and *The Full Monty* (dir. Peter Cattaneo; 1997) as well as an emerging Anglo-Asian film market also helped the British film industry to thrive and diversify in the

⁷³³ Ibid, 207.

⁷³⁴ Selznick, *Global Television: Co-Producing Culture*, 71.

⁷³⁵ Ibid, 84.

⁷³⁶ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 306.

⁷³⁷ Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (London: Picador, 2014), 123.

⁷³⁸ Ibid, 123.

⁷³⁹ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 306.

1990s.⁷⁴⁰ Turner attributes the turn away from heritage cinema to ‘the generation that had spent the 1980s in opposition to Margaret Thatcher’ and had been further disappointed by the Tory victory in 1992.⁷⁴¹ These political setbacks led to a ‘determination to shift the battleground from politics to popular culture, to continue the fight for the soul of the nation in another form.’⁷⁴² Film, comedy, and music therefore became increasingly left of centre.

Because of the strong association between heritage films and the politics of the 1980s, heritage films continue to be ‘forcefully attacked as ideologically complicit with – or at least symptomatic of – Thatcherism’s radical economic and social restructuring and reinvention of the “nation”.’⁷⁴³ Indeed, Cairns Craig contends that heritage films were so reflective of the socio-political climate of the Thatcher years that the genre was only viable in the 1980s.⁷⁴⁴ If ‘heritage’ was indeed falling out of favour in the 1990s and if British cinema was experiencing a left of centre cultural renaissance, how then can we explain the phenomenal success of Austen adaptations in the mid-1990s? I would argue that the term ‘post-heritage’, rather than heritage, may be most appropriate to describe Davies’s adaptation. Monk uses this term to describe period productions of the 1990s that show ‘an overt concern with sexuality and gender’ and a ‘self-consciousness about how the past is represented’ even as they paradoxically ‘revel in the visual pleasures of heritage’.⁷⁴⁵ As the following sections will show, Davies’s adaptation combines ‘heritage’ with ‘emotion and sexuality’ allowing for different readings of England, and of the adaptation. It came out during a transitional period, moving from John Major’s Tory government to the rebranded ‘New Labour’ government under the leadership of Tony Blair. The following sections will attempt to negotiate the complexities of a culture industry that was ‘turning back to heritage’ to recapture a stable sense of national identity and to sell ‘Heritage England’ abroad, whilst also striving to ‘turn away from heritage’ and towards a new demonstratively emotional rebranding of the previously restrained English national character. The aim is to provide a nuanced account of the reception of Davies’s *P&P* that considers how audiences might respond differently to the same text and generate a plurality of

⁷⁴⁰ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 123.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid, 124.

⁷⁴² Ibid, 124.

⁷⁴³ Claire Monk, “The British ‘heritage film’ and its critics,” *Critical Survey* 7.2 (1995): 116.

⁷⁴⁴ Craig, “Rooms Without a View,” 3.

⁷⁴⁵ Claire Monk, “Sexuality and Heritage,” in *Film/Literature/Heritage: A Sight and Sound Reader*, ed. Ginette Vincendeau (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2001), 7-8.

meanings, regardless of how the adaptation was ‘intended’ to be received. First, let us look at the cultural and industrial factors that allowed anti-heritage critics to read the adaptation as promoting a conservative vision of national identity.

The Heritage Film Genre Debate

‘Anti-heritage’ critics, who evince ‘intellectual and ideological opposition’ to heritage films,⁷⁴⁶ frequently accuse these products of operating ‘as cultural ambassadors, promoting certain images of Englishness’, specifically white, class-bound, and imperialist images of Englishness.⁷⁴⁷ Numerous commentators argue that the Austen adaptations articulate nostalgia for such images of national identity. For example, James Thompson claims that ‘Austen costume dramas can be said to represent a purely white Englishness, before the fall into Empire and the politics of race’.⁷⁴⁸ Likewise, Mike Crang argues that the Austen adaptations were recruited in order to promote an Englishness that ‘invoked history to both cloak and set a purported Anglo-Saxon ethnicity against other Celtic, Asian, and African Britons’.⁷⁴⁹ Martin Amis attributes English nostalgia for ‘Jane’s World’ to ‘a blend of disembodied snobbery and vague postimperial tristesse’.⁷⁵⁰

The perception that Austen adaptations were complicit in the Tory agenda of ‘aggressive nostalgia’ was bolstered when government officials explicitly cited Austen’s world as a form of ‘traditional’ England that contrasted favourably with contemporary, multi-cultural Britain. From 1995 to 1997, the most concentrated period of Austenmania, the position of Secretary of State for National Heritage was filled by Virginia Bottomley. Upon attending the 1996 Cannes film festival to see the gritty black comedy *Trainspotting* (dir. Danny Boyle; 1996), based on Irvine Welsh’s novel, Bottomley professed to have liked the film; however, she eagerly seized the opportunity to turn the conversation away from the contemporary Scottish author’s work towards ‘England’s Jane’. Bottomley remarked that: ‘Part of my job is to encourage tourism and

⁷⁴⁶ Monk, “The British ‘heritage film’ and its critics,” 117.

⁷⁴⁷ Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

⁷⁴⁸ Thompson, “How to Do Things with Jane Austen,” 23.

⁷⁴⁹ Crang, “Placing Jane Austen, Displacing England,” 112/113.

⁷⁵⁰ Martin Amis, “Jane’s World,” *The New Yorker*, January 8, 1996, accessed August 16, 2017 <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/01/08/janes-world-2>.

our great traditions. This is what films like *Sense and Sensibility* did, as well as the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice*. If we have got the country houses and the landscapes, they should be shown off on film, particularly as we approach the millennium.⁷⁵¹ For British cultural ambassadors like Bottomley, the Austen adaptations were akin to promotional brochures that could be used to market a pleasing version of England for consumption.

The government's professed wish to promote tourism and to sell 'England' through Austen was answered very effectively. Parrill points out that 'Lyme Park had 800 visitors during the first week after *Pride and Prejudice* was shown on television, yet only 86 in the same period in the previous year.'⁷⁵² The Austen adaptations therefore had a very 'demonstrable effect on heritage tourism'.⁷⁵³ Davies' *P&P* 'was even given an award by the British Tourist Authority' for contributions to English tourism.⁷⁵⁴ More than two decades after the series originally aired, Davies' *P&P* continues to be an important draw for the heritage tourism industry. The National Trust website advertises the 'Pemberley Walk at Lyme' which encourages tourists to '[f]ollow in the footsteps of Mr. Darcy and the BBC film crew' and '[d]iscover some of the idyllic filming locations from the 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*'.⁷⁵⁵ *Bridget Jones* comments on the efficacy of the series as an advertising tool by having the eponymous heroine develop an all-consuming desire to visit a country house subsequent to watching the BBC mini-series. Bridget is depicted obsessively leafing through brochures with titles like 'Pride of Britain: Leading Country House Hotels of the British Isles', and spending every spare moment planning a romantic mini-break to the country.⁷⁵⁶ Looking at period country houses allows Bridget 'to imagine other times and places and plunge into domestic daydreaming and armchair nostalgia'.⁷⁵⁷ Boym defines 'armchair nostalgia' as 'a marketing strategy that tricks consumers into missing what they haven't lost'.⁷⁵⁸ This particular marketing strategy was exploited to great commercial effect in the 1990s in order to sell 'Austen's England': listed buildings like Lyme Park, private collections displayed at the Jane Austen's House Museum, and Austen brand merchandise sold at

⁷⁵¹ Virginia Bottomley quoted in Richard Brooks, "Bottomley wants 'heritage' films: Call for 'country house' movies fuels row over lottery cash veto for 'arty' projects", *Observer*, 19 May, 1996.

⁷⁵² Parrill, *Jane Austen on Film and Television*, 6.

⁷⁵³ Higson, "English Heritage, English Literature, English Cinema" 42.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 42.

⁷⁵⁵ "Pemberley Walk at Lyme," *National Trust*, accessed July 15, 2016 <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lyme/trails/pemberley-walk-at-lyme->.

⁷⁵⁶ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 143.

⁷⁵⁷ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 15.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 38.

the Jane Austen Centre, all allowed people to buy into the image of Englishness that the Tory government wished to promote.

For anti-heritage critics, ‘the country house’ is emblematic of a conservative construct of English national identity and is thus frequently cited as an especially problematic part of the genre’s appeal. In popular culture, ‘the well-appointed, well-administered, well-filled country-house’ has long been an important exemplar of what Henry James termed the ‘credit of the national character... a compendious illustration of [English] social genius and [English] manners’.⁷⁵⁹ As cultural historian Dominic Sandbrook observes, ‘[t]he very idea of the country house has itself become a symbol of Britishness, or, more accurately, Englishness: an idealized, supposedly timeless paradise, set in a pastoral rural landscape untouched by modernity.’⁷⁶⁰ It is somewhat ironic that the ‘country house’ has become synonymous with the ‘stability’ of the English national character because, as Sandbrook points out, it actually occupies a very precarious position in England’s history. The country house has come under threat numerous times throughout history due to damage inflicted by the World Wars, the fall in the availability of domestic servants in the 20th century, and marginal tax rates.⁷⁶¹ Nevertheless, it remains powerfully symbolic in the popular imagination as a place of unchanging order and stability, ‘a lost world of deference and hierarchy’, and is sold to audiences as such.⁷⁶²

In Davies’s *P&P*, Lyme Park, the sprawling National Trust owned Cheshire estate that stood in for the exterior of Pemberley, functions as a powerful signifier of idealized, exportable, Englishness. For many reviewers, glimpsing the sumptuous interiors of Pemberley was a highlight of the series.⁷⁶³ For example, one *Sunday Telegraph* reviewer compared watching the series to ‘a lovely day out in some National Trust property’ revealing the extent to which the heritage and tourism industries shaped responses to the adaptation.⁷⁶⁴ In Davies’s adaptation, the camera follows Elizabeth and the Gardiners through the halls as Darcy’s housekeeper, Mrs Reynolds, showcases the rooms in the guise of tour guide, making the viewer feels as if they too are part of the

⁷⁵⁹ Henry James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, (New York: Library of America, 1993) 222.

⁷⁶⁰ Sandbrook, *The Great British Dream Factory*, 152.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid*, 165.

⁷⁶² *Ibid*, 159.

⁷⁶³ Scenes of the interior were shot at Lancock Abbey and Sudbury Hall as a change in management before filming resulted in Lyme Park being unavailable.

⁷⁶⁴ *Sunday Telegraph* reviewer quoted in Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, 57.

group of visitors being treated to a privileged glimpse of Pemberley's interior. Viewers are thereby transformed into National Trust tourists while watching these scenes. Critics hostile to the aesthetic of the heritage genre complain that in Davies' adaptation 'the real star of the show' is 'Old England, bucolic and gorgeous' and that 'the film exploits the scopophilic potential of Austen's text by eroticizing and commodifying a fine view'.⁷⁶⁵ From this anti-heritage perspective, Austen adaptations can, as Crang insists, be interpreted as sustaining 'a reactionary and deeply conservative vision of Englishness'.⁷⁶⁶ Consequently, Austenian nostalgia is treated disdainfully by those who view the adaptations as 'part of the enterprise of marketing and selling [England's] past (or rather, highly constructed and selective images of it) as a commodity'.⁷⁶⁷



Figure 10: Lyme park, used for exterior shots of Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice* (dir. Simon Langton; 1995)

⁷⁶⁵ Elisabeth Ellington, "'A Correct Taste in Landscape': Pemberley as Fetish and Commodity," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 97.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁷⁶⁷ Monk, "The British 'heritage film' and its critics," 116.



Figure 11: Sudbury Hall, used for interior shots of Pemberley, in *Pride and Prejudice* (dir. Simon Langton; 1995)

Selling Austen to America: Heritage Branding and the Cult of the Country House

The Austen adaptations were undeniably appropriated by the government as part of an agenda to deflect attention away from contemporary problems – being addressed in films like *Trainspotting* – and to ‘support an essentialised English identity through a static, enclosed sense of the past’.⁷⁶⁸ Consequently, anti-heritage critics assume that audiences uniformly adopt what Stuart Hall terms the ‘dominant/hegemonic’ viewing position, and that they embrace the idealised depiction of English national character that the adaptations articulate.⁷⁶⁹ However, critics such as Monk and Amy Sargeant challenge what they perceive to be ‘heritage-film criticism’s over-privileging of the national.’⁷⁷⁰ Monk points out that most heritage adaptations are addressed to an international audience. Consequently, she argues, it does not make sense to interpret the heritage film as functioning ‘centrally as a vehicle for “national” messages’.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁸ Crang, “Placing Jane Austen, Displacing England,” 3.

⁷⁶⁹ The dominant/hegemonic position is where the consumer decodes the message in the way that the encoder intended the meaning to be interpreted. Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” 136-138.

⁷⁷⁰ Claire Monk, “The British heritage-film debate revisited,” in *British Historical Cinema*, ed. Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (London: Routledge, 2002), 185.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

Davies' P&P was produced by the BBC but was partly funded by the American A&E network. Indeed, all the Austen adaptations from the 1990s were 'either funded by American companies, or made as co-productions', meaning that these adaptations were always intended to appeal to English *and* American audiences.⁷⁷² As a 'cultural co-production', Davies's *P&P* was extremely successful in both English and American cultural contexts and has indeed been described as 'the ultimate example of what could be done' with the combination of English heritage and U.S. financing.⁷⁷³ An average audience of 10 million people watched the original six-episode broadcast on BBC One on Sunday evenings from 24 September to 29 October 1995.⁷⁷⁴ The series was first broadcast on the American A&E network on 14 January 1996 and went on to attract the highest ratings for any A&E production, with an average of 3.7 million homes tuning in to the show.⁷⁷⁵ It is consequently important to consider that 'what may seem to be a national representation is in reality an international mythology, that is, a story and characters that are assumed to have meaning, significance, and poignancy for international audiences'.⁷⁷⁶

Higson points out that market research reports conducted in the 1990s reveal that England 'was seen from overseas in heritage terms' and that it 'was consequently "a dated concept", difficult to reconcile with reality...and in the USA almost entirely 'fictionalised''.⁷⁷⁷ For the A&E target audience of educated upper and higher middle class women, nostalgia for Austen's England took a different form than it did in England. If for anti-heritage critics the Austen adaptations articulate nostalgia for a conservative vision of a great English past, in America the Austen adaptations provide 'viewers with a kind of sanitized, guilt-free nostalgia', whereby they can 'enjoy being transported through time and space to a gorgeous space of high society, a cultured alcove that appears hermetically sealed off from the ugly contamination of *real* history'.⁷⁷⁸ In other words, 'Heritage England' acquires new meanings in different contexts: for some English audiences it may evoke nationalist sentiments, as anti-heritage critics insist, but in America it elicits *brand associations*. Barbara Selznick argues that the 'Heritage England' brand promoted by cultural co-productions like the

⁷⁷² Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, 5.

⁷⁷³ Selznick, *Global Television: Co-Producing*, 89.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁷⁶ Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, 5.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁷⁸ Selznick, *Global Television: Co-Producing Culture*, 78. (emphasis mine).

Austen adaptations is associated with ‘the qualities of elitism, high culture, classic literature, and orderly society.’⁷⁷⁹ This fictionalised brand of Englishness thus gives rise to certain expectations in American consumers. Considering how ‘Heritage England’ and ‘Jane Austen’ are sold in American as well as English contexts is therefore important when exploring Austen reception in the 1990s.

We have already looked at the symbolic significance of the country house for audiences in the UK, but the country house was also an important selling point of the series for audiences abroad. As mentioned in the Literature Review, Sandbrook argues that as British imperial and industrial power has declined, the nation’s importance as a popular culture powerhouse with ‘well-developed cultural and creative industries’ has increased.⁷⁸⁰ As a commercial product manufactured by ‘the great British dream factory’, the country house can be adapted to suit national and international markets. Country house dramas provide ‘a symbolic heartland for...nostalgic English nationalism’ in the UK and simultaneously attract American audiences who buy into the pleasing fiction of picture-postcard ‘souvenir’ England.⁷⁸¹ The continuing bankability of the English country house setting has been proven by the success of television shows like *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015), which was even more successful in America than in England.⁷⁸²

The responses of early reviewers to the A&E airing of Davies’s *P&P* validate the claims that the ‘Heritage England’ brand sells in America because American consumers are seduced by the ‘pleasant misconception that British society is founded on tradition and standards that make the British seem more cultured, educated, and civilized than people in the United States.’⁷⁸³ For example, in a 1995 *New York Times* article on the appeal of the Austen adaptations in America, Edward Rothstein argues that ‘manners’ are a rare commodity in American society but that they ‘flourished in a hierarchal society like the one Austen portrayed.’⁷⁸⁴ Consequently, he reasons, ‘[i]t is

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid, 76.

⁷⁸⁰ Sandbrook, *The Great British Dream Factory*, xxii.

⁷⁸¹ Crang, “Placing Jane Austen, Displacing England,” 113.

⁷⁸² *Downton Abbey* aired on PBS in America and became the channel’s highest-rated drama. “National Ratings Cement “Downton Abbey, Season 3” on Masterpiece Classic as Highest-Rated Drama in PBS History,” *PBS Publicity*, Mar 19, 2013, accessed Mar 4, 2017, <https://www.pbs.org/about/blogs/news/national-ratings-cement-downton-abbey-season-3-on-masterpiece-classic-as-highest-rated-drama-in-pbs-history/>.

⁷⁸³ Selznick, *Global Television: Co-Producing Culture*, 77.

⁷⁸⁴ Edward Rothstein, “IDEAS AND TRENDS; Jane Austen Meets Mr. Right,” *New York Times*, Dec 10 1995, accessed April 1, 2016 <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/10/weekinreview/ideas-trends-jane-austen-meets-mr-right.html>.

no accident that Austen's novels' finely detailed accounts of moral and social education should inspire such interest at a time when conservative criticism of American culture is increasingly concerned with failures in those areas.⁷⁸⁵ Impoverished Americans, he argues, 'gaze upon Austen's world with a form of manners envy' and luxuriate in the opportunity to be transported back to an apparently simpler, more orderly time, when people operated by clear rules of behaviour.⁷⁸⁶ Similarly, Julia Keller argues that the mini-series offers an escape to a 'tranquil time of civilized mores, sophisticated amusements and fetching ball gowns, a vanished era of beauty and light'.⁷⁸⁷ In Davies's adaptation, England's hierarchal society can be envisioned as 'a world warmed by a great tea cozy of elegance and refinement'.⁷⁸⁸ In an early review of the A&E airing of *P&P*, John Carman attributes Austen's 'current popularity' in America to 'her elaborate depiction of an orderly world that, while narrow, often venal and fraught with desperation, is still powerfully alluring to all of us caught in these crowded and more chaotic times.'⁷⁸⁹ *P&P* successfully advertised and sold England as 'a theme park of the past' to American consumers.⁷⁹⁰

The marketability of heritage adaptations in America calls into question the supposed nationalist appeal of these productions. There is also debate as to whether heritage films were really as dominant in the 1980s as anti-heritage critics suggest, further casting doubt as to whether these films are truly evocative of Thatcher's reinvention of the 'nation'. Monk, for example, notes that her own research 'shows that from 1982 to 1992 only a modest (although steady) proportion of the new UK feature films starting production each year which went on to achieve a UK theatrical release were set in the past, and a far tinier proportion were readily identifiable as "heritage films"'.⁷⁹¹ She therefore argues that 'the perceived dominance of these films lay in a commercial success with UK and (more significantly) US audiences which seemed – sometimes staggeringly – disproportionate to their presence within UK feature film production as a whole.'⁷⁹² US audiences, Monk argues, were significant to the perceived

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ Julia Keller, "Austen's Powers," *Chicago Tribune*, April 17, 2001, accessed June 13, 2017, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-04-17/features/0104170016_1_jane-austen-society-english-professor-austen-s-powers.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ John Carman, "Austen's 'Pride' Glows Enchanting evenings in A&E series," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 12, 1996, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.oocities.org/dwan_y/pp.html.

⁷⁹⁰ Cairns Craig, "Rooms Without a View," 4.

⁷⁹¹ Monk, "The British 'heritage' film and its critics," 118.

⁷⁹² Ibid, 118.

dominance of heritage films because once heritage films became ‘surprise’ hits in the States, ‘UK marketing strategies were then predicated on selling these films (back) to British audiences as US successes.’⁷⁹³ Given the importance of US audiences to the success of heritage adaptations, it is pertinent to consider how the Austen adaptations fit into existing production trends in both markets. As Higson argues, to fully appreciate the reception of Austen adaptations, greater attention should be paid to ‘the fact that the Austen films are cultural products that were produced and then circulated in a particular industrial context’.⁷⁹⁴

Inquiry into the industrial conditions that gave rise to the influx of Austen adaptations in the mid-1990s is especially productive given that Austenmania in Britain and America appears to have been a spontaneous occurrence rather than the result of a premeditated marketing plan to renew popular interest in Austen. It is common for one successful film to spawn others of the same type. However, the Austen adaptations were produced concurrently, rather than in a sequence. As Sue Parrill points out, ‘several of these adaptations were being planned or even being filmed at the same time’.⁷⁹⁵ Douglas McGrath was indeed planning to make an updated adaptation of Austen’s *Emma* set in 1990s New York but had to revise his plans in favour of a Regency adaptation when he realised that Amy Heckerling, director of *Clueless* (1995), was simultaneously making a contemporary version of the same novel, set in Los Angeles. Furthermore, another adaptation of *Emma* (dir. Diarmuid Lawrence; 1996), with Andrew Davies at the helm as screenwriter, was in production at the same time as McGrath’s *Emma* (1996). Like Parrill, Higson sees ‘little evidence ... of producers carefully planning these film and television programmes as part of a coherent cycle at the production stage.’⁷⁹⁶ The cultural and industrial contexts in which the films were produced must therefore have played a part in creating the favourable conditions of reception for Austenmania.

Higson accounts for the Austenmania of the 1990s by situating the films within the broader production trend of ‘the Anglo-Hollywood costume drama’, arguing that the audience for these films extended beyond the Janeites to a more general audience for ‘period romantic comedies’ with ‘an English setting and strong characters, strong

⁷⁹³ Ibid, 118. Monk compares the marketing strategy of selling heritage films back to the UK to ‘the same selling point used to sell US blockbusters to UK audiences.’

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid, 36.

⁷⁹⁵ Parrill, *Jane Austen on Film and Television*, 6.

⁷⁹⁶ Higson, “English Heritage, English Literature, English Cinema,” 38/39.

literary connections, and an intense appeal to female viewers.⁷⁹⁷ Period dramas set in England, or ‘frock flicks’ as Higson terms them, were extremely popular during the 1990s. Higson identifies eighty films released between 1990 and 2000 that fall into this category.⁷⁹⁸ The public appetite for these period productions suggests that critics who argued that heritage films were only viable in the eighties were too strongly influenced by an ideological reading of the films from an anti-heritage perspective and had not taken account of broader production trends in Anglo-American cinema. Fifty-five of the period films cited by Higson are literary or dramatic adaptations and several more are biopics of literary figures.⁷⁹⁹ Austen film adaptations are therefore part of a 1990s’ vogue for ‘literary cinema’; the films could be ‘pre-sold’ to ‘audiences with strong attachments to literary culture’ because of an existing market for period productions and literary adaptations in Britain and America.⁸⁰⁰

Reading the Romance: ‘An Alternate Mythology’

Anti-heritage critics have been criticised not only for over-privileging the national, but also for assuming that ‘the spectacular pleasures of heritage film’ produce ‘a passive and uncritical viewing position’.⁸⁰¹ The potential complexity of audiences’ reactions to heritage productions have been under-addressed because, as Monk points out, critics too often construct the heritage film audience as ‘an undifferentiated mass – and as “other” than the heritage film critic in their policies, tastes, and responses to the films.’⁸⁰² Cultural studies critics and fan studies critics have demonstrated that audiences are not universal in their tastes and interpretations. As noted in the Literature Review, the work of Michel de Certeau established that the reader is an active interpreter of meaning who ‘takes neither the position of the author nor an author’s position’ and who ‘invents in the text something different from what they intended’.⁸⁰³ In De Certeau’s theoretical framework, the reader takes the elements that he or she wants from texts, ‘combines their fragments and creates something unknown in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings’.⁸⁰⁴

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid, 39.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid, 40.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid, 40.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid, 40.

⁸⁰¹ Monk, “The British heritage-film debate revisited,” 150.

⁸⁰² Ibid, 184.

⁸⁰³ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 169.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid. 169.

As Jenkins argues, research by cultural studies critics like De Certeau, ‘direct attention to the meanings that texts accumulate through their use’ and remind us that the reader’s activity is not limited to simply ‘recovering the author’s meanings but also as reworking borrowed materials to fit them into the context of lived experience’.⁸⁰⁵

Although De Certeau argued that readers inject their own voices into the story by ‘scribbling in the margins’ of texts, he was less convinced of the power of television viewers to resist the messages of broadcast technology.⁸⁰⁶ De Certeau characterised the television viewer as a ‘pure receiver’ rather than a ‘textual poacher’, arguing that when watching television, the ‘reader’s increased autonomy does not protect him, for the media extend their power over his imagination, that is, over everything he lets emerge from himself into the nets of the text – his fears, his dreams’.⁸⁰⁷ However, Jenkins counters such claims, arguing that ‘De Certeau is wrong to deny the possibility of readers “writing in the margins” of the television text, a practice occurring with remarkable frequency in the fan community’.⁸⁰⁸ He elaborates on how fans ‘blur the distinction between reading and writing’, stating that ‘fans’ particular viewing stance – at once ironically distant, playfully close – sparks a recognition that the program is open to intervention and active appropriation’.⁸⁰⁹ Fans ‘promote their own meanings over those of producers’ by rewriting the source text through fanfiction, but they also gravitate towards texts that ‘seem to hold special potential as vehicles for expressing the fans’ pre-existing social commitments and cultural interests’.⁸¹⁰ In other words, rather than taking a purely ‘oppositional’ stance towards a text, fans often adopt a ‘negotiated’ position: the reader acknowledges and generally accepts the preferred meaning of the text but simultaneously modifies the meaning in way that reflects their own interests and experience.⁸¹¹ Viewers of Davies’s adaptation adopted such a complex and contradictory position towards the series. They embraced some elements whilst resisting others, depending on their own interests, ideological preferences, and social background, and depending on their prior relationship with Austen’s novel.

Responding to the criticism that heritage film critics do not take the agency of the audience into account, Higson concedes that that ‘not...all audiences who engage

⁸⁰⁵ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 53.

⁸⁰⁶ De Certeau, “Reading as Poaching,” 155, 31.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 176.

⁸⁰⁸ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 158.

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 158.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid*, 34.

⁸¹¹ Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” 128-139.

with these representations [of England] automatically buy in to a particular mythology of the old country and national identity; but if they do not, then they must actively resist such representations and seek to create an alternate mythology'.⁸¹² A number of heritage film critics have suggested that audiences for heritage adaptations create an 'alternate mythology' by focusing on the portrayal of relationships, rather than on representations of England. For example, Alison Light argues that heritage films can be interpreted by audiences as 'romances' or 'women's films' because they foreground female characters, celebrate personal relationships, and are centred around romance plots that take place in domestic settings.⁸¹³ Likewise, Richard Dyer argues that one of the defining traits of the heritage genre is its heightened emotionality, rather than just the pleasure of looking at houses.⁸¹⁴ Monk also highlights that heritage films often tell personal stories of young women in love and celebrate 'liberal pleasures' such as emotional and sexual expression, relationships and romance.⁸¹⁵ Monk even suggests that 'critical hostility to these [heritage] films... may have more to do with the cinematically unusual (and, for some heterosexual male critics, uncomfortable) ways in which gender and sexuality function in these personal journeys than with the films' focus on a privileged class and their 'incorrectness' as expressions of the national past (which is what the anti-heritage discourse presents itself as objecting to).⁸¹⁶

Romance is indeed an important aspect of the appeal of *P&P*. Producer Sue Birtwistle ensured that audiences had multiple points of entry to the adaptation by announcing the production team's intention of amplifying the romantic aspects of *P&P* with a heavy dosage of 'smouldering looks across rooms, or hands touching'.⁸¹⁷ In Davies's adaptation, 'emotion' and 'romance' is encapsulated by the 'erotically enhanced' Mr. Darcy, who, as numerous Austen critics have pointed out, is offered up

⁸¹² Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, p. 27

⁸¹³ Alison Light, "Englishness," [letter], *Sight and Sound* 1, no. 3, (July 1991): 63.

⁸¹⁴ Richard Dyer, "Feeling English," *Sight and Sound* 4, no. 3 (1994): 16-19.

⁸¹⁵ Monk, "The British 'heritage film' and its critics," 122.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 120. Monk points out that: 'In contrast with the model of cinema spectatorship offered by 1970s film theory, in which (in classic narrative films at least) the male gaze is fixed and fixated on the 'to-be-looked-at' female form onscreen, the central peculiarity of the best-known heritage films is that it is the men onscreen who are displayed as the spectacle to be looked at, and an audience which (empirical evidence suggests) is largely composed of women and gay men which does the looking.'

⁸¹⁷ Sue Birtwistle quoted in William Grimes, "Cover Story; An Austen Tale of Sex and Money in which Girls Kick up their Heels," *The New York Times*, 1996, August 16, 2017
<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/14/tv/cover-story-an-austen-tale-of-sex-and-money-in-which-girls-kick-up-their-heels.html>.

to the female gaze in Davies's adaptation.⁸¹⁸ Given the focus on nationalism in heritage criticism it is pertinent to look at the ways in which Davies's Darcy constructs an alternative version of 'Englishness' than that ostensibly symbolised by the country house. Heritage critic Jeffrey Richards explores the possibility that heritage films challenge, rather than endorse, traditional conceptions of the English national character. He makes the point that '[r]estraint is invariably depicted in [heritage] films as a recipe for personal unhappiness, and something that should be rejected in favour of personal, usually sexual, fulfilment.'⁸¹⁹ Such films therefore provide a 'comprehensive critique of the ethic of restraint, repression and the stiff upper lip, of the surrender of personal happiness to higher notions of duty and self-sacrifice, hitherto key elements of the national character.'⁸²⁰ He therefore concludes that far from being 'reactionary and backward-looking', heritage films are in fact 'profoundly subversive' in so far as they challenge the legitimacy of the 'ethic of restraint' typically associated with the English national character.⁸²¹

'A Striking Resemblance[?]' – Darcy in Austen Adaptations

Davies created a Darcy who was not only erotically enhanced, but who also had greater range of emotional expression than Austen's Darcy. In the novel, we see Darcy from Elizabeth's prejudiced point of view, and so he appears reserved, arrogant, and proud for much of the novel's first half. As we do not have access to Darcy's thoughts, we do not start to develop 'a more gentle sensation' towards the hero until Elizabeth does.⁸²² The *P&P* adaptation sought to redress the perceived defects of Austen's portrayal of the hero 'by amplifying and glamorizing' Darcy and by compensating for his lack of an inner monologue in the novel by having him speak through his actions on screen.⁸²³ Darcy is given 'extra scenes' which depict him engaging in physical activities like fencing, horse-riding, and (most famously) jumping in a lake, scenes which Cheryl

⁸¹⁸ Phrase 'erotically enhanced' taken from Menand, "What Jane Austen Doesn't Tell Us."; For a discussion of the female gaze in *P&P* see example, Lisa Hopkins, "Mr Darcy's Body: Privileging the Female Gaze," in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 111-122.

⁸¹⁹ Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, 169.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁸²² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 189.

⁸²³ Deborah Kaplan, "Mass Marketing Jane Austen: Men, Women and Courtship in Two Film Adaptations," *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 180.

L. Nixon argues reveal the hero's 'emotional capabilities'.⁸²⁴ While Austen's hero is absent for most of the second half of the book, Davies keeps Darcy in view with these added scenes of physical activity and emotional expression. Critics therefore conclude that 'Darcy's physical actions speak a twentieth-century emotional vocabulary' and his body is consequently 'not just a body, but a medium of emotional expression'.⁸²⁵



Figure 12: Darcy (Colin Firth) fencing in *Pride and Prejudice* (dir. Simon Langton; 1995)

⁸²⁴ Nixon, "Balancing the Courtship Hero," 24.

⁸²⁵ Ibid. 24.



Figure 13: Darcy riding a black stallion in *Pride and Prejudice* (dir. Simon Langton; 1995)



Figure 14: Darcy post-pond in *Pride and Prejudice* (dir. Simon Langton; 1995)

In England, ‘Darcymania’ took the form of ‘Darcy Parties, Darcy Weekends, and Darcy Walks to Pride and Prejudice Balls’ catering to viewers who had watched the series, and were now looking to find new ‘ways to satisfy their craving for the proud, moody hero played by Colin Firth.’⁸²⁶ Women across the UK gathered together for the ‘Darcy parties’, where they watched the mini-series on VHS, whilst drinking

⁸²⁶ Liz Hunt, “Down to Darcy’s wet shirt,” *Independent*, July 18, 1996, accessed Aug 16, 2017 <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/get-down-and-party-with-mr-darcy-1329343.html>.

champagne and discussing the pleasures of the ‘wet-shirt’ scene. Fans could also extend their pleasure in the series by indulging in dancing and dress-up at *P&P*-themed charity balls.⁸²⁷ As already noted, Davies’ adaptation caused a rise in Austen tourism as visitors flocked to see the great country house at Lyme Park that stood in for Darcy’s Pemberley estate in the series. Yet, not all visitors were interested in the house: some fans came for the pond. Indeed, the ‘Pemberley Trail’ devised by the National Trust became better known amongst fans of the series as the ‘Darcy Walk’.⁸²⁸ Although the pleasure of looking at Pemberley was certainly an important part of the series’ appeal, visitors’ renaming of the ‘Pemberley Trail’ to the ‘Darcy Walk’ suggests that for many fans, Darcy’s dive and its ‘revelation of his emotional capabilities’, was probably a bigger draw than the house. Nixon points out that viewers respond positively to this scene because ‘it serves to dramatize Austen’s development of Darcy’s character’.⁸²⁹ Darcy’s dive ‘provides a dramatic visual symbol of his emotional rebirth, as he forsakes pride and moves toward a more generous love of Elizabeth’.⁸³⁰

Austen critics consistently argue that ‘[t]he phenomenal success’ of the mini-series ‘is undoubtedly attributable in large part to the intense enthusiasm with which Firth’s portrayal of Mr. Darcy was received’.⁸³¹ Likewise, fans deem ‘The Wet Shirt Darcy Explosion – 1995’ to be the most concentrated period of Austen fandom because Davies’ ‘more energized and sexy interpretation’, symbolized by the ‘provocative plunge by hero Mr. Darcy into the Pemberley pond’, had strong global appeal.⁸³² While critics and fans have reached a consensus regarding what makes Davies’s Darcy different from Austen’s Darcy, which is his emotional depth, they have not adequately explained why a more emotionally expressive hero should have had such an astonishing effect on the growth of Austen fandom in the 1990s, particularly in England where, as we will see, the ‘fidelity’ model of criticism has long deterred audiences from being wholly receptive to any rewriting of Austen’s characters.

Writing after the initial surge of Austenmania, Austen critics suggested that the rewriting of the socially awkward Darcy as an emotionally expressive romantic hero

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ Nixon, “Balancing the Courtship Hero,” 22.

⁸³⁰ Ibid, 22.

⁸³¹ Hopkins, “Mr Darcy’s Body,” 112.

⁸³² Laurel Ann Nattress, “An Introduction to Jane Austen's Sequels,” *Austenprose- A Jane Austen Blog*, 2012, accessed July 7, 2016 <https://austenprose.com/jane-austen-sequels-2/an-introduction-to-jane-austen-sequels/>.

says more about what we want from Austen than about the novels themselves. For example, Nixon states that: ‘Both the novels and films enact their respective time periods’ visions of the correct balance between emotional display and restraint; the films’ vision favors display.’⁸³³ The adaptations therefore reveal ‘how we today use Austen to reveal ourselves to ourselves’.⁸³⁴ These comments suggest that an emotionally enhanced Darcy is a distinctly late-twentieth century creation, reflective of late-twentieth century ideals. However, Davies is not the first adapter to endow Darcy with greater erotic and emotional capabilities. Indeed, although Davies ‘is credited with creating the first version of the character that presented him as perceptibly in touch with his manly desires’, research into ‘the history of stage Darcys shows that Austen’s dramatic adapters were running with this idea long before Davies.’⁸³⁵ A short comparative analysis between how Darcy has been adapted and received on stage, and how he has been adapted and received on screen, is fruitful because it promises to shed light on how the series’ conditions of reception contributed to a more enthusiastic reception of an emotional Darcy in the 1990s. Looser points out that the ‘influence of dramatized Austen is easiest to grasp at the moment of its greatest popularity and commercial success: the mid-1930s.’⁸³⁶ Therefore, I will compare the reception of Davies’s Darcy in the 1995 screen adaptation to that of Helen Jerome’s Darcy in the play *Pride and Prejudice: A Sentimental Comedy in Three Acts* (1935) and the portrayal of Darcy in the 1936 stage adaptation *Miss Elizabeth Bennet* by A.A. Milne (of *Winnie the Pooh* fame).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, stage adaptations of *P&P* minimized Darcy’s role, concentrating instead on the heroine’s point of view.⁸³⁷ Stage directions typically instructed the actor playing Darcy to look “bored”, “aloof”, and “grave” for most of the play, thereby encouraging the audience to view Darcy through Elizabeth’s eyes, following the example of Austen’s novel.⁸³⁸ Jerome’s adaptation departs from this template: she emphasizes Darcy’s erotic appeal, transforming him into a moody but passionate hero. In Jerome’s play, the stage directions draw attention to his emotional depths (he struggles with a ‘hidden yearning’); his vocal expression (he

⁸³³ Nixon, “Balancing the Courtship Hero,” 27.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸³⁵ Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 99.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

delivers lines ‘slowly and passionately’) and his ability to physically emote (his face is ‘white with emotion’).⁸³⁹

In Milne’s adaptation of *P&P*, completed just as Jerome’s play made its New York debut, the author takes similar ‘liberties’ with Darcy’s character to make him a more compelling figure for audiences.⁸⁴⁰ As the play’s title (*Miss Elizabeth Bennet*) suggests, Milne’s adaptation is not as Darcy-centric as Jerome’s play, or Davies’ screenplay. However, much like Jerome, and later Davies, Milne found it impossible to be faithful to Austen’s characterisation of Darcy, conceding that in the case of Austen’s dour hero, alterations were unavoidable:

Let us admit frankly that Darcy, as drawn by Miss Austen, is not a very attractive person. His birth and wealth made more of an appeal to her world than do to ours... Somehow Darcy must seem to a modern audience to be as worthy of Elizabeth’s love as Miss Austen thought him. The only sort of man that seems from the stage entirely unworthy of a good woman’s love is a humourless bore.⁸⁴¹

Darcy, ‘the humourless bore’, is made more dynamic by becoming more demonstratively passionate. Darcy’s enhanced emotional expression is especially evident in the first proposal scene where the stage direction indicates that ‘Darcy is in a state of repressed emotional excitement’ upon encountering Elizabeth.⁸⁴² He surprises Elizabeth, and no doubt also surprises audiences expecting Austen’s taciturn hero, when he ‘cries out bitterly’ that: ‘It is no use! I struggle and struggle in vain! You have caught me! I cannot escape!’⁸⁴³ He goes on to melodramatically exclaim: ‘I cannot do without the light in your eyes, the sound of your voice; they go with me everywhere! In vain, in vain I have struggled to escape them. I love you.’⁸⁴⁴

Jerome’s play has had significantly more cultural impact than Milne’s adaptation. It became the ‘basis for the screenplay, by Aldous Huxley and Jane Muffin (1940), produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’ and starring Laurence Olivier; additionally, ‘the musical *First Impressions*, which had a run in New York in 1959, claims kinship with

⁸³⁹ Helen Jerome, *Pride and Prejudice: A Sentimental Comedy in Three Acts* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1935), 132-135.

⁸⁴⁰ A.A. Milne, “Introduction,” *Miss Elizabeth Bennet: A Play From Pride and Prejudice*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), xi.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid*, xi.

⁸⁴² Milne, “Act II, Scene 3,” 79.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid*, 80.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 80.

Helen Jerome's version.⁸⁴⁵ It is probable that Jerome's play was used as a template for subsequent American-produced adaptations because of its proven popularity with audiences in the U.S.⁸⁴⁶ Her adaptation was a triumph in America: it 'became a New York hit, running for 219 performances.'⁸⁴⁷ However, 'British reviewers were on the whole less glowing about...Darcy and about the play.'⁸⁴⁸ Looser speculates that this critical failure is 'perhaps because London's theatre critics expressed greater attachment to the fidelity model of adaptation or because they were more conversant with the original novel.'⁸⁴⁹ Although both Jerome and Milne made alterations to Darcy's character, Milne does not move the focus away from the heroine, as Jerome does.⁸⁵⁰ Indeed, as noted in Chapter One, Milne's motivation for writing the play was to dramatize *Austen's* life, but as he saw Austen as a version of Elizabeth, he created a stage version of *P&P* where the focus is naturally kept on the perspective of Elizabeth/Austen. The popularity of Jerome's play in America, compared to its tempered reception in England, leads Looser to conclude that audiences in England 'seemed to want to hold on longer than American ones to the centrality of Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* stage adaptations'.⁸⁵¹

Jerome's more Darcy-centric play enjoyed greater international acclaim than Milne's version but English audiences in the mid-1930s were not as receptive to the centrality given to Darcy at the expense of Elizabeth. By contrast, Davies' Darcy-

⁸⁴⁵ Wright, "Jane Austen Adapted," 430-431.

⁸⁴⁶ 'Timing' was also a factor in the greater popularity of Jerome's play. Milne was not even aware that another dramatist was adapting *P&P* until 'the day [his version] was finished'. At that stage he was still waiting for the actress he wanted to play Elizabeth to become available and he was thus unable to stage his play in London before Jerome's 'American version' made its way from New York to the London stage. Milne most likely identifies Jerome's play as an 'American version' because of its success in America, rather than because of the dramatist's nationality. Jerome is Australian. Milne, "Introduction," *Miss Elizabeth Bennet*.

⁸⁴⁷ Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 107.

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 112. 'The *Observer's* reviewer declares the play "potted Austen." The reviewer acknowledges that [Hugh] Williams as Darcy "triumphantly holds our interest," yet saves its greater praise for [Celia] Johnson's Elizabeth.'

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 112.

⁸⁵⁰ Although Milne took 'liberties' with Darcy's character; overall, he strove for faithfulness to Austen, writing that altering Austen's characters should be avoided as the 'only truth of which the dramatist need be certain is truth to character'. Milne, "Introduction," x.

⁸⁵¹ Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 112. The earliest scholarly review of Austen adaptations, conducted by Andrew Wright in the 1970s, suggests that a preference for the fidelity model was indeed a distinctive feature of early Austen adaptation criticism. Wright states that the 'Milne version is superior to that of Helen Jerome – more thoughtful and *more faithful*, whether as actable I cannot say.' While he begrudgingly admits that Jerome's play has achieved greater cultural resonance internationally, he cannot forgive the dramatist for innovating so freely with Austen: 'much is omitted; and much is altered' from the novel, and some of Jerome's additions are 'indeed unthinkable in, Jane Austen'. Wright, "Jane Austen Adapted," 432. (emphasis mine).

centric adaptation was enthusiastically embraced by English audiences in the 1990s: 40% of the nation tuned in for the final episode of the series and ‘by January 1996 the home video of the miniseries had sold 100,000 units and the companion novel had sold out in book stores.’⁸⁵² Indeed, Davies’ Darcy had such an extreme effect on viewers that the series reportedly put one woman in the hospital when, after viewing the last episode of the series, her symptoms of ‘shortness of breath, sweating and racing pulse – suggested an impending heart attack’, and led to an eventual diagnosis of ‘Darcy fever’ from her doctor.⁸⁵³

An awareness of how audience’s interests are ‘constituted in a cultural frame’ is essential to understanding how Darcy came to occupy such a central position in popular culture in the 1990s because, as Michael Schudson argues, ‘the needs of an audience are socially and culturally constituted’.⁸⁵⁴ He elaborates that: ‘[t]he relevance of a cultural object to its audience, its utility, if you will, is a property not only of the object’s content or nature and the audience’s interest in it but of the position of the object in the cultural tradition of the society the audience is a part of.’⁸⁵⁵ Davies’ amplified Darcy has had far greater resonance in English popular culture than previous incarnations, suggesting that audiences were more suitably positioned to accept an emotional reimagining of the character during the 1990s than in previous decades because of its position in viewers’ ‘cultural tradition’. As ‘emotion’ in heritage adaptations is linked to a new conception of English national identity, one which challenges the ‘ethic of restraint’ associated with ‘Old England’ and traditional English values, it is pertinent to look at the changing emphasis of ‘emotion’ in English culture to understand why viewers were primed to be responsive to a more expressive Darcy in the 1990s.

‘In Vain Have I Struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed.’ Emotion in English Culture

The growing importance of ‘emotion’ in English politics and culture created extremely favourable conditions of reception for Davies’ Darcy-centric adaptation in England. As

⁸⁵² Selznick, *Global Television*, 89.

⁸⁵³ Grimes, “An Austen Tale of Sex and Money In Which Girls Kick Up Their Heels.”

⁸⁵⁴ Michael Schudson, “How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols,” *Theory and Society* 18, no. 2 (1989), 169.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 169.

mentioned earlier, the 'New Labour' government was strongly aligned with an emotional redefinition of the English national character. The success of this rebranding exercise would not have been possible if the public had not already been positioned to embrace a change in the conception of national identity because of changes in the emotional climate. These changes were brought about by '[c]omplex shifts in emotional culture - perhaps even an emotional revolution', which 'preceded the changes in sexual culture so characteristic of the latter years of the twentieth century'.⁸⁵⁶

In her social history of heterosexual love and commitment in England, sociologist Claire Langhamer highlights the 1940s and 1950s as pivotal periods of change in the emotional climate in England. For Langhamer, the post-war period was of particular significance as 'the emotional landscape changed dramatically for large numbers of ordinary people' and it was thus 'a period that witnessed a revolution in the value attached to emotional intimacy within heterosexual encounters.'⁸⁵⁷ The war was the principal catalyst of change in attitudes towards the importance of emotion, with people feeling that '[l]ove and marriage, ... were the right and reward of the post-war citizen'.⁸⁵⁸ Langhamer argues that while in the nineteenth century 'love was not always deemed sufficient reason to marry', in the post-war period love alone was increasingly seen as being enough of a reason to marry.⁸⁵⁹ The change in attitudes towards the primacy and validity of personal expression from the 1950s to the 1990s can perhaps best be seen in the public's reaction to the love affairs of the Windsors, the stars of the country's 'most popular country-house drama'.⁸⁶⁰

In the early 1950s Princess Margaret elected not to marry the man she loved because her marriage to Group Captain Peter Townsend, a divorced father of two, would have been 'subject to [her] renouncing [her] rights of succession' and the Princess felt that she should put her 'duty to the Commonwealth' before other considerations like love and personal fulfilment.⁸⁶¹ The public was divided in its response to this self-sacrifice. Polls by popular newspapers showed that many felt personal happiness should come before obligations; however, the older generation

⁸⁵⁶ Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 11.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁶⁰ Sandbrook, *The Great British Dream Factory*, xxxiv.

⁸⁶¹ Princess Margaret, October 31, 1955, quoted in Langhamer, *The English in Love*, 1.

applauded Princess Margaret's decision to put duty first.⁸⁶² Therefore, while there was increased public sympathy towards the idea that one's emotions should guide personal decisions, 'traditional' English values like duty and restraint were still highly valued. By contrast, in the 1990s the gap between 'the stuffy old uncaring royals and the emotionally literate public' was wider than in previous decades.⁸⁶³ The waning popularity of the monarchy was made clear by a 1992 opinion poll conducted by the *Daily Mail* which showed that only a quarter of the population agreed with the statement that 'the monarchy is something to be proud of'.⁸⁶⁴ The disconnect between the monarchy and the people during the 1990s is succinctly summed up by comedian and cultural commentator Armando Iannucci who states that:

In times of national crisis or tragedy, the royal family doesn't share grief through the expression of recognisable emotion. They express it through staring at flags and inspecting rubble. They show resolve in the firmer extension of their hand-shakes. They receive curtsies with undaunted determination. They do terrific one-minute silences. But their shoulders aren't considered the best public place to stain with tears.⁸⁶⁵

The public's collective turn towards a culture of emotion can be attributed to political as well as socio-historic reasons.

Turner notes that Thatcher 'cast a long shadow' due to her uncompromising leadership style and that her political philosophy was consequently still felt in the 1990s with the phrase '[t]here's no such thing as society', uttered by Thatcher in a 1987 interview, acquiring lasting resonance.⁸⁶⁶ The 'need for shared experience, a wish to be seen to be part of a recognisable community' was an understandable reaction to the 'atomisation of society' into the 'individual men and women' that Thatcher

⁸⁶² Ibid, 2/3.

⁸⁶³ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 376.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid, 357.

⁸⁶⁵ Armando Iannucci, "The Queen and I," *Facts and Fancies*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1997) 94.

⁸⁶⁶ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 3; See Margaret Thatcher, "No such thing as society," interview by Douglas Krey, *Woman's Own*, Sept 23, 1987, accessed June 15, 2016 <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>. Taken out of context, this quote was interpreted as confirmation that Thatcherism was synonymous with self-interest. However, the passage was apparently intended to argue that looking after one's own best interests is not the same as greed since care is a 'reciprocal business'. Thatcher stated that '[W]ho is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour and life is a reciprocal business and people have got the entitlements too much in mind without the obligations'.

expounded.⁸⁶⁷ A longing to establish a sense of society was also ‘made more acute by the growing influence of the EU’, discussed earlier in the chapter.⁸⁶⁸ People attempting to redefine ‘Englishness’ strove to find a sense of community through communal gatherings like festivals and large-scale gigs by ‘Cool Britannia’ bands, the formation of online communities, and even though the attendance of public funerals. For example, the 1995 funeral of notorious gangster Ronnie Kray provoked an intense outpouring of public grief and was attended by thousands of people solidified by a desire to be part of a mass moment of emotional display.⁸⁶⁹

The growing importance of emotion over restraint to the public was evidenced by the people’s preference for Princess Diana’s brand of celebrity candour and emotional vulnerability over the silence and stoicism characteristic of the Queen. Diana was often hounded by the press who delighted in disparaging her for her affairs, history of self-harming, tendency to over-share in interviews, and other indiscretions highlighted in the tell-all celebrity biography *Diana: Her True Story* (1992) by Andrew Morton.⁸⁷⁰ Nevertheless, these very failings endeared her to the public who responded positively to ‘a royal talking like a real human being with all the traumas of a real person’s life’.⁸⁷¹ Diana had, as Blair stated, ‘a power...born out of emotion’, that offered a contrast to the ‘flinty-hearted Windsors’.⁸⁷² She thereby came to symbolize the new, rebranded English character while the Queen continued to represent the ‘stiff upper lip’ mentality typified by the traditional English national character.⁸⁷³ Turner

⁸⁶⁷ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 9.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 130, 9. Kray’s twin brother Reggie attended the funeral in handcuffs and was ‘received by crowds with a kind of hysteria, accompanied by chants for his release.’ This extreme display of public grieving would of course be completely upstaged two years later with the death of Princess Diana. Although there were no events planned for the day after her funeral, three million people still gathered together in the royal parks in London in an impromptu tribute to the late princess, ‘seemingly responding to a deep-seated desire to be part of a collective’.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 371. Diana’s character was constantly being rewritten and reinvented by the British press. In the days leading up to her death, she was constructed as an ignorant airhead; however, when news of her death began to circulate this narrative was quickly rewritten and Diana was reconstructed as the ‘people’s princess’ and the ‘Queen of Hearts’.

⁸⁷¹ Tony Hall, BBC Director of News and Current Affairs, quoted in Turner, *A Classless Society*, 362.

⁸⁷² Tony Blair describing Princess Diana, quoted in Turner, *A Classless Society*, 355; Phrase ‘flinty-hearted Windsors’ from Pamela Church Gibson, “From Dancing Queen to Plaster Virgin: Elizabeth and the end of English heritage?” *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 5 (2002): 134.

⁸⁷³ Régis Debray cites the moment when the Queen appeared in front of the Palace gates to watch Diana’s funeral procession, as encapsulating the symbolic significance of the Queen, as Old England, and Diana, as New England: [F]or whom was she waiting? Her absolute opposite. A queen of hearts, a diva of glamour, a heroine of photo-novellas...The old England stood humbly in the open air awaiting the new...The Queen placed a foot on the top step, but descended no further...the radical moment passed, ‘the irreparable was not committed’. Régis Debray cited in Pamela Gibson, “From Dancing Queen to

explicates Diana's wide-ranging appeal, stating that she 'was the kind of royal the country now wanted; aristocratic and privileged still, but glamorous, impulsive and emotional as well – heritage, celebrity and the common touch all rolled into one'.⁸⁷⁴

Davies's Darcy successfully combined 'emotion' and 'heritage' for a 1990s audience that was redefining what it meant to be English. Darcy is entitled, wealthy, and cultured, thereby embodying some of the values associated with Heritage England. However, his dive into the lake also resonated strongly with audiences turning towards a culture of emotion. Davies' Darcy provided viewers with a demonstrably passionate rebranding of a character that had been characterised by reserve in Austen's novel. Although his Darcy was preceded by stage Darcys that evinced similar emotional depths, English audiences were more disposed to accept an emotional Darcy in the 1990s, than in previous decades, because of the cultural conditions of reception. Of course, Davies's Darcy also has had lasting appeal for a global Austen fanbase, who were naturally less strongly influenced by the cultural climate of England. The following section will therefore look more specifically at Darcy's reception in the context of international Austen fandom.

'A Collection of Romances': *Pride and Prejudice* Fanfiction in the 1990s

Although some heritage critics argue that 'audiences may resist national messages and interpret [heritage] films as female-driven romances', Monk points out that due to 'practical and methodological difficulties involved in conducting research into, and interpreting data on, the responses of "real" audiences', very little empirical evidence exists to support such claims.⁸⁷⁵ However, as records of reader response and cultural commentary, fanfiction *can* provide researchers with evidence of how audiences responded to the Austen adaptations. Myretta Robens, founder of *Pemberley*, identifies the 'Bits of Ivory' fanfiction archive as 'a collection of romances' and has explicitly claimed that the fanfiction is heavily romantic because 'the romance has been magnified by the film adaptations and by our imaginations'.⁸⁷⁶ The fact that fanfiction

Plaster Virgin: Elizabeth and the end of English heritage?" *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 5, (2002): 134.

⁸⁷⁴ Turner, *A Classless Society*, 380.

⁸⁷⁵ Claire Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited," 184.

⁸⁷⁶ Robens, "Words of a 'Janeite.'"

responding to the adaptations focuses on romance, suggests that Light was correct in speculating that for certain audiences, it is as ‘romances that [heritage films] might be best understood, criticised, and...enjoyed’ rather than as vehicles for English national messages.⁸⁷⁷

Heritage film critics like Monk, Light, and Dyer interpret the act of reading heritage films as romance narratives as a positive form of active consumption. Yet, the Austen adaptations have been harshly criticised by a number of Austen critics precisely because they are perceived to ‘elevate and celebrate romance beyond any level the novels justify’.⁸⁷⁸ For example, Emily Auerbach laments that ‘some filmmakers have reduced her novels to little more than sappy love stories’ by focusing ‘on romance at the expense of other themes’.⁸⁷⁹ Similarly, Brownstein contends that the adaptations misrepresent Austen’s work, arguing that it is only through the rose-tinted lens of the romantic film adaptations that Austen’s novels can be viewed as ‘romantic’ or ‘escapist’ as the novels themselves contain too many ‘hardheaded observations and hard recalcitrant details’ to be read as such.⁸⁸⁰ Deborah Kaplan is similarly derisive about the seemingly reductive romantic ingredients in Austen adaptations and criticises the films for their ‘harlequinization’ of Austen, arguing that ‘the focus is on a hero and heroine’s courtship at the expense of other characters and other experiences, which are sketchily represented’.⁸⁸¹ In other words, the adaptations were interpreted as having more in common with contemporary romance novels, than Austen’s novels.

This combative attitude toward the ‘romance’ stems from pejorative assumptions about the genre that are well-rehearsed and that are now profoundly outdated. Critics outside of the field of contemporary romance criticism deem romance novels to be ‘bad’ ‘because they are mass-produced, formulaic, limited in scope, accepting of a patriarchal status quo, overly concerned with sex, almost exclusively concerned with heterosexual sex, and appealing only to an unintelligent readership incapable of appreciating better writing’.⁸⁸² The connotations of the word ‘formula’ are of course negative. As romance critic Pamela Regis notes, ‘[t]he term implies hack-

⁸⁷⁷ Light, “Englishness,” 72.

⁸⁷⁸ Troost and Greenfield, “Introduction: Watching Ourselves Watching,” 7.

⁸⁷⁹ Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen*, 279-280.

⁸⁸⁰ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 247.

⁸⁸¹ Kaplan, “Mass Marketing Jane Austen,” 178.

⁸⁸² Harriet Margolis, “Janeite culture: what does the name ‘Jane Austen’ authorize?,” in *Jane Austen on Screen*, ed. Gina McDonald and Andrew Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24.

work, subliterate, and imagination reduced to a mechanism for creating “product”.⁸⁸³ However, as the website for *Romance Writers of America* makes clear, all romances are expected to ‘have a central love story and an emotionally satisfying ending’ but aside from these prescriptions the genre allows for a great deal of flexibility.⁸⁸⁴ Romances ‘may have any tone or style, be set in any place or time, and have varying levels of sensuality.’⁸⁸⁵ Romance fiction also encompasses a variety of subgenres including erotic romance, historical romance, paranormal romance, and detective romance to name a few.⁸⁸⁶ Romance critics have demonstrated that romance readers are careful discriminators of their genre and that romance has critical and cultural significance as well as considerable commercial benefits: it is ‘one of the most profitable sectors of the publishing industry’.⁸⁸⁷ *P&P* fanfiction and profic unashamedly celebrates a genre that has often been unfairly critically maligned. As a result, the way in which Austen fans resist national messages by focusing on romance has not received adequate attention. To address this oversight, it is fruitful to look at Darcy’s symbolic significance in Austen fandom as an ‘ideal lover’ or embodiment of ‘Mr. Right’.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸³ Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 23.

⁸⁸⁴ “About the Romance Genre,” *Romance Writers of America*, accessed July 6, 2016, <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=578>.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁶ “Romance Subgenres,” *Romance Writers of America*, accessed July 6, 2016, <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=579>.

⁸⁸⁷ Illouz, *Hard-Core Romance*, 13.

⁸⁸⁸ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 247.

‘Ooh Mr. Darcy’: Darcymania in the Austen Fandom



Figure 15: Kate Beaton, "Ooh Mister Darcy: A Fanfiction"

Kate Beaton’s comic satirizing Austen fandom highlights how Darcy took over as the imaginative centre of *P&P* following the release of Davies’s adaptation.⁸⁸⁹ Fanfiction and profic texts from the 1990s were overwhelmingly Darcy-centred, having been written for an audience who ‘saw Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy and got all hot and bothered.’⁸⁹⁰ Examples of Darcy-centric profic from this period include: *The Diary of Henry Fitzwilliam Darcy* (1997) by Marjorie Fasman; *Desire and Duty: A Sequel to Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice* (1997) by Ted F. Bader and Marilyn Bader; *The Bar Sinister* (1999) by Linda Berdoll; and the *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman* (2003-2005) trilogy by Pamela Aidan. These texts, all by American writers, follow the example of Davies’s Darcy-centric screenplay. Even now, Darcy remains the main inspiration for fanfiction and profic. Deb Werksman, romance-fiction editor at Sourcebooks, one of the leading purveyors of ‘Austen sequels’,⁸⁹¹ confirmed that that ‘spin-offs about Darcy and

⁸⁸⁹ Kate Beaton, “Ooh Mister Darcy: A Fan Fiction,” *Hark! A Vagrant*, accessed July 30, 2016 <http://www.harkavagrant.com/index.php/index.php?id=120>.

⁸⁹⁰ Linda Berdoll quoted in Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 74.

⁸⁹¹ Sourcebooks currently publishes 82 titles in its “Jane Austen Sequels” section. *Sourcebooks*, accessed July 28, 2016 http://www.sourcebooks.com/store/fiction/jane-austen-sequels/#ty:pagination_contents:/store/fiction/jane-austen-sequels/.

Elizabeth sold best, especially those with ‘Darcy’ in the title’ while books based on ‘*Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, or secondary characters from *Pride and Prejudice* did one-tenth as well, and books based on Austen’s three other novels hardly sold at all.’⁸⁹² Therefore, contemporary Austen fandom can be seen as being particularly tied to *P&P*, and specifically to Davies’s Darcy-centric reworking of the story.

Davies’s adaptation, which encouraged viewers to look at Darcy as representative of a romantic ideal, sparked a particular profic trend: rewriting *P&P* as a pseudo-dating guide or ‘self-help’ book intended to help readers to find their own ‘Mr. Darcy’. Recent studies of self-help literature have argued that self-help ‘ought to be a category defined by a reader’s use of a text’.⁸⁹³ Although it is certainly not a self-help book, fans use *P&P* for self-improvement and self-education, illustrating that self-help literature can be defined as ‘a mode of reading, rather than a genre’.⁸⁹⁴ For example, *Jane Austen’s Guide to Dating* (2005) and *Jane Austen’s Guide to Romance: The Regency Rules* (2016), both by Lauren Henderson, offer readers advice on how to navigate the dating world by using *P&P* as a kind of handbook. Readers can take a quiz to find out what Austen heroine they resemble most and ‘can learn what to do if you’re a Lizzie, but the object of your affection is a Bingley’.⁸⁹⁵ Likewise, *Dating Mr. Darcy* (2005) by Sarah Arthur aims to equip ‘young women to gauge a guy’s Darcy Potential (DP) according to his relationships with family, friends, and God.’⁸⁹⁶ Wells argues that these ‘Austen-inspired advice guides’ demonstrate the ‘authorial creativity’ of the writers, ‘even as such guides contribute to their readers’ own imaginative use of Austen for a goal of self-improvement’.⁸⁹⁷

The Austen therapy genre also encompasses novels that represent Austen fans attempting to make sense of their own love lives by relating their problems to those of Austen’s characters. For example, in the profic novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004) by Karen Joy Fowler, communally engaging with Austen’s novels is represented as a ‘healing activity’ that helps the women in the book club to form stronger bonds

⁸⁹² Deb Werksman, paraphrased in Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 86.

⁸⁹³ Micki McGee quoted in Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 22.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

⁸⁹⁵ Tagline for Lauren Henderson’s *Jane Austen’s Guide to Dating* (2005) quoted in *Amazon*, accessed March 30, 2016, <https://www.amazon.ca/Austens-Guide-Dating-Lauren-Henderson/dp/1401301177>.

⁸⁹⁶ Tagline for Sarah Arthur’s *Dating Mr. Darcy* (2005) quoted in *Amazon*, accessed March 30, 2016 https://books.google.ie/books/about/Dating_Mr_Darcy.html?id=JBxkiYLJIX8C&redir_esc=y.

⁸⁹⁷ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 22.

with each other, as well as with the men in their lives.⁸⁹⁸ *Austenland* (2007) by Shannon Hale, features an American Austen fan who attempts to overcome her Darcy obsession by immersing herself in a Regency England theme park as a form of cognitive behavioural therapy. While staying in ‘Austenland’, Jane learns to differentiate between the false love offered by the Wickham character and the true love offered by Mr. Nobley, the Darcy character. *Definitely Not Mr. Darcy* (2011) by Karen Doornebos also comments on the attraction of ritualized romance to contemporary Austen fans. In this novel, a Midwest mom competes in an Austen-inspired reality dating show for the prize of ‘Mr. Wrightman’. *What Would Jane Austen Do?* (2009) by Laurie Brown sees a modern woman travel back in time to the Regency era so she can learn from Miss Austen how to tell a worthy hero from a rake, while *Me and Mr Darcy* (2007) by Alexandra Potter tells the story of American Janeite Emily Albright who ‘disillusioned with modern-day love...seeks solace by thinking about the romantic heroes in literature - particularly Mr Darcy.’⁸⁹⁹ Most of these authors are notably American writers, for whom the practice of using fictional texts as self-help guides has been normalized by reading groups like the Oprah Book Club, which advocate reading fiction as a therapeutic act that can facilitate healing.⁹⁰⁰

Although Janeite behavior is treated somewhat satirically in these novels, the books do bear some relation to real-life fan practices, in so far as fans do discuss the relationships between Austen’s characters as a means of coping with relationships in their own lives. However, while the heroines of *Austenland* and *Me and Mr Darcy* ‘are largely isolated in (and by) their Darcy fixation’, Austen fans can come together in many different forums as a community in order to discuss Mr. Darcy.⁹⁰¹ Janeite ethnographer Deborah Yaffe provides an interesting account of what she terms Austen ‘Bibliotherapy’ groups, described as ‘a cross between a do-it-yourself support group and an English class’, where fans communally discuss Austen’s characters as a form of therapy.⁹⁰² For members of such groups, the ritualized romantic order of *P&P* has been used to make sense of chaotic contemporary dating. A consideration of sociological changes in romantic relationships is important to understanding why the story of *P&P*

⁸⁹⁸ Marilyn Francus, “Austen Therapy: Pride and Prejudice and Popular Culture,” *Persuasions On-line* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2010), <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no2/francus.html>.

⁸⁹⁹ Blurb for Alexandra Potter, *Me and Mr Darcy*, accessed August 17, 2017

https://books.google.ie/books/about/Me_and_Mr_Darcy.html?id=_as1HwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y.

⁹⁰⁰ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 22.

⁹⁰¹ Francus, “Austen Therapy: Pride and Prejudice and Popular Culture.”

⁹⁰² Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 139.

acquired new significance as a dating manual following the popularity of Davies's *P&P*.

In her monograph, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (2012), Illouz explores the modern romantic experience for women. Illouz argues that throughout the twentieth century 'the idea that romantic misery is self-made' proliferated.⁹⁰³ Illouz argues that the success of the self-help industry was made possible by the popularisation of the idea that romantic failures derive from some internal flaw, because 'psychology offered the consoling promise' that such misery could be undone by reading the right self-help books.⁹⁰⁴ The contemporary romantic experience contrasts with Austen's time when obstacles to personal happiness came from forces *outside* of the woman's control such as economic and societal restrictions, rather than from problems *inside* the self in the form of insecurities and low-self-esteem. As Illouz states: 'until the middle or late nineteenth-century the romantic bond was organised on the basis of an already and almost objectively established sense of social worth', while 'in late modernity the romantic bond is responsible for generating a large portion of what we may call the sense of self-worth.'⁹⁰⁵ The popularity of *P&P* as a pseudo 'dating-guide' or 'self-help' book from the late twentieth century onwards indicates that the 'lost world' of clear relationship rules that courtship represents, is part of the nostalgic attraction of her works for some contemporary readers. To those readers afflicted by anxieties about love and dating, Elizabeth and Darcy's story, with its clear model of behaviour, offers a compelling guide for how to navigate courtship to find 'Mr. Right'. Although the Austen therapy industry is now dominated by American writers, the first text to highlight the contemporary cultural significance of *P&P* as a dating guide/self-help book was a British novel.

Bridget Jones is often credited as pioneering the 'chick lit' genre, a mutation of the romance where the focus is on the heroine's relationship with her circle of friends, as well as her relationship with the hero.⁹⁰⁶ Therefore, much academic discussion of

⁹⁰³ Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, 4.

⁹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

⁹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 112.

⁹⁰⁶ '[Chick Lit's] primary features are the lives of single women in the big city, first-person narration, a preoccupation with material goods, weight, dating, etc., all with self-depreciating humour. These novels differ from traditional contemporary romance in that rather than focusing on the one female/one male relationship, Chick Lit includes relationships with friends, co-workers and family as equally important as developing a relationship with a man who might be Mr Right.' Maryan Wherry, "More than a Love Story: The Complexities of the Popular Romance," in *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*, ed. Christine Berberich (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 59.

Bridget Jones has thus far centred on a consideration of the text as the prototypical chick-lit novel. However, Fielding's novel is also a foundational text in Austen profic publishing as it sparked the trend for rewriting *P&P* as a dating guide for finding 'Mr. Right'. *Bridget Jones* explicitly invites a comparison between Austen's world of ritualized romance and that of contemporary dating culture and is therefore useful for the perspective it provides on sociological changes in love and dating between Austen's time and the late twentieth century. In *Bridget Jones* the eponymous heroine, who is an avid fan of Davies's adaptation of *P&P*, looks to Darcy and Elizabeth as her 'chosen representatives in the field of shagging, or rather courtship'.⁹⁰⁷

Illouz characterises Bridget Jones, who is obsessed with self-help books and frustrated by the lack of commitment shown by men, as a woman shaped by the 'cultural tensions and contradictions that have come to structure modern selves and identities'.⁹⁰⁸ In the novel, the heroine anxiously attempts to manoeuvre through a world where the rules dictating behaviour between courting couples are opaque. Bridget describes the 'major trauma' she experiences when she is unable to read the motives of her love interest, Daniel, who represents the 'Wickham' character in the novel:

I am so depressed. Daniel, though perfectly chatty, friendly, even flirty all week, has given me no hint as to what is going on between us, as though it is perfectly normal to sleep with one of your colleagues and just leave it at that. Work – once an annoying nuisance – has become an agonizing torture. I have major trauma every time he disappears for lunch or puts his coat on to go at end of day: to where? With whom? whom?⁹⁰⁹

When the 'fraudulently flirtatious' Daniel ultimately cheats on Bridget, she holds herself responsible and questions: 'Oh God what's wrong with me? Why does nothing ever work out? It is because I am too fat.'⁹¹⁰ Bridget blames herself for romantic failures because she is a 'child of *Cosmopolitan* culture' and a devotee of self-help books like *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (1992) by John Gray, she has therefore been taught to believe that 'neither [her] personality nor [her] body is up to it if left to its own devices.'⁹¹¹ The guide books that Bridget consumes teach her that she is responsible for her own miseries but also offer 'the consoling promise' that self-

⁹⁰⁷ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 246.

⁹⁰⁸ Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, 4.

⁹⁰⁹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 67.

⁹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 181.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid*, 59.

inflected romantic misery can be undone by reading the right manual. For Bridget, the right manual is *P&P*, which if followed, should lead her to Mr. Right (in the form of Fitzwilliam Darcy surrogate, Mark Darcy).

Bridget's self-doubt in *Bridget Jones* is a sharp contrast to Elizabeth Bennet's self-assurance. As discussed in Chapter One, Elizabeth is confident about her own social and moral worth. Consequently, Elizabeth is able to withstand Darcy's derision because 'his scorn does not shape or affect her sense of self and value'.⁹¹² In direct contrast, Bridget is 'left with the personal confidence of a passed-over British Rail sandwich' after she is spurned by Daniel.⁹¹³ Illouz argues that Austen's heroines are shielded from insecurity by the rituals of courtship, which function as 'a powerful symbolic tool to ward off anxieties created by uncertainty'.⁹¹⁴ In Austen's novels, the heroine can gauge the hero's intentions by observing his behaviour towards her; the rituals he enacts give a clear indication of what she should expect to happen next. After being properly introduced, a typical courtship between a man and woman would advance in a clear sequence: 'with couples first speaking, then walking out together, and finally keeping company once their mutual attraction had been confirmed.'⁹¹⁵ As the man's conduct was governed by clear rules of behaviour his motivations were transparent to the woman. Illouz argues that in 'a performative regime of emotions, the woman was not and perhaps could not be overwhelmed by the object of love'; if the man followed the rituals of courtship it was evident that marriage was the ultimate goal.⁹¹⁶ Unlike in dating culture, in the world of ritualized romance 'the realm of emotions' was bound 'to a clear system of signs'.⁹¹⁷

The profic trend for comparing courtship rituals to contemporary dating culture emerged after Davies's adaptation renewed interest in Austen and it is therefore evident that its depiction of courtship resonated with readers. As Marilyn Francus argues in her analysis of the 'Austen therapy' industry, in these therapeutic profic texts contemporary fans' 'turn to Austen is not a statement about traditional British values, [or] nationalism...but rather a commentary about courtship in contemporary society'.⁹¹⁸ Of course, given the wide gap between Austen's world of ritualized romance and the

⁹¹² Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, 24.

⁹¹³ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 193-194.

⁹¹⁴ Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, 29.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹¹⁸ Francus, "Austen Therapy: Pride and Prejudice and Popular Culture."

contemporary dating scene, it is questionable as to how *P&P* can function as a useful ‘guide’ for readers. I would argue that *P&P*’s relevance for readers as a dating guide is related again to its fairy tale appeal. As noted in the last chapter, fairy tales inspire readers to dream of ways to transform their lives, giving these narratives of wish-fulfillment ‘the capacity – even if it is not realised or acted upon – to be socially transformative’.⁹¹⁹ By presenting a clearly signposted modal of courtship, *P&P* offers readers hope for an alternative model of behaviour, even if it cannot be realised in their own lives. Indeed, it is noteworthy that *P&P* has had a similar therapeutic appeal for readers during earlier historical periods, when again there was seemingly a large gap between the orderly, leisurely world Austen depicted and the chaotic one that readers were experiencing. For example, *P&P* was popular with soldiers in the trenches during the first World War because Austen’s work offered ‘psychic consolation’ to readers whose minds were ‘boggled by unthinkable carnage’.⁹²⁰

Rudyard Kipling comments on the therapeutic value of Austen during wartime in his short story ‘The Janeites’ (1926). This story depicts a group of war-stricken soldiers who find solace in Austen’s novels and solidarity with each other through a shared love of ‘Jane’. The soldiers use allusions to her novels that outsiders would find abstruse as a means of forming such communal bonds and of keeping ‘a shattering world in place’ by ‘talking Jane and identifying people and things in their own experience and renaming them according to her characters’.⁹²¹ For example, they hold on to a sense of stability by naming their guns after familiar characters from the novels – ‘The Reverent Collins’, ‘General Tilney’, and ‘Lady Catherine De Bugg’ (de Bourgh).⁹²² Austen does not provide a retreat from the war, she provides a means to *survive* it, so for the Janeites ‘there’s no one to touch Jane when you’re in a tight place’.⁹²³ As Johnson notes, ‘Austen is with [Kipling’s Janeites] there on the front, offering a way to be in an absurd and doomed world beyond their control.’⁹²⁴ Francus offers a direct comparison between Kipling’s story and contemporary profic dating

⁹¹⁹ Teverson, *Fairy Tale*, 130-133.

⁹²⁰ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 107. Contrasting Austen’s world to the chaotic one experienced by World War I Janeites is not to suggest that war is absent from *P&P*, which of course features a garrison of militia who disrupt the peace of Meryton with their arrival. Nevertheless, Austen’s treatment of war is not explicit so her world can seem removed from its horrors, even though the Napoleonic Wars are an implicit structuring presence in *P&P*.

⁹²¹ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 102.

⁹²² Kipling, “The Janeites,” 130.

⁹²³ *Ibid*, 137.

⁹²⁴ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 104.

guides, arguing that these novels depict Austen fans as ‘refugees from a different war: the battle of the sexes’, but still offer a similar form of restorative hope.⁹²⁵

As the previous chapter demonstrated, like a fairy tale *P&P* offers a social critique of marriage by portraying many mismatched unhappy pairings but it also offers an example of an alternative utopian pairing in Darcy and Elizabeth. Their marriage is a model of a better relationship, one which promises to ‘teach the admiring multitudes what connubial felicity really [is].’⁹²⁶ Escapism is often viewed derisively as a cowardly retreat from the problems of the real world and the Janeites have long come under criticism for seeming to use Austen’s novels as a ‘refuge’ from life. However, fans’ belief in the exemplary model of Darcy and Elizabeth does not derive from weakness or delusion, but rather a willingness to believe that a better alternative is possible. The world of the novel has an emancipatory potential because like a fairyland it represents a ‘world inverted’: it ‘reacts upon [the real world]: it suggests that we transform it’.⁹²⁷ *P&P* is a fairy tale because it is ‘a survival story with hope’, offering not a way out of difficulty, but a way to endure it.⁹²⁸ As the following section will show, fans’ turn to Austen’s world is ‘an act of fellowship, an involvement with and concern for others rather than mere escapism.’⁹²⁹

An Arrival in Austenland

This chapter has considered the ways in which Austen’s world has been ‘refit’ by different viewers. It has been interpreted by anti-heritage critics as an idealised construct of ‘Old England’ used to promote nationalistic values; it can also be interpreted as celebrating ‘New England’ in all its impassioned glory; it has been sold to America as a brand of Englishness with high cultural associations; and it has been celebrated by fans for its inviting depiction of a world of ritualized romance. For many in the Austen fandom however, Davies’ portrayal of Austen’s world perhaps has the greatest symbolic significance as a representation of ‘Austenland’, an ‘imaginary world’

⁹²⁵ Francus, “Austen Therapy: *Pride and Prejudice* and Popular Culture.”

⁹²⁶ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 237.

⁹²⁷ Michel Butor, “On Fairy Tales,” in *European Literary Theory and Practice*, ed. Vernon W. Gras (New York: Delta, 1973), 352.

⁹²⁸ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 27; Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, xi.

⁹²⁹ Saler, *As If*, 18.

that, as this section will demonstrate, Janeites have been communally inhabiting and building on since the nineteenth century.⁹³⁰

The term ‘Austen-land’ was first used by Janeites Constance and Ellen Hill to describe the ‘peaceful country of green pastures and low wooded hills’ associated with the author and her characters and the name is still used today by contemporary Austen fans to refer to this imaginary world.⁹³¹ Michael Saler defines imaginary worlds as ‘fantasy realms presented in a realist mode’ that are ‘communally inhabited for prolonged periods of time by rational individuals’.⁹³² A key component of modern imaginary worlds is that ‘while they are understood to be explicitly fictional, they are also taken to be real, often to such an extent that they continue to be “inhabited” long after the tale has been told’.⁹³³ This form of double-consciousness is achieved through ‘the willing activation of pretense’.⁹³⁴ In other words, rather than suspending their disbelief, readers allow themselves to believe in and inhabit an imaginary world, all the while retaining the knowledge that this world is a fictional construct and that they are engaging in play-acting. As this is a *voluntary* form of enchantment, readers invest emotionally in the imaginary world without losing the ability to reflect critically upon that world.

Marie-Laure Ryan argues that ‘to apprehend a world as *real* is to feel surrounded by it’, in other words the experience must be ‘immersive’.⁹³⁵ Medium ‘plays a role in creating immersive worlds’; for example, film contributes to immersion by adding ‘movement and sound to images’, thereby ‘involving multiple senses in the apprehension of the represented world, an involvement that emulates our perception of reality’.⁹³⁶ Davies’s *P&P* facilitates immersion because it paints a vivid picture of Austen’s vanished world that ‘erects no barriers to the fantasy’, allowing audiences to fully luxuriate in ‘a visual production so rich and meticulously detailed that it can

⁹³⁰ Parts of this section are based on Áine Madden, “She stimulates us to supply what is not there”: Expanding Austen’s World through Fandom,” *Oxford Research in English*, no. 5 (Autumn 2017): 33-56. <https://oxfordresearchenglish.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/brevity-autumn-2017-3.pdf>.

⁹³¹ Constance Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, [1902] 1995), 1 and 5. *Austenland* is also the title of the 2007 profic novel by Shannon Hale and of a 2013 film based on Hale’s book.

⁹³² Saler, *As If*, 25 and 6.

⁹³³ *Ibid*, 28

⁹³⁴ *Ibid*, 28.

⁹³⁵ Marie-Laure Ryan, “Immersion vs. Interactivity: Virtual Reality and Literary Theory,” *SubStance* 28, no. 89 (1999): 111.

⁹³⁶ Marie-Laure Ryan, “Why Worlds Now?,” in *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 9 and 10.

honestly be called enchanting.⁹³⁷ *P&P* contrasts with Roger Michell's *Persuasion* (1995), the first of the Austenmania adaptations, in which 'the overall tone is of gritty realism rather than swooning spectacle'.⁹³⁸ *Persuasion* was advertised as a 'Cinderella' tale; however, because it was 'deliberately low-key and de-glamorised' it did not evoke a fairy tale world.⁹³⁹ As noted in the last chapter, *Persuasion* the novel is, like *P&P*, a hopeful Cinderella-like text and has been voted fans' second favourite Austen novel. Yet, Michell's *Persuasion* does not enjoy as high a level of popularity on the fan forum as Davies's lush and lavish adaptation, which is a clear favourite. (See Figure 18.) Davies's *P&P* was more successful in drawing audiences into the world of the text because his adaptation was packed 'with lively country balls, verdant landscapes, [and] grand manors' and thereby allowed fans to visualise Austenland in clear and vivid detail and to immerse themselves fully in this utopian fairyland.⁹⁴⁰



Figure 16: Still from *Persuasion* (dir. Robert Michell: 1995)

⁹³⁷ Carman, "Austen's 'Pride' Glows Enchanting evenings in A&E series."

⁹³⁸ Andrew Higson, *Film England: Culturally English Filmmaking Since the 1990s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 143.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁹⁴⁰ Carman, "Austen's 'Pride' Glows Enchanting evenings in A&E series."



Figure 17: Still from *Pride and Prejudice* (dir. Simon Langton; 1995)

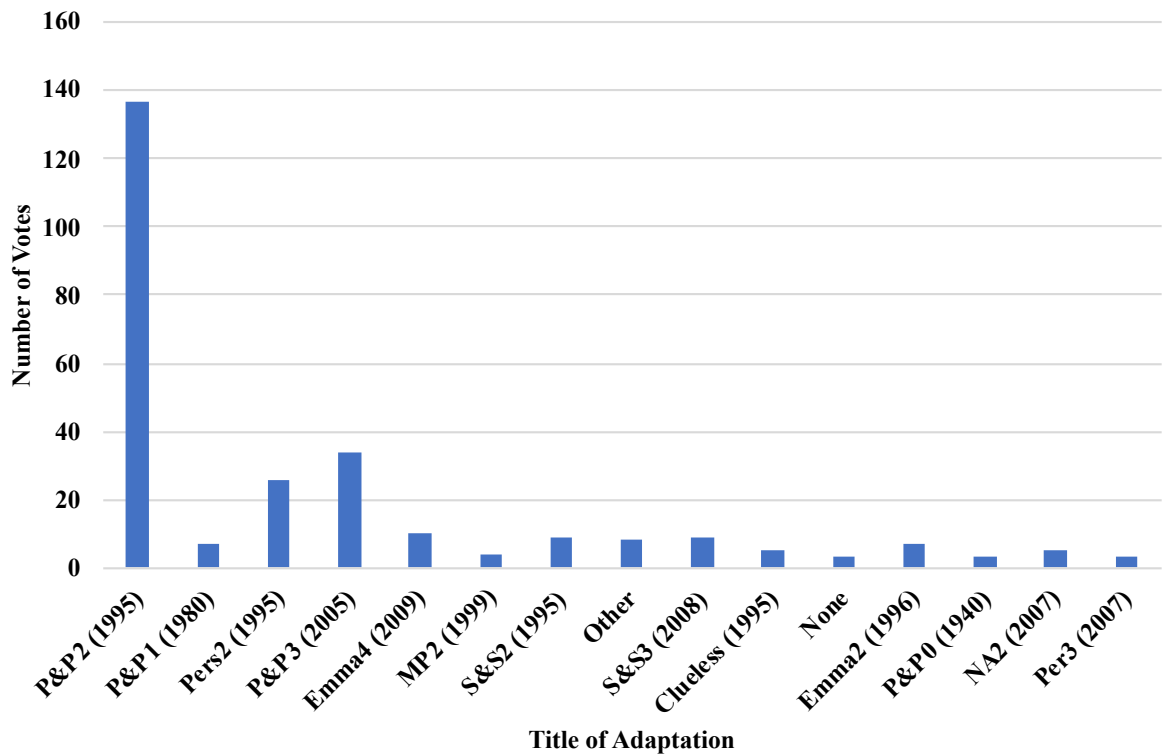


Figure 18: Ranking of Favourite Jane Austen Adaptation, 'The Baronetage,' The Derbyshire Writers' Guild, Accessed June 15, 2017

Ryan argues that television is an especially immersive medium in comparison to film or drama because:

While the duration of film and drama is limited to what spectators can absorb in one session, television produces serials that can span many seasons, keeping

spectators in a state of suspense that may last for whole weeks, and creating an addiction to the world of the show.⁹⁴¹

Davies's *P&P* was more immersive than the Austen feature films because, as Kathryn Sutherland points out, it was broadcast over six weeks 'so there was a cumulative excitement and a public participation in it that you can't get from a two-hour film.'⁹⁴² Like Ryan, Saler highlights the immersive property of serials, though he uses the example of nineteenth century serialised texts.⁹⁴³ He argues that the communal habitation of readers is key to transforming an imagined world of fiction into an imaginary world, hence the popularity of such serial productions. They 'encouraged readers to persistently dwell on (if not in) the imagined world while they anxiously awaited the next installment'.⁹⁴⁴

Serials also facilitate community formation. Jennifer Hayward observes that, 'one of the most important gifts of serial fiction' is the way in which it 'cements social bonds, providing neighbors or workmates who might otherwise have no interests in common with an instant topic of conversation'.⁹⁴⁵ Like a nineteenth century serial, the BBC series became part of a cultural moment by inserting itself into people's weekly lives, becoming a talking point over which fans of the show could bond. The adaptation maintained an average of about 10 million viewers a week while the last episode garnered 11.3 million viewers and the entire first run of home videos, released the week before the final episode aired, sold out within two hours.⁹⁴⁶ Therefore, the audience enlarged as the series progressed and as the audience grew, their emotional investment in Austen's world also increased. In short, Davies' adaptation facilitated an arrival in Austenland: it was a successful reading of the novel partly because it aided fans in picturing, and communally inhabiting, an ideal version of her world. After the series finished airing, fans continued to build on this world online through the construction

⁹⁴¹ Ryan, "Why Worlds Now?," 9.

⁹⁴² Katherine Sutherland quoted in Nicholas Barber, "Pride and Prejudice at 20: The scene that changed everything," *BBC Culture*, September 22, 2015, accessed October 10, 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150922-pride-and-prejudice-at-20-the-scene-that-changed-everything>.

⁹⁴³ Saler, *As If*, 36.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 36.

⁹⁴⁵ Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasure: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 3.

⁹⁴⁶ JoJo Moyes, "BBC cashes in as 'Darcy Phenomenon' has nation in a Swoon," *Independent*, October 28, 1995, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/bbc-cashes-in-as-darcy-phenomenon-has-nation-in-a-swoon-1579778.html>.

and maintenance of virtual spaces like *The Republic of Pemberley* and its off-shoot *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*.

Pemberley and *Derbyshire* are unusual in that these online spaces evoke physical places. As Kylie Mirmohamadi points out, these online communities are not lost in cyberspace; they are anchored in materially imagined places and are 'about buildings, and types and parts of buildings'.⁹⁴⁷ As the names suggest, both forums model themselves after the structure of the country house. The online fanfiction archives could be considered as analogous to the family libraries that Darcy considered a quintessential aspect of a country house. During a discussion about books, Darcy states: 'I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these'.⁹⁴⁸ *Pemberley* uses site maps and geographical perimeters to orientate people and to create the impression that 'this is a tangible place, with boundaries and citizens, tracks, trails, Great Houses and libraries.'⁹⁴⁹ Hilary Talbot, the *Pemberley* denizen who designed the graphics for the site in the 1990s, states that she created a map of *Pemberley* because she and fellow members liked 'the idea of Pemberley being an actual place that gave the community a home'.⁹⁵⁰ (See Figure 19) Maps are, as Saler argues, 'important for establishing the imaginary world as a virtual space consistent in all its details.'⁹⁵¹ Visitors to *Pemberley* are periodically reminded that this is a community with discernible estate 'borders' by the tagline appearing at the bottom of each webpage reassuring the wandering visitor that 'no, you have not lost your way, you remain safe within the borders of Pemberley'. (See Figure 20)

⁹⁴⁷ Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen*, 56.

⁹⁴⁸ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 27.

⁹⁴⁹ Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen*, 56.

⁹⁵⁰ Hilary Talbot, "First Site Map," accessed July 30, 2016
<http://spiritsdancing.com/pemberley/islandicons1/firstmap.htm>.

⁹⁵¹ Saler, *As If*, 67.



Figure 19: *The Republic of Pemberley*, site map, 1997-2003

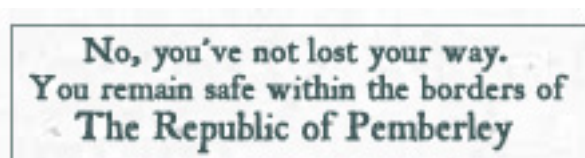


Figure 20: *The Republic of Pemberley*, webpage tagline

There is a correlation between these fan-made virtual worlds and Austen's textual one. Ryan points out that immersion in virtual reality 'is a technologically induced phenomenon, the experience of being surrounded by data' while by contrast, immersion in a book 'is a purely mental phenomenon, the product of an act of imagination'.⁹⁵² Nevertheless, virtual reality theorists often compare immersion in virtual reality to the experience of being immersed or 'lost' in the world of a literary text.⁹⁵³ Indeed, Saler regards readers' practice of communally residing in imaginary worlds of literature as being part of the 'literary prehistory of virtual reality'.⁹⁵⁴ For a

⁹⁵² Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* 2, 61.

⁹⁵³ Ibid, 61.

⁹⁵⁴ Saler, *As If*, 7.

reader to transform an imaginary world into a virtual one, they must construct ‘in imagination a set of language-independent objects, using as a guide the textual declarations but building this always incomplete image into a more vivid representation’.⁹⁵⁵ One reason why Austen’s style stimulates a desire for ‘more’ in readers, but does not entirely satisfy this desire, is because the alluring picture of Regency England that she paints is ‘incomplete’. Readers must therefore use their imaginations to construct ‘language-independent objects’ in the manner described by Ryan.⁹⁵⁶

P&P offers a characteristic example of what Andrew Elfenbein terms ‘[Austen’s] weird experimental minimalism’.⁹⁵⁷ Excepting Austen’s description of the Pemberley estate as ‘a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills’, the novel contains little topographical description or period detail.⁹⁵⁸ Elfenbein points out that Austen’s omission of such descriptive detail in *P&P* is especially striking given the literary and cultural context in which she was writing:

Given all the developments in eighteenth century culture, from empiricism to the picturesque, Austen ought to have crammed *Pride and Prejudice* with detail. We should read minute descriptions of faces, dresses, houses, gardens, landscapes and prospects, all understood as metaphors for their wonders. Instead, with a few exceptions, the novel reads as if some overzealous editor had outlawed such information.⁹⁵⁹

In the last chapter we saw how Austen’s reticence about romantic details and her terse endings inspire fans to supply the details in fanfiction that Austen omits in her novels. Similarly, Janeites’ obsession with mapping out Austen’s world is related to the author’s studied omissions. The gaps in Austen’s texts inspire readers to visualise her world because, as Iser states, ‘it is the unwritten part [of the literary text] that gives us the opportunity to picture things; indeed without the elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text, we should not be able to use our imagination.’⁹⁶⁰ The lack of period

⁹⁵⁵ Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality 2: Revisiting Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015), 63.

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁹⁵⁷ Andrew Elfenbein, “Austen’s minimalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 109.

⁹⁵⁸ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 185.

⁹⁵⁹ Elfenbein, “Austen’s minimalism,” 111.

⁹⁶⁰ Iser, “The Reading Process,” 288.

detail in the author's work is 'a major factor in Austen's longevity, and in her appeal to generations disconnected from her own', because her omissions encourage the reader to imaginatively reconstruct the parts of her world that are not comprehensively described.⁹⁶¹

As well as building virtual country houses, fans on *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* share online 'Regency Resources' as a means of filling in Austen's textual gaps and expanding on her world through fanfiction. For example, *Pemberley*'s 'Jane Austen Information Page' provides fans with detailed information about aspects of Regency society, politics, and fashion.⁹⁶² Likewise, an earlier version of *Derbyshire* featured a compilation of 'Links to The Regency on The Web' directing fans to sites where they could find out more about 'Regency Society', 'Regency Fashion', and 'Military and War'.⁹⁶³ Fans writing Regency-based fanfiction use such resources to aid them in supplying the kind of period detail that Austen excludes, thereby filling in the gaps of Austen's world with their own additions. Saler points out that readers heighten their 'emotional investment' in the world of a text by participating in such 'collaborative exercises of world building':

In so doing, they become ex post facto collaborators with the author, using references from the original text to reconcile its contradictions, fill in gaps, extrapolate possibilities, and imagine prequels and sequels.⁹⁶⁴

Readers enter the gaps in Austen's text and supply what is left unsaid by the author, using her few hints about the English countryside and English houses to conjure up an entire world.

Before being enthusiastically realised online in fan forums, Austen's textual world became a sustained virtual world which transcended her novels because of the Janeites' involvement. Like the contemporary Janeites, the author's historical readers found her reticence about place to be an imaginative stimulant that inspired them to supply the details she omitted and to map out her world. In an early review, for

⁹⁶¹ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 275.

⁹⁶² See "Jane Austen Information Page," *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed April 16, 2017, <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeinfo.html>.

⁹⁶³ "Links to Regency on the Web," *Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.austen.com/onreg.htm>.

⁹⁶⁴ Saler, *As If*, 25.

example, Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897) said it was ‘impossible to conceive a more perfect piece of village geography’ than one of Austen’s country settings, claiming that ‘[n]othing could be more easy than to make a map’ of one of her fictional villages.⁹⁶⁵ Likewise, as Harman points out, R.W. Chapman’s (1881-1960) notes for scholarly editions of Austen’s works ‘show him calculating the distance between’ different locations in Austen’s world, ‘not just as if they were all equally real places that he could map, but as if he could travel to that world, and inhabit it’.⁹⁶⁶ For some readers, making mental maps of Austen’s world has not been enough: long before Austen literary tourism became a booming industry, Janeites have been going on pilgrimages to real world locations associated with her novels in an attempt to inhabit her world.

In 1867 the Poet Laureate Lord Alfred Tennyson travelled to Lyme Regis for the express purpose of finding ‘the exact spot’ where Louisa Musgrove, a character from Austen’s *Persuasion*, fell when jumping from steps mentioned in the novel.⁹⁶⁷ Similarly, novelist and Janeite Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855) visited Bath to live in the company of Austen’s characters, purportedly finding them ‘more real’ than the town’s inhabitants.⁹⁶⁸ Janeite sisters Constance and Ellen Hill immersed themselves even further in Austen’s world, undertaking a pilgrimage in 1901 to what they termed ‘Austen-land’.⁹⁶⁹ The sisters’ intention was to establish a connection with Austen by following in ‘the footprints of a favourite writer’ to ‘the places she dwelt’.⁹⁷⁰ Constance Hill wrote an account of their journey, while Ellen Hill provided sketches of landmark Austenland sites. Today, Austen tours are well mapped out, and even the *Lonely Planet* offers a travel guide not just for England, but specifically for ‘Jane Austen’s England’.⁹⁷¹ However, at the time of the Hills’ pilgrimage they were entering uncharted territory. Austen sites were not an established part of British tourism at the turn of the century with the author’s grave at Winchester being ‘the only readily accessible pilgrimage site’.⁹⁷²

⁹⁶⁵ Margaret Oliphant quoted in Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends*, 267.

⁹⁶⁶ Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 182.

⁹⁶⁷ David Nokes, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997), 271.

⁹⁶⁸ Mary Russell Mitford quoted in Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends*, 106.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, v.

⁹⁷¹ “Jane Austen’s England: a traveller’s guide to finding Mr. Darcy,” *The Lonely Planet*, accessed June 13, 2017, <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/england/travel-tips-and-articles/jane-austens-england-a-travellers-guide-to-finding-mr-darcy/40625c8c-8a11-5710-a052-1479d277b6e4>.

⁹⁷² Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 162.

When Hill arrives in Austenland, she must use ‘family portraits and pictures, as well as contemporary sketches representing places associated with [Austen] which either no longer exist or are greatly altered’ to plan her route through this enchanted realm.⁹⁷³ For example, on her first stop in Austenland Hill finds that all that is left of the author’s childhood home is a an old pump in an otherwise empty field.⁹⁷⁴ Yet, Hill imaginatively reconstructs the Rectory for the reader, and even conjures up the ghost of Austen and her sister, declaring that: ‘I see flowers and fruit trees and I even catch a glimpse of two girlish forms moving among them- those of Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra’.⁹⁷⁵ Contemporary Janeites must tax their imaginations still further in order to appreciate this Austen site. The field is now showcased to tourists as a place where ‘there *used* to be an iron pump, which replaced a wooden pump, which *used* to serve Jane Austen’s house in Steventon, but is now just a patch of grass’.⁹⁷⁶ While Ellen Hill used drawings to reconstruct the site, modern technology allows for even more inventive solutions to the problem of Austen’s invisibility. In a recent BBC2 documentary about Austen’s homes entitled *Jane Austen: Behind Closed Doors* (2017), the host Lucy Worsley enlists the aid of an archaeologist to try to restore Austen’s childhood home. The house is realised as a digital chalk outline representing where the rooms *might* have been placed.⁹⁷⁷ These examples how ‘just how much imaginative work is required from the visitor bent on Austenian enchantment’.⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷³ Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends*, vii.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁷⁶ Emma Spooner, “Touring with Jane Austen,” *Critical Survey* 26.1: 2014: 42, accessed June 25, 2017, doi: 10.3167/cs.2014.260104.

⁹⁷⁷ Lucy Worsley, *Jane Austen: Behind Closed Doors*, documentary, dir. Rachel Jardine, (BBC2, 2017).

⁹⁷⁸ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 73.

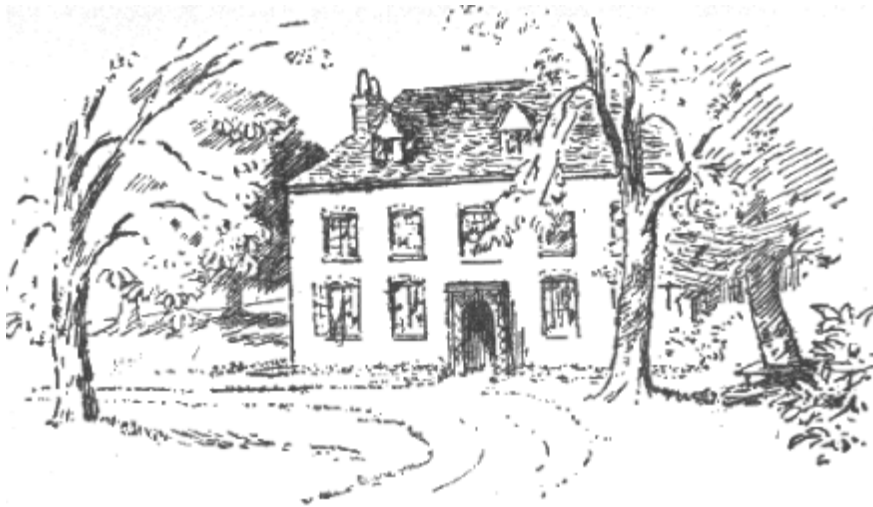


Figure 21: Ellen Hill's sketch of Steventon Parsonage (based on a contemporary sketch), from Constance Hill's *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends* (1902)

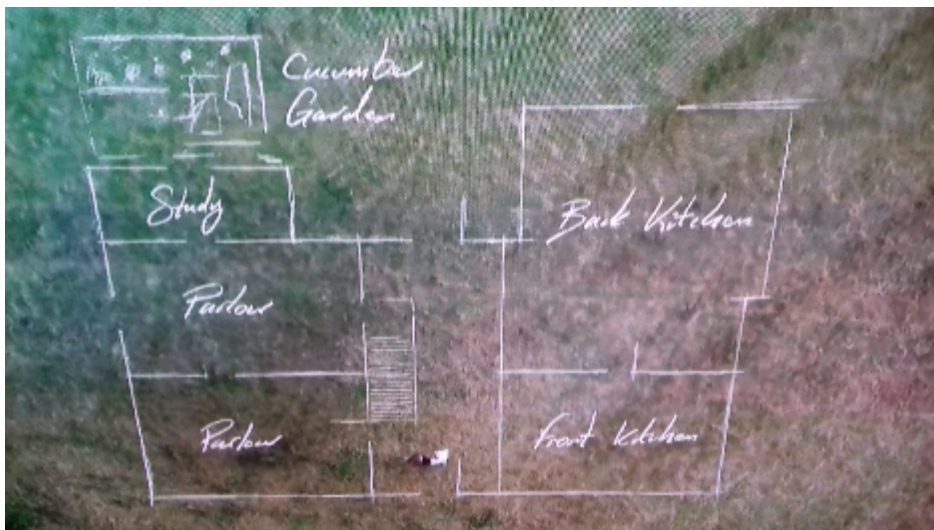


Figure 22: Digital Outline of Steventon Parsonage based on an archeologist's reconstruction, from *Jane Austen Behind Closed Doors* (dir. Rachel Jardine, 2017)

The Hills not only imaginatively reconstructed places where Austen once lived, but also sought out the places that her heroines frequented in fiction, making no distinction between the fictive and the actual or between Austen and her characters. Constance Hill justifies her choice to meld the fictional and the real, stating that:

The personages introduced to us by Miss Austen are not only her creations they are her friends, and have long become the friends of her readers, and so we pass and repass from them to their author as if *all* had equally together walked this earth. We look up at the windows of the "Royal Lion" and feel that it would be hardly surprising if we caught a glimpse of Anne's sweet face, or of Mary

looking out for the "Elliot countenance," and we also look up the rambling old-world street and almost expect to see Miss Austen herself coming down it.⁹⁷⁹

Saler uses the term 'ironic imagination' to describe people's willingness to believe in fictional characters, and to reside in fictional worlds, whilst still retaining the knowledge that they are participating in pretence.⁹⁸⁰ The ironic imagination is a 'form of modern enchantment that delights without deluding', freeing people to envision 'life not in essentialist, "just so" terms but rather in provisional, "as if" perspectives', as when Hill chooses to discuss Austen and her characters '*as if all* had equally together walked this earth'.⁹⁸¹

A decade after the Hills pilgrimage, Janeite Oscar Fay Adams likewise engaged the ironic imagination when exploring Austenland. Adams declared that while in Bath: 'if we go to the Pump room...it is *her* men and women whose faces we look for...[t]he people of "Persuasion" and "Northanger Abbey" meet us at every turn,' and 'the novelist herself is just as constantly before us.'⁹⁸² This type of pilgrimage, where fiction is melded with fact, is now an established part of the Austen tourism experience. As Yaffe observes, Austen tours include 'places where Austen lived, places she mentioned in her novels, and places used in filmed adaptations of her work' and the itinerary is consequently a 'mélange of the real and the fictional, the historical and the invented'.⁹⁸³ 'Austenland' is thus a loaded signifier: it encompasses real locations where Austen once lived, settings where Austen adaptations were filmed, 'physical analogues to unreal settings' such as spaces mentioned in her novels that people have attempted to locate in the real world, as well as virtual country estates.⁹⁸⁴

Why Jane Austen?

The gaps in Austen's novels are obvious imaginative stimulants that encourage immersion in her world. Yet, not all texts with narrative gaps inspire readers to construct detailed virtual worlds or to believe in fictional characters *as if* they were real. Therefore, there must be something else about Austen's style that invites readers to

⁹⁷⁹ Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends*, 145.

⁹⁸⁰ Saler, *As If*, 30.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 30, 7; Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends*, 145. (added emphasis mine).

⁹⁸² Oscar Fay Adams, "In the Footsteps of Jane Austen," *New England Magazine*, n.s., 8 (1893): 598-599.

⁹⁸³ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 27.

⁹⁸⁴ Saler, *As If*, 4.

collaborate with the author in building Austenland. The author's use of free indirect discourse, discussed in the last chapter, is an important source of immersion because this narrative technique draws readers into the world of the novel. As *P&P* contains 'an unusually high proportion of unmediated dialogue', this novel is especially effective at facilitating immersion because the reader, like the heroine, must undertake 'an effort of enquiry and discovery' to understand the motivations of different characters as Austen's narrator does not instruct us what to think.⁹⁸⁵ Austen's use of literary allusions further contributes to the creation of a confiding tone that draws readers in, encouraging them to get lost in Austenland. Numerous critics have commented on Austen's 'confident, even cheerful intertextuality with other authors' and her choice to 'revisit and remake these earlier authors, out of respect, companionship, and even love'.⁹⁸⁶ *P&P*, for example, contains so many allusions to Frances Burney's *Camilla* 'as to constitute a form of elaborate homage'.⁹⁸⁷ Austen's novels also contain cryptic puns, riddles, and double-entendres that encourage readers to read between the lines, giving her novels 'the quality of "confidential" writing'.⁹⁸⁸

There are many instances of Austen's historical readers using their shared knowledge of her novels to play games with Austen, as identified by Katie Halsey in her chapter on the 'relationship between Austen's novels, sociability and reading communities'.⁹⁸⁹ Historical records of reader response show that Janeites delighted not only in decoding the literary allusions suffused throughout Austen's novels, but also in using allusions to Austen's novels as a secret code between themselves. For example, Janeite Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) would refer 'knowledgeably and allusively to minor characters' from Austen's novels in his letters to friends and family and would challenge his correspondents 'to identify quotations and catchphrases'; he would also match 'Austenian allusions to relevant situations in his own life'.⁹⁹⁰ Similarly, Elizabeth Wordsworth (1840-1932) would play a game with fellow Janeites called 'Capping Miss Austen', the object of which was 'not only to illustrate one's

⁹⁸⁵ Keymer, "Narrative," 10.

⁹⁸⁶ Jocelyn Harris, "Jane Austen and the Burden of the (Male) Past: The Case Reexamined," in *Jane Austen and the Discourses of Feminism*, ed. Devoney Looser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 88.

⁹⁸⁷ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 28.

⁹⁸⁸ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 95. Halsey borrows the term "confidential writing" from Donald Reiman; for a discussion of Austen's use of puns, see Jill Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

knowledge of the texts (as in the schoolboy game of capping Latin quotations) but to do so together, gaining pleasure in challenging a fellow devotee by thinking of ever more recondite questions and answers'.⁹⁹¹ In her study of Janeite reception during World War I, Johnson likewise notes that readers used allusions to Austen as 'passwords of sorts that establish a secret fellowship with a subset of readers'.⁹⁹² For example, the collected war letters of Austen admirer Reginald Farrer are littered with 'uncited, uncontextualised, and far from self-evidently apt' quotations to Austen's novels.⁹⁹³ The 'deeply embedded allusions' to Austen function, 'at least temporarily, to surmount trauma by describing it in terms of what is already known', a Janeite practice that is of course referenced in Kipling's 'The Janeites'.⁹⁹⁴

Halsey argues that readers who use Austen allusions as community code are performing 'playful acts of literary friendship' by making use of the author's 'own trick of deliberately resonant and complex use of literary allusion'.⁹⁹⁵ These games not only encourage 'affectionate familiarity' with Austen, they also help readers to bond with each other by using a coded language, accessible only to initiated Janeites.⁹⁹⁶ Online fan forums continue this tradition of using Austen's works as what Halsey calls 'social enablers'.⁹⁹⁷ Uncontextualised references to Austen's novels are used in online fan forums as a means of promoting companionship and replicating the author's own conspiratorial and companionable tone. For example, the original 'posting etiquette' section on the *Pemberley* forum outlined the following guideline for contributor behaviour: 'We do tease and needle each other in a Lizzyesque fashion, but endeavor not to be so mean as Emma was on Box Hill, and strive never to let our differences get personal.'⁹⁹⁸ The site managers trusted that knowledgeable Janeites would understand the significance of the references to *P&P* and *Emma* without need for further contextualisation or explanation. *Pemberley* citizens clearly enjoy playing the Janeite game of deciphering intertextual references and have indeed created a whole

⁹⁹¹ Ibid, 190.

⁹⁹² Johnson, *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures*, 106.

⁹⁹³ Ibid, 107.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid, 107.

⁹⁹⁵ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 151 and 150.

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid, 191.

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid, 201.

⁹⁹⁸ See *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Nov 16, 2017, <http://archive.is/KAO2#selection-511.118-511.286>.

information page dedicated to ‘Allusions to Books and Authors in Jane Austen’s Writings’.⁹⁹⁹

Saler argues that ‘self-contained narratives’ with ‘elements of a serial narrative’ also facilitate immersion.¹⁰⁰⁰ The world Arthur Conan Doyle created, for example, was accessible to new readers because the *Sherlock Holmes* stories were self-contained but they also had an addictive serial element that would reinforce ‘the depth and familiarity of this particular imaginary world’.¹⁰⁰¹ Austen, of course, did not write a series, but her novels have what Brownstein calls a ‘serial quality’ because of the similarity of her settings (‘3 or 4 Families in a Country Village’) and of her courtship plots.¹⁰⁰² Janeites have enhanced the serial quality of her texts by turning Austen’s novels into a vast shared universe. For example, Sybil G. Brinton’s *Old Friends and New Fancies* (1913), ‘intertwines the lives of the most beloved characters from all six Austen novels’ in an epic ‘sequel’ where multiple heroes and heroines from different novels come together in matrimony at the novel’s end.¹⁰⁰³ This profic text can be read as an early example of Janeite world-building where readers enhance their immersive experience by situating the individual novels ‘within an overarching imaginary world as their referent’.¹⁰⁰⁴ As we will see in Chapter Four, contemporary digital adaptations of *P&P*, like *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (dir. Bernie Su; 2012-2013), also incorporate characters from Austen’s other novels, into a fictional shared universe, illustrating that Janeites continue to envision Austen’s novels as a series. As Janeites have used materials from all of Austen’s novels to build on Austenland it may seem as if the connection to *P&P* here is tangential. However, *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire* were created as a direct response to *P&P*, specifically Davies’s immersive version of *P&P*. Therefore, *P&P* has had the greatest influence on the expansion of virtual manifestations of Austenland online. Fans’ desire to expand on *P&P* has helped to carry Austen forward into new digital mediums ensuring her work stays relevant for the next generation of readers.

⁹⁹⁹ “Allusions to Books and Authors in Jane Austen’s Writings,” *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed March 8, 2018, <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/litallus.html>.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Saler, *As If*, 95.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid, 95.

¹⁰⁰² Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 68. Austen advised her niece that when constructing a novel ‘3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on’. Jane Austen, “Letter to Anna Austen,” September 9-18, 1814,” in *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 287.

¹⁰⁰³ Quote from blurb to Sybil G. Brinton, *Old Friends and New Fancies: An Imaginary Sequel to the Novels of Jane Austen* (London: Holden & Hardingham, 1913; Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2007). Citations refer to the Sourcebooks edition.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Saler, *As If*, 95.

Lost in Austenland: A Return Home?

Austenland is obviously immersive, but the conception of an imaginary world as ‘real’ also depends on an additional factor: ‘interactivity’. While immersion is about being ‘surrounded’ by the world of the text, interactivity is defined as ‘the power to modify this environment’.¹⁰⁰⁵ A printed text can deliver an ‘immersive’ experience for the reader but Ryan argues that ‘[w]hen applied to traditional forms of text – that is, preserved and transmitted in book form – “interactivity” remains a largely metaphorical concept’ because readers cannot modify the text.¹⁰⁰⁶ Yet, it can be argued that by rewriting *P&P* through fanfiction, Janeites have long been disrupting the traditional text by expanding on Austen’s narrative and that fanfiction is in a way, ‘interactive’ as well as ‘immersive’. The immersive and interactive nature of fans’ experience of *P&P* is commented on in online fanfiction from the 1990s, later profic novels such as *Austenland* (2007), as well as the four-part television series *Lost in Austen* (dir. Dan Zeff; 2008). These texts also register the important impact that Davies’s adaptation has had on readers’ conception of *P&P* and of Austenland.

In *Lost in Austen*, devoted Janeite Amanda Price enters the world of *P&P* through a portal in the bathroom of her London flat and becomes part of the evolving story. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Bennet takes a leave of absence from *P&P* and travels to twenty-first century London. This series is based on *Lost in Austen: Choose Your Own Jane Austen Adventure* (2007), an Austen profic text by Emma Campbell Webster in which readers’ answers to questions dictate the page they turn to. The journey begins in *P&P*, but the reader can cross the entire terrain of Austenland as the choice of where to go next can lead to other novels:

Choosing to walk home from Netherfield Hall means falling into *Sense and Sensibility* and the infatuating spell of Mr. Willoughby. Accepting an invitation to Bath leads to *Northanger Abbey* and the beguiling Henry Tilney. And just where will *Emma*’s Mr. Knightley fit in to the quest for a worthy husband? It’s all up to the reader.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ryan, “Immersion vs. Interactivity: Virtual Reality and Literary Theory,” 111.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Marie-Laure Ryan, *Immersion vs. Interactivity: Virtual Reality and Literary Theory*, 1994, accessed July 17, 2017 <http://faculty.humanities.uci.edu/poster/syllabi/readings/ryan.html>.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Book description for Emma Campbell Webster, *Lost in Austen: Choose Your Own Jane Austen Adventure* (New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 2007), quoted on *Amazon*, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://www.amazon.com/Lost-Austen-Create-Your-Adventure/dp/1594482586>.

This text is interactive as well as immersive as it invites the reader into Austen's world, and then allows her to explore routes not taken by the author. In the television adaptation, Amanda's experience emulates that of the fan or fanfiction writer as she can rewrite the story through her interactions.

Amanda is initially dismayed to find that her presence in the world of the text disrupts Austen's perfectly plotted novel: Mr. Bingley dances with Amanda, not Jane, at the Ball; Jane settles for marriage with Mr. Collins having been rejected by Bingley; and a sapphic Caroline Bingley pursues Amanda, after a misunderstanding leads her to believe that she is interested in women. Most disastrously of all, Darcy falls in love with Amanda causing her to fret that 'the entire world will hate [her]' because she is not Elizabeth.¹⁰⁰⁸ Amanda tries to convince Elizabeth to return to the story, but Austen's heroine does not wish to take her part back, believing that the understudy fits into the world of the text better than the original star. The twenty-first century reader fits into the world of *P&P* better than Elizabeth because as a devoted fan, Amanda knows this world better than any of the characters within the novel and can therefore learn to navigate its environs. Additionally, as discussed earlier, the world of ritualized romance holds a nostalgic attraction for the contemporary fan that it naturally does not hold for Elizabeth. The first sentence of *P&P* makes it clear that marriage for Elizabeth and her sisters is a social and economic necessity, implying as it does 'that a single woman without a fortune is...obliged to find a husband to support her.'¹⁰⁰⁹ Austen's most unconventional heroine is better suited to life in contemporary London where she has a chance of gaining economic independence through means other than marriage. In the end, Amanda chooses to return to Pemberley for good and live happily ever after with Mr. Darcy while Elizabeth takes her own story in a new direction.

Amanda's desire to get lost in Austen derives from a longing to extend the pleasure of the text and to enhance her identification with the world Austen created. As she tells her boyfriend in the first episode:

I'm not hung up about Darcy. I do not sit at home with the pause button on Colin Firth in clingy pants, okay? I love the love story. I love Elizabeth. I love the manners and language and the courtesy. It's become part of who I am and what I want.¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁸ Guy Andrews (scriptwriter), *Lost in Austen*, miniseries, dir. Dan Zeff, (Mammoth Screen Ltd. (ITV), September 3-24, 2008).

¹⁰⁰⁹ Browstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 21.

¹⁰¹⁰ Andrews (scriptwriter), "Episode One", *Lost in Austen*.

Amanda's statement about not being 'hung up' on Colin Firth, does not mean that Davies's adaptation is not an important influence on her understanding of *P&P*, but it is not her main point of entry to the text. Amanda reads the novel *and* watches the series. She is first pictured reading Austen's novel but when she is 'lost' in the world of *P&P* she demonstrates her love of Davies's adaptation by asking Darcy to jump in the pond so she can enjoy a 'postmodern moment'.¹⁰¹¹

There are in fact a number of subtle references to the 1995 adaptation within the *Lost in Austen* series. For example, Amanda wears a bonnet and a tan spencer (short, fitted jacket) originally worn by Jennifer Ehle, the actress who played Elizabeth in Davies's adaptation, and Elizabeth wears a plaid spencer originally worn by Susannah Harker, who played Jane Bennet in the 1995 adaptation.¹⁰¹² Cartmell observes that in *Lost in Austen*, costume 'functions to recall other adaptations, covertly inviting the viewer to contemplate the process of adaptation itself and, especially, how far it has come from fruitlessly maintaining the illusion of stemming from a single source text.'¹⁰¹³ We are reminded that *P&P* has become an ever-expanding archive, or world, that has multiple points of entry. In the 'text as world' metaphor, 'the text is apprehended as a window on something that exists outside language and extends in time and space well beyond the window frame'.¹⁰¹⁴ Mark J.P. Wolf argues that multiple 'media windows' such as television shows, film adaptations, tie-in books, and websites open up 'portals through which [imaginary worlds] grow in clarity and detail, inviting us to enter and tempting us to stay'.¹⁰¹⁵ Austen adaptations, fanfiction, and profic texts provide new 'windows' from which to view *P&P*, providing fans with the opportunity to picture it with greater clarity. For Amanda, Davies's adaptation functions as another 'media window' that she uses to enhance, not replace, her experience of the novel. The experience of immersing herself in different versions of the text deepens her enjoyment of *P&P* without causing her to lose her awareness that she is inhabiting a fictional world, made 'real' only through her interactions with it.

In *Lost in Austen*, inhabiting Austenland is ultimately represented as restorative because it allows the Austen fan to fully invest in the world of a beloved text. However,

¹⁰¹¹ Andrews (scriptwriter), "Episode Three", *Lost in Austen*.

¹⁰¹² Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations*, 107.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid*, 107.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* 2, 63.

¹⁰¹⁵ Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 1-2.

in Hales's *Austenland* the 'return home' is treated as a less fulfilling experience. *Austenland* addresses one of the central questions raised by this chapter in relation to the experience of nostalgia: 'how can one be homesick for a home that one never had?'¹⁰¹⁶ American Janeite Jane Hayes has certainly never experienced the Regency era, yet she dreams of 'living in Austen's world' and is given the chance to do so when an elderly relation, who guesses at her *P&P* obsession, bequeaths her an 'all-inclusive, three-week vacation in England' in her will.¹⁰¹⁷ Jane's love of *P&P* is very explicitly inspired by Davies's 'pesky movie version' of the novel:¹⁰¹⁸

Sure, Jane had first read *Pride and Prejudice* when she was sixteen, read it a dozen times since...But it wasn't until the BBC put a face on the story that those gentlemen in tight breeches had stepped out of her reader's imagination and into her nonfiction hopes.¹⁰¹⁹

Despite some initial reservations, Jane decides to try to overcome her Darcy/Colin Firth obsession by fully immersing herself in the secluded Austen theme park where 'Prince Regent still rules a carefree England' and where guests can enjoy 'the country manners and hospitality – a tea visit, a dance or two, a turn in the park, an unexpected meeting with a certain gentleman, all culminating with a ball'.¹⁰²⁰ The 'certain gentleman' that Jane meets is the actor 'Mr. Nobley', a Darcy surrogate who appears aloof and disapproving at first, but who is gradually revealed to be the true hero of the tale.

Jane is determined to enjoy her immersion therapy. However, she is immediately disappointed by the fulfilment of her desire to inhabit Austenland. Although her elegant Regency room at Pembroke Park 'was exactly the kind of room Jane would have imagined...this discovery was disappointing.'¹⁰²¹ She is shocked to find that after all the 'years [she] had fantasized about an Austenland', she feels like 'an outsider' within the borders of this enchanted land.¹⁰²² Jane feels increasingly disaffected as she immerses herself further in Austenland:

Part of the Experience was the life of leisure, she knew, but she was an adopted New Yorker, an heiress to the Puritan work ethic, and doing next to nothing all

¹⁰¹⁶ Boym, *Nostalgia*, xiii.

¹⁰¹⁷ Hale, *Austenland*, 62 and 13.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*, 62.

day was taking its toll. She had begun to daydream of the oddest things: washing her clothes in the sink when all her building's laundry machines were occupied; the hot, human smell of a full subway; eating a banana from a street vendor; buying a disposable umbrella in a downpour.¹⁰²³

In contrast to Amanda Price whose decision to live forever in Austen's world brings her contentment, Jane Hayes is 'forlorn and pathetic in make-believe England'.¹⁰²⁴ Jane is motivated to immerse herself in the Regency era both to help 'cure' herself of what she perceives to be a dangerous Darcy obsession, and to indulge a nostalgic longing for 'a carefree England'.¹⁰²⁵ Boym argues that people who experience nostalgia seek to repair 'longing with final belonging' but argues that a real return home will always disappoint because nostalgia is a 'romance with one's own fantasy'.¹⁰²⁶ Consequently, '[n]ostalgic love can *only* survive a long distance relationship' because reality will never live up to fantasy.¹⁰²⁷ Living in Regency England cannot possibly match Jane's fantasy as she is confronted with the tedium of women's circumscribed lives in the nineteenth century.

Interestingly, like Amanda Price who is fulfilled by her Austenland experience, the denizens of virtual versions of *Austenland* do *not* feel disappointed by the return home. Janeite Deborah Yaffe states that: '[t]he first time I read Pemberley's epigraph ("Your haven in a world programmed to misunderstand obsession with things Austen"), I knew I was home.'¹⁰²⁸ I would argue that Janeites' desire to inhabit Austenland is not ultimately motivated by the nostalgia that attracts heritage enthusiasts, and therefore going 'home' does not disappoint. Janeites immerse themselves in Austenland to deepen their emotional investment in an imaginary world and are therefore 'delighted but not deluded' because they retain their critical awareness even while engaging in make-believe.

Both *Lost in Austen* and *Austenland* 'enjoyed considerable success in the Austen fandom.'¹⁰²⁹ *Austenland* was followed by a sequel entitled *Midnight in Austenland* (2012) and was adapted into a film of the same name in 2013 while *Lost in Austen* was

¹⁰²³ Ibid, 75.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid, 63.

¹⁰²⁵ Hale, *Austenland*, 13.

¹⁰²⁶ Boym, *Nostalgia*, x.

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid, x (emphasis mine).

¹⁰²⁸ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, xiv.

¹⁰²⁹ Maddalena Pennacchia, "Recreating Jane: 'Austenland' and the Regency Theme Park," *Purloined Letters: An International Journal of Quotation Studies*, no. 16 (December 2017): 147.

voted one of ‘the top 50 TV shows of the noughties’.¹⁰³⁰ *Lost in Austen* has also received critical praise from Austen critics for the way ‘it plays intelligently with our contemporary intermedial fascination with Austen.’¹⁰³¹ Kathryn Sutherland states that:

The idea that a book absorbs us as we read is familiar enough. But the opportunity literally to enter its pages and eject the heroine in the process offers unusual scope – both for our understanding of how fiction works and for developing a more critical relationship to adaptation.¹⁰³²

Lost in Austen and *Austenland* are interesting reworkings of *P&P* because they dramatise the reading experience of being immersed in the world of the text, as well as commenting on Janeite nostalgia. However, it is important to note that online fanfiction explored the experience of being ‘lost in Austenland’ a decade before these ‘innovative’ profic texts and television adaptations, demonstrating that online fanfiction can anticipate future trends in commercial culture and offer valuable insight into what contemporary fans get from *P&P*.

A search through the *Derbyshire* archives reveals that numerous stories posted in the mid-to late 1990s explore the phenomenon of being lost in Austenland. ‘Trapped in Netherfield’ by Annie, for example, follows an almost identical plot pattern to *Lost in Austen*: a Janeite named Maggie time travels to the world of *P&P* and replaces Elizabeth in the story.¹⁰³³ Maggie has a copy of *P&P* with her when she enters the world of the text and finds that the story is being rewritten as she interacts with the characters. Maggie realises to her horror that her involvement in the storyworld has transformed Austen’s comedy of manners into a melodramatic gothic romance. Maggie divulges her knowledge of Wickham’s sordid past to Elizabeth too early, Wickham realises the error of his ways, falls genuinely in love with Elizabeth, and ‘[t]he rest of the novel, then, was a peculiar story about the reformation of a rake.’¹⁰³⁴ Maggie stops reading in disgust, declaring: ‘*Dear God, this is so stupid! Jane Austen would never*

¹⁰³⁰ Andrew Billen and David Charter, “The top 50 TV shows of the Noughties,” *The Times*, December 19, 2009, accessed June 2, 2010, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/#section-arts?region=ie&>.

¹⁰³¹ Kathryn Sutherland, “Jane Austen on Screen,” *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 221.

¹⁰³² *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁰³³ Annie, “Trapped at Netherfield,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, August 29, 1997, accessed August 14, 2017, <http://thedwg.com/derby/olda/annie2.htm>.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*

*have written this! This is so Gothic-like, so vapid, so...ridiculous!*¹⁰³⁵ Austen fanfiction texts are commonly criticised by Austen critics for feeling ‘like throwbacks to the Gothic and sentimental novels that Austen loved to burlesque’ and thus feeling ‘in their sensationalism, strangely pre – rather than post – Austen.’¹⁰³⁶ Maggie’s comment is possibly a commentary on fans’ awareness of criticisms of the fanfiction genre. ‘The Superfluous Assumption, or The Adventures of Cassandra’ by Aja is similar in scope to the previous story. An Austen fan who is chided by her friends for ‘living in daydreams’ falls asleep only to wake up in an imaginary world: ‘Austenland’.¹⁰³⁷ Likewise, ‘The Mirror has Two Sides’ by Cat sees an American Janeite buy an ‘enchanted’ mirror from England, which reflects the world of *P&P*.¹⁰³⁸

Some of the ‘Austenland’ stories consciously reference Davies’s adaptation, rather than Austen’s novel, demonstrating once again that *P&P2*, as it is known in the Austen fandom, was early accepted as part of the *P&P* archive. For example, ‘P&P2 Addicts in Darcyland’ by Jake is a short sketch in which American fans of Davies’s adaptation enter the world of *P&P* and head straight for Mr. Darcy, ignoring the other characters.¹⁰³⁹ Katy, Cheryl, Amy, Kim, Candace, and Leslie, the ‘P&P2 Addicts’ referenced in the story, are all real members of the *Derbyshire* fanfiction writing community, illustrating the Janeite love of in-jokes. ‘A Party at Pemberley’ features fans from the *Derbyshire* community as the honoured guests at Darcy’s stately home.¹⁰⁴⁰ This story was written collaboratively by several fanfiction writers, all of whom feature in the tale itself. Again, the story is clearly written for knowing fans. There are allusions to the original fan bulletin board used by the community, which had crashed due to too much fan traffic, as well as references to the famous pond scene from Davies’s adaptation.¹⁰⁴¹ In ‘Austen Adventures in Wonderland’ by Nicky, an explicit connection is made between the magic of Lewis Carroll’s ‘Wonderland’ and the enchantment of ‘the tales of Austenland’, both of which are accessible by a rabbit

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁶ Lynch, “Sequels,” 164.

¹⁰³⁷ Aja, “The Superfluous Assumption, or The Adventures of Cassandra,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, January 25, 1999, accessed August 14, 2017, <http://thedwg.com/derby/oldc/aja1.htm>.

¹⁰³⁸ Cat, “The Mirror has Two Sides,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, November 30, 1997, accessed August 14, 2017, <http://thedwg.com/derby/olda/cat1.htm>.

¹⁰³⁹ Jake, “P&P2 Addicts in Darcyland,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, February 2, 1997, accessed August 14, 2017, <http://thedwg.com/derby/olda/jake.htm>.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Katy Kendell, Cheryl Sneed, and Candace, “A Party at Pemberley,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, November 30, 1996, accessed August 14, 2017, <http://thedwg.com/derby/olda/collect2.htm>.

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

hole.¹⁰⁴² The *Derbyshire Writers' Guild* contains many more 'tales in Austenland' in which fans expand on the world of their favourite author, while playfully commenting on their own fannish activities. These stories allow readers and writers to deepen their emotional investment in the imaginary world of Austenland and to form stronger communal ties with each other by sharing the experience of being lost in the text. The referential nature of the texts exemplifies the continuing importance of intertextual references, allusions, and in-jokes to the 'family circle' mode of Janeite response.

Austenland: 'Utopian England' or 'Mental America'

The texts referenced above are predominantly by American authors, meaning that the 'Austenland' in these fictional accounts accommodates a distinctly American perspective.¹⁰⁴³ As noted in the Literature Review chapter, Favret argues that for many American readers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Austen represented 'freedom and the pursuit of happiness' and therefore evoked 'the idea of the New World'.¹⁰⁴⁴ Building on Favret's argument that American readers 'incorporate Austen into the pursuit of pleasure...and the possibility of creating a new world', I would argue that Austenland is, for some contemporary American fans, tantamount to a 'mental America', as evidenced by the number of stories by American writers that represent Austen's parallel world as a second home.¹⁰⁴⁵ Central to Favret's argument is the idea that although Austen is a quintessentially English writer, her nationality is 'pliable or even eradicable' because readers have 'performed their own Americanness by accepting Austen as part of their own'.¹⁰⁴⁶ In her research on Austen reception, Johnson has likewise revealed that readers outside of England claimed Austen as one of their own, demonstrating that 'the attachment to the local, to the dust of one's neighbourhood that Austen's novels both exemplify and produce, was transposable to other national

¹⁰⁴² Nicky, "Austen Adventures in Wonderland," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, December 3, 1997, accessed August 14, 2017, <https://www.dwiggie.com/derby/olde/nicky.htm>.

¹⁰⁴³ All of the Austenland texts referenced in the previous paragraphs were written and archived in the 1990s. Some of these writers do not currently have biographical profiles on the *Derbyshire* 'Baronetage' page. However, any writers that currently have profiles, list their nationality as American. "Baronetage," *Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed August 14, 2017, <https://www.dwiggie.com/baronetage/>.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Favret, "Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America," 168 and 177.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 177.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 167.

contexts.¹⁰⁴⁷ Austenland can transform from an idealised version of England to a utopian representation of America because of the way American fanfiction writers appropriate her world in their texts for their own uses. I would argue that the lack of period detail in Austen's novels discussed earlier is a contributing factor to Austenland being readily transposable to America.

Harman argues that Austen *deliberately* pared down the detail in her novels because she knew this 'would give her narratives more imaginative flexibility'.¹⁰⁴⁸ She points out that Austen was familiar with the struggle of reworking old material for publication, such as the oft-revised manuscript for *P&P*, which Austen critics speculate may have been drafted in 1796-7 and 'perhaps altered extensively in the early 1800s'.¹⁰⁴⁹ She contends that this experience of reworking old material for publication 'made [Austen] study to avoid period-specific detail so that readers would not be perturbed by outdated references in her books'.¹⁰⁵⁰ An additional side effect of this pared down detail is that her novels can appear strangely unfixed in time and place. Indeed, even Austen's nineteenth century reviewers interpreted her Regency England as belonging to an 'old world'. For example, an anonymous reviewer wrote in 1866 that: 'One of the greatest charms to us of Miss Austen's novels is the complete changes of scene they afford: we are transferred at once to an old world which we can scarcely believe was England only half-a-century ago.'¹⁰⁵¹ Harman argues that for fans from the nineteenth century onwards: "'Jane Austen Country" was rural, certainly, green, pleasant...but its potency resided in remaining amorphous'.¹⁰⁵² Of course, critics such as Marilyn Butler, Alistair Duckworth, Margaret Kirkham, Claudia Johnson, and Roger Sales, have carefully situated Austen in her historical context by showing that she was connected to the political and literary issues of her time. Nevertheless, James Thompson argues that even in academic criticism 'Austen has traditionally been contextless, a never-never land on the fold between history and modernity, touching but not part of either'.¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁴⁷ Johnson, *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures*, 112. Johnson gives the example of Irish political activists who expressed admiration for Austen's novels in the period leading up to the 1916 Easter Rising. Their 'passion for "Jane" was consistent with armed nationalist insurgency against Jane's England', demonstrating that Austen can be transported to different national contexts.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 221.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Janet Todd, *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 221.

¹⁰⁵¹ Anonymous reviewer, quoted in Thompson, "How to Do Things with Jane Austen," 21.

¹⁰⁵² Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 189.

¹⁰⁵³ Thompson, "How to Do Things with Austen," 21.

The ‘contextless’ nature of Austen-land is most vividly captured by the illustration of an old-fashioned fingerpost that Ellen Hill used to point the way to ‘Austen-land’. (See Figure 23) Harman reasons that Hill ‘might easily have added an identical pointer in every direction’ because Austen-land is a no-where-land that has become divorced from its original time period and geographical location.¹⁰⁵⁴ Austenland can therefore be adapted to accommodate the American perspective of fanfiction writers in online fandom, and reconceived of as a utopian version of America.¹⁰⁵⁵ Saler argues that in order for a world to be immersive it ‘must be untethered to mundane reality’ so that the reader is inspired to imaginatively engage with it but the world must also be ‘empirically grounded’ so that it seems convincing in its details.¹⁰⁵⁶ Like the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, which have also proved ‘amenable to prolonged and ironic habitation’, Austen’s novels describe localities that are ‘of this world, yet also unworldly’.¹⁰⁵⁷ Her novels are grounded in small ‘knowable communities’, where characters ‘rarely venture north of the Watford Gap’, making them seem realistic to the reader.¹⁰⁵⁸ (See Figure 24) Yet, her world also has a fairy tale quality because it can be conceived of as ‘a charmed place fixed in a curious sort of time warp.’¹⁰⁵⁹ The appropriation of Austen’s world by American writers suggests that in the realm of Austen fandom at least, she is not just ‘England’s Jane’, she is also ‘America’s Jane’.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 189.

¹⁰⁵⁵ The relocation of Austenland to America is even evident in Austen tourism. For example, *Jane Austen Weekends*, a holiday package aimed at Janeites since 2013, invites fans to ‘slip quietly back into Regency England’ whilst experiencing a stay at the Governor’s House in Hyde Park, *Vermont. Jane Austen Weekends*, accessed Dec 1, 2017, <https://www.onehundredmain.com/events/event/jane-austen-character-weekend/>.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Saler, *As If*, 33.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 32 and 33. Saler says of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories that: ‘Holmes’s adventures were not allegorical, and his imaginary world was as cosily self-contained as a snow globe’.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Raymond Williams has argued that canonical novels offer readers ‘knowable communities’, in the sense that the ‘novelist offers to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways.’ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011), 163; Infographic of ‘key journeys’ in Austen’s novels compiled by Adam Frost, Jim Kynvin, and Amy Watt, “Jane Austen’s Facts and Figures in Charts,” *The Guardian*, July 18, 2017, accessed August 20, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2017/jul/18/jane-austens-facts-and-figures-in-charts>.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 75.

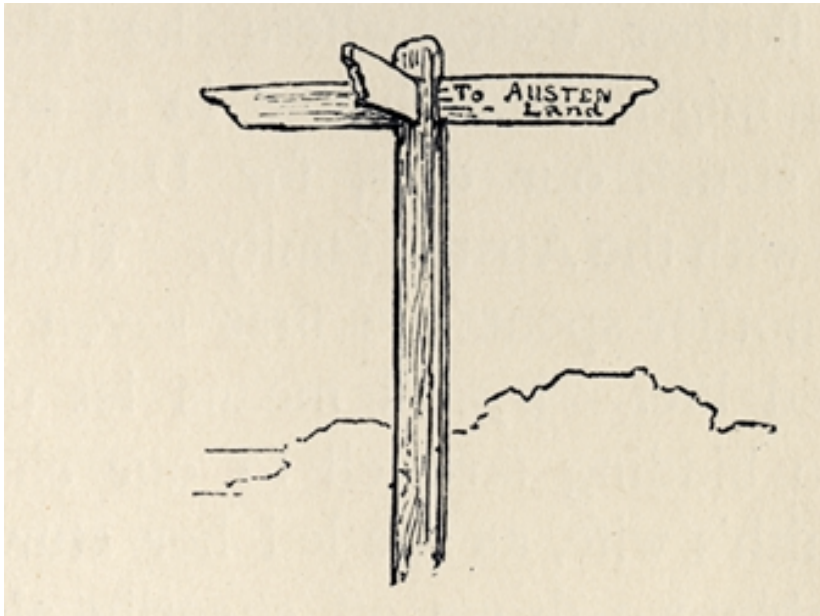


Figure 23: Ellen Hill's Signpost to 'Austen-land', from Constance Hill's *Jane Austen: Her Home and her Friends* (1902)

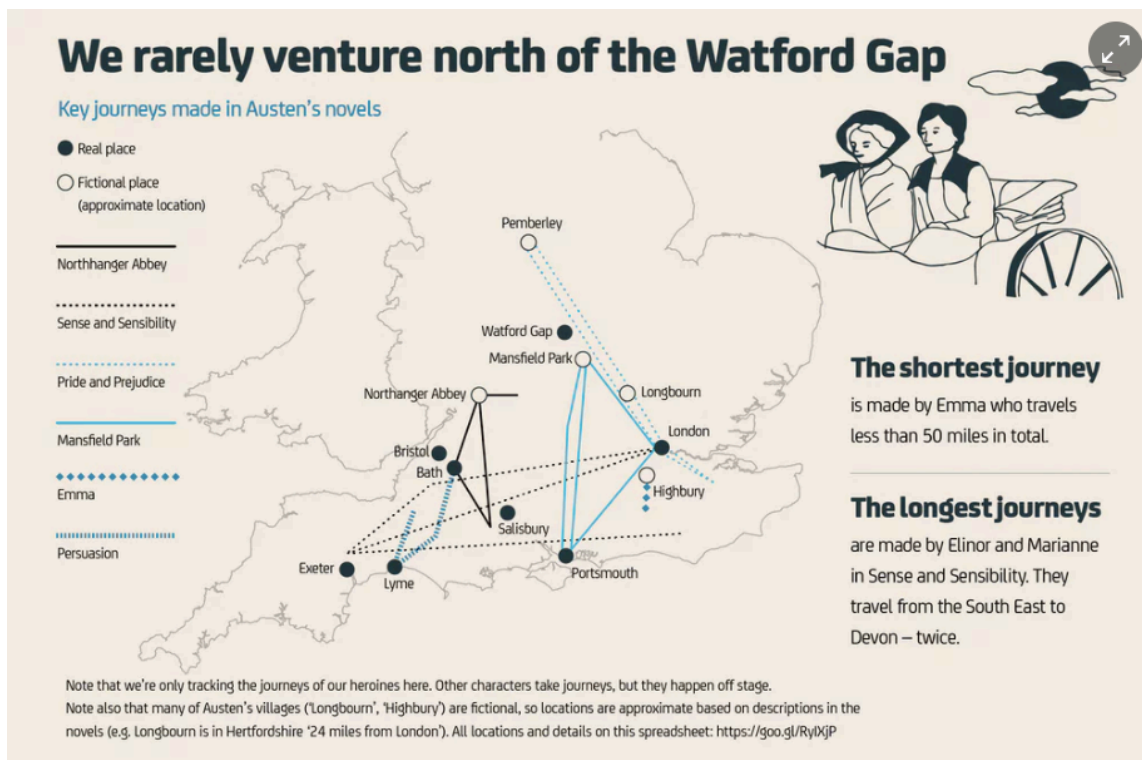


Figure 24: Infographic of key journeys taken by Austen's characters compiled by Adam Frost, Jim Kynvin, and Amy Watt

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, Davies's *P&P* is a pliable text capable of producing a multiplicity of meanings and appealing to diverse audiences. The series paid homage to the aesthetic charms of heritage England and promoted National Trust nostalgia through the invocation of the English country house, in this case Pemberley, as representative of 'a stable, hierarchically ordered society'.¹⁰⁶⁰ Anti-heritage critics therefore interpreted the series as a conservative adaptation supporting an imperialist view of the past. However, the series also celebrated 'New England' and challenged traditional national values like restraint, through its gleeful celebration of emotional expression and personal fulfilment through the figure of Mr. Darcy, meaning that the adaptation spoke very effectively to an English audience that was experiencing a transitional phase in its conception of national identity. General audiences for heritage film in the U.S. were encouraged to look upon Austen's England as a brand to be consumed, rather than as a real period within England's history. For fans of Austen coming to the series from the novels, Davies's adaptation offered a chance for them to further immerse themselves in 'Austenland', the imaginary world for which Janeites have long been searching. For these fans, a longing to inhabit Austen's world did not necessarily entail nostalgia for 'Heritage England', but rather a desire to build a utopian version of America. Of all Austen's novels, the 'light and bright and sparkling' *P&P* best exemplifies the pursuit of better happiness, and of all the Austen adaptations, Davies's *P&P* most fully realises Austen's exemplary world on screen. The novel, and Davies's adaptation of the novel, therefore have special significance amongst Austen fans seeking greater immersion in Austenland.

The following chapter will look at the next significant peak in *P&P* profic and fanfiction: vampire romance and zombie adaptations published in the late noughties. Following the 2008 financial crash, *P&P* was populated by legions of vampires and zombies, the 'monsters of the recession', by American writers who knew that one way to survive the economic downturn was to exploit the commercial potential of the ever-bankable Austen. As well as exploring tensions arising from the exploitation of the

¹⁰⁶⁰ Crang, "Placing Jane Austen, Displacing England," 113.

‘Jane Austen’ brand name, the chapter will consider the continuing influence of Davies's adaptation on the growth of the *P&P* archive, and Darcy’s influence on the generic identity of the romantic vampire in the vampire romance genre.

Chapter Three: ‘Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?’ – Zombies and Vampires Invade *Pride and Prejudice*

In the economic doldrums, it is the eminently bankable Austen’s blessing and curse to be constantly applied and misapplied. Jane-anything sells out.¹⁰⁶¹

In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash, Seth Grahame-Smith’s ‘mashup’ novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009, *PPZ* hereafter), seemed to confirm that even in times of economic hardship ‘Jane-anything’ will indeed sell out.¹⁰⁶² *PPZ* became a *New York Times* bestseller upon its release and occupied the top position in Amazon’s “Movers and Shakers” chart, which identifies the items moving fastest up the sales rank.¹⁰⁶³ Indeed, the demand for the novel was so high that it necessitated the publishers ordering a second print run before the book’s UK release.¹⁰⁶⁴ *PPZ* also spawned a host of hideous progeny including a graphic novel, a deluxe heirloom edition, a video game, a book of postcards, a prequel called *Dawn of the Dreadfuls* (2010), a sequel entitled *Dreadfully Ever After* (2011), and a long-anticipated film adaptation which finally debuted in 2016.¹⁰⁶⁵ The unexpected success of *PPZ*, the monster mashup trend’s ‘patient zero’, incentivised publishers to take advantage of a lucrative trend. Following a zombie-like ‘model of viral contagion’, more classics mutated into monstrous new forms.¹⁰⁶⁶ *Jane Eyre* (1847) became *Jane Slayre* (2010); *Wuthering Heights* (1847) transformed into *Wuthering Bites* (2010); and Louisa May Alcott’s children’s classic was soon overrun by shapeshifters in *Little Women and Werewolves* (2010). Although

¹⁰⁶¹ Sarah Ball, “Book Review: Jane Austen's Zombie Mashups,” *Newsweek*, Feb 26, 2010, accessed Sept 27, 2016, <http://europe.newsweek.com/book-review-jane-austens-zombie-mashups-75345?rm=eu>.

¹⁰⁶² Carolyn Kellogg, “Pride and Prejudice and Zombies by Seth Grahame-Smith,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 2009, accessed July 31, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-zombies4-2009apr04-story.html>. The term ‘mashup’ is borrowed from the remix culture of the music industry. It was first used to describe *PPZ* by Kellogg in her review of the novel. *PPZ* is credited as inaugurating the mashup genre.; See also: Jennifer Malia, “Jane Austen Monster Mash-ups and Supernatural Spin-offs,” *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 21. A mashup ‘combines text that uses the tropes of another genre, such as horror, with the text of a pre-existing work of literature into one story.’

¹⁰⁶³ Alison Flood, “Jane Austen in zombie rampage up the book charts,” *The Guardian*, April 9, 2009, accessed Aug 25, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/apr/09/austen-zombie-pride-prejudice>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁵ Rumours of a film adaptation started as early as 2009, with actress Natalie Portman attached to the project. The film was eventually made with British actress Lily James. Michael Fleming, “Natalie Portman to slay zombies,” *Variety*, Dec 10, 2009, accessed Oct 10, 2016, <http://variety.com/2009/film/news/natalie-portman-to-slay-zombies-1118012601/>.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz, “Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse,” in *Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture*, eds. Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz (Jefferson/London: McFarland & Company, 2011), 3.

the viral strain that originated in *PPZ* did not remain quarantined in Austen's world, her novels proved to be especially susceptible to contagion. *PPZ* begot *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* (2009) by Ben H. Winters; *Mansfield Park and Mummies* (2009) by Vera Nazarian; *Emma and the Werewolves* (2009) by Adam Rann; *Northanger Abbey and Angels and Dragons* (2010) by Vera Nazarin; as well as an anthology of Gothic novellas based on Austen's novels called *Bespelling Jane* (2010).

Unsurprisingly, *P&P* was subject to more monster attacks than any other Austen novel, demonstrating once again that the characters from Austen's signature novel have an exceptional capacity to survive beyond the final pages through resurrection in increasingly inventive stories. 'Paranormal romance', described as 'romantic fictions which feature overtly supernatural elements', became a prominent *P&P* production trend.¹⁰⁶⁷ Books such as *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (2009) by Amanda Grange and *Vampire Darcy's Desire* (2009) by Regina Jeffers helped sate fans' appetite for such fictions. John Kessel's Nebula Award-winning *Frankenstein/P&P* crossover 'Pride and Prometheus' (2008) also took Austen into Gothic territory. In this reimagining, Victor Frankenstein, the single 'dark, brooding young man' whom Mary Bennet meets at a ball, *is* in search of a wife, just not for himself: he is looking for a body to harvest so he can construct a mate for his monstrous creature.¹⁰⁶⁸ There were numerous other monster-riddled retellings of *P&P* released in the late noughties such as *Georgina and the Wolf: Pride and Prejudice Continues* (2012) by Marsha Altman, *Pride and Platypus: Mr Darcy's Dreadful Secret* (2012) by Vera Nazarian, and *Mrs Darcy versus the Aliens* (2011) by Jonathan Pinnock. As peaks in *P&P* profic connect to broader production trends in popular culture, this chapter will consider what the surge in monster mashup and paranormal romance *P&P* profic can tell us about readers' cultural preoccupations in the post-crash period. Most of the writers who participated in this Austen publishing trend were American meaning that it is regarded as 'unmistakably an American phenomenon'.¹⁰⁶⁹ Placing these texts in their socio-economic and cultural context will allow us to better appreciate the cultural factors behind Austen's special appeal to American writers and readers in the late noughties.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 8.

¹⁰⁶⁸ John Kessel, "Pride and Prometheus," in John Kessel, *The Baum Plan for Financial Independence and Other Stories* (Easthampton: Small Beer Press, 2008), 280.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 178.

Zombies and vampires enjoyed a particularly intensive phase of cultural saturation in America at the beginning of the economic recession. Therefore, although Austen's novels were infested by a host of different monsters in the late noughties from mummies and werewolves to dragons and sea monsters, this chapter will have a specific focus on texts featuring zombies and vampires as they have the potential to offer the greatest insight into the cultural moment. Grahame-Smith's zombie mashup was a bestseller while Grange's *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* and Jeffers's *Vampire Darcy's Desire* were written in dialogue with Stephenie Meyer's bestselling *Twilight* series (2005-2008). The chapter will focus on these texts as the bestseller 'is the fiction that most becomes its period and which is most caught in its own age' and therefore can tell us the most about what readers felt strongly about in the post-crash period.¹⁰⁷⁰ The commercial value of these texts also inevitably reignited old debates about the ways in which the 'eminently bankable' Austen has been commodified in popular culture. Over a decade ago, Lynch made the claim that 'the history of Austen sequels – and, in particular the timing of the up-turns in their production – seems to confirm a cynical understanding of sequel writing as the literati's closest approximation to a get-rich-quick scheme.'¹⁰⁷¹ The chapter will explore tensions arising from the exploitation of Austen's name by seemingly strategic writers who knew that one way to survive the recession was to use 'Jane Austen' as a form of branding. By considering changes in how Austen was marketed and sold during this period, the chapter will also address questions about the relationship between 'canonical' and 'popular' literature raised by the monster invasion of the classics.

P&P profic can obviously provide valuable insight into the cultural atmosphere and industrial trends of late-noughties America but, as Hills suggests, placing too much importance on socio-historical analysis 'means downplaying (or rejecting outright) the possibility that transhistorical structures of meaning-making could be significant' in the maintenance of a myth as well.¹⁰⁷² Resurrecting Austen's characters is a Janeite practice that has persisted since the earliest days of Austen fandom and is a response to Austen's confidential writing style, rather than a phenomenon that is tied to a specific socio-cultural moment. In the late noughties, fans self-consciously employed the language of the (un)dead to playfully comment on the

¹⁰⁷⁰ Bloom, *Bestsellers*, 15.

¹⁰⁷¹ Lynch, "Sequels," 161.

¹⁰⁷² Hills, "Sherlock 'Content' Onscreen," 72.

regenerative abilities of Austen's characters and also to explore the lively afterlife of Davies's pond-diving Darcy. The texts commenting on the lasting cultural legacy of Davies's adaptation of *P&P* also invite a consideration of how Darcy has developed into a 'virtual reality character' that has escaped the bonds of Austen's original novel. The chapter will first look at the cultural factors that allowed zombie and vampire cultural products to flourish before looking more specifically at how Austen circulates in this discourse of the undead.

From Outliers to Mainstream Monsters – Zombies and Vampires in Popular Culture

Zombies and vampires saturated literature, film, television, and other aspects of popular culture in the late noughties. Joseph Crawford notes that after the success of *Twilight* 'paranormal romances came to be written in such volume that they rapidly established themselves as a new bookstore category, with a new section – sometimes labelled "paranormal romance" and sometimes "dark fantasy" but always awash with novels featuring red, white, and black covers', a colour scheme that was brought into vogue by *Twilight*'s distinctive book covers.¹⁰⁷³ The first three books in the *Vampire Diaries* series, originally released in 1991-1992, were re-released in 2009 with red, white, and black packaging to appeal to the established *Twilight* market. Rachel Caine's *Morganville Vampires* (2006-2014) also employed this colour-scheme as did Cassandra Clare's *The Mortal Instruments* (2007-2014); Yvonne Woon's *Dead Beautiful* (2010-2014); and Joann I. Martin Sowles's *Brookehaven Vampires* (2010-2013). Vampires also permeated film and television during this period. The film adaptation of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* premiered in 2008, becoming the highest grossing female-directed film ever in its opening weekend.¹⁰⁷⁴ The *Twilight* film franchise continued to dominate the box office over the next few years as further instalments were released while vampire films such as *Daybreakers* (2009), *Thirst* (2009), and *Let the Right One In* (2010) received critical acclaim. The small screen was also infiltrated by the undead. *True Blood* (2008-2014), the award-winning vampire series based on Charlaine Harris's

¹⁰⁷³ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 4.

¹⁰⁷⁴ "Twilight debuts in No. 1 slot at box office," CCN, Nov 23, 2008, accessed Nov 21, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081211091707/http://www.cnn.com/2008/SHOWBIZ/Movies/11/23/boxoffice.ap/>.

The Southern Vampire Mysteries (2001-2013), began airing in 2008. In addition, the supernatural high-school drama *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2016), based on the novels by L.J. Smith, was broadcast on The CW television network.

Zombies likewise pervaded popular culture in the late noughties.¹⁰⁷⁵ Zombie films like *Quarantine* (dir. John Erick Dowdle; 2008), a remake of the 2007 Spanish film *REC* (dir. Jaume Balagueró i Bernat), and *Zombieland* (dir. Ruben Samuel Fleischer; 2009), were box office successes while franchises such as the *Living Dead* (1968-2009), *REC* (2007-2014), and *Resident Evil* (2002-2016) all released further instalments around this time.¹⁰⁷⁶ The zombie apocalypse saga *The Walking Dead* (2010-present) also achieved commercial and critical acclaim while zombie games like *Plants vs Zombies* (2009-present) gained mass appeal with children and adults.¹⁰⁷⁷ People even actively entered the zombie narrative themselves by participating in zombie parades and zombie runs on a mass scale. 2009 saw numerous Guinness World Records set for the largest gatherings of zombies in one spot.¹⁰⁷⁸ The cultural takeover of the zombie was further highlighted in 2009 at the premiere of ZomBcon International, the world's first convention recognising and celebrating 'zombie culture'.¹⁰⁷⁹

The transformation of zombies and vampires from gothic outsiders to Americanised mainstream monsters constitutes an important factor in the dominance of the undead. In their earliest incarnations zombies and vampires were represented as 'outsider' figures but in contemporary American popular culture these creatures are no longer a reviled "other", but rather have symbolic appeal as "one of us". Zombies have their origins in Haitian culture and first shuffled into Western popular culture through pulp fiction and Hollywood B-movies in the 1930s. These early zombie films were influenced by sensationalised accounts of Voodoo ritual. For example, the first feature length zombie film *White Zombie* (dir. Victor Halperin; 1932) starring Bela Lugosi,

¹⁰⁷⁵ Zombies infiltrated the high culture worlds of art and design as well as popular culture films and television series. Architects entered designs for 'the best zombie-proof houses' in the Apocotecture Awards while artist Dawn Mellor's 'zombified' celebrity portraits were in high demand with art collectors during this period. Roger Luckhurst, *Zombies: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 191.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Survival of the Dead* (dir. George Romero; 2009); *REC2* (dir. Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza; 2009); and *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (dir. Paul W.S. Anderson, 2010).

¹⁰⁷⁷ Alexander Sliwinski, "Plants vs. Zombies is PopCap's fastest-selling game," *Engadget*, May 20, 2009, accessed Oct 17, 2016, <https://www.engadget.com/2009/05/20/plants-vs-zombies-is-popcaps-fastest-selling-game/>.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Monica Guzman, "Now it's official: Guinness to certify record Seattle zombie walk," *Seattle's Big Blog*, July 23, 2009, accessed Sept 29, 2016, <http://blog.seattlepi.com/thebigblog/2009/07/23/now-its-official-guinness-to-certify-record-seattle-zombie-walk/>.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Luckhurst, *Zombies: A Cultural History*, 8.

drew inspiration from William Seabrook's travel book *The Magic Island* (1929), which documents the author's experiences studying the occult in Haiti.¹⁰⁸⁰ In films like *White Zombie* the zombie embodied colonial fears of the 'Other'.

George Romero's original *Living Dead* trilogy (1968-1985), though not strictly speaking a 'zombie' series, was crucial to changing the conception of the zombie from a cultural outsider to a metaphor for the masses, and from a foreign threat to an American popular culture symbol.¹⁰⁸¹ In the *Living Dead* series Romero equated zombies with everyday people ("They're, us, that's all"), rather than unknown outsiders from an alien culture.¹⁰⁸² Romero also made the symbolic association between the zombie hoard and all-consuming capitalist culture 'blindingly obvious' by portraying the zombie as a mirror image of the American consumer in the second film in the series.¹⁰⁸³ Kim Paffenroth argues that in this film series 'the identity of zombies and living humans, and the greater threat posed by the living humans...mitigate against an identification of the zombies as outside forces or the "other".'¹⁰⁸⁴ The *Living Dead* series has had lasting cultural resonance meaning that zombies have become increasingly humanised and Americanised and no longer 'do the work of monstrous others, slimy tentacular aliens or ancient cephalopodic gods raised from the deep', instead, as Roger Luckhurst states, 'they are simply us reflected back, depersonalized, flat-lined by the alienating tedium of modern existence.'¹⁰⁸⁵

Just as the changing status of zombies from 'outsiders' to 'insiders' has helped them to achieve mainstream popularity, the rise of paranormal romance has been attributed to the 'changing cultural status of that most basic Gothic figure: the outsider'.¹⁰⁸⁶ John William Polidori created the template for the literary vampire with *The Vampyre* (1819), which was based upon a fragment of a story written by Polidori's

¹⁰⁸⁰ Seabrook's travel book was hugely influential and he credited himself as having introducing the word 'zombie' to Western culture but the bohemian writer Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) was the first to put the word *zombi* in print in his travel narrative *Martinique Sketches* (1848). Ibid, 18-22.

¹⁰⁸¹ The first two films in this series avoided the word 'zombie' and are therefore arguably not zombie films. However, *Dawn of the Dead* was renamed *Zombie* in Britain and *Zombi* in Italy and other European countries, and the films became known retrospectively as a sequence of zombie films. Ibid, 137.

¹⁰⁸² George Romero (scriptwriter), *Dawn of the Dead*, feature film, dir. George Romero (Laurel Group Inc, Sept 1978).

¹⁰⁸³ Luckhurst, *Zombies: A Cultural History*, 12.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Kim Paffenroth, "Zombies as Internal Threat or Fear," in *Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture*, eds. Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz (Jefferson/London: McFarland & Company, 2011), 19.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Luckhurst, *Zombies: A Cultural History*, 10.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 7.

former employer, Lord Byron. Polidori did not invent the vampire, as accounts of vampires date back to 1680 and were an established part of folklore by the time Polidori began his tale.¹⁰⁸⁷ However, he was responsible for transforming this creature from a ruddy-faced, uncouth peasant into the pale and handsome aristocratic seducer that has been resurrected throughout literary history for the past two centuries. The appeal of Polidori's vampire lay in the figure's outsider status: Lord Ruthven is a lethal yet alluring Romantic wanderer, living outside of society's rules and mores, as well as outside of time. Byronic vampires like Ruthven do not look like us or live like us; therefore, they are attractive yet fearsome figures: 'attractive to the extent that we long to share their freedom or to alleviate their loneliness, and fearsome to the extent that we dread that freedom being used against us.'¹⁰⁸⁸

Because of the early vampire's 'outsider' status, vampirism has long been interpreted as a metaphor for minority groups. Milly Williamson, for example, notes that in the cultural imagination 'the vampire is a voraciously sexual woman, and a hyper-sexual African, a hypnotic Jewish invader, and effeminate or homosexual man'.¹⁰⁸⁹ Likewise, David J. Skal argues that '[h]omophobes had long held that gay people were evil predators with the Draculean power to corrupt and transform the sexually straight and virtuous', and that this backlash against homosexuality was often reflected in vampire culture.¹⁰⁹⁰ For example vampire films of the 1980s like *Fright Night* (1985) and *The Lost Boys* (1987) portrayed vampires as dangerous and evil seducers threatening to infect the morally upright. Writing in 2005, Williamson notes that although the vampire is an outsider, some identify with the creature's very otherness because it 'offers a way of inhabiting difference with pride'.¹⁰⁹¹ She elaborates that 'the vampire has become an image of emulation, a glamorous outsider, a figure whose otherness we find versions of (sometimes ambivalently) in ourselves.'¹⁰⁹² As society has become more accepting of cultural outsiders, vampires have also become less monstrous and more 'humanised', leading to an even closer identification between the living and the undead. The change in cultural and societal attitudes towards

¹⁰⁸⁷ Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 5.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 7.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Milly Williamson, *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction, and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (London; New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), 1.

¹⁰⁹⁰ David J. Skal, *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror* (London: Plexus Publishing Limited, 1994) 346. Films such as *Fright Night* (1985) and *The Lost Boys* (1987), for example, were cautionary tales that portrayed vampires as dangerous and evil seducers threatening to infect the morally upright.

¹⁰⁹¹ Williamson, *The Lure of the Vampire*, 1.

¹⁰⁹² *Ibid*, 1.

vampirism is reflected in shows such as *True Blood* (2008-2014), which draws an explicit parallel between the LGBT rights movement and the struggle for vampire equality by utilising and modifying expressions used against gay people (“God Hates Fangs”) and expressions celebrating gay liberation (“coming out of the coffin”).¹⁰⁹³ In *True Blood* vampires are largely portrayed sympathetically while those that persecute vampires become the social pariahs and sources of fear. The acceptance of the vampire therefore reflects larger societal shifts that have, as Crawford notes, ‘repositioned a variety of former outsider groups as being, in fact, “just like us” (where “we” are assumed to be white, Western, heterosexual, Christian or agnostic, and middle class), and stigmatized their persecution’.¹⁰⁹⁴

An additional side-effect of the mainstreaming of the vampire is that the vampire has been redefined as a tragic *romantic* hero rather than as an evil (Romantic) monster, and as an American leading man, rather than a European villain. Polidori’s prototype had some romantic associations because he based the character of the dashing but deadly Lord Ruthven upon Lord Byron, who was, of course, also the inspiration behind the seductive and charismatic Byronic hero. However, there is an important distinction between the Byronic hero and the Byronic vampire. As Crawford elucidates, the Byronic vampire has ‘no heroism in him: he is merely a world-weary predator, who destroys those he encounters apparently out of simple habit’.¹⁰⁹⁵ By contrast, the Byronic hero is sinful yet remorseful and is thus ‘capable of good as well as evil’.¹⁰⁹⁶ While Lord Ruthven was unequivocally evil, literary vampires have gradually transformed into tortured creatures ‘capable of love and aching for redemption’, much like the Byronic hero.¹⁰⁹⁷ Crawford identifies American novelist Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles* (1976-present) as being instrumental in bringing ‘the figure of the sympathetic, conflicted, vampire anti-hero to a mass audience for the first time’.¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹³ Charlaine Harris, the author of the book series on which the show is based, states that she conceived of the vampires as ‘a minority that was trying to get equal rights’. However, the openly gay show-creator Alan Ball warns against putting too much emphasis on the allegory of LGBT rights stating that: ‘To look at these vampires on the show as metaphors for gays and lesbians is so simple and so easy, that it’s kind of lazy’ as well as possibly ‘homophobic as vampires are dangerous.’ Charlaine Harris and Alan Ball quoted in Maxine Shen “Flesh & ‘Blood’ – How HBO has turned vampires into gay-rights analogy,” *New York Post*, June 23, 2009, accessed Nov 21, 2016, <https://nypost.com/2009/06/23/flesh-blood/>.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 7.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55. Cf. Judith Kohlenberg, “Why *Twilight* Sucks and Edward Doesn’t: Contemporary Vampires and the Sentimental Tradition,” in *Screening Twilight: Critical Approaches to a Cinematic Phenomenon*, ed. Wickham Clayton and Sarah Harman (London; New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2014), 60.

Rice's Lestat de Lincoyrt evolved over the course of the series from an amoral killer to a 'principled predator' in response to readers' demand for a more romanticised hero.¹⁰⁹⁹ Lestat was not a straightforward romantic lead; however, the centrality that Rice gave to love in her novels made it possible for later American television shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and authors of novels like *The Vampire Diaries* (1991-1992) to cast the vampire as a viable romantic hero rather than as a villain. The twentieth century thus 'produced a new generation of morally ambiguous, sympathetic vampires' like *Buffy's* Angel and Spike, paving the way for the paranormal romance heroes of the twenty-first century.¹¹⁰⁰

The romanticising of the vampire culminates in Meyer's vampire hero Edward Cullen who represents the apex of the 'mainstreaming' of a former Gothic outsider. He is a handsome and affluent American high school student who abstains from drinking blood, can go outside during the day, has no fangs, and indeed has no discernible markers of difference, aside from his supernaturally sparkling skin. Unlike many of his predecessors, Cullen does not have European roots, and was born in America and has lived there since the start of the twentieth century. Cullen symbolises what Williamson terms the 'normative identity': 'white, middle-class, male, able-bodied, heterosexual, and successful', an identity which she posited as being in opposition to that of the Byronic vampire.¹¹⁰¹ *Twilight*, Judith Kohlenberg argues, has more in common with the contemporary romance tradition, than gothic horror. The '(re-)romanticisation of the vampire' is a key aspect of its appeal to fans; however, it has also 'come to serve as a central argument for why Edward and his siblings suck big time', given the romance genre's low cultural status.¹¹⁰² As this chapter will show, *P&P* paranormal profic has suffered a similar form of critical disdain. Yet, the new configuration of vampires as romanticised heroic leads certainly made it easier for profic writers like Jeffers and Grange to financially profit from the 'fuzzy borderland' between humans and vampires 'explored so thoroughly in the *Twilight* saga'.¹¹⁰³ Likewise, the mainstreaming of the

Kohlenberg argues that while 'the humane, soulful and compassionate bloodsucker may seem a recent phenomenon which has only lately found its culmination in *The Twilight Saga*, there are both fictional and cinematic instances of sympathetic vampires long before Anne Rice's influential *Vampire Chronicles*.'

¹⁰⁹⁹ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 56.

¹¹⁰⁰ Williamson, *The Lure of the Vampire*, 29.

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁰² Kohlenberg, "Why *Twilight* Sucks and Edward Doesn't," 59.

¹¹⁰³ Neil Campbell, "Popular Vampires: The Twilight Effect," *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*, ed. Christine Berberich (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 271.

zombie created favourable cultural conditions of reception for gothic horror rewrites of literary classics like Grahame-Smith's mashup *PPZ*.

Zombies and Vampires- The Monsters of the Recession

The shift in the way vampires and zombies have been represented in popular culture is an important factor in their cultural dominance, but the question still remains, why did the undead have such cultural currency in the years following the 2008 economic crash? Why this particular moment? Neil Campbell points out that monster narratives generally reach peak popularity in America 'under conditions of crisis and anxiety' because 'humanity questions its motives, relations and beliefs, testing and re-imagining them through the prism of fantasy, horror and the inhuman.'¹¹⁰⁴ After 'the whole system crashed in October 2008', people's economic security and social stability were severely threatened and it was feared that 'the instability [was] going to increase'.¹¹⁰⁵ There is a clear link between the rise in popularity of zombie and vampire cultural products in the late noughties and the economic and social conditions of recessionary America. Seizing on the etymological origin of the word monster (*monere* – to warn), the influx of zombie and vampire texts in popular culture was interpreted by cultural critics and economic experts as a warning 'not only of what may happen but also of what is already *happening*.'¹¹⁰⁶ In other words, zombies and vampires were figured as symbols of the recession, or 'monsters of the market'. Of course, the undead have long been considered capitalist monsters due to the Marxist association between capitalism and 'dead labour which, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour'.¹¹⁰⁷ As capitalism has always been defined by an invisible monstrosity, Chris Harmon argues that 'modernity's monstrosities do not begin and end with shocking crises of financial markets'.¹¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the 'insidiousness of the capitalist grotesque' becomes more apparent at times of financial

¹¹⁰⁴ Campbell, "Popular Vampires: The Twilight Effect," 268.

¹¹⁰⁵ Chris Harmon, *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010), 7-8.

¹¹⁰⁶ David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 9.

¹¹⁰⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Michigan: Vintage Books, 1977) 342.

¹¹⁰⁸ Harmon, *Zombie Capitalism*, 2.

crisis, like the 2008 economic crash, and monsters therefore infiltrate the public discourse in an overt way.

In the economic sphere the language of the ‘undead’ was indeed regularly invoked to describe the financial crisis and impending recession. David McNally illustrates how: ‘As banks collapsed and global corporations wobbled, and millions were thrown out of work, pundits talked of “zombie banks”, “zombie economics”, “zombie capitalism”, even a new “zombie politics” in which the rich devoured the poor’.¹¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Harmon describes capitalism as a ‘zombie system, seemingly dead when it comes to achieving human goals and responding to human feelings, but capable of sudden spurts of activity that cause chaos all around’.¹¹¹⁰ Lev Grossman even referred to the zombie as ‘the *official* monster of the recession.’¹¹¹¹ An explicit vampire rhetoric was also employed after the crash. The American investment bank Goldman Sachs, for example, was compared to ‘a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money.’¹¹¹² Zombies and vampires did not do the work of foreign invaders during this period; rather, these mainstream monsters gave form to the threat coming from *inside* the capitalist system.

Vampires and zombies were perhaps especially well-suited to embodying fears about the economic crisis because of their adaptability. Horror critic Stefan Dziemianowicz notes that the vampire is ‘a malleable infinitely interpretable motif in which one can read the anxieties of the age’.¹¹¹³ The malleability of vampires has been well demonstrated by critics like Nina Auerbach, who presents a ‘history of Anglo-American culture through its mutating vampires’ and demonstrates that vampires have effectively charted a range of cultural preoccupations from the changing status of women in the workplace, to post-war anxieties, to fears surrounding presidential corruption.¹¹¹⁴ Her research reveals that the ‘alacrity with which vampires shape themselves to personal and national moods is an adaptive trait their apparent uniformity

¹¹⁰⁹ McNally, *Monsters of the Market*, 1.

¹¹¹⁰ Harmon, *Zombie Capitalism*, 12.

¹¹¹¹ Lev Grossman, “Zombies are the New Vampires: Hang on to your brains- the walking dead are staging a pop-cultural coup,” *Time*, April 9, 2009, accessed Nov 10, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1890384,00.html> (emphasis mine).

¹¹¹² Matt Taibbi, “The Great American Bubble Machine,” *Rolling Stone*, April 5, 2010, accessed March 12, 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-great-american-bubble-machine-20100405>.

¹¹¹³ Stefan Dziemianowicz, “Contemporary Horror Fiction, 1950-1998,” *A Critical and Historical Guide to Literature, Illustration, Film, TV, Radio, and the Internet*, ed. Neil Barron (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1999), 218.

¹¹¹⁴ Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampire, Ourselves* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995), 1.

masks’, meaning that vampires can very successfully embody the fears of different generations, such as the post-crash fear of economic instability.¹¹¹⁵

Like the vampire, the zombie’s ‘capacity for mutation and adaptation’ has allowed zombification to become a useful metaphor for times of anxiety and upheaval.¹¹¹⁶ In his comprehensive account of zombie culture, Luckhurst highlights the mutability of the zombie by demonstrating that ‘the history of the zombie is one of continual transport, translation and transformation’ between cultures and between time periods.¹¹¹⁷ Zombies have been used to give expression to a vast range of cultural concerns over the years including: fears of alien cultures; the horror of dehumanising catastrophic events; the degradation of colonial subjection; the ‘brain-washing’ effects of both Communist propaganda and Capitalist consumerism; the deadening influence of mass cultural; and the fear of viral contagion and infectious epidemics. As Doug Gross states, zombies could easily be enlisted to symbolise an economic crisis ‘because for all their limitations, the brain-rotted, animated corpses are so darned versatile – helping to reflect whatever our greatest fears happen to be at the time’.¹¹¹⁸ In the post-crash climate, I would argue that as well as embodying the threat coming from within the broken economic system, that vampires and zombies also paradoxically offered a form of comfort. As Clive Bloom argues, the threat embodied by the revenant ‘is also curiously a type of *reassurance*, not only because of the innate conservation of *the return* (implying a cyclical cosmos) but because the return is what the reader *wanted!*’¹¹¹⁹ The revenant gives form to cultural anxieties in times of upheaval but the reader wants ‘the return’ because the revenant also embodies assurance and hope, as it implies regeneration and renewal. The following section will look at how *PPZ* articulates post-crash anxieties but also offers therapeutic value to readers grappling with a crisis.

From Austenland to Zombieland: The Therapeutic Recovery of a ‘Lost World’

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid, 5.

¹¹¹⁶ Boluk and Lenz, “Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse,” 9.

¹¹¹⁷ Luckhurst, *Zombies: A Cultural History*, 190/19.

¹¹¹⁸ Doug Gross quoted in Boluk and Lenz, “Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse,” 2.

¹¹¹⁹ Clive Bloom, “Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition,” *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2015), 218.

Judith Butler argues that times of crisis in America create a demand for action ‘with the power to restore the loss or return the world to a former order, to reinvigorate a fantasy that the world formerly was orderly.’¹¹²⁰ I would argue that *PPZ* offers a fantasy of a ‘lost world’ of stability and order during a time of social upheaval in America and can potentially be ‘read as a fiction of the return, reprocessing fears triggered by the communal fragility felt within the American nation as its fundamental values were suddenly jeopardized’.¹¹²¹ In *PPZ*, the characters inhabit an alternate world where ‘a mysterious plague has fallen upon the quiet village of Meryton – and the dead are returning to life!’¹¹²² Yet, even in this zombie-riddled environment, the clear hierarchal structures of Regency society are maintained, giving this world a sense of stability and order.

The post-apocalyptic society of *PPZ* is clearly still a ‘mannered’ world where rank has meaning. Lady Catherine demonstrates that class systems have not been disturbed when she disparages Elizabeth for receiving her martial arts training in China, rather than in Japan, the preferred training ground for accomplished ladies.¹¹²³ Social niceties also continue to be observed. For example, even though they are in the midst of an epidemic, the Bennet girls undertake the ‘short though perilous walk’ to enquire after their neighbours, as manners dictate.¹¹²⁴ They also frequently walk to the nearby town of Meryton, ‘despite the unmentionables which frequently beset travellers along the road, to pay their duty to their aunt’.¹¹²⁵ Important social events from Austen’s original text, like the eagerly anticipated Netherfield ball, still take place, though events unfold slightly differently. During the ball the guests’ peace is temporarily disturbed by hordes of ‘unmentionables’ who pour through the windows, devouring those who have the misfortune to be standing nearby.¹¹²⁶ Order is restored though as the undead are quickly dispatched by Elizabeth and her sisters who immediately form a ‘Pentagram of Death’ and begin ‘stepping outward in unison – each thrusting a razor-sharp dagger with one hand, the other hand modestly tucked into the small of her back.’¹¹²⁷ Although a few of

¹¹²⁰ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), 29-30.

¹¹²¹ Campbell, “Popular Vampires: The Twilight Effect,” 269. Campbell takes *Twilight* as an example of a monster narrative popularised in the aftermath of a crisis (9/11 and the subsequent ‘War on Terror’) that ‘seeks to put back some reassuring “sparkle” through its recuperation of vampirism as the expression of lost or superseded values.’ *PPZ* arguably does the same thing for a post-crash readership.

¹¹²² Blurb for Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, (Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2009).

¹¹²³ *Ibid*, 126 and 130.

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

¹¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 23.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 14.

¹¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

the guests are ‘seized and feasted on’ during the attack, ‘the evening passed off pleasantly for the whole family’ because the sisters had the opportunity to dance and be admired before the arrival of the tiresome unmentionables.¹¹²⁸ In this world, the values of society and propriety are under attack, but still manage to survive.

In *PPZ*, the calamity that sweeps through the land ‘leaves the built environment mostly intact’; therefore, the novel could be classed as participating in a post-apocalyptic subgenre known as the ‘cozy catastrophe’.¹¹²⁹ Terry Harpold states that in a classic cozy catastrophe novel:

Many of the mainstays of apocalypse – nuclear wars, cometary collisions, alien invasions, anything literally earth-shaking – are excluded from this scenario; the calamity has to be something that is global in its effects but guarded in terms of the damage it leaves behind...¹¹³⁰

Harpold notes that the cozy catastrophe reached peak popularity in the post-war period of 1950s Britain, perhaps because readers were ‘exhausted by wartime rationing and threatened by post-War changes to the nation’s political and economic orders’ and the cozies offered solace because ‘[w]hatever unease they may have also elicited, [they] offered a fantasy of guilt-free redistribution of consumer goods’.¹¹³¹ Yet, the world that these novels portray is ultimately not so cozy after all: despite the initial satisfaction of being able to loot for goods, the survivors ‘must after a time confront the problem of its future’.¹¹³² Like the cozies, *P&P* and its adaptations offer a complex form of sanctuary in an anxiety-riddled world, one that ‘does not seem like any ordinary warm and fuzzy source of refuge or comfort’.¹¹³³

As established, Austen’s novels have had therapeutic value for readers during periods of crisis, such as the aftermath of World War I when Janeites in ‘water-logged trench[es]’ would turn ‘for comfort and company perennially refreshing, to Hartfield and Randalls, Longbourn, Northanger, Sotherton and Uppercross’.¹¹³⁴ As argued in the

¹¹²⁸ Ibid, 14 and 16.

¹¹²⁹ Terry Harpold, “The End Begins: John Wyndham’s Zombie Cozy,” in *Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture*, ed. Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz (Jefferson/London: McFarland & Company, 2011), 156. The term ‘cozy catastrophe’ was coined by British Science Fiction writer Brian Aldiss in *Billion Year Spree: the true history of science fiction* (1973). Harpold utilises the American spelling of ‘cozy’, following Aldiss’s example.

¹¹³⁰ Ibid, 156-157.

¹¹³¹ Ibid, 157.

¹¹³² Ibid, 158.

¹¹³³ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 105.

¹¹³⁴ Reginald Farrer, “Jane Austen, ob. July 18, 1817,” *Quarterly Review* 452 (July 1917): 1-2.

previous chapter, Austen did not so much offer Janeites a means of escaping the world, as a way of surviving it by ‘making the front companionable’.¹¹³⁵ Likewise, after World War II Austen was prescribed as ‘a wonderful tonic for the hard-pressed provinces which had suffered greatly from enemy bombing’.¹¹³⁶ The solace offered by Austen is perhaps best expressed by Janeite Beatrice Jean Seymour, who in 1937 declared that:

In a society which has enthroned the machine-gun and carried it aloft even into the quiet heavens, there will always be men and women –Escapist or not, as you please – who will turn to [Austen’s] novels with an unending sense of relief and thankfulness.¹¹³⁷

She classed Austen with writers such as D.H. Lawrence, William Blake, and Percy Shelly, who offered ‘a vision of truth and beauty and a world that does not correspond to that vision.’¹¹³⁸

Seymour is one of the Janeites whom D.W. Harding criticised for turning to Austen as ‘a refuge...when the contemporary world grew too much for them.’¹¹³⁹ Yet, as Johnson points out, in singling out Seymour’s comment as worthy of scorn in *Regulated Hatred*, Harding ‘passes over the unusual, highly revisionist notion of escape’ Seymour proposes when she aligns Austen with other socially engaged authors who she ‘calls “escapist” not because they withdraw from the world’, but because they posit a vision of a better world that is at odds with the one we inhabit.¹¹⁴⁰ Fantasy writer J.R.R. Tolkien famously suggested that critics misunderstand the concept of escapism, pointing out that the ‘world has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it’ and that by using the word “escape” with a ‘tone of scorn or pity’ critics ‘have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter’.¹¹⁴¹ In other words, critics (like Harding) fail to see that dreaming of better alternatives can be a heroic means of enduring the real world, rather than a cowardly way of retreating from it. Just as *P&P* offered a means of

¹¹³⁵ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 101.

¹¹³⁶ Chris Viveash, “Emma and Robert Donat,” *Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society*, 1996-2000 (Chawton: Jane Austen Society, 2005): 338.

¹¹³⁷ Beatrice Kean Seymour, *Jane Austen: Study for a Portrait* (London: Michael Joseph, 1937), 255.

¹¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹¹³⁹ Harding, “Regulated Hatred,” 5.

¹¹⁴⁰ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 143.

¹¹⁴¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” in *The Monsters and the Critics: And Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 148.

enduring wartime Britain, the parodic *PPZ* provides a means of coping with a crisis through finding humour and making order in a disorderly world, though this time the novel is aimed at American consumers.

If we consider Austen's world as a 'mental America' and read the zombie plague as a metaphor for the communal fears provoked by the recession, it is apparent why *PPZ* might have therapeutic value for American readers craving the restoration of something that has been 'lost'. The characters work together to drive away the undead and to reclaim an enchanted land of superseded values and stability that could be read as 'an earlier, mythic version of America'.¹¹⁴² The world of *PPZ* is in many ways a frontier fairyland, representing the optimistic values of the 'New World', values such as the importance of family, community ties, and hierarchical rules of behaviour. The idea of a zombie-riddled world might not seem obviously reassuring. Indeed, the dead's refusal to stay dead could be read as a reminder that the monsters of the market cannot be expunged. Yet, it can be argued that hope ultimately wins out over anxiety in zombie apocalypse texts because 'authors and filmmakers rarely visualize a world in which zombie rule is total'.¹¹⁴³ Rather, as Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz point out, the 'zombie narrative situates itself in that deferred space between catastrophe and posthistory where the march of time begins to shamble and, ... "the end begins," but is incapable of reaching its logical conclusion'.¹¹⁴⁴

In zombie apocalypse texts, 'we are spared that moment of total annihilation, the death of death' because there is always the possibility of a return, of the dead, but also of the living in the form of survivors.¹¹⁴⁵ Although most zombie apocalypse narratives contain survivors, the characters in *P&P* are particularly apposite embodiments of resilience and hope in times of crisis because their powers of resurrection and regeneration are greater than those of the zombies. Austen's characters will always live on because 'readers, chronologically and culturally removed from Austen, will adapt and appropriate her life and works to their needs' suggesting that the end will never truly arrive.¹¹⁴⁶ In other words, Austen's characters are *non-zombified* revenants who offer reassurance through cyclical return.

¹¹⁴² Campbell, "Popular Vampires: The Twilight Effect," 270.

¹¹⁴³ Boluk and Lenz, "Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse," 12.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁴⁶ Francus, "Austen Therapy: *Pride and Prejudice* and Popular Culture."

Rising from the Dead: The Afterlife of Austen's Characters

The practice of reanimating Austen's characters is not tied to any one historical or cultural moment, reminding us that 'transhistorical structures of meaning-making' are also important in Janeite reception.¹¹⁴⁷ Fanfiction invites a consideration of *why* Austen's characters have what Farrer refers to as a 'capacity for intense vitalisation'.¹¹⁴⁸ The author's ability to create characters that seem 'real' to the reader has been remarked upon from the earliest critical reviews, when Sir Walter Scott praised Austen's 'exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment'.¹¹⁴⁹ Scott's views about the verisimilitude of her characters have been echoed by the testimonies of diverse readers.

Virginia Woolf commented in 1913 that Austen's characters 'are so rounded and substantial that they have the power to move out of the scenes in which she placed them into other moods and circumstances'.¹¹⁵⁰ Likewise, in 1913 Warwick James Price claimed that Austen's characters are 'easier to understand than describe, for they evolve themselves, and so tell their own stories'.¹¹⁵¹ In 1925, the novelist and playwright J.B. Priestley remarked that the character of Mr. Collins is so convincingly executed that he 'exists in his own right and compels his creator to indulge him all over the place'.¹¹⁵² In 1927 E.M. Forster gave a lecture at Trinity College, Cambridge on 'Round versus Flat characters' in which he applauded the vitality of Austen's creations, remarking as Woolf did that they 'are ready for an extended life, for a life which the scheme of her books seldom requires them to lead'.¹¹⁵³ One of the most insightful analytic accounts of Austen's power to bring fictional characters to life comes from the novelist Edith Wharton who wrote an essay entitled 'Visibility in Fiction' in 1929 in which she credited the author with having the powers of resurrection:

[W]hen [Austen] touched the dead bones they arose and walked. Not only stood, struck lifelike attitudes, did the Madame Tussaud business with an uncanny air of reality, but actually progressed or retrograded, marked time or spurted

¹¹⁴⁷ Hills, "Sherlock 'Content' Onscreen: Digital Holmes and the Fannish Imagination," 72.

¹¹⁴⁸ Farrer, "Jane Austen, *ob.* July 18, 1817," 2.

¹¹⁴⁹ Walter Scott, "Extract from Journal entry," March 14, 1826, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol 2*, 106.

¹¹⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, quoted in *Ibid*, 244.

¹¹⁵¹ Warwick James Price, quoted in Favret, "Free and and Happy: Jane Austen in America," 176.

¹¹⁵² J.B. Priestley, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol 2*, 109.

¹¹⁵³ E.M. Forster quoted in *Ibid*, 109.

forward, in our erratic human way; and came out at the end of their tales disfigured, altered, yet still the same, as we often do when life has dealt thoroughly with us.¹¹⁵⁴

She argues that although Austen never dwells on her characters' physical appearance 'we certainly do not think of Jane Austen's characters as disembodied intelligences' because the author's narrative technique makes them 'visible' to the reader.¹¹⁵⁵

Austen's use of free indirect speech is significant because, as indicated in the previous chapter, 'accessible minds' are an important 'source of immersion, not just for the pleasure of contemplating the passing thoughts of characters and sharing their perceptions...but because beliefs, desires, plans, goals, and emotional reactions scaffold the logic of narrative action.'¹¹⁵⁶ In other words, because we are 'natural born voyeurs of private thoughts', sharing the consciousness of Austen's characters not only makes them 'visible' to the reader, it also makes them 'real'.¹¹⁵⁷ Wiltshire states that:

When one says that other people are 'real' one is not referring to their physical presence near or around one. Their 'reality' refers to the degree to which they are present *to us*, and thus must refer to the degree they become real in our thoughts and imaginations.¹¹⁵⁸

Consequently, he argues, 'very few actual people...are present to us as "real," their feelings and motives as fully known to us as those of the protagonist of a novel, as an Elizabeth Bennet.'¹¹⁵⁹ Austen's confidential writing style has helped her creations develop from textual creations to "virtual reality" characters that exist outside the pages of the novel.

In his account of the literary prehistory of virtual reality, Saler argues that Sherlock Holmes is 'the first "virtual reality" character in fiction' to be 'widely treated as if he were real and his creator fictitious', but does not discuss the virtual reality of Austen's characters.¹¹⁶⁰ Saler identifies the practice of inhabiting imaginary worlds as a *late* nineteenth century phenomenon because in the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century imagination was viewed with suspicion. Texts aimed at '[w]omen,

¹¹⁵⁴ Edith Wharton, quoted in *Ibid*, 112.

¹¹⁵⁵ Wharton, quoted in *Ibid*, 112.

¹¹⁵⁶ Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* 2, 80.

¹¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 80.

¹¹⁵⁸ Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, 103.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 103.

¹¹⁶⁰ Saler, *As If*, 6 and 106.

children, the working classes, and “primitive” peoples’ were deemed to be especially dangerous as these reader groups ‘were presumed to be deficient in the rationality and fortitude required to resist the seductive blandishments of the imagination’.¹¹⁶¹ He argues that such ambivalent attitudes towards the imagination began to evolve in the mid-nineteenth century due to diverse factors like the spread of secularism, an increase in leisure time, and the greater availability of mass-produced fiction. As a result of these ‘intertwined social, economic, and cultural reasons’, by the late nineteenth century people ‘experienced fewer cultural prohibitions against pretending that imaginary worlds were real, and their creators irrelevant.’¹¹⁶²

Saler concedes that there have been precedents to the Holmes obsession, such as the vogue for writing sequels to Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) and John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) as well as the ‘brief fad’ for all things relating to Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740). However, he argues that these episodes of engagement with imaginary worlds in fiction ‘were anomalous’ and ‘were restricted to a limited public for a short time’.¹¹⁶³ Yet, in contrast to the examples supplied by Saler, Janeites’ immersion in Austenland has not been a short-lived trend, but a sustained form of communal habitation that dates back to when the author was still alive. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, Janeites have long discussed Austen ‘as if’ she was a heroine from one of her novels and spoken about her characters ‘as if’ they were real. Austen reception criticism is littered with responses from historical readers who envisioned her characters as ‘familiar acquaintances’, claimed to know them ‘as individually and intimately as if they were living neighbours’, and insisted on debating their actions ‘as those of beings who have actually walked this earth’.¹¹⁶⁴ Indeed, Austen enthusiast and man of science Sir Francis Darwin (son of Charles Darwin) even expressed a desire to question the ‘ghost’ of the author as a means of securing ‘genetic information about the offspring of Elizabeth and Darcy’.¹¹⁶⁵ Given the long history of this playful type of Janeite reception, Austen’s characters perhaps deserve the title of the first virtual reality characters in fiction.

¹¹⁶¹ Ibid, 35.

¹¹⁶² Ibid, 6.

¹¹⁶³ Ibid, 37.

¹¹⁶⁴ The phrase ‘familiar acquaintances’ is quoted from Anne Thackeray, “Jane Austen,” *Cornhill Magazine*, 1871, in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol.2*, 164.

The phrase ‘living neighbours’ is taken from Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir*, ed. Sutherland, 9.

Final comment taken from Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends*, viii.

¹¹⁶⁵ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 5-6. Johnson references a 1917 essay by Darwin called “Jane Austen”.

Janeites' ludic approach to Austen's characters is one of the reasons why academics have traditionally been disdainful of them as an interpretive group. As Johnson points out, academic readers tend to be uneasy about Austen's admirers because:

Janeites constitute a reading community whose practices violate a range of protocols later instituted by professional academics when novel studies emerged - dogmas holding for example, that *you cannot talk about characters as if they were real people...*¹¹⁶⁶

Yet, even academics who chastise Janeites for speaking about fictional characters as if they were real are not except from engaging in the same practice. In his essay 'A Long Talk about Jane Austen,' Edmund Wilson reviews *Speaking of Jane Austen* (1943) by Janeites G.B. Stern and Sheila Kaye-Smith. Wilson laments that Stern and Kaye-Smith write about Austen in a 'conversational' style and treat Austen's characters 'as actual people,' 'speculating about their lives beyond the story.'¹¹⁶⁷ As Johnson points out, Wilson also talks about Austen's characters as if they were real people motivated by psychological impulses unknown to the author.¹¹⁶⁸ He speculates about characters' lives beyond the story when he imagines an extra-textual life for Emma and Knightley where Emma continues to show an intense interest in women even after her marriage. By arguing that Emma might be a lesbian he too is carrying on 'the Janeite practice of reading beyond what is printed.'¹¹⁶⁹ His imaginative speculation is not very different to the one that fanfiction writers engage in. Indeed, there is a piece of profic called *Emma in Love* (1996), which imagines Emma having a lesbian liaison outside of her marriage to Knightley, thereby following the same premise as Wilson's critical hypothesis. Rather than condemning fans for treating Austen's characters as if they were real, it is more productive to look at fanfiction as a way of gaining insight into how and why her characters have evolved beyond their original parameters. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Davies has made a significant contribution to Darcy's development as a virtual reality character. Profic and online fanfiction from the late noughties uses the metaphor of the returning dead to critically comment on how Davies has contributed to

¹¹⁶⁶ Johnson, "The Divine Miss Jane," 30. (emphasis mine).

¹¹⁶⁷ Edmund Wilson, "A Long talk about Jane Austen," in Ian Watt, ed. *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ian Watt (London: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1963), 35-36.

¹¹⁶⁸ Johnson, "The Divine Miss Jane," 36.

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 36.

Darcy's everlasting life, drawing particular attention to the recirculation of the pond scene. These fanfictions, in which Darcy dies by drowning only to be resurrected again in a new story, draw a clever analogy between the numerous reproductions of the pond scene in popular culture and the 'patterns of repetition and recirculation' associated with the 'recurring return of the living dead'.¹¹⁷⁰

The Repeating Dead and the Viral Recirculation of the 'Pond Scene'

Davies's iconic pond scene, which visually dramatizes Darcy's inner life, is recycled in Grange's novel. Whilst walking through the French Alps, Elizabeth happens upon Darcy going for an early morning dive in a mountain lake. She decides to join her husband in the lake and two enjoy a secluded swim before being rudely interrupted by the inconvenient (and frankly bizarre) arrival of Lady Catherine.¹¹⁷¹ Jeffers does not mention the lake in her novel, but her Darcy does pay homage to Colin Firth by regularly donning Firth/Darcy's most famous costume of 'a loose fitting shirt tucked into his breeches.'¹¹⁷² The film adaptation of *PPZ* also references Davies's adaptation by including a scene where the Darcy character takes a break from zombie slaying and dives into a lake wearing a replica of the famous white shirt.

The lake scene has had a clear ripple effect throughout popular culture. For example, the 2005 British-American film version of *P&P* (dir. Joe Wright) includes three scenes that pay homage to a wet-shirted Mr. Darcy: Darcy's two proposal scenes take place in the rain and an alternative ending created for American audiences features a white-shirted Mr. Darcy afloat on a candle-lit lake. Similarly, in 2008's *Lost in Austen* (dir. Dan Zeff), the Darcy character dives into a lake dressed in Darcy's costume of a white shirt and tight breeches, indulging Janeite Amanda Price's desire to enjoy 'a postmodern moment'.¹¹⁷³ Even period dramas unrelated to Austen have capitalised on the seminal scene. For example, 2015's remake of the 1975 TV series *Poldark* features the eponymous hero diving into a lake and having what reviewers dubbed a 'Darcy moment'.¹¹⁷⁴ The actor Benedict Cumberbatch also conjured up connotations of *P&P* in

¹¹⁷⁰ Boluk and Lenz, "Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse," 3.

¹¹⁷¹ Amanda Grange, *Mr Darcy, Vampyre* (Illinois: Sourcebooks Landmark, 2009), 69-71.

¹¹⁷² Regina Jeffers, *Vampire Darcy's Desire* (Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2009), 53.

¹¹⁷³ Andrews, "Episode Three", *Lost in Austen*.

¹¹⁷⁴ Vic Groskop, "Aidan Turner Strips off for *Poldark*- a nation swoons," *The Guardian*, March 16, 2015, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/mar/16/aidan-turner-strips-off-for-poldark-a-nation-swoons>.

a 2014 campaign for Cancer Research where he posed waist-deep in a lake wearing a white shirt. No other contextual clues were needed to signal to people that Cumberbatch was referencing Darcy. The image of Cumberbatch/Darcy went viral, spreading throughout Twitter like a zombie contagion. Colin Firth has also been condemned to re-enact the wet-shirt scene throughout his career. For example, in *Love Actually* (dir. Richard Curtis; 2003) Firth's character must dive into a lake to prove himself to his love interest. Likewise, a rain-soaked Firth must fight his rival in a fountain in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (dir. Beeban Kidron; 2004). In the 2007 film *St Trinian's* (dir. Oliver Parker) Firth is thrown into a fountain by a group of irate school girls and then struts across a field wearing a wet shirt with his suit jacket slung over his arm, in a scene obviously meant to be visually reminiscent of Darcy's walk from the pond in Davies's *P&P*.



Figure 25: From Left: Colin Firth in *Pride and Prejudice* mini-series (dir. Simon Langton; 1995), Matthew McFayden in *Pride and Prejudice* feature film (dir. Joe Wright; 2005), Elliot Cowen in *Lost in Austen* (dir. Dan Zeff; 2008), Benedict Cumberbatch in the 2014 'Give up Your Clothes for Good' campaign in aid of Cancer Research



Figure 26: From Left: Colin Firth in *Love Actually* (dir. Richard Curtis; 2003), Firth in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (dir. Beeban Kidron; 2004), Firth in *St Trinian's* (dir. Oliver Parker; 2007)

Filmmakers' predilection for drowning Firth led one journalist to caustically observe that the actor's 'image as Mr. Darcy has clung to him tighter than the wet shirt which he wore when he emerged from a lake in *Pride and Prejudice*'.¹¹⁷⁵ Indeed, 'The Shirt' has become so fetishized in popular culture that in 2016 it was announced that it would be loaned to America and displayed as part of a 'Will & Jane' exhibition examining the celebrity afterlives of William Shakespeare and Jane Austen.¹¹⁷⁶ The 'Will & Jane' exhibition draws explicit attention to the fact that repetition 'is a powerful reinforcing mechanism of celebrity'.¹¹⁷⁷ In this exhibition, the shirt worn by Firth in the 1995 mini-series is displayed near a series of homages, such as Cumberbatch's reincarnation of a wet shirt-clad Darcy. The text accompanying the display makes it clear that 'The Shirt' is now a signifier for 'Darcy' and that this item, and the image of the lake scene that it conjures up, will continue to be inextricably linked to the character because '[t]he cultural value of an image increases the more it is copied.'¹¹⁷⁸ The viral spread of Davies's pond scene and of Darcy's shirt has zombie-like connotations. As Boluk and Lenz argue, zombie literature is a form of 'plague writing' that 'follows a logic of contagion and compulsive repetition'.¹¹⁷⁹ The undead return again and again in 'many interconnected sequels, series and spinoffs' appearing on screen and on the page.¹¹⁸⁰ Davies's pond scene has clearly followed a similar pattern of serial repetition and recirculation.

¹¹⁷⁵ Garth Pearce, 2007, "Colin Firth: I'm no posh pin-up," *Daily Express*, Sept 29, 2007, accessed June 28, 2016, http://www.firth.com/articles/07express_929.html.

¹¹⁷⁶ Jennifer Schuessler, "Mr. Darcy's Shirt is Coming to America," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2016, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/09/arts/television/mr-darcys-shirt-is-coming-to-america.html>.

¹¹⁷⁷ Jennifer Schuessler, "Lit's Dynamic Duo, Will and Jane, Shared Path to Pop Stardom," *The New York Times*, Aug 4, 2016, accessed Sept 19, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/05/books/will-jane-two-literary-superheroes-united-in-pop-culture.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=mini-moth®ion=top-stories-below&WT.nav=top-stories-below&_r=1. The quote about repetition being a powerful reinforcing mechanism of celebrity' is taken from the text of a display case in the exhibition.

¹¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁹ Boluk and Lenz, "Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse," 3.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.



Figure 27: The Shirt, ‘Will & Jane: Shakespeare, Austen, and the Cult of Celebrity,’ Folger Shakespeare Library Exhibition, Aug 6-Nov 6, 2016

The serial repetition of the pond scene has endowed Darcy with associations of the ‘repeating dead’ and with the generative powers of resurrection.¹¹⁸¹ Online fanfiction from the late noughties engages with the zombie/vampire trend by making an explicit association between the undead and the resurrection powers of Davies’s white shirt-wearing, lake-diving Darcy. *Derbyshire* has a tradition of inviting fans to submit stories with a Halloween theme as part of an annual writing challenge entitled the ‘Jane Austen October Gothic Horror Nonsense Challenge’, or ‘JAOctGoHoNo’ for short. The 2009 challenge had only one rule: ‘Drown Darcy’.¹¹⁸² Some of the writers chose to drown Darcy by unconventional methods, such as in punch bowl, or even in his own blood.¹¹⁸³ However, in ten out of the sixteen 2009 JAOctGoHoNo stories the infamous ‘pond’ became Darcy’s watery grave.¹¹⁸⁴ In these stories, the pond is repeatedly utilised as a symbol of death and resurrection, just as Darcy, like the zombie, is associated with

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid,” 3.

¹¹⁸² Katharina, “Re: What is JAOctGoHoNo...,” “Tea Room 2009,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Nov 1, 2009, accessed Sept 20, 2016, http://www.dwiggie.com/archive/read.php?12_43595_43597#msg-43597.

¹¹⁸³ Mary S., “Don’t Forget the Punch,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Aug 16, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/maryshall09.htm>; Mari A., “The Heart Still Beating,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Aug 16, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/marihall09b.htm>.

¹¹⁸⁴ In one of these ten stories (“Eau de Boue” by Teg) Darcy eventually drowns ‘in his sorrows’. However, Darcy also has a near-death experience earlier in the story when he slips into the pond. Teg, “Eau de Boue (Boo!),” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Aug 16, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/teghall09.htm>.

death but is also represented as a generative force because he is killed off but also begets more stories.

‘Propriety’s Price’ by Katharina makes use of the idea of the repeating dead by telling a version of *P&P* where Darcy is condemned to repeat the same actions *ad nauseam* until an exasperated Colonel Fitzwilliam drowns his cousin in the Pemberley pond. The Colonel explains to a horrified Caroline Bingley that Darcy’s penchant for unseemly pond-diving had gotten out of control and that too many maids had ‘been traumatised for life because they saw their master come dripping wet and in his underwear to the house’.¹¹⁸⁵ Colonel Fitzwilliam is therefore left with no other recourse but to drown Darcy in an attempt to break the cycle of persistent pond dives. In ‘Angel of Death’ by Cindy C. and ‘All the Days of Her Life’ by Sybil, Darcy is once again drowned in the Pemberley pond by disgruntled Austen characters, namely Anne Elliot and Elizabeth Bennet, with a little help from the Gardiners.¹¹⁸⁶ Likewise, ‘The Ballad of the Murderous Hurst’ ends with Darcy ‘drowned, dead and pale in the pond’ having fallen victim to Mr. Hurst.¹¹⁸⁷ In ‘The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship’, a *P&P/Emma* crossover, Darcy is found by Jane Fairfax ‘floating prone in the water’ of a duck pond wearing his ‘wet, white shirt and his tan riding breeches’.¹¹⁸⁸

‘Hell’s vengeance boileth in mine heart’, a *P&P/Supernatural* crossover, sees Elizabeth Bennet and her demon-hunting sisters dispatch a seemingly possessed Darcy by drowning him in the pond.¹¹⁸⁹ In the H.P. Lovecraft/Austen crossover ‘The Rise of the Great Old One’ by Jimmy, the pond is Darcy’s deathbed once more. Darcy becomes entangled in some reeds while still on land, and despite his best efforts to set himself free ‘the Master of Pemberley was hurled into the air where more tendrils grabbed his

¹¹⁸⁵ Katharina, “Propriety’s Price,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, 31 Oct, 2009, accessed, Aug 11, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/kayhall09b.htm>.

¹¹⁸⁶ Cindy C., “Angel of Death,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, 31 Oct, 2009, accessed Sept 20, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/cindyhall09.htm>.

Sybil, “All the Days of Her Life,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Sept 20, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/sybilhall09.htm>.

¹¹⁸⁷ Mari A., “The Ballad of the Murderous Hurst,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Sept 20, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/marihall09d.htm>.

¹¹⁸⁸ Mari A., “The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct, 31 2009, accessed Sept 20, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/marihall09c.htm>.

¹¹⁸⁹ Shemmelle, “Hell’s vengeance boileth in mine heart,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Sept 20, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/shemhall09.htm>.

person and dragged him into the wretched water.’¹¹⁹⁰ ‘The Sixth Sense and Sensibility’ by Katharine T. reincarnates Darcy as a Bluebeard-esque killer of Austen heroines. He is dragged under water when attempting to drown his latest wife, Marianne Dashwood, and the story once again ends with Darcy ‘floating face-down in the water’.¹¹⁹¹ In ‘Eau de Boue (Boo)’ by Teg, Darcy is drenched repeatedly throughout the story, first by a heavy rain, then by a fall in the pond, followed by an unfortunate tumble down a well, a submergence in a bath, and then finally he drowns ‘in his sorrows’ after drinking too much brandy.¹¹⁹² ‘Iniquities of the Past’ also features serial drownings, though happily Darcy remains relatively unperturbed by these incidents because he is ‘by now used to the experience’.¹¹⁹³

‘Happily Ever After’ by Katharina most fully exploits the zombie-metaphor of repeating death and cyclical regeneration. In this story, Darcy does not merely drown – he also rises again from the dead as a bloated corpse covered in pondweed. In this version of *P&P*, Darcy has been dead for 10 years and has transformed into a zombie that shambles ‘along in a slow, unsteady, shuffling gait, his shoulders hunched, his arms hanging limply at his sides.’¹¹⁹⁴ Despite Elizabeth’s plea to her ‘rotting carcass’ of a husband to remain in his watery grave, Darcy continually resurfaces so that he can reunite with his long-suffering wife who has grown ill from the stress of ‘dealing with a dead husband who refuses to stay dead’.¹¹⁹⁵ For Darcy, ‘[d]ying was very easy...It was the staying dead part he couldn’t quite get the hang of.’¹¹⁹⁶ Here, Darcy and the pond are very obviously symbolic of both death and regeneration. The cumulative effect of these JAOctGoHoNo stories, where Darcy is killed in ever more innovative ways only to be resurrected in another writer’s work, is to impress upon the reader that Davies’s version of Darcy has acquired too much cultural significance to ever be truly ‘killed-off’. As one fan commented on the JAOctGoHoNo stories, Darcy has ‘no chance of escaping his fate’ because the image of the pond dive is now inextricably linked to

¹¹⁹⁰ Jimmy, “The Rise of the Great Old One,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Aug 11, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/jimmyhall09.htm>.

¹¹⁹¹ Katharine T., “The Sixth Sense and Sensibility,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct 31, 2009, accessed Aug 16, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/kathhall09.htm>.

¹¹⁹² Teg, “Eau de Boue (Boo!)”.

¹¹⁹³ “Iniquities of the Past,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, Oct, 31 2009, Sept 20, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/marihall09.htm>.

¹¹⁹⁴ Katharina, “Happily Ever After,” “The Fantasia Gallery,” *The Derbyshire Writers’ Guild*, 31 Oct, 2009, accessed Aug 16, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/derby/hallow2009/kayhall09.htm>.

¹¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Austen's hero, and he therefore seems destined to dive again, and rise again, in an endless succession of stories.¹¹⁹⁷

Perhaps the most potent example of the cultural impact of Davies's contribution to the *P&P* archive, came in 2013 during the 200th year anniversary of Austen's *P&P*. As a tribute to the *novel*, Darcy was amplified into a 12-foot tall statue emerging from Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park. In response to this commemoration, the literary critic John Mullan observed that 'it is *inevitable* that *Pride and Prejudice* be best known for a scene that Austen never wrote.'¹¹⁹⁸ Inevitable perhaps, because Davies' adaptation has accrued such 'cultural value' through repetition that it is now a competing canonical source. The lake scene has become so integral to fans' vision of *P&P* that they have expressed disappointment when 'fancy modern interpretations' have failed to include this 'critical plot point'.¹¹⁹⁹ Even fans who have read Austen's *P&P* numerous times have started to forget that the lake scene is not in the novel. For example, Harman quotes an Austen fan who comments that: 'I have read *Pride and Prejudice* a couple of times, but it never occurred to me the lake scene wasn't in the book. Guess it just goes to show how a great movie scene (or a lot of hype) can leave an indelible impression on the mind, and change the perception of reality (or fiction).'¹²⁰⁰ Like Dorothy's glittering ruby slippers, which are silver in the book, and Sherlock Holmes's curved pipe and deerstalker cap, which are absent from the stories entirely, the pond scene and Darcy's shirt have become synonymous with Darcy because of the visual impact of an adaptation and the recirculation of that image in popular culture.¹²⁰¹

¹¹⁹⁷ Mari A., "Re: Eau de Boue (Boo!)," "2009 Message Board Archives," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, Nov 1, 2009, accessed Sept 19, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/archive/read.php?11,43614,43663#msg-43663>.

¹¹⁹⁸ John Mullan quoted in Liz Bury, "Mr. Darcy surfaces as statue in London lake," *The Guardian*, July 8, 2013, accessed July 15, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jul/08/mr-darcy-statue-pride-and-prejudice>, (emphasis mine).

¹¹⁹⁹ Quote taken from a fan comment responding to a post on a *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* fansite. The site provides a forum for fans to post 'confessions' regarding their opinions of the 2012 digital adaptation of *P&P*. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries Confessions*, Dec 10, 2012, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://lbdconfessions.tumblr.com/post/37650425719/i-want-a-lake-scene-with-darcy#notes-container>.

¹²⁰⁰ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 262.

¹²⁰¹ The artist Sidney Paget first depicted Holmes wearing a deerstalker cap in his caricatures for the *Strand*. The actor William Gillette (1853-1937) popularised the image of Holmes with a curved pipe in his portrayals of Holmes on stage throughout his acting career. Illustrators had traditionally depicted Holmes with a straight pipe, but Gillette reportedly favoured a curved pipe, so his face could still be seen by the audience whilst on stage. Gillette modelled for portraits of Holmes drawn by artist Frederic Dorr Steele and the curved pipe is now synonymous with the Holmes image. See Winifred Paget, "The artist who made Holmes real," in *A Sherlock Holmes Compendium*, ed. Peter Haining (London: Warner books, 1994), 53-59.

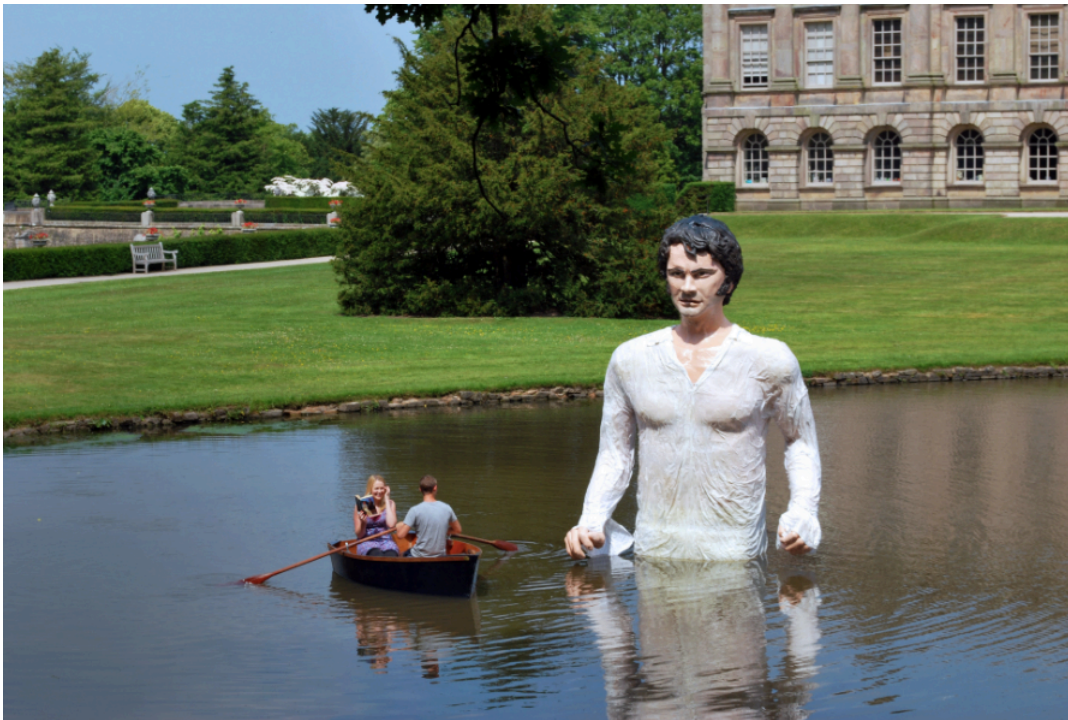


Figure 28: Commemorative Statue of Mr. Darcy, Serpentine Lake, Hyde Park (2013)

Crucially, not only did Austen not write the lake scene, she *could not* have written this episode. The lake scene would not have had resonance in a nineteenth century novel as the image's effectiveness is dependent upon a twentieth century association of a desirable figure emerging from the water – often traced to Ursula Andress' introduction as 'Honey Ryder' in the James Bond film *Doctor No* (dir. Terence Young; 1962).¹²⁰² One of the ironies of the repetition of the lake scene is that just as Austen is associated with a scene she never wrote, Davies is also being celebrated for a scene that *he* never wrote. Firth's Darcy is never actually filmed standing *in* the lake. However, in reproductions of the lake scene the hero is featured standing in the water, rather than at the banks of the pond, much like a character from a James Bond film. Darcy has therefore evolved beyond Davies's conception of him, as well as beyond Austen's original creation. Like Sherlock Holmes, he has been 'emancipated beyond the bonds of fact' and has taken on a life of his own.¹²⁰³ 'Darcy' is no longer a character from a novel, he is an amalgamation of multiple versions of Darcy from popular culture.

¹²⁰² Like Davies' lake scene, the Bond water scene has also followed a pattern of repetition and reproduction in popular culture. The actress Halle Berry payed homage to Andress' iconic Bond girl entrance when she emerged from the sea in *Die Another Day* (dir. Lee Tamahori; 2002), as did Daniel Craig in his first starring role as James Bond in the 2006 film *Casino Royale* (dir. Martin Campbell).

¹²⁰³ Phrase taken from S.C. Roberts, "The Cult of Sherlock Holmes," in *A Sherlock Holmes Compendium*, ed. Peter Haining (London: Warner books, 1994), 17.

Fanfiction commenting on Darcy's virtual reality illustrates that the Austen canon is not a sealed crypt that was closed when Austen finished writing. It is an ever-expanding archive that is kept open by writers, readers, and producers who add new elements to the archive, like the lake scene, and continually resurrect her characters in new stories and new contexts.

Where this is Going: Austen jumps the shark?

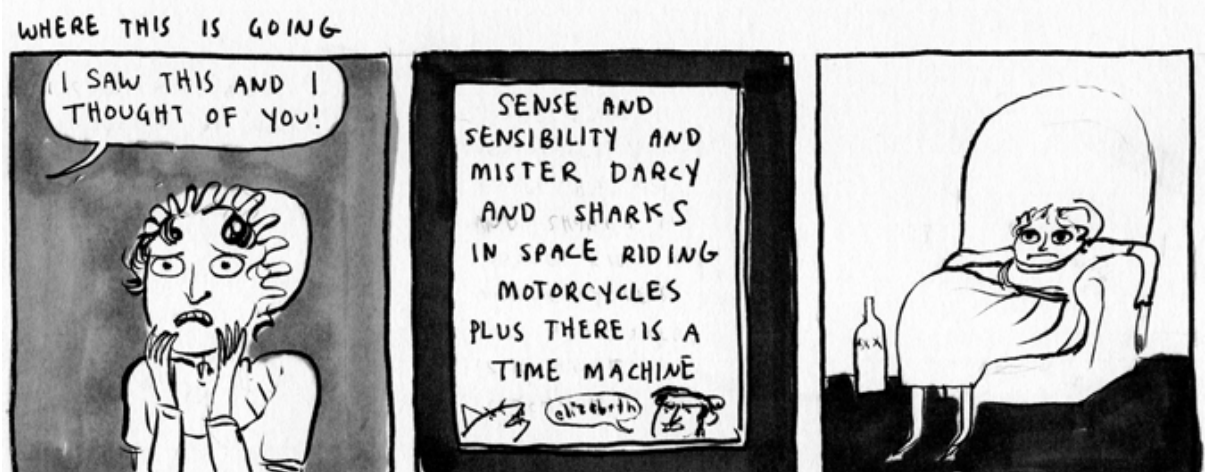


Figure 29: 'Where this is going' by Kate Beaton

As well as commenting on the liveliness of the author's immortal characters, Austen fans used online fanfiction to provide critical commentary on the commercial monster/Austen publishing trend, illustrating once again the intertextual relationship between profic and online fanfiction in the Austen fandom. For example, the writers in *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild* used fanfiction to respond to a comic by the artist Kate Beaton in which she takes a satirical look at the Austen profic industry and the monster mashup publishing trend. The first panel in the comic depicts a scandalised Austen being handed a book, entitled *Sense and Sensibility and Mr Darcy and Sharks in Space Riding Motorcycles plus there is a Time Machine*, by an admirer who declares, 'I saw this and thought of you!'¹²⁰⁴ Austen's dejected appearance in the last panel of the comic implies that the author would likely be displeased by her popular culture appropriation by monster mashup writers.

¹²⁰⁴ Kate Beaton, "Where This is Going," *Hark! A Vagrant*, accessed July 26, 2016 <http://www.harkavagrant.com/index.php?id=263>. "Where This is Going" is the third of a three-part series of comics commenting on Austen fan culture.

An Austen fan shared the comic with the *Derbyshire* community knowing that her fellow fans would be amused by this depiction of the Austen industry.¹²⁰⁵ Fans took up the challenge to respond creatively to Beaton's comic by writing and sharing a series of stories using her comic's title. There are six stories in the 'Fantasia Gallery' from 2010 with the fantastical title 'Sense and Sensibility and Mr Darcy and Sharks in Space Riding Motorcycles plus there is a Time Machine' and it appears to have become a running joke in the fan community.¹²⁰⁶ One of the most interesting of these stories is a *Star Trek/Austen* hybrid written by Wendi. This story is inspired by both Beaton's comic and by an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994) entitled 'Elementary, Dear Data'.¹²⁰⁷ In this episode, Professor James Moriarty, a holodeck character based on Arthur Conan Doyle's creation, achieves sentience upon realising that he is a character inhabiting a fictional world. In Wendi's story, Austen's characters are transported out of their original novels and on to the Starship *Enterprise* where they become aware of their fictional status and in so doing, become 'real'. Their consciousness is downloaded into a simulation and we are assured that the characters' love for each other 'would live on forever within the special computer – and no doubt, within the hearts and minds of all those who would continue to read Jane Austen's novels for centuries to come'.¹²⁰⁸ This story suggests that fans' imaginative investment in Austen's characters is keeping them alive and bringing readers closer to her work (rather than further away, as Beaton's comic suggests). The playful use of the 'Shark' title illustrates the continuing love of in-jokes within the Austen fan community, the extent to which fans on the *Derbyshire* forum are willing to experiment, as well as the referential nature of Janeite response. Additionally, in responding to Beaton's comic, fans demonstrated that they do not passively receive Austen-related material, but instead they take up the challenge to respond to that material on their own terms by playfully reworking it into something new.

¹²⁰⁵ Comic shared by Candace, "Sense and Sensibility and Mr Darcy and Sharks in Space Riding Motorcycles plus there is a Time Machine," *2010 Message Board Archives*, May 7, 2010, accessed Dec 1, 2016, <http://www.dwiggie.com/archive/read.php?17,53024,53024#msg-53024>.

¹²⁰⁶ "Fantasia Gallery," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, accessed Dec 1, 2016, <https://www.dwiggie.com/toc/index.php?id=F&page=all>.

¹²⁰⁷ "Elementary, Dear Data," Episode 3: Season 2, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, originally aired 5 Dec, 1988.

¹²⁰⁸ Wendi, "Sense and Sensibility and Mr Darcy and Sharks in Space Riding Motorcycles plus there is a Time Machine," *The Derbyshire Writers' Guild*, June 12, 2010, accessed Dec 1, 2016, <https://www.dwiggie.com/derby/wendi.htm>.

While Austen fans responded to the idea of the mashup with creativity and humour, this publishing trend courted significantly more controversy outside the Austen community. In the mainstream media, American writers who participated in the mashup trend were frequently portrayed as metaphorical vampires, feeding from their sources to sustain themselves in a struggling economy and thereby offering ‘[p]roof of the essentially vampiric nature of today’s culture industry’.¹²⁰⁹ While writers were figured as vampires, Austen fans were portrayed as mindless zombified consumers willing to ‘greedily gobble’ anything remotely related to Austen.¹²¹⁰ Critics feared that Austen’s reputation was being ‘ruined’ by opportunistic writers and undiscerning readers and that ‘familiarity with authentic Austen’ would fade as adaptations moved further and further away from her novel of manners into new terrains of Gothic horror.¹²¹¹ *PPZ* in particular attracted a substantial amount of vitriol from the press. For example, Macy Halford, book reviewer for *The New Yorker*, described *PPZ* as ‘[e]ighty five per cent Austen, fifteen per cent a television writer named Seth Grahame-Smith, and one hundred per cent terrible’.¹²¹² For Halford, ‘the book effectively undermines the seriousness of...the original’.¹²¹³ Similarly, Sarah Ball declared that mashup books like *PPZ* are ‘objectionable because they strike out Austen’s greatest contributions – seething satire, brilliant language, critique of classism – while helping themselves to the benefits of her name brand’.¹²¹⁴ The way that *PPZ* was singled out from the other mashup novels is noteworthy, especially as (given that it reuses 85% of the original novel) *PPZ* brought uninitiated readers closer to Austen’s own words than most profic, which should perhaps have alleviated fears that readers were being ‘distanced’ from her original work.

PPZ was, of course, guaranteed to have a high profile and to attract a lot of media attention because of its bestselling status. Devoney Looser notes that there is ‘a long history of intellectuals deriding popular things that sell well, especially when attached to material understood by some to be the rightful property of high-culture connoisseurs.’¹²¹⁵ It is difficult to remain neutral about bestselling novels because they

¹²⁰⁹ Jennifer Schuessler, “I was a Regency Zombie,” *The New York Times*, Feb 21, 2009, accessed Oct 4, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/22/weekinreview/22schuessler.html>.

¹²¹⁰ Ball, “Book Review: Jane Austen’s Zombie Mashups.”

¹²¹¹ Ibid.

¹²¹² Macy Halford, “Jane Austen does the Monster Mash,” *The New Yorker*, April 4, 2009, accessed Sept 27, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/jane-austen-does-the-monster-mash>.

¹²¹³ Ibid.

¹²¹⁴ Ball, “Book Review: Jane Austen’s Zombie Mashups.”

¹²¹⁵ Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 60.

have such a significant cultural presence that they inevitably become a point of contention. As Crawford observes of the bestselling *Twilight*, the early reviews of the novel ‘generally described it as inoffensive’ and it was only after the novel became a bestseller that reviews became more critical and the *Twilight* book and film series began to be accused of ‘a range of cultural crimes’ including accusations that they ‘endangered young women, glorified abusive behavior, taught dangerous life-lessons and unhealthy sexual attitudes, acted as covert pro-life, pro-Mormon propaganda, and much more besides.’¹²¹⁶ Like *Twilight*, *PPZ* courted a disproportionate degree of controversy in part because of its greater mainstream success, but I would argue that the peculiar shock-value of the novel is most strongly related to the low cultural status of the zombie and the way in which this creature’s insertion into a classic text threatened to break down boundaries between high and ‘low’ culture.

Critics commenting on the popularity of the undead in the late noughties often distinguished between ‘quality’ monsters like vampires and ‘back-list B-movie’ zombies, claiming that:

Zombies are what we feel like at our worst: slogging through a winter workday, standing in a long line at airport security, waking up with a hangover. Vampires speak to the romantic in us, to our need for human contact, teeth to neck... They don’t rip a victim’s limbs off; they leave two decorous little puncture marks on the neck or breast. But once they get into your system, you’re theirs forever — unlike a zombie, whom you can escape just by walking briskly in the opposite direction. Vampires have savoir-faire and star quality; a vampire is Johnny Depp, a zombie John C. Reilly.¹²¹⁷

The early 1920s pulp fiction and 1930s zombie movies were considered degraded and quite literally disposable forms of culture. The film stock was subject to deterioration over time while the magazines were printed on cheap, expendable wood pulp paper. The zombie itself was the illegitimate child of Haitian folklore, in contrast to vampires which have a rich European literary lineage. Due to its inauspicious origins, the zombie is still considered ‘the decomposing poor relation of aristocratic vampires and mummies, the outsider undead of horror movies’.¹²¹⁸

¹²¹⁶ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 181, 182, and 183.

¹²¹⁷ Richard Corliss, “Thirst: Why Vampires Beat Zombies,” *Time*, July 31, 2009, accessed Sept 27, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1914182,00.html>.

¹²¹⁸ Luckhurst, *Zombies: A Cultural History*, 7.

PPZ preserves most of Austen's words whilst seamlessly weaving in scenes of 'ultraviolet zombie mayhem' as if they were a natural part of Austen's world.¹²¹⁹ Grahame-Smith even remarked that the zombie genre meshes so easily with Austen's comedy of manners that it almost seemed 'as if Jane Austen was subconsciously setting this up for us'.¹²²⁰ The melding of classic art and mass culture in this text is most effectively illustrated by the gory book cover which features a 'zombified' portrait of Marcia Fox painted by Sir William Beechey in c.1810. Designer Doogie Horner chose this portrait because he 'wanted the cover to look like a regular classic book, a real copy of *Pride and Prejudice*, but with a zombie on the cover.'¹²²¹ Indeed, the image of Marcia Fox had already been used as the cover art for a 1966 Penguin Classics edition of *Emma*, meaning that it had an 'authentic' look to readers familiar with Austen editions. This striking visual makes manifest that the 'mashup' is not just a conflation of two literary genres, but also constitutes a mergence between popular culture and high art. The disgust that *PPZ* provoked in some quarters could perhaps be attributed to its seemingly 'sacrilegious reuniting of tastes', namely the sophisticated palate of the discerning high cultural reader and the abject appetites of the popular reader, 'which taste dictates shall be separated'.¹²²²

¹²¹⁹ Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, title page.

¹²²⁰ Seth Grahame-Smith, "Pride and Prejudice, Now with Zombies," interview by Lev Grossman, *Time Magazine*, April 2, 2009, accessed Oct 10, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1889075,00.html>.

¹²²¹ Doogie Horner, "Behind Our Best Cover: Questions for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* Designer Doogie Horner," interview by Tom Nissey, *Omnivoracious*, Jan 7, 2010, accessed Aug 30, 2010, <http://www.omnivoracious.com/2010/01/behind-our-best-cover-questions-for-pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-designer-doogie-horner.html>.

¹²²² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) 57.

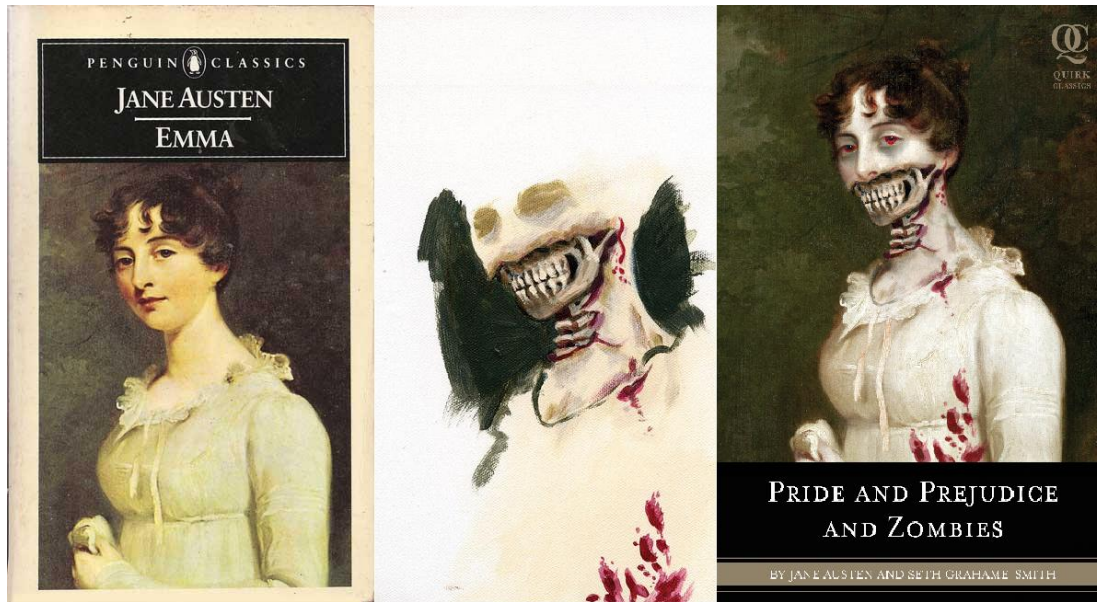


Figure 30: From Left: Jane Austen, *Emma* (Penguin Classics, 1966) with portrait by Sir William Beechey, Seth Grahame-Smith and Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Quirk Classics, 2009) with cover art by Doogie Horner

As a text that ‘combines the lofty with the low’ *PPZ* could be ‘conceived as destabilizing the boundary between popular and literary writing and, through doing so, providing an attack on a fundamentally conservative “high” or “official” culture.’¹²²³ Ben Dew argues that it would be a mistake to take this line of arguing too far. He contends that the book’s stated objective (to transform ‘a masterpiece of world literature into something that you’d actually want to read’) ‘serves to confirm, rather than question, the gap between “high” and “low” culture’.¹²²⁴ For Dew, *PPZ* results in emphasising the distinction between the ‘serious, cerebral, pious’ canonical text and the ‘comic, fun and subversive’ zombie horror.¹²²⁵ However, this argument is undermined by the fact that Grahame-Smith did not, as Dew suggests, ‘rewrite’ a serious literary text as popular fiction by introducing a ‘new’ comic sensibility to Austen’s novel. Rather, he highlights the subversive humour *already* contained within Austen’s work. In Grahame-Smith’s own words, *PPZ* exploits the comic possibilities of *P&P* by ‘playing up what Jane Austen already put there.’¹²²⁶

¹²²³ Dew, “Rewriting Popular Classics as Popular Fiction,” 287.

¹²²⁴ *Ibid*, 287.

¹²²⁵ *Ibid*, 287.

¹²²⁶ Grahame-Smith, “*Pride and Prejudice*, Now with Zombies.”

Like all of Austen's novels, *P&P* contains 'allusions, puns, riddles, and sex symbols'.¹²²⁷ For example, Darcy and Elizabeth's verbal spars in Austen's original novel are replete with sexual innuendos. When Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance she archly replies that she wishes to subvert his expectations by declining 'to dance a reel at all.'¹²²⁸ The word 'reel' had a sexual connotation in Austen's time and could be understood as a slang term for sexual intercourse.¹²²⁹ The couple can talk about sex yet maintain a façade of public decorum by simply choosing 'wilfully to misunderstand' this flirtatious double talk.¹²³⁰ Grahame-Smith accentuates Austen's use of suggestive allusions and knowing puns by using the zombie "unmentionables" as a sexual euphemism and by adding overt puns, generally involving less than subtle jokes playing on the double meaning of the word "balls". For example, Darcy flirtatiously remarks to Elizabeth that she expressed herself with 'great energy' when teasing Colonel Forster about throwing a ball, but then 'balls are always a subject which makes a lady energetic.'¹²³¹ Halsey argues that it is important to acknowledge Austen's use of puns and *double entendres* because if 'we fail to notice how very funny she really is, we do the writing itself a very serious disservice'.¹²³² Grahame-Smith encourages readers to acknowledge the presence of 'erotic comedy', 'unwholesome humour', and 'saucy allusions' in Austen's novels, reminding us that she has always been a playful, comedic writer.¹²³³

Even before the publication of *PPZ* by an American writer and publisher, the Austen industry's refusal to distinguish between 'high' and 'low' was seen by some critics as a troubling *American* idiosyncrasy. In an early review of Austen profic, Kincaid stated that:

It is customary to say that we certainly can like bowling and polo, Kierkegaard and Kevin Costner -- but in different ways. Well, this bulging Austen industry denies that easy distinction between refined and coarse, art and entertainment. There's no difference; it's exactly the same thing: we like what we like. This

¹²²⁷ Alice Chandler, "'A pair of fine eyes': Jane Austen's treatment of sex," *Studies in the Novel*, 7 (1975), 102.

¹²²⁸ *Ibid*, 53.

¹²²⁹ 'The phrases "the reels o'Boogie", "the reels of Stumpie," and "dance the miller's reel" are all slang terms for sexual intercourse.' Chandler, "'A pair of fine eyes': Jane Austen's treatment of sex," 103.

¹²³⁰ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 59.

¹²³¹ Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, 21, 3. Darcy also causes Elizabeth to blush during another dance when he responds to her verbal taunts with his own playful observation that: 'balls are much more enjoyable when they cease to be private.'

¹²³² Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 7.

¹²³³ Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, 1, 2, 3.

stubborn refusal to make distinctions of taste or locale or appetite is part of America's most productive tradition, the grandly inclusive Whitmanesque.¹²³⁴

Yet, when it comes to Austen, this melding of high art with popular culture is neither an exclusively American phenomenon, nor a new one. As early as 1905, Henry James famously went on a tirade against the commercial exploitation of 'Dear Aunt Jane' by:

...the body of publishers, editors, illustrators, producers of the pleasant twaddle of magazines; who have found their 'dear,' our dear, everybody's dear, Jane so infinitely to their material purpose, so amenable to pretty reproduction in every variety of what is called tasteful, and in what seemingly proves to be salable form.¹²³⁵

Writers who form part of the 'Austen industry' can hardly be accused of bringing 'low' culture to bear on her work for the first time. Indeed, *P&P* has alternated between being marketed as a popular fiction text or a work of art since the early nineteenth century.

In her account of Austen's novels as 'Regency Popular Fiction', Barbara Benedict illustrates that the earliest editions of novels like *P&P* were aimed at the circulating library readership and 'were jacketed in marble, sky-blue, or rose-colored paper that advertised both their function as articles designed for feminized leisure and their similarity.'¹²³⁶ In other words, Austen's novels were initially packaged as formulaic popular literature. They were 'constructed and presented to audiences in the mould of circulating fictions: as the episodic adventures of familiar, sympathetic heroines, designed for a rapid read.'¹²³⁷ In 'The Bentley Years' (1832-93), Austen's novels were sold by publisher Richard Bentley (1794-1871) as valuable collectables 'with chocolate-brown ink on creamy hand-made paper, each page decoratively framed with border rules and small corner-pieces...with a dust jacket of primrose paper printed in blue and brown.'¹²³⁸ The elaborate book bindings reflected Austen's perceived artistic worth and '[a]s the sales increased, the binding decoration became more varied and lavish.'¹²³⁹ The Bentley editions 'dominated the nineteenth-century market in Britain and overseas' but the expiry of copyrights in the early 1840s allowed for another

¹²³⁴ Kincaid, "You Jane?."

¹²³⁵ Henry James, "The Lesson of Balzac," 1905, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol. 2*, 230.

¹²³⁶ Benedict, "Sensibility by the numbers," 71.

¹²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²³⁸ Brian Southam, "Texts and Editions," in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 55.

¹²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

shift in how her work could be consumed and perceived.¹²⁴⁰ From 1840-1923 *P&P* was featured in various popular novel series and as part of the Routledge Railway Library, which published inexpensive reprints with ‘garish pictorial front covers’ known as ‘yellowbacks’.¹²⁴¹ The cheap yellowbacks were unequivocally aimed at a popular audience, while the elaborately designed Bentley editions were aimed at a more exclusive market of bibliophiles and collectors. The 1870s saw a rise in popularity of the illustrated editions of the novel that so disconcerted James. The illustrated editions packaged Austen for a popular audience whilst still marketing her novels as luxury items worthy of artistic interpretation.¹²⁴² In other words, like *PPZ*, they advertised Austen as being part of *both* popular and high culture.



Figure 31: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Thomas Egerton, 1813), Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Chapman and Hall Select Library of Fiction, 1872), Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, (George Allen, 1894)

Dew’s argument that *PPZ* confirms the gap between “high” and “low” culture is underpinned by an assumption that Austen’s novels are situated in the ‘autonomous’ or ‘restricted field’ of cultural production, that is, ‘production not aimed at a large-scale

¹²⁴⁰ Ibid, 55.

¹²⁴¹ Ibid, 55.

¹²⁴² Austen’s illustrators have been roundly disparaged by Austen critics who routinely dismiss the artists as ‘capable of little better than period costumery and prettification’. See for example Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol 2*, 59.

Cf. Looser’s close examination of the illustrated editions reveals that although some illustrators focused on prettifying Austen’s world, others ‘infused illustrated Austen with images of social criticism, overt physicality, war, and death’, suggesting dismissive assessments of the illustrated editions were perhaps unfair. Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 49.

market.¹²⁴³ By contrast the ‘heteronomous’ mode of cultural production is related to cultural products created for an undifferentiated mass. In her Bourdieu-derived field theory of fandom, Williamson argues that not enough attention has been paid to the struggle between these ‘two opposing but powerful poles of culture [heteronomous and autonomous] which provide the dynamic of cultural production’ within fan studies, where fandom is often figured as a site of resistance to dominant culture.¹²⁴⁴ She argues that fandom ‘has its own drive towards hierarchization based on heteronomous or autonomous cultural values’ and that ‘fans takes positions in line with either set of values.’¹²⁴⁵ Matt Hills has further explored the theory that ‘fans can adopt different position-takings in a field just as much as established, official media producers’.¹²⁴⁶ He argues that ‘the greatest difficulty of field theory is that it conflates logics of consumption with those of cultural production’ and ‘[t]here is little sense that “autonomous” or “heteronomous” positions within a field of cultural production may be complicated by consumers’ position takings’.¹²⁴⁷

As we have seen, Austen’s novels were initially aimed at a popular audience for Regency fiction, but were later claimed by an elite audience and were adopted as part of the canon, only to be appropriated again by an ever-growing fandom. Evidently, cultural products ‘intended for a specialist audience’ can ‘nevertheless find themselves consumed by a “mainstream” market’ and ‘marked by the taint of “too much popularity”’, making these products *autonomous-heteronomous*.¹²⁴⁸ As the next section will make clear, cultural products intended to be highly commercial, such as profic, can be ‘embraced and consumed’ by ‘a cognoscenti’ of discerning fans with their own expert knowledge and methods of evaluation and hierarchisation, making these products *heteronomous-autonomous*.¹²⁴⁹ Furthermore, mashups like *PPZ* are consumed by Austen fans who are capable of appreciating high cultural literary fiction as well as popular genres like zombie horror, and such cultural products therefore blur the boundaries ‘between heteronomous and autonomous parameters’ and between high and

¹²⁴³ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*,

¹²⁴⁴ Williamson, *The Lure of the Vampire*, 97.

¹²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 117.

¹²⁴⁶ Hills, “Implicit Fandom in the Fields of Theatre, Art, and Literature,” 480.

¹²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 480.

¹²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 480.

¹²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 480.

popular culture.¹²⁵⁰ Clearly then, the division between “high” and “low” culture is difficult to sustain, given Austen’s ability to inhabit both sides of the binary.

Looser argues that an awareness of how Austen book covers were repurposed and renovated throughout the nineteenth century ‘ought to make it difficult for us to take seriously today’s residual claims about Austen being “ruined” by graphic novels or by massively multiplayer online role-playing games’, or by zombie hoards.¹²⁵¹ *PPZ* reminds readers that Austen has *always* been both comic and serious, both popular and high cultural. It is fitting that a zombie adaptation of *P&P* renewed debate about the decay of boundaries between high and popular culture in Austen’s work because as a creature that is both living and dead, the zombie’s function is to ‘collapse difference and break down binaries’.¹²⁵² Despite the fears of critics and cultural commentators in the late noughties, Austen has survived this zombie attack, just as she survived the ‘pretty reproductions’ of previous periods, because such renovations of Austen’s work help to carry her ‘image forward’ whilst also propelling ‘weightier conversations about her fiction and its legacy’.¹²⁵³ As well as reinvigorating old debates about the relationship between popular and canonical fiction, the commodification of Austen during the post-crash period raises questions about how these undeniably profit-oriented texts can be understood in the context of fanfiction, especially given that not all writers who participated in the Austen/monster trend were ‘fans’ of Austen.

The Only Things Selling Are Vampires, Zombies, and Jane Austen

It has been suggested that Austen was seized upon by American profic writers primarily as a means of *surviving* the recession, rather than as a way of paying homage to the survival abilities of her characters. Wells, for example, attributes the author’s appeal to American writers and publishers to a comparative lack of ‘reverence for Austen as a cultural figure’ in America leading to a greater ‘readiness to invest in ever more audacious reworkings of the Austen brand’ during times ‘of great uncertainty and change in the industry’.¹²⁵⁴ The recession did have a negative effect on the publishing

¹²⁵⁰ Ibid, 486.

¹²⁵¹ Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 73.

¹²⁵² Boluk and Lenz, “Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse,” 11-12.

¹²⁵³ Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 73.

¹²⁵⁴ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 178.

industry and the book trade.¹²⁵⁵ Indeed, commentators used the language of viral infection to describe this effect, declaring that bookshops had ‘broken out in a rash of red discount stickers’ while ‘an even more virulent strain [had] developed online’ causing books on the Amazon website to become ‘peppered with crimson blotches’.¹²⁵⁶ Given the unstable economic climate, publishers were reluctant to take chances on material that might only appeal to niche markets. Consequently, writers were incentivized to capitalise on lucrative trends, like the vogue for monster mashups, and to invest in reliable sellers, like the ever-saleable Austen.

Some of the writers who participated in the monster/Austen publishing trend were quite transparent about having materialistic incentives for becoming Austen brand ambassadors. For example, *Jane Bites Back* (2010) author Michael Thomas Ford combined Austen with vampires partly because, as his agent reminded him, ‘[t]he only things selling [were] vampires and Jane Austen’.¹²⁵⁷ Vera Nazarin, author of *Mansfield Park and Mummies*, explicitly stated in her blog that she used Austen to help her to avoid bankruptcy and mortgage foreclosure following the economic crash. Nazarin knew that the Austen audience was key to her salvation, reasoning that even ‘[i]f only a tiny portion of that audience that is buying the Zombies and the Sea Monsters books finds out about this book of mine, I will have a regular minimal addition cushion of income that will solve my problems pretty much indefinitely.’¹²⁵⁸ Mashup writers’ tendency to cite ‘Jane Austen’ as ‘co-writer’ further suggests that they saw her as a form of branding. Traditional profic writers have, as Janeite Laurel Ann Nattress points out, ‘been writing prequels, sequels and retellings’ of Austen’s novels ‘for years’ without feeling the need to attach their names to Austen.¹²⁵⁹ It is possible that Grahame-Smith included Austen’s name on the cover to acknowledge that most of his text was actually

¹²⁵⁵ Jeremy Ashkenas and Alicia Parlapiano, “How the Recession Reshaped the Economy, in 255 Charts,” *The New York Times*, last modified June 6, 2014, accessed Nov 24, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/06/05/upshot/how-the-recession-reshaped-the-economy-in-255-charts.html>.

¹²⁵⁶ Helen Brown, “How the recession will affect publishing,” *The Telegraph*, Jan 1, 2009, accessed Nov 24, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/4209237/How-the-recession-will-affect-publishing.html>.

¹²⁵⁷ Michael Thomas Ford, “Well? Have you read it yet?” *Blog - Michael Thomas Ford*, December 30 2009, accessed May 28, 2010, <http://janebitesback.com/blog>.

¹²⁵⁸ Vera Nazarian, “I Need Your Help,” *LiveJournal*, Dec 4, 2009, accessed Oct 6, 2016, <http://norilana.livejournal.com/151791.html>.

¹²⁵⁹ Laurel Ann Nattress, “Dawn of the Dreadfuls – Prequel to *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* Rises from the Grave,” *Austenprose*, Nov 4, 2009, access Nov 21, 2016, <https://austenprose.com/2009/11/04/dawn-of-the-dreadfuls-prequel-to-pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-rises-from-the-grave/>.

written by her. However, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls* and *Dreadfully Ever After*, the prequel and sequel to *PPZ*, also cite ‘Jane Austen’ as the co-author even though these follow-up books do not utilise any of Austen’s writing. As Quirk editor Jason Rekulak declares of *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, the prequel is a ‘completely original novel inspired by Austen’s characters; — in other words, there’s not a drop of original Austen writing in it’.¹²⁶⁰ It is therefore likely that mashup writers co-branded with Austen simply so they could benefit from her enormous selling power whilst also symbolically accruing more ‘cultural capital’.¹²⁶¹ Evaluating these texts as fanfiction is clearly complicated, given some of the mashup writers’ manifestly mercenary motives for using the Austen brand name.

As the Introduction made clear, the application of the term *fanfiction* to commercial texts is controversial within fan studies and fan culture because fanfiction is most often defined as writing ‘done for love’ while fiction written from within the marketplace is interpreted as ‘work done for money’. In contrast to other fandoms, Austen fans are generally receptive to writers profiting from their Austen tributes because online fanfiction writers and profic writers are frequently envisioned as being part of the same community and as having a shared goal: expanding on Austen’s world and keeping her characters ‘alive’ for readers. For example, vampire romance profic writers Grange and Jeffers are self-confessed Janeites and are established profic writers who ‘have been able to build an entire industry’ around *P&P* alone.¹²⁶² Though they reap the commercial benefits of the Austen industry, they also write from within the Austen fan community and their work is therefore supported by fellow Austen fans. As Grange acknowledges, profic writers ‘owe a great deal to websites such as *The Republic of Pemberley*, *AustenBlog*, and *Austenprose*’, which ‘have been very generous with their time in reviewing and championing [their] books’ as well as providing feedback on

¹²⁶⁰ Jason Rekulak quoted in *Ibid*.

¹²⁶¹ The concept of “cultural capital” was theorised by Pierre Bourdieu to designate non-economic assets that lead to social mobility such as education, dress, style of speech, or the acquisition of cultural goods like works of art. He first presented the theory of cultural capital with Jean-Claude Passeron in 1977 and further developed the concept in the essay “The Forms of Capital”. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1986), 241-258.

¹²⁶² Auerbach, “Pride and proliferation”, 189. Grange is the author of the *P&P* profic novels *Darcy’s Diary* (2005); *Mr Darcy, Vampyre* (2009); *Dear Mr Darcy* (2012); and *Pride and Pyramids* (2012) as well as the novella *Wickham’s Diary* (2011). Jeffers is an even more prolific purveyor of *P&P* profic: to date, she has written an astonishing fifteen books based on this novel alone.

ongoing projects.¹²⁶³ Mashup writers, by contrast, do not necessarily write either from *within* the Austen community or *for* the Austen community.

Grange characterises Austen's representative novel as being 'in [her] view, literally perfect' while *PPZ* publisher Jason Rekulak describes *P&P* as 'about the most boring book in the world'.¹²⁶⁴ Grahame-Smith professes to have gained an appreciation for Austen's 'brilliantly plotted novel' as he was writing his mashup, but he too remembers being 'bored to tears' by *P&P* as a teenager.¹²⁶⁵ Rekulak stated that he did not anticipate that Austen fans would be their target audience, assuming the novel 'would appeal mainly to readers of horror and zombie fiction'.¹²⁶⁶ Wells therefore insists that 'these works do not qualify as fan fiction in the conventional sense, since they are not written to please other fans – and, indeed, may repel some who consider themselves devotees of Austen's writings'.¹²⁶⁷ *PPZ* certainly did repel *some* Austen fans. Before the book was even released *Pemberley* manager Myretta Robens stated that while she is 'interested in anything relating to Jane', she felt that *PPZ* was 'like Jane Austen jumping the shark'.¹²⁶⁸ However, even though the team behind *PPZ* was not composed of fans, the Austen fan community certainly played an essential part when it came to building an audience for the book in the 'first phase' of the novel's reception and were therefore integral to the novel's success.¹²⁶⁹

Rekulak did not originally envisage the Austen fan community as *PPZ*'s target market, but to his surprise the book proved to be 'much more popular with Austen fans than with horror fans'.¹²⁷⁰ The *PPZ* publisher acknowledges the 'phenomenal' role that online reviewers and bloggers played in marketing the book, stating that: 'Sometime in February 2009 the book exploded onto the blogosphere, and within days there were hundreds of blogs and websites talking about the book. *They did*

¹²⁶³ Grange, "Fan appreciation no. 1: Amanda Grange, Novelist," 39.

¹²⁶⁴ Ibid, 36; Jason Rekulak, quoted in Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 186.

¹²⁶⁵ Grahame-Smith quoted in Grossman, "Pride and Prejudice, Now with Zombies,"; Grahame-Smith, quoted in Schuessler, "I was a Regency Zombie".

¹²⁶⁶ Jason Rekulak quoted in Marie Mulvey-Roberts, "Mashing Up Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and the Limits of Adaptation," *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, 13. (Summer 2014): 33/34.

¹²⁶⁷ Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 178.

¹²⁶⁸ Myretta Robens quoted in Schuessler, "I was a Regency Zombie".

¹²⁶⁹ Illouz, *Hard-Core Romance*, 19. Eva Illouz defines two phases of a bestseller: the first phase is the one in which the book takes off because of its cultural relevance and the way it resonates with readers, the second is the one in which 'the book becomes *publically* known as a "best-seller", in which case its attraction becomes entwined with its fashionableness.'

¹²⁷⁰ Jason Rekulak quoted in Wells, *Everybody's Jane*, 34.

*the marketing for us.*¹²⁷¹ Although Rekulak does not specifically refer to these denizens of the internet as *fans*, the Janeite fan community were the early reviewers responsible for this initial surge of interest in the novel. Nattress credits herself as being ‘the first blogger to even notice *P&P&Z* in 2009, before it ever became an international sensation spawning an entire franchise of mash-up books’.¹²⁷² Unlike Robens, who dismissed the book without reading it, Nattress read *PPZ* and gave the gothic parody a positive review, stating that she ‘dearly love[d] to laugh as much as the next Janeite’ and that Grahame-Smith’s comic take on Austen was ‘the most creative way [she had] ever seen to entice readership of literary classics.’¹²⁷³ Nattress is a recognised authority on Austen profic in the Janeite community.¹²⁷⁴ Her endorsement of *PPZ* on *Austenprose* was very influential in converting potential readers into committed consumers before the book had even been officially released. The *Austenprose* blog was also instrumental in disseminating information about the novel to other Austen blogs and to mainstream media outlets.¹²⁷⁵ Therefore, although *PPZ* was not written by a fan, it was still reviewed, received, and circulated in the context of Austen fandom and was also examined by fans according to the conventions of fanfiction.

Austen fans like Nattress belie the stereotype of the undiscerning ‘zombie’ reader by performing ‘their own informal version of a fair use test in order to decide

¹²⁷¹ Rekulak, quoted in *Ibid*, 187 (emphasis mine).

¹²⁷² Laurel Ann Nattress, “‘Z’ Day Celebrations Begin with Dreadfully Ever After, by Steve Hockensmith - & a Giveaway!,” *Austenprose*, March 22, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <https://austenprose.com/tag/pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies/?iframe=true&preview=true>. Nattress first blogged about the novel in Jan 2009, *PPZ* was due out in May but was published in April 2009. See Laurel Ann Nattress, “Coming Soon from Meryton Graveyard: Pride and Prejudice and Zombies,” *Jane Austen Today*, Jan 20, 2009, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://janitesonthejames.blogspot.ie/2009/01/coming-soon-from-meryton-graveyard.html>.

¹²⁷³ Laurel Ann Nattress, “Zombies and Vampires and Jane Austen, Oh My! Pride and Prejudice and Zombies is Haute,” *Austenprose*, Feb 3, 2009, accessed Sept 22, 2016, <https://austenprose.com/2009/02/03/zombies-and-vampires-and-jane-austen-oh-my-pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-is-haute/>.

¹²⁷⁴ “About Austenprose,” *Austenprose*, accessed September 22, 2016, <https://austenprose.com/about-austenprose/>. Nattress is a prolific blogger on all things Austen-related: her blog *Austenprose* features ‘over 800 book, movie, television series and merchandise reviews’. She is also a regular contributor to the Jane Austen Centre online magazine, the editor of the anthology of fanfiction stories *Jane Austen Made Me Do It* (2011), and a life member of the Jane Austen Society of North America.

¹²⁷⁵ Shortly after Nattress alerted Janeites to the impending publication of *PPZ*, Janeite Margaret C. Sullivan of *Austenblog* wrote a feature on the novel in Jan 2009, citing Nattress as the source of her information about the forthcoming book. Sullivan employed the blog title ‘Jane Austen Ate My Brain’. Sullivan’s title was later utilised by Jennifer Schuessler of *The New York Times* in a Feb 2009 article, indicating that the fan blog was probably the source of her information about the book. See Margaret C. Sullivan, “Jane Austen Ate My Brain,” *Austenblog*, January 22, 2009, accessed September 22, 2016 <https://austenblog.com/2009/01/22/jane-austen-ate-my-brain/>. Accessed 22 Sept, 2016; Jennifer Schuessler, “Jane Austen Ate My Brain,” *The New York Times*, February 22, 2009, accessed September 22, 2009, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com//2009/02/02/jane-austen-ate-my-brain/>.

whether or not to invest time and imagination in a certain work.¹²⁷⁶ As established in the Introduction, a commercial fanfiction text is considered to be an example of ‘transformative use’ or ‘fair use’ if it reflects critically upon the source material by bringing ‘out in the open what was present in the subtext or context’ of the original.¹²⁷⁷ Nattress argued that *PPZ* encouraged a fresh view of *P&P* by using parody to elevate subtext to text. Indeed, she suggested a link between the parodic style of Grahame-Smith and that of Austen, acknowledging that Austen enjoyed ‘a good campy and gory Gothic novel’ as evidenced by the author’s homage to the novels of Anne Radcliffe in *Northanger Abbey* (1817), where Austen used parody not to mock stylistic conventions, but to encourage readers to reconsider them from a new perspective.¹²⁷⁸ Grahame-Smith uses parody to comically exaggerate Elizabeth’s athleticism, transforming her from a ‘sharp-tongued, fiercely independent heroine’ into ‘a sharp-daggered, fiercely independent’ action heroine.¹²⁷⁹ The representation of Elizabeth as an action heroine may seem incongruous at first, however, although Austen’s heroine is certainly not a skilled ninja, she is unusually active and assertive for a nineteenth century heroine.

Joanna Russ famously contended that the heroine of a love story can do nothing ‘except exist, except think, except feel’, but Elizabeth walks unescorted through muddy fields, skips over puddles, and springs over stiles ‘with impatient activity’.¹²⁸⁰ Her actions frequently invite censor from the surrounding characters demonstrating the unorthodox nature of her behaviour. For example, Bingley’s sisters are horrified by the appearance of Elizabeth’s petticoat, ‘six inches deep in mud’, and are especially shocked by the ‘abominable sort of conceited independence’ that emboldens Elizabeth to walk through the dirty country lanes ‘alone, quite alone!’¹²⁸¹ Elizabeth’s athleticism is graphically illustrated by the images for *PPZ* supplied by Philip Smiley, drawn in the style of the black and white line drawings of C.E Brock’s illustrations for the 1895

¹²⁷⁶ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 179.

¹²⁷⁷ Tushnet, “Copyright Law, Fan Practices, and the Rights of the Author,” 61/62.

¹²⁷⁸ Laurel Ann Nattress, “Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: (Jane Austen Ate Our Brain Long Ago) – A Review,” *Austenprose*, April 5, 2009, accessed Sept 21, 2016, <https://austenprose.com/2009/04/05/pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-jane-austen-ate-my-brain-long-ago-a-review/>. Johnson likewise allows that: ‘it is conceivably possible that Seth Grahame-Smith was aware that Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* ironized the Gothic a long time before he did and thus in a way wrote a novel that, rather than violating her properties, actually followed in her footsteps’. Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 6.

¹²⁷⁹ Grahame-Smith, quoted in Grossman, “Pride and Prejudice, Now with Zombies.”

¹²⁸⁰ Joanna Russ, “What Can a Heroine Do? Or Why Women Can’t Write,” *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 87-88; Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 24.

¹²⁸¹ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 26.

Macmillan illustrated edition of *P&P*. (See Figure 32) Brock's images seem designed to subdue Elizabeth's verve while the illustrations in *PPZ* aim to enhance her attractive vitality and to therefore elevate subtext to text by highlighting the heroine's unconventionality for the reader. (See Figure 33) Ultimately, *PPZ* caused a much greater furore amongst reactionary members of the mainstream media than amongst Austen's fans, who recognised that rather than 'undermining' the original, Grahame-Smith, like Austen, used parody to encourage a re-evaluation of his source.¹²⁸²



Figure 32: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Macmillan, 1895), illustrated by C.E. Brock

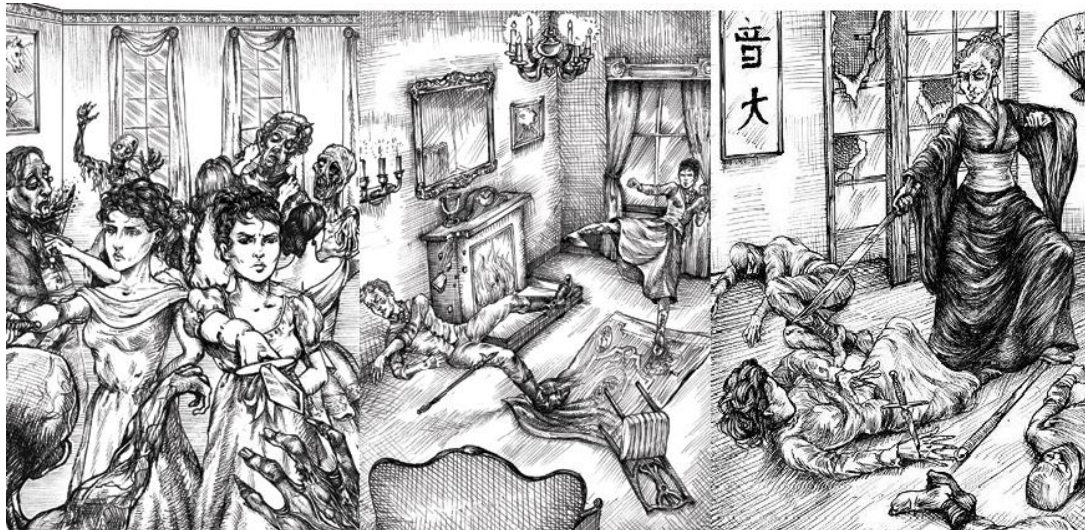


Figure 33: Seth Grahame-Smith and Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Quirk Classics, 2009), illustrated by Philip Smiley

¹²⁸² In contrast to Austen fans, journalists displayed a comparative lack of understanding of Austen's parodic style and her treatment of the gothic, misinterpreting *Northanger Abbey* as proof that 'Austen thought gothic tales were silly'. See Halford, April 4, 2009, "Jane Austen does the Monster Mash."

‘The Love that Started it All’ – *Pride and Prejudice* as the literary template for *Twilight*?

Marketing *P&P* as paranormal romance was not as controversial as merging *P&P* with zombie horror because, as established, vampires have superior cultural credentials due to their rich literary history and romantic associations. However, the paranormal romance texts did reignite old debates about the appropriateness of associating Austen with contemporary romance genres. Meyer cites Austen’s Darcy as a source of inspiration for her hero, stating in an interview that ‘*Twilight* was loosely based on *Pride and Prejudice*’.¹²⁸³ If Meyer’s Edward Cullen is based on Darcy, then Austen’s hero is potentially both ancestor *and* descendant of the romantic vampire, as vampire Darcy in *P&P* profic also draws sustenance from Edward Cullen. The 2009 Harper Teen edition of *P&P* certainly signalled to readers that Darcy was the literary forbearer of Edward. The edition featured a tagline reading ‘the love that started it all’ as well as an accompanying sticker that simply stated: ‘before Bella and Edward’. If, as Gérard Genette argues, the book cover is a ‘threshold’ to the world of the text ‘that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back’, then the covers of *Vampire Darcy’s Desire*, and *Mr Darcy, Vampire* invite readers to enter a world of paranormal romance like the one popularised by Meyer in *Twilight*.¹²⁸⁴

¹²⁸³ Stephenie Meyer, quoted in Maurine Proctor, “Stephenie Meyer’s Vampire Series makes Readers’ Blood Rush,” *Meridian Magazine*, Aug 6, 2008, accessed Nov 28, 2016, <https://ldsmag.com/article-1-1829/>.

¹²⁸⁴ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 1-2.

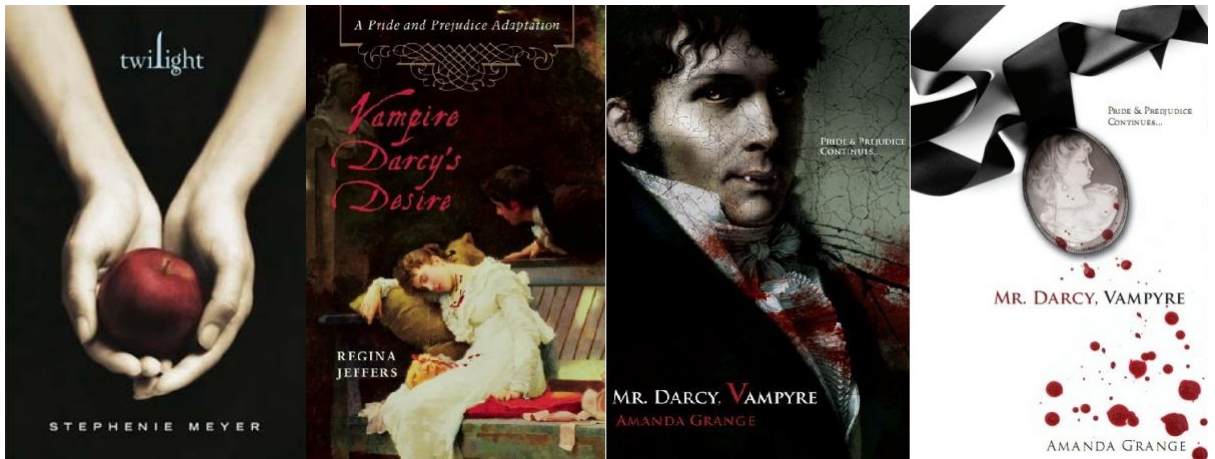


Figure 34: Left to Right: *Twilight* (2005) by Stephenie Meyer, *Vampire Darcy's Desire* (2009) by Regina Jeffers, two alternate covers for *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (2009) by Amanda Grange

This was not the first time that Austen's *P&P* was repackaged as contemporary romance fiction or heralded as the literary template for a subgenre of the romance. In 1940, the paperback publisher Pocket Books sold *P&P* as a mass market romance novel, featuring a cover image of a man's hand placing a wedding ring on a woman's finger. In the early noughties, *P&P* was repackaged to resemble 'chick lit', a mutation of the romance novel that, as mentioned in chapter two, originated with novels like *Bridget Jones's Diary*.¹²⁸⁵ Like paranormal romance novels with their black, red, and white covers, chick lit covers have a recognizable aesthetic: 'pastel-coloured covers with swirly writing and butterflies, flowers and bird emblems'.¹²⁸⁶ These various rebrandings of *P&P* suggest that Austen is not only 'the mother of romance', but the 'great-grandmother of chick lit', and perhaps the 'great-great-grandmother of paranormal romance'. Indeed, Austen's work has, as *Pemberley* founder Myretta Robens states, certainly 'been a path to [r]omance' for her fans.¹²⁸⁷ Robens proclaims herself to be 'an unabashed reader of [r]omance novels' and states that she suspects 'many others came to romance through their love of the Regency and their desire to read more about characters that acted like those in Jane Austen's novels.'¹²⁸⁸ Therefore, in *Pemberley* at least, Jane Austen is proudly lauded as 'the mother of romance.'¹²⁸⁹

¹²⁸⁵ Wherry, "More than a Love Story," 59.

¹²⁸⁶ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 253.

¹²⁸⁷ Robens, "Words of a 'Janeite'." Although Robens capitalises 'Romance', she is referring to contemporary romance novels in her article.

¹²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

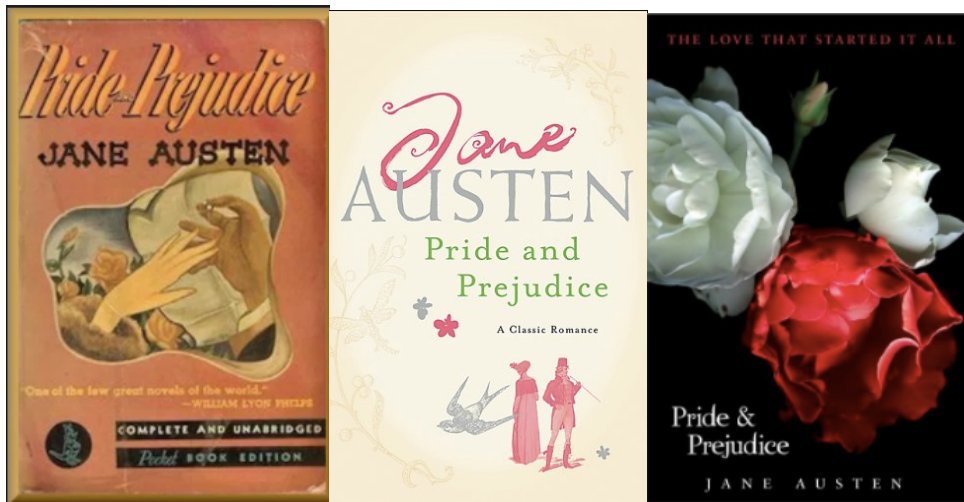


Figure 35: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Pocket Books, 1940), Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Hodder Headline, 2006), Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Penguin Red Classics, 2006)

As noted in the previous chapter, the idea that the label ‘mother of romance’ could be applied to Austen has been treated derisively by some Austen critics:

Jane Austen as one of the mothers of the Harlequin or Silhouette novel? This genealogy should amuse many of Austen’s admirers, who know her novels to be much more culturally and linguistically complex than the mass-market romance.¹²⁹⁰

Although some Austen critics are amused by the suggestion that the contemporary romance can be traced to Austen, romance critics have argued precisely for this genealogy. Regis identifies Austen as the ‘indisputable’ ‘master of the romance novel’ and dubs *P&P* as ‘the best romance novel ever written’, arguing that the novel’s ‘masterpiece status’ lends validity to the genre by countering notions that ‘all romance novels are hack-work’.¹²⁹¹ Regis claims that *P&P* contains all ‘eight essential narrative elements of the romance novel’ and that it therefore ‘fulfills the requirements of the basic definition’.¹²⁹² Of course, it could be argued that *P&P* is retrospectively recognisable as a romance novel simply because it has been used as the template for the contemporary romance, a genre that only developed in the 1930s.

¹²⁹⁰ Kaplan, “Mass Marketing Jane Austen,” 178.

¹²⁹¹ Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, 75 and 27/28.

¹²⁹² *Ibid.*, 27. The eight elements are as follows: the society of the novel is defined as being flawed in some way; the hero and heroine meet and a note of conflict is introduced; an internal or external barrier creates an obstacle for the protagonists; the hero and heroine are attracted to each other; their love is declared; this is followed by the ‘point of ritual death’ where the hoped for resolution seems impossible; ‘recognition’, where the hero’s true self is revealed; and finally, the ‘betrothal’, where the hero and the heroine are united (though not necessarily through marriage).

In Austen's time 'the word "romance" did not mean "love story": instead, it referred to those works that imitated the romance tradition of the seventeenth century', a tradition that Austen parodied.¹²⁹³ Austen explicitly stated: 'I could not sit seriously down to write a serious Romance under any other motive than to save my life, & if it were indispensable for me to keep it up & never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.'¹²⁹⁴ Crawford notes that 'when the first authors in a given genre begin to map out new fictional territory, they inevitably draw heavily upon the literature which has come before.'¹²⁹⁵ Thus, Austen's *P&P* was used by pioneering romance writers in the early twentieth century as a 'literary template', just as gothic writers in the late eighteenth century 'drew upon older works such as *Macbeth* and *Paradise Lost* in order to develop a literary vocabulary with which to depict scenes of supernatural terror'.¹²⁹⁶ Popular romance writer Georgette Heyer (1902-1974), for example, very consciously drew on Austen's Regency settings and plot elements for her own novels, and indeed, Heyer is 'the number one choice' for contemporary Austen fans seeking authors 'similar' to Austen.¹²⁹⁷ Not all romance writers reuse Austen's Regency setting, but the basic plot structure from the perfectly paced *P&P* has been recycled with impunity while Darcy, the rich, arrogant hero who yields to the power of the heroine's love, has become *the* archetypal hero of romance. Consequently, *P&P* often strikes 'readers as being, in the modern sense of the word, "romantic"', even though Austen's novel pre-dates the naming of the contemporary romance genre by over a hundred years.¹²⁹⁸

The link between Austen and romance may be a natural one, 'enabled by similarities of some sort that connect the Austen novels with our contemporary phenomenon of women's romance novels'.¹²⁹⁹ It may also be merely a marketing label applied to Austen so that *P&P* can be retrospectively 'repackaged as if it were "chick lit"' or paranormal romance, enabling publishers to capitalise on the enormous audience for these subgenres of the romance.¹³⁰⁰ The point of this review of competing

¹²⁹³ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 16.

¹²⁹⁴ Jane Austen, "Letter to James Stanier Clarke," April 1, 1816," in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 326.

¹²⁹⁵ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 15.

¹²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²⁹⁷ Juliet A. Youngren, "Comments on Similar Authors – Georgette Heyer," accessed Oct, 16, 2017, <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/alfaqhey.txt>.

¹²⁹⁸ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 15-16.

¹²⁹⁹ Margolis, "Janeite culture: what does the name 'Jane Austen' authorize?," 25.

¹³⁰⁰ Bloom, *Bestsellers*, 2.

viewpoints is not to decide definitively whether ‘the mother of romance’ is an appropriate moniker or a misleading misnomer when applied to Austen. Rather, it is to demonstrate that Austen’s name has acquired certain associations in popular culture. In his article ‘Notable Quotables’, Thomas Hine argues that ‘people can be turned into quotations if they acquire strong associations’.¹³⁰¹ For example, in popular culture Albert Einstein’s name has come to signify “pure braininess” while Che Guevara has come to epitomize the “romantic revolutionary”.¹³⁰² Similarly, “Jane Austen” has acquired an inescapable association with “romance”.

The association between “Jane Austen” and “romance” has clearly been widely endorsed by the romance community and embraced by Austen’s fans. It is equally evident that an aversion to romance is prevalent in Austen studies and even widespread in fan culture, where Jamison notes that romance often suffers from ‘an internalized gender and genre prejudice’.¹³⁰³ Even fans from specifically romance-based fan communities have expressed an ambivalent attitude towards the genre. *Twilight* fans, for example, may love the vampire romance series but they also see the books, and by extension themselves, ‘as being derivative and amateurish’.¹³⁰⁴ Thus far, the paranormal romance trend in Austen profic has been dealt with in a cursory manner because of an aesthetic distaste for romance as a genre within Austen studies. In order to avoid this kind of ‘scholarly “distant reading”’,¹³⁰⁵ it is pertinent to look more closely at the relationship between Austen’s *P&P* and the development of the lucrative paranormal romance genre, rather than dismissing the up-turn in paranormal romance profic as further proof that it is ‘impossible to dissociate...attempts to recycle Austen from commercial motives’.¹³⁰⁶

Darcy’s Descendants: Vampire Romance Heroes

In the *Twilight* series, Edward and Bella are destined to be eternal companions: ‘the bond forged between [them] was not one that could be broken by absence, distance, or

¹³⁰¹ Thomas Hine, “Notable Quotables: Why Images Become Icons,” *New York Times*, Feb 18, 1996, accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/18/arts/notable-quotables-why-images-become-icons.html?pagewanted=all>.

¹³⁰² Ibid.

¹³⁰³ Anne Jamison, “The Twilight Fandom,” *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World* (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2013), 179.

¹³⁰⁴ Ibid, 180.

¹³⁰⁵ Hills, “Media Academics as Media Audiences,” 41.

¹³⁰⁶ Lynch, “Sequels,” 161.

time'.¹³⁰⁷ Grange and Jeffers follow the example of paranormal romance novels by exaggerating the love between Austen's hero and heroine, elevating it from a union based on a compatibility of temperament and a good economic match to one brought about by supernatural forces. At one point in Grange's novel Elizabeth asks her 150 year old husband why '[t]here has never been a Mrs Darcy' before her.¹³⁰⁸ Darcy replies: 'Because I never met you'.¹³⁰⁹ This indicates that Darcy and Elizabeth 'were meant to be together'.¹³¹⁰ Similarly, in Jeffers' novel Darcy and Elizabeth are more than just an example of a harmonious union, they are soulmates brought together by 'Fate'.¹³¹¹ Austen's Elizabeth and Darcy save one another from pride and prejudice but in vampire romance literature, the hero and heroine save each other's souls.

Austen favoured depictions of rational rather than Romantic love. Therefore, *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* and *Vampire Darcy's Desire* would seem at first to have more in common with Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), which straddles the genres of the female gothic and the Romance, than with Austen's *P&P*. Brontë's Heathcliff and Cathy share the same kind of eternal bond as the hero and heroine of vampire romance novels. Cathy declares of Heathcliff that: 'He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same.'¹³¹² One of the concerns that Austen critics have frequently expressed of Austen profic is that 'the more popular of these works by "other pens" make a particular feature out of the sort of "guilt and misery" that Austen's novels are at such pains to avoid' and that such novels therefore 'misrepresent' and 'misread' Austen by injecting a discordant 'Brontëesque' Romantic sensibility into her works.¹³¹³ However, a closer observation of these profic texts reveals a natural lineage between Austen's Darcy and the heroes of contemporary vampire romance novels. This link suggests that the *P&P* paranormal profic texts are making explicit what was already implicit in the paranormal romance novel: 'that the romantic vampire...is merely an exaggerated, metaphoric representation' of Darcy.¹³¹⁴ If the romantic vampire is Darcy in gothic dress, this also suggests that *Twilight* can be read as *P&P* profic. Indeed, this is an argument made by Austen's fans who have theorised

¹³⁰⁷ Stephenie Meyer, *New Moon* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008), 526-27.

¹³⁰⁸ Grange, *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*, 260.

¹³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 260.

¹³¹⁰ *Ibid*, 288.

¹³¹¹ Jeffers, *Vampire Darcy's Desire*, 207.

¹³¹² Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Pennsylvania: Penguin Books, 2009), 82.

¹³¹³ Simons, "Classics and trash: reading Austen in the 1990s," 35.

¹³¹⁴ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 233.

that the *Twilight* series could 'be considered an extended form of Gothic influenced JAFF' (Jane Austen Fan Fiction).¹³¹⁵

When the Austen profic vampire craze was still in its infancy, romance critics were already analysing Darcy's contribution to the generic identity of the contemporary vampire romance hero. For example, in her 2009 article 'Darcy's Vampiric Descendants', romance critic Sarah Frantz drew a parallel between Darcy and the vampire romance heroes of contemporary fiction, contending that 'the modern version of Darcy's moderate expression of his love for Elizabeth and his appreciation of her influence over him...is the extreme of a superhuman vampire weeping for the love of his heroine.'¹³¹⁶ These tearful moments usually come during the 'confession' scene, where vampirism is very obviously presented as being analogous to the anguish of hidden love. In *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*, for example, Darcy is continuously tempted by the blood coursing through his wife's 'neck [which] is so delicate, so precious, so fragile.'¹³¹⁷ He tells Elizabeth that: 'You are like ambrosia to me. I have tried to resist you, but it is so hard...so hard...'¹³¹⁸ Darcy eventually confesses his secret desire for blood in an excessively emotional scene:

I have wanted to tell you so many times. When you asked me what was wrong I tried to tell you, but I could never find the words, and even if I had found them, I would not have had the right to rob you of your safe and familiar world. How could I plunge you into a world of such nightmares? A deeper, darker world where creatures stalk the night? I never meant to hurt you. I never meant you to know. I never wanted to do this to you, to make you afraid, to see you tremble.¹³¹⁹

Vampire Darcy's confession is an extreme version of the hero's revelation in *P&P*, where he declares: 'In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings must not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.'¹³²⁰

Crawford may be dubious about the idea that Austen is the mother of romance, however, like Franz, he accepts that Darcy is possibly the father of the

¹³¹⁵ Gabrielle Malcolm, "Darcymania," *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 80.

¹³¹⁶ Sarah S. G. Frantz, "Darcy's Vampiric Descendants: Austen's Perfect Romance Hero and J. R. Ward's *Black Dagger Brotherhood*," *Persuasions On-Line* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2009), accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no1/frantz.html>.

¹³¹⁷ Grange, *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*, 148.

¹³¹⁸ *Ibid*, 148.

¹³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 246.

¹³²⁰ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*,

vampire romance hero. Crawford theorises that the vampire romance hero is an amplified version of the romance hero, ‘suited to a more hyperbolic retelling of what [is] still, essentially, the same story’.¹³²¹ The romance hero is strong, wealthy, powerful and typically a few years older than the heroine. The romantic vampire exaggerates these qualities: he possesses superhuman strength, centuries’ worth of riches, supernatural powers, and is typically a few hundred years older than the heroine.¹³²² Edward Cullen can be read as a superlative Darcy figure because he is a superhuman, extra brooding, hyper wealthy version of Austen’s hero who is even bedazzled with glitter for extra effect. Like Meyer, Grange and Jeffers merely had to exaggerate the traits that Austen’s Darcy already possessed to turn him into a romantic vampire. The ease with which Darcy could be rewritten as a vampire lends credence to the theory put forth by both romance critics and Austen fans that ‘under all their Gothic horror fancy dress, romantic vampires had actually just been...Darcy all along’.¹³²³

Darcy’s appeal for romance writers and readers is most strongly related to the fact that he ‘evokes both an enjoyable masochistic dread of the overbearing male *and* a utopian exultation at the feminine erotic power that can bring the monster to heel with minimal effort’.¹³²⁴ Darcy initially shuns the heroine out of a sense of superiority but ultimately yields to her ‘bewitching’ influence. He debases his pride by going in search of Wickham and Lydia, declaring that his love for Elizabeth was his only motivation for doing so: ‘I believe I thought only of *you*.’¹³²⁵ The paradoxical fantasy of the all-powerful male who can be conquered by love is also central to the attraction of *Twilight* where Edward is represented as a manipulative, yet malleable monster. Throughout the series, Edward alternates between wanting to protect, and wanting to literally consume the woman he loves. He has an obsessive fixation with Bella: he watches her sleep and tracks her movements because he ‘feel[s] very protective of [her]’.¹³²⁶ He also desires her blood and must repeatedly warn her to ‘stay away’ from

¹³²¹ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 65.

¹³²² *Ibid*, 66.

¹³²³ *Ibid*, 233.

¹³²⁴ Todd, “The Romantic Hero,” 153.

¹³²⁵ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 280.

¹³²⁶ Quote from the film adaptation of *Twilight*. Melissa Rosenberg (scriptwriter), *Twilight*, feature film, dir. Catherine Hardwicke (Temple Hill Entertainment; Maverick Films; Imprint Entertainment; DMG Entertainment: November, 2008). As numerous critics and fans have pointed out, in the real world, Edward’s actions would be interpreted as emotionally abusive, but in the fantasy realm of *Twilight* they are generally accepted by readers as ‘protective’. For a discussion of how Edward’s manipulative behaviour is interpreted by fans and critics, see Crawford, “The Twilight Controversy,” *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 181- 236.

him.¹³²⁷ Yet, Bella, ‘the lamb’, can ultimately subjugate Edward, ‘the lion’, because his love for her causes him to yield to her will.¹³²⁸ Edward abandons Bella to keep her safe from his own predatory advances but when they are eventually reunited she uses the force of her love to compel him to submit to her influence, and to align with her desire to be together, for all eternity.¹³²⁹

Like *Twilight*, P&P paranormal profic fully exploits the fantasy of a powerful domineering hero who can yet be dominated and overpowered by love. In the novels by Jeffers and Grange, the tempering power of the heroine’s love is exaggerated just as Darcy’s Alpha-male traits are amplified. For example, in *Vampire Darcy’s Desire*, Darcy is ‘consumed by [his] need to take [Elizabeth]’ and indeed he has the superhuman strength to simply overpower the heroine and feed upon her whenever he wants, as he continually reminds her throughout the novel.¹³³⁰ However, Elizabeth’s influence over him is so strong that he also wants to use his power to protect her: ‘He would protect her from George Wickham and the rest of the world, and Darcy would provide for her. She would never want for anything, and –in his own way – he would love Elizabeth above all others.’¹³³¹ Jeffers’ Darcy therefore expresses conflicting fantasies of protection and possession similar to those of Edward Cullen: ‘Elizabeth created in him a need to protect and shelter her, but also a desire to possess her completely’.¹³³² Throughout their courtship Elizabeth defers to Darcy’s superior knowledge and is reluctant to ‘challenge his masculinity’ lest she destroys it.¹³³³ However, by the end of the novel Elizabeth realises that Darcy’s desire gives her power over him: ‘He had controlled their relationship up to this point, but now she would take it over’.¹³³⁴

It is clear from paranormal romance that the fantasy of the domineering man who can be overpowered by love, a fantasy originally encapsulated by Darcy, has continuing relevance for romance readers today. Crawford suggests that this fantasy has immense appeal because representing powerful or even violent men as being

¹³²⁷ Meyer, *Twilight*, 84.

¹³²⁸ *Ibid*, 274.

¹³²⁹ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 102. Crawford argues that Bella’s greatest gift is ‘pure will, in the service of pure appetite: no matter how much pain it causes her (or anyone else), she simply wants and wants and *wants* until, finally, she is given everything that she could desire.’

¹³³⁰ Regina Jeffers, *Vampire Darcy’s Desire*, 187

¹³³¹ *Ibid*, 174.

¹³³² *Ibid*, 112.

¹³³³ *Ibid*, 414.

¹³³⁴ *Ibid*, 435.

redeemable by love allows the attraction of such men ‘to be contained within a conventional, socially acceptable narrative of heterosexual monogamy.’¹³³⁵ Illouz posits that such stories also have a compensatory function: women are not socially and economically equal to men in the real world, but in romance novels women are ‘not only protected by men but also superior to them.’¹³³⁶ Paranormal profic is valuable for the insight it offers into why *P&P* has become a literary template for romance writers and for opening up the question of why the fantasy of the powerful man who can be overpowered by love still has such strong attraction for romance readers.

Auerbach has argued that ‘every age embraces the vampire it needs’.¹³³⁷ It is possible that in the late noughties, American Austen fans needed a vampiric Darcy because as a literal revenant this (re)incarnation of Austen’s hero amplifies and highlights the character’s reassuring regenerative abilities, offering a sense of stability during a time of upheaval. As Grange states, paranormal profic reminds fans that ‘Mr. Darcy is over 200 years old and yet he is forever young and handsome and he still has the power to attract women.’¹³³⁸ Indeed, she states her main incentive for writing *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* was to make ‘a statement about the deathless nature of *Pride and Prejudice* and the eternal freshness of its characters’¹³³⁹ She goes on to argue that her novel ‘made a comment on the relationship between novel and readers. A novel does not exist by itself, it only lives when a reader gives up some of their lifeforce in order to vitalise it.’¹³⁴⁰ In other words, profic and fanfiction texts have a vampiric relationship to *P&P*: they feed upon the source text, but they also give the original new life. It is a symbiotic rather than a parasitic relationship because it is mutually beneficial. Austen’s work will never be laid to rest because fans will continue to resurrect her creations and place them in new stories.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the characters from *P&P* were reconfigured in response to the cultural context in the post-crash period. Darcy was transformed into a

¹³³⁵ Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic?*, 163.

¹³³⁶ Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 8.

¹³³⁷ Auerbach, *Our Vampire, Ourselves*, 145.

¹³³⁸ Amanda Grange, “Article in the Historical Novel Society magazine,” *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre Blogspot*, Feb 16, 2009, accessed Dec 5, 2016, http://mrdarcyvampyre.blogspot.ie/2010_02_01_archive.html.

¹³³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

romanticised popular vampire, still attracting readers after two-hundred years, and Elizabeth was reimagined as a zombie slayer, fighting the monsters of the recession. The regenerative powers of Austen's characters offered reassurance during a time of crisis because the revenant embodies renewal and hope through its ability to return. Zombie and vampire profic and fanfiction offers insight into the cultural context of post-crash America but also provides commentary on transhistorical aspects of Janeite reception, such as fans' playful style of treating Austen's characters as if they were real. Hills argues that in the case of Sherlock Holmes, these two approaches (socio-cultural and transhistorical) 'have started to hybridize, becoming articulated through contemporary "demediated" versions of Holmes'.¹³⁴¹ The digital Holmes is 'of his media-technological moment' but as a transmedial figure, 'who can move seamlessly across media platforms', he also 'shares a sense of Holmes as transcending specific representations and media, becoming "as if" real and thus resonating with the fannish imagination.'¹³⁴² The following chapter will look at *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (dir. Su; 2012-13), a digital version of *P&P* that evolved across various social media platforms over the course of a year, to explore how seemingly competing frames of interpretation are actually intertwined in digital Austen fandom as well. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* utilises digital technologies to tell a new kind of story that is part online fanfiction, and part commercial production, and that actively involves the audience in the creation, interpretation, and (crucially) the financing of that story. As the next chapter will show, this adaptation offers insight into new developments in digital technology and the digital economy, but its success was ultimately dependent on its ability to resonate with established Janeite reception practices.

¹³⁴¹ Hills, "Sherlock 'Content' Onscreen: Digital Holmes and the Fannish Imagination," 69.

¹³⁴² *Ibid*, 69.

Chapter Four: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* – *Pride and Prejudice* in the Digital Realm

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (*LBD* hereafter) is an Emmy Award-winning transmedia adaptation of *P&P* that evolved across the social media sites YouTube, Twitter, Lookbook, and Tumblr between the 9th April 2012 and the 28th March 2013.¹³⁴³ The series was produced by *Pemberley Digital*, a web-production company that specialises in the ‘adaptation of classic works onto the new media format’.¹³⁴⁴ In this contemporary retelling of *P&P*, the action is relocated to California and the story is set four years after the 2008 economic crash. The Bennet sisters are reimagined as young American women struggling to complete their educations and to start fulfilling careers in an economic environment where choices are limited.

Like Davies’s iconic adaptation, the *LBD* uses serialisation to build a sense of anticipation between instalments and to immerse the audience in the storyworld. As argued in previous chapters, serials are an important contributing factor to immersion because they create ‘an addiction to the world of the show’ by spanning longer periods of time, thereby keeping viewers ‘in a state of suspense that may last for whole weeks’, or even months, as in the case of the *LBD*.¹³⁴⁵ The *LBD* audience had the opportunity to discuss the adaptation together on social media as the series progressed, strengthening fans’ communal bonds and emotional investment in the characters, just as Davies’s series became part of a cultural moment by inserting itself into people’s weekly lives. Yet, this digital version of *P&P* also writes against Davies’s television series by moving the focus away from Darcy and back to the Bennet sisters. The key plot points from *P&P* are developed through Lizzie’s episodic YouTube videos, which range from between three to eight minutes long. There are 100 episodes in Lizzie’s vlog series. Darcy appears in ten of these videos and does not make his first appearance until episode sixty meaning that in the *LBD*, as in Austen’s original novel, the main focus is on the heroine’s perspective.

¹³⁴³ The *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* became the first YouTube series to win an Emmy, receiving the 2013 Primetime Emmy Award for ‘Outstanding Creative Achievement in Interactive Media – Original Interactive Program’. Pemberley Digital, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, accessed Dec 18, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/>.

¹³⁴⁴ Pemberley Digital, “About,” accessed Dec 18, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/about/>.

¹³⁴⁵ Ryan, “Why Worlds Now?,” 9.

This contemporary version of *P&P* resonated greatly with ‘a connected generation’ of young Austen fans.¹³⁴⁶ The author’s ‘natural constituency’ has, in the past, been characterised as comprising the ‘middle-aged, the middle class and those who consider themselves slightly above the middlebrow’.¹³⁴⁷ However, director Bernie Su states that the audience demographics for the *LBD* was of 86% female, with 50% of them aged between eighteen and twenty-four.¹³⁴⁸ Critically engaging with the *LBD* provides insight into a specific media-technological moment, whilst highlighting the cultural appropriation of *P&P* as an American story that is being embraced by a new generation of digitally literate Austen fans. Although the *LBD* relies on new technologies and is aimed at the digital generation, the series also resonates with established patterns in Janeite reception by inviting fans to ‘play’ in Austen’s world. The *Pemberley Digital* team had a loose framework before commencing production, but they left room for improvisation.¹³⁴⁹ Fans were encouraged to enter the gaps in the text left by the series’ ‘official’ creators, to add their own content on Twitter and Tumblr, and to record responses to the story in the commentary sections on YouTube. Audience members who were following the story in real time were thereby given an opportunity to influence the shape of the text as it unfolded on social media and to review and critique it as it was being written.

By tweeting Austen’s characters online, fans not only became writers, they also became characters within the evolving story, making the *LBD* ‘interactive’ as well as ‘immersive’. As noted in Chapter Two, these two terms ‘explain what makes the computer-assisted experience an experience of reality’ because ‘[t]o apprehend a world as real is to feel surrounded by it, to be able to interact physically with it, *and* to have the power to modify this environment’.¹³⁵⁰ The *LBD* is valuable because it gives greater

¹³⁴⁶ Director and series co-creator Bernie Su states that the *Pemberley Digital* team envisioned their ‘core audience as female’, as a ‘connected generation’ who do ‘not know a world without internet’, who would ‘come in for the great story’ and stay for the innovations in how this story would be told. Bernie Su, “Surprising marketing lessons from the hit show *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*,” *imedia*, Jan 22, 2014, accessed Dec 18, 2017, <http://www.imediainconnection.com/articles/ported-articles/red-dot-articles/2014/jan/surprising-marketing-lessons-from-the-hit-show-the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/>.

¹³⁴⁷ Harman, *Jane's Fame*, 245.

¹³⁴⁸ Bernie Tumbles, *Tumblr*, September 22, 2014, accessed April 3, 2017, <https://berniesu.tumblr.com/post/98194334453/hi-im-in-a-graduate-level-class-about-new-media>.

¹³⁴⁹ The *Pemberley Digital* team behind the *LBD* includes: Bernie Su, co-creator, director, head writer, and executive producer; Hank Green, co-creator, editor, and executive producer; Jenni Powell, producer; Stuart Davis, assistant director; Margaret Dunlap, writer and co-executive producer; Jay Bushman, transmedia producer; Alexandra Edwards, transmedia editor; Rachel Kiley, Kate Rorick, and Anne Toole, writers. Pemberley Digital, “Team,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, accessed Dec 12, 2016, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/team/>.

¹³⁵⁰ Ryan, “Immersion vs. Interactivity: Virtual Reality and Literary Theory,” 11. (emphasis mine).

visibility to audiences' interactions with the text by including their responses, tweets, and comments as part of the narrative. In her study of digital Austen fandom, Kylie Mirmohamadi points out that: 'Reading, unlike many other cultural undertakings, leaves little physical trace, and historians of reading are often working from fragmentary sources and incidental reference' accessed indirectly through contemporary reviews and references in letters and diaries.¹³⁵¹ Serial digital productions that include an 'ancillary record' of reader response are therefore valuable because such texts render 'visible processes and experiences of literary production, consumption and circulation which may have been obscured in traditional print culture'.¹³⁵² In other words, the *LBD* provides unique insight into how fans collectively transform Austen's textual world into a virtual one, by immersing themselves in it and also by disrupting it with their own contributions.¹³⁵³ Characteristic aspects of Janeite reception revealed by fans' interactions with the text will be explored throughout the chapter, namely: the love of in-jokes as a means of forming community bonds, the Janeite appetite for 'more', and the desire for greater intimacy with Austen.

When the series finished airing, select social media content created by the producers and fans was collated and curated on the *Pemberley Digital* website. The archived story is organised under clear chapter headings, fans' YouTube comments are not included, and tweets are re-ordered in a linear sequence, rather than adopting the 'structure of reverse-order sequencing' of a live Twitter conversation.¹³⁵⁴ As well as engaging with the curated content on the *Pemberley Digital* website, this chapter will look at reader response from the commentary sections on YouTube and from fans' live Twitter accounts. These 'comments, tweets and status updates can all potentially constitute forms of fannish textual productivity' making the *LBD* part online fanfiction text and part commercial production.¹³⁵⁵ Engaging with fans' social media content alongside the content curated by *Pemberley Digital* presents methodological challenges because 'to read the [live social media] archive in anything other than reverse order,

¹³⁵¹ Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen*, 38.

¹³⁵² *Ibid*, 5.

¹³⁵³ As Busse and Hellekson point out, an evolving story is an open text that 'invites responses, permits shared authorship, and enjoins a sense of community' and therefore allows for an especially immersive and interactive reading experience. Busse and Hellekson, "Introduction: Work in Progress," 6-7.

¹³⁵⁴ Ruth Page, "Seriality and Storytelling in Social Media," *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 5, no.1 (2013): 41.

¹³⁵⁵ Matt Hills, "Fiske's 'textual productivity' and digital fandom: Web 2.0 democratization versus fan distinction?," *Participations Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 130.

[readers] must manipulate the material they have in front of them'.¹³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, analysing fans' influence on the 'work-in-progress' *LBD* text is a worthwhile endeavour because it provides a unique opportunity to investigate the role of the reader in animating the text through the creation of meaning.

Increased interest in fans as creators of content also has consequences for the nature of media production and the development of fan studies scholarship. As the *LBD* is a commercial production that relies on fan-generated content, this digital dynamic inevitability raises questions as to whether fans' creative contributions are encouraged for their artistic merit or exploited for their economic value. By looking at fans' interactions with the text, the chapter will address the question of whether the relationship between the *Pemberley Digital* producers and Austen fans constituted a genuinely productive collaboration, where fans were given the opportunity to have a real and meaningful impact on the development of the text, or whether it was an empty one based on 'an illusion of reciprocity'.¹³⁵⁷ The chapter will first place the *LBD* in the context of digital fandom and the new digital economy before looking more specifically at fans' creative contributions to this female-centric digital adaptation.

From 'Textual Poachers' to 'Influential Consumers': The Changing Landscape of Digital Fandom

Fan studies critics identify 'the arrival and widespread adoption of digital technology' as being the biggest development in the landscape of fan culture since fan studies was inaugurated as a discipline in the early 90s.¹³⁵⁸ Digital technology has led to significant developments within fan culture because it is 'empowering and disempowering, blurring the lines between producers and consumers, creating symbiotic relationships between powerful corporations and individual fans, and giving rise to new forms of cultural production.'¹³⁵⁹ When Jenkins published his now canonical fan studies work *Textual Poachers* in 1992, he characterised fans as peripheral figures conducting their affairs in the shadows of popular culture, arguing that '[t]o speak as a fan is to accept

¹³⁵⁶ Page, "Seriality and Storytelling in Social Media," 41.

¹³⁵⁷ Rebecca Williams, "Good neighbours?: Fan/producer relationships and the broadcasting field," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 24, no. 2 (2010): 282.

¹³⁵⁸ Bennett, "Tracing Textual Poachers," 7.

¹³⁵⁹ Roberta Pearson, "Fandom in the Digital Era," *Popular Communication* 8, no. 1 (2010): 84.

what has been labeled a subordinated position within the cultural hierarchy, to accept an identity constantly belittled or criticized by institutional authorities.’¹³⁶⁰ Digital technologies have brought greater *visibility* to fan activities, leading to a shift in how fans are perceived, in academia and in mainstream culture. As digital fan studies scholar Lucy Bennett argues, thanks to online platforms like social media, fans have ‘stronger resources’ and channels with which to amplify their voices, ‘allowing for widespread networks to form, and more instantaneous modes of communication to be maintained.’¹³⁶¹

Fans are now widely recognised as ‘prosumers’ who ‘produce and circulate’ the products that they also consume, and they are therefore actively courted by media producers due to their ability to promote and engage with new media.¹³⁶² In light of these changes, Jenkins has revised his earlier concept of fans and has advocated that ‘[w]e should no longer be talking about fans as if they were somehow marginal to the ways the culture industries operate’.¹³⁶³ Fans have moved from the shadowy wings to the centre stage, and have evolved from being perceived as ‘false worshippers’ to ‘inspirational consumers’, and from maligned marginal figures to valued (or valuable) audience members at the heart of media production.¹³⁶⁴ This increased interest in fans’ online activities has led to an extension of their cultural influence but also puts them at risk of potential exploitation. Some critics associate ‘user-generated content with downsizing of the creative economy’ and see ‘these forms of commercially embraced grassroots expressions primarily as a means of cutting costs by off-loading jobs onto the consumer who now produce the content that others are consuming and even create the networks through which that content is circulating.’¹³⁶⁵ Using fans to build a brand and market content is becoming a more common practice for media producers as ‘investing in niche markets with small but committed consumer bases...can lower costs of production and replace marketing costs by building a much stronger network with your desired consumers.’¹³⁶⁶ The controversy surrounding the potential for producers to exploit fans’ sharing networks and creative labour is perhaps most succinctly summed

¹³⁶⁰ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 22-23.

¹³⁶¹ Bennett, “Tracing Textual Poachers,” 7.

¹³⁶² Henry Jenkins, “Afterword: The Future of Fandom,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, eds. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 359.

¹³⁶³ Jenkins, “Afterword: The Future of Fandom,” 362.

¹³⁶⁴ Terms taken from Jenkins’s *Textual Poachers* and *Convergence Culture*.

¹³⁶⁵ Jenkins, “Afterword: The Future of Fandom,” 362.

¹³⁶⁶ Chris Anderson quoted in Jenkins, “Afterword: The Future of Fandom,” 359.

up by the phrase: ‘You make all the content. They keep all the revenue’.¹³⁶⁷ In other words, in the most cynical terms, capitalising on fan labour allows producers to keep all the profits while fans essentially do the work of creating and circulating the content.

The *LBD* marks a key change in how shows are produced and offers insight into an important development in fanfiction’s relationship to technology and the market place. The series illustrates that the role of the traditional ‘media producer’, as well as the consumer, is being challenged and renegotiated in digital spaces. The *LBD* is not a single-platform series like a television show and *Pemberley Digital* is not a mainstream production company. As a digital media company, it differs from film or television productions in that it faces far fewer restrictions in terms of development process and storytelling format. When developing the *LBD*, the producers did not have to ‘sell’ the idea of a *P&P* adaptation to investors, as Sue Birtwistle (producer of the 1995 BBC/A&E adaptation) did when she pitched Austen’s novel without mentioning the title so that she could make it ‘sound very modern, very contemporary’ to an executive who ‘was beside himself and asked if [she had] secured the rights to the book.’¹³⁶⁸ *Pemberley Digital* writer Margaret Dunlap notes that ‘one of the advantages of working as an independent in new media’ is that the production process is ‘incredibly fast’: there is no need to ‘get approval [for an idea] from three layers of vice presidents’.¹³⁶⁹ As a digital media company, *Pemberley Digital* also did not have to tailor content to adhere to network standards; instead, they had the freedom to alter the series as it progressed and to remain in direct contact with the audience.

In the *LBD*, the traditionally separate roles of producer and consumer are further challenged by the fact that members of the production team self-identify as Austen fans, and as members of fanfiction writing communities. Executive producer and co-creator Hank Green declared that one of his reasons for adapting *P&P* was that it is his ‘favourite book’ while Alexandra Edwards, writer and transmedia editor, describes herself as ‘someone who love[s] Jane Austen...and love[s] working directly with fan communities’ and who has ‘been interested for a long time in how Austen gets adapted into pop culture, both in fandom and in television’.¹³⁷⁰ Indeed, Edwards is a contributor

¹³⁶⁷ Phrase quoted in Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 180.

¹³⁶⁸ Sue Birtwistle, quoted in “Behind the scenes of *Pride and Prejudice*,” *Jennifer Ehle BlogSpot*, May 20, 1995, accessed Dec 18, 2017, <http://jenniferehle.blogspot.ie/1990/05/behind-scenes-of-pride-and-prejudice.html>.

¹³⁶⁹ Margaret Dunlap, quoted in *Pemberley Digital*, “Fan Appreciation no.2: *Pemberley Digital*,” in *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 54.

¹³⁷⁰ Alexander Edwards quoted in *Pemberley Digital*, “Fan Appreciation no.2: *Pemberley Digital*,” 54.

to the Jane Austen *Fan Phenomena* anthology of essays written ‘*about the fans, for the fans, by the fans*’ where she explores gift economy fanfiction which, she argues, ‘has much to tell us about the pleasure and social protest that unite in popular culture versions of Jane Austen.’¹³⁷¹ Edwards developed her skills as a writer within supportive fanfiction writing communities where ‘there’s a really positive community spirit, even when people give you feedback’, in contrast to professional writing workshops which, she claims, ‘are kind of terrifying.’¹³⁷² Edwards’ fannish identity is important because, as this chapter will demonstrate, it facilitated a deeper level of engagement with the target audience. Elizabeth Minkel argues that in the digital realm ‘the traditional publishing industry *sees* fans, and understands their power...but doesn’t fully understand them’, adding that to set up a truly collaborative community it is important ‘to know what it’s like to be a fan’.¹³⁷³ The success of the *LBD* is perhaps attributable to the fact that members of the *Pemberley Digital* team were Austen fans and the text was constructed using their own knowledge, resources, and skills *and* those of the Austen fans that comprised the audience.

At the time of development, Edwards was also undertaking a PhD focusing ‘on the early-twentieth-century history of fandom’, a topic on which she has since published.¹³⁷⁴ In other words, she is an ‘aca-fan’ who is invested in the worlds of fandom and of academia and is ‘able to speak both languages’.¹³⁷⁵ Indeed, perhaps the term ‘aca-fan-writer’ is most appropriate to describe Edwards’ complex identity as an academic who studies fanfiction, creates fanfiction, and also writes professionally for a specific fan community. This term was coined by Catherine M. Roach to describe her own ‘multi-positioned’ identity as an academic researcher who studies popular romance, but who is also positioned inside the community as a romance fan, and participates in the genre as a published romance writer.¹³⁷⁶ Roach claims that her

¹³⁷¹ Alexandra Edwards, “In the Regency Alternate Universe: Jane Austen and Fanfiction Culture,” in *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 5 and 16.

¹³⁷² Alexandra Edwards, “Lessons from Fandom- In Conversation with Alexandra Edwards & Hannah W.,” *Many a True Nerd*, interview by Hannah W., May 25, 2014, accessed Jan 26, 2015, <http://manyatrue nerd.com/2014/05/25/lessons-from-fandom-in-conversation-with-alexandra-edwards-hannah-w/>.

¹³⁷³ Elizabeth Minkel, “To build a fan base, it helps to know what it’s like to be a fan,” *NewStatesman*, Dec 12, 2014, accessed Dec 18, 2017, <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/12/build-fan-base-it-helps-know-what-it-s-be-fan>.

¹³⁷⁴ “Contributor Details,” in *Fan Phenomena: Jane Austen*, ed. Gabrielle Malcolm (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015), 163. Edwards has contributed a chapter on the early-twentieth-century history of fandom to the Blackwell-Wiley *Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies* (2018).

¹³⁷⁵ Busse and Hellekson, “Introduction: Work in Progress,” 8.

¹³⁷⁶ Catherine M. Roach, “Going Native”: Aca-Fandom and Deep Participant Observation

experiences writing from within, and for, the romance community have yielded ‘an alternative form of engaged and participatory research’:

By sinking deep into the romance narrative as a writer, I have found I can inhabit the inside of that storyline and trace out its pathways in a fictional, emotionally-driven writing experiment that reflexively informs and enriches my non-fiction, analytically-driven writing.¹³⁷⁷

Edwards likewise drew on her fannish experiences to develop her skills as a professional writer and to inform her academic research. The *LBD* demonstrates that in digital production, creators, knowledge experts, and audiences occupy overlapping and multiple roles leading to a complex narrative experience for all involved.

Analysing the complicated relationship between producers and fans in the context of digital Austen fandom is a fruitful area of inquiry. The blurring of boundaries between producers and fans has arguably led to a more democratic creative environment as the lines of communication are more open and both groups can therefore collaborate on the production of new material. Yet, it is still important to maintain an awareness of the power relations at play in the digital model of cultural production. As Christine Berberich argues, popular forms of fiction ‘always and inevitably, [have] political connotations as [popular] refers to the people and the distribution of power in society.’¹³⁷⁸ Therefore, an appreciation of the democratic potential of popular forms of digital production must also encompass a consideration of the ways that those in power can seek to manipulate those with comparatively less power. Edwards claims that empowered, knowledgeable fans are valued by *Pemberley Digital* because they create new creative opportunities:

I think the biggest mistake creators can make is to try to dictate to fan communities how they should be interacting or expressing their fannishness. You have to respect these people who love your work. If you want to use transmedia, especially to encourage interactivity, you have to find ways to invite them to play in the world and make it cooperative... fan communities operate on the principle of possibility. They’re always asking “What if...?”

in *Popular Romance Studies*,” *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature* 47, no. 2 (June 2014): 38. Roach has published two romance novels under the pen-name ‘Catherine LaRoche’: *Master of Love* (2012) and *Knight of Love* (2014).

¹³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹³⁷⁸ Berberich, “Introduction: The Popular – Literature versus literature,” 3.

And the best thing you can do as a creator is to allow all those possibilities to co-exist.¹³⁷⁹

Nevertheless, as Francesca Coppa argues, ‘there can be an easy slippage between *valuing* fan-work and *appraising* it.’¹³⁸⁰

A frequent concern raised by critics is that because the producer remains in charge of the terms of interaction ‘these relationships can be fraught with conflict, and unrest, with fans having ultimately little say in the direction and production of the text’.¹³⁸¹ Sam Ford contends that ‘[m]edia producers are more likely to value some fans...over others,’ and tend to ‘embrace fans via ways that match the company’s goals and motivations.’¹³⁸² If the fan is working for the producer or author by promoting the text or show and building a community of followers then the fans’ contributions are valued. However, if fans are using characters in ways deemed inappropriate or contrary to their goals then fannish activity may be restricted.¹³⁸³ The media industry and its consumers alike, Jenkins notes, ‘now operate as if we were moving towards a more participatory culture, but they have not yet agreed upon the terms of our participation.’¹³⁸⁴ Even when a collaborative approach is adopted, fans may not be respected as equal partners within the collaboration.

The *LBD* started off as ‘an experiment’ in storytelling: *Pemberley Digital* knew they would only be able to tell the ‘entire story’, and to financially profit from this story, if fans responded positively to the show and promoted the interactive project by liking, sharing and commenting on the collaboratively produced content.¹³⁸⁵ The team did not spend any money on PR, relying on fans to promote the series through ‘word-of-

¹³⁷⁹ Alexandra Edwards, “Exclusive Interview: Alexandra Edwards,” interview by Dan Whitehead, *K7media*, Sept 24, 2013, accessed Dec 12, 2014, <http://k7media.co.uk/2013/09/24/exclusive-interview-alexandra-edwards-2/>.

¹³⁸⁰ Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 15.

¹³⁸¹ Bennett, “Tracing Textual Poachers,” 15.

¹³⁸² Ford, “Fan Studies: Grappling with an ‘Undisciplined’ Discipline,” 66.

¹³⁸³ As an illustrative example, Amazon’s ‘Kindle Worlds’ project sought to monetise and control fanfiction by creating a platform where fanfiction writers could publish stories based on ‘licenced’ worlds. Stories were subject to content and circulation restrictions as writers had to abide by Amazon’s limiting content guidelines and agree to host stories only on Amazon platforms. Furthermore, submitting a story to Kindle Worlds entailed granting ‘Amazon Publishing an exclusive license to the story and all the original elements...in that story’. “Rights and the Publication Agreement,” *Kindle Worlds*, accessed Jan 28, 2015, <https://kindleworlds.amazon.com/faqs?topicId=A31DTV3VSRP82B>. For a discussion of Kindle Worlds from a fan studies perspective, see Coppa, *The Fanfiction Reader*, 14-15.

¹³⁸⁴ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 177.

¹³⁸⁵ Bernie Su, “FAQ,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, April 14, 2012, accessed Dec 12, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lizzie-bennet-diaries-bts-where-are-mary-and-kitty/>.

mouth'.¹³⁸⁶ In other words, the producers used the participation of fans as 'viral marketing', described as 'a form of advertising that emerges as the participation of the audience distributes content through word-of-mouth, viral videos, e-mail forwards, or other online user-generated content.'¹³⁸⁷ Fans were relied upon to help the series to make money, but they did not make money from the show. Alexis Lothian has termed this trend 'an inversion in the direction of fannish theft' as fans have moved from poaching from the texts of others in order to creatively manipulate content, to having that content taken from them and sold commercially with little or no monetary reward going back to the fans.¹³⁸⁸ This media practice is theorised by Emma Keltie as a form of 'authorised participation', which allows the culture industry to capitalise 'on the leisure time of audiences, who use their own labour power to contribute to the power of the culture industry.'¹³⁸⁹

A consideration of the producers' commercial incentives is especially pertinent in the case of the *LBD*, given the serial mode of publication. Jennifer Hayward reminds us that a defining quality of serial fiction from the nineteenth century to the present day has been 'its ability to (at least pretend to) respond to its audience while the narrative is still in the process of development', because satisfying a 'perceived demand' is key to making money.¹³⁹⁰ The chance of financial gain is increased if it appears as though the narrative is being customised for the audience's benefit. Yet, serials also facilitate audience agency: 'by involving a community of readers in collaboratively interpreting and to some degree shaping a text, serials incorporate a space for critique and thus defuse the text's potentially coercive powers'.¹³⁹¹ 'By engaging in the social media platforms occupied by the audience', the *LBD* 'bridges the gap between the story and the viewer, and creates a richer level of immersion' than television serials, which use the serial format to facilitate immersion, but which allow for comparatively limited audience interaction.¹³⁹² The following sections will explore whether the *LBD*'s

¹³⁸⁶ Su, "Surprising marketing lessons from the hit show *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*."

¹³⁸⁷ Paul Booth, *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2010), 25.

¹³⁸⁸ Alexis Lothian, quoted in Jones, "Fifty Shades of Exploitation."

¹³⁸⁹ Emma Keltie, *The Culture Industry and Participatory Audiences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 60.

¹³⁹⁰ Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 23-24.

¹³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹³⁹² Jessica Seymour, "Writing across Platforms: Adapting Classics Through Social Media," in *Minding the Gap: Writing across Thresholds and Fault Lines*, ed. Thom Conroy and Gail Pittaway (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 112. The television format does not allow for the same level of

responsiveness to its audience was a ‘true audience responsiveness’ that respected their agency or ‘a stimulated’ one, motivated by money.¹³⁹³

The LBD and the Digi-Gratis Economy

When the *Pemberley Digital* team commenced production, they had enough money to make the first three months’ worth of YouTube videos.¹³⁹⁴ Subsequent months of production were funded by five revenue streams, all of which depended upon fan involvement and agency.¹³⁹⁵ The first source of revenue was from fans’ view counts on YouTube. Advertisers place ads on YouTube videos and the producers of the videos earn money for every thousand views of a single ad. The amount of money earned depends on various factors such as the position of the ad within a video, the type of ad displayed, and the percentage cut owed to YouTube.¹³⁹⁶ The second form of revenue was generated from merchandise such as t-shirts, badges, teacups, and journals.¹³⁹⁷ In the *LBD*, the main character knows she is in a show: Lizzie creates the YouTube series ‘The Lizzie Bennet Diaries’ as part of a thesis project for her graduate studies course in Mass Communications. The producers could therefore use Lizzie to advertise merchandise to the *LBD* followers, without drawing attention to the character’s fictional status, as it would be natural for any YouTube content creator to want to sell to their online fanbase. Lizzie ends her Q&A sessions with fans with the reminder: ‘don’t forget to check out our new merch, that’s right, you asked for it and here it is!’¹³⁹⁸

audience interaction as digital narratives, but audiences can still interact with television content by writing fanfiction.

¹³⁹³ Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures*, 24.

¹³⁹⁴ Hannah W., “Ten Things You Might Not Know About The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” *Many A True Nerd*, July 3, 2015, accessed Jan 26, 2015, <http://manyatrue nerd.com/2013/07/03/ten-things-you-might-not-know-about-the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/>.

¹³⁹⁵ For a discussion of the five revenue streams see: Su, “Surprising marketing lessons from the hit show The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.”

¹³⁹⁶ See “Lesson: Ads on YouTube,” *YouTube Creators*, accessed Dec 20, 2018, <https://creatoracademy.youtube.com/page/lesson/ad-types>.

¹³⁹⁷ “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” *DFTBA*, accessed Jan 9, 2018, <https://store.dftba.com/collections/lizzie-bennet>.

¹³⁹⁸ Pemberley Digital, “Episode QA2: Lizzie Answers Questions,” (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, June 23, 2012, accessed Dec 20, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-qa2-lizzie-answers-questions/>.

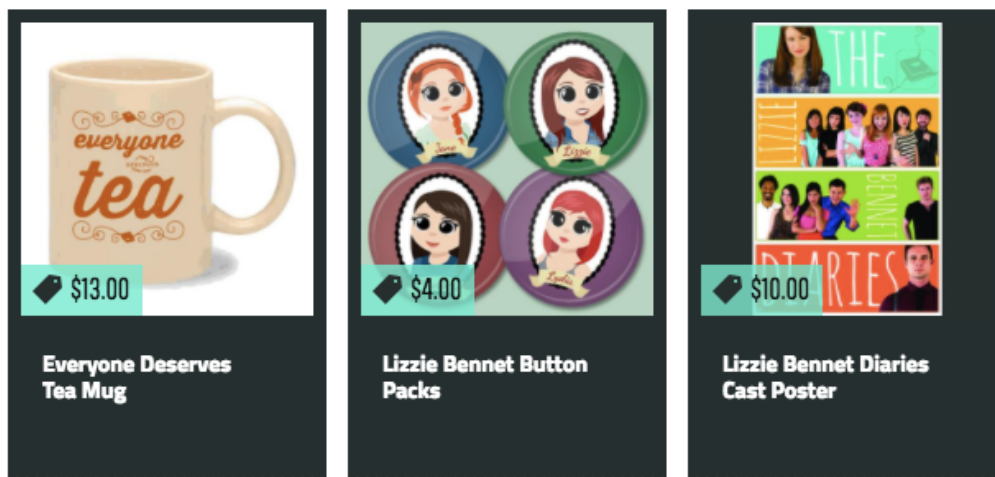


Figure 36: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Merchandise

Another important form of revenue was raised through ‘affiliate marketing’, where an individual (or a company posing as an individual in the case of *Pemberley Digital*) promotes the products of another company and earns a commission for sales that they help to generate. In the series, Jane Bennet works as a fashion merchandise coordinator and has an online ‘Lookbook’ where she showcases her personal style to her followers.¹³⁹⁹ Each post features links that direct viewers to shops where they can purchase the items that Jane wears in the photographs meaning that fans are driven to buy the character’s clothing, and *Pemberley Digital* earns a share of the profits. Su states that *Pemberley Digital* has ‘driven tens of thousands of audience members’ to buy dresses worn by the Bennet sisters using affiliate marketing, even causing dresses to sell out completely.¹⁴⁰⁰

¹³⁹⁹ Lookbook is an online forum which provides a ‘source for fashion inspiration from real people around the world’. The Lookbook for ‘Jane Bennet’ can be found at <http://lookbook.nu/looksbyjane>.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Su, “Surprising marketing lessons from the hit show *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.”

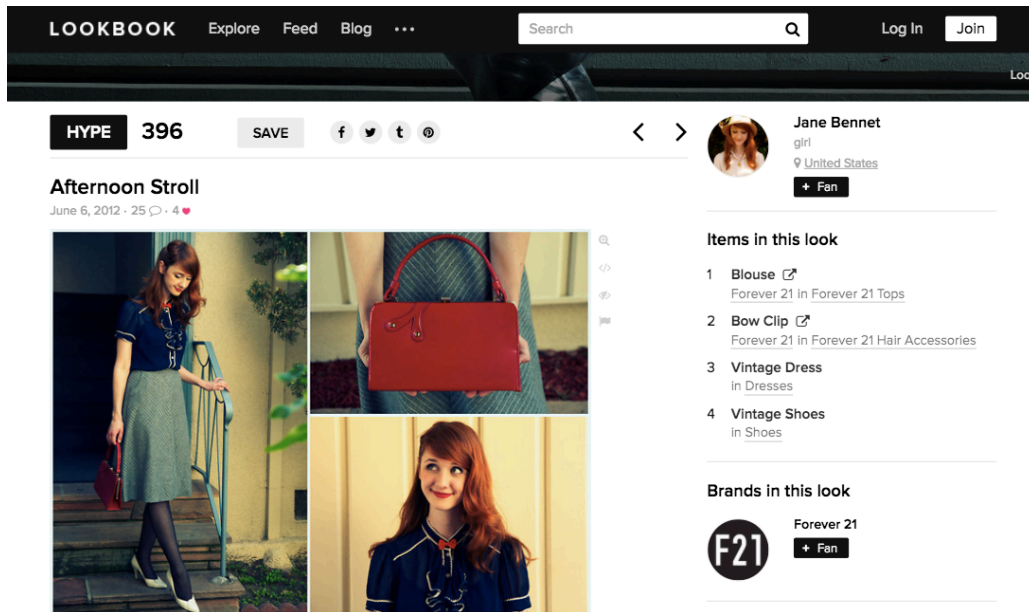


Figure 37: Jane Bennet, 'Afternoon Stroll,' Lookbook

The final two forms of revenue came from DVD and book sales. The production company relied upon the power of collective fan activism to raise enough money to produce a set of DVDs based on the *LBD* when the series finished airing. The goal of the crowdfunded Kickstarter campaign organised by *Pemberley Digital* was to raise \$60,000 to put these DVDs into production but, thanks to the advocacy of fans, the result was \$462,405.¹⁴⁰¹ Su and series writer Kate Rorick also collaborated on *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet* (2014), a novel based on the web-series (based on Austen's original novel) which expands on the events from the series. Fans donated funds to produce products that they then bought back from the producers for more money, effectively paying for the product twice.

¹⁴⁰¹ "The *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* DVD... and More!," *Kickstarter*, accessed January 29, 2015, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/pemberleydigital/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries-dvdand-more>.

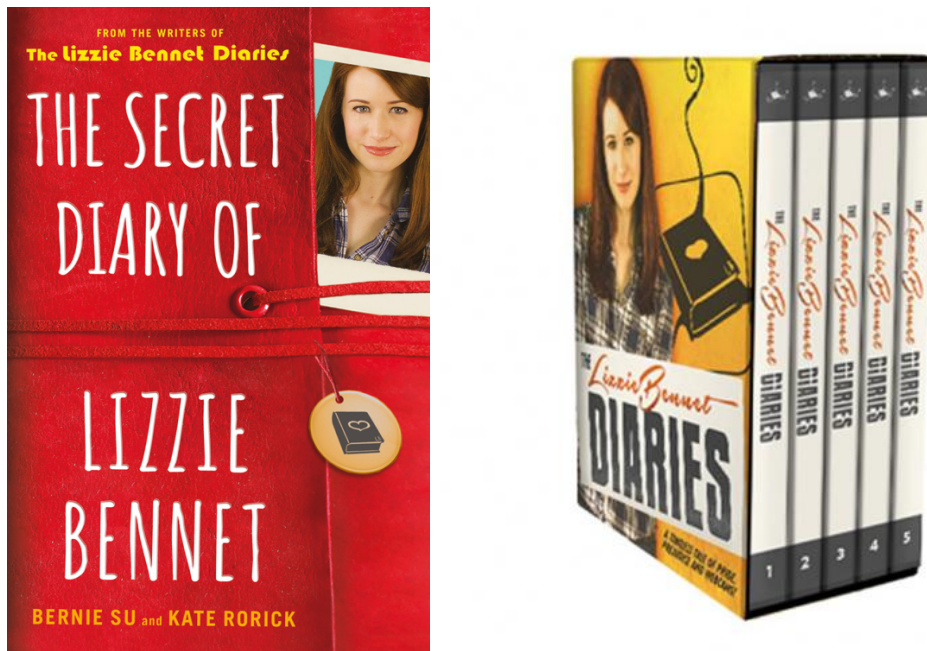


Figure 38: The Lizzie Bennet Diaries Book and DVD Set

Fans were not obligated to contribute any money to produce the DVD and book because, of course, the *LBD* is available online for free. Yet, many were motivated to give back to the series out of a sense of love and appreciation, as one fan stated: ‘When I decided to support the series’ Kickstarter campaign, I did so out of gratitude for a delightful year of entertainment via *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.’¹⁴⁰² In exchange for this gesture of appreciation, fans expected the producers to acknowledge their support. Fans pledging money to the Kickstarter campaign were promised additional bonus material such as DVD commentary, cast interviews, and autographed items if they increased the level of their support, but for some fans the promise of a printed ‘thank you’ from *Pemberley Digital* was the most coveted ‘extra’, as illustrated by the following fan testimonial:

All I desired was the printed thanks. I wanted my name on this because I helped make it happen. I had watched faithfully from nearly the beginning; even when an episode began with a YouTube-generated ad, I sat through patiently for the sake of the series.¹⁴⁰³

¹⁴⁰² Laura Jane Ramsburg, “The Persistence of Austen in the 21st Century: A Reception History of The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” *Hollins University Digital Commons*, 2014, accessed Dec 20, 2017, <https://digitalcommons.hollins.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=malsfe>, 42.

¹⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, 36.

Paul Booth argues that the form of acknowledgement referenced above is a ‘new gift, the digital gift’: ‘[i]nstead of reciprocity, what the gift in the digital age requires for “membership” in the fan community, is merely an obligation to reply’, or as in the case of the *LBD*, to say ‘thank you.’¹⁴⁰⁴ This model of reciprocal exchange adopted by the fans and producers is related to the idea of the gift economy, discussed in the Introduction.

In the *LBD*, gift economy-related characteristics like ‘sharing, reciprocation and communalization’ are used both to strengthen relationships *and* to generate money.¹⁴⁰⁵ Booth has coined the term ‘Digi-Gratis’, defined as a ‘mash-up of the market economy and the gift economy’, to describe this complex economic structure.¹⁴⁰⁶ These two economic structures seem antithetical because ‘while the market economy describes the buying and selling of goods, the gift economy articulates the establishment of relationships among its participants, the formation of a community.’¹⁴⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Booth argues that in the mash-up Digi-Gratis economy, both the gift and market economies exist together, ‘*not* [as] a convergence or hybrid of the two’, but as ‘the simultaneous existence of both economies as both separated and conjoined.’¹⁴⁰⁸ The *LBD* fans generate and share content to build community in the manner of a gift exchange economy while the *Pemberley Digital* producers rely on fans’ participatory practices to make an income and to fund the series. The *LBD* is therefore an illustrative example of this new ‘mashup’ Digi-Gratis economy at work. As we have seen, fans are often relegated to positions of relative powerlessness in discussions of the monetisation of user-generated content; yet, digital technologies are resources that can be used by fans to resist attempts to control or curtail their creativity, leading to a ‘new kind of cultural power’.¹⁴⁰⁹

Corporations, Jenkins reminds us, may envision ‘participation as something they can start and stop, channel and reroute, commodify and market’ but fans ‘are asserting a right to participate in the culture...when and where they wish’.¹⁴¹⁰ Fans and fan studies scholars have taken advantage of digital tools to amplify their voices and form sites of resistance. The most infamous example of a failed attempt to manipulate

¹⁴⁰⁴ Booth, *Digital Fandom*, 134.

¹⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

¹⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 130.

¹⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Jenkins, “Afterword: The Future of Fandom,” 363.

¹⁴¹⁰ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 175.

fannish output is that of the FanLib fiasco. FanLib.com was a site ostensibly set up to offer fans a space where fanfiction could be commercially hosted through an official channel sanctioned by copyright holders. Claims were made that this would be a venue for fans to safely and freely exercise their creativity without fear of legal ramifications. However, contributors found an old business prospectus online that outlined the company's real objectives. The site's developers promised the rightsholders that all fanfiction would be 'managed and moderated to the max', that players' terms-of-service would be restricted to protect companies 'rights and property', and that 'as with a coloring book' contributors would be forced to 'stay within the lines.'¹⁴¹¹ In response to FanLib, academics, fans, and legal experts came together to form the *Organisation for Transformative Works*, a digital archive dedicated to legitimising fan creativity and to 'protecting and defending' fan work 'from commercial exploitation and legal challenge'.¹⁴¹² The OTW hosts an archive of non-commercial fanworks, provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, and provides representation for fans during legal proceedings, to ensure that fandom is protected from exploitation. The example of the OTW demonstrates that although rightsholders, or 'the powers that be' as fans' term them, may try to manipulate them, fans are taking advantage of the power and immediacy of digital tools to speak back to those that try to channel their activity in restrictive ways.

Fans of the *LBD* demonstrated that they are not a passive audience when they spoke back to the *Pemberley Digital* team at times when they felt that they were 'overstepping their boundaries.'¹⁴¹³ Rachel Kiley, the writer responsible for developing the Lydia/Wickham storyline, entered a fan space to discuss Wickham's character with the audience. Fans resented her attempt to dictate how they should interpret Wickham, stating that 'when people like Rachel Kiley go through the tags and attack fans for either not having the "right" reactions to their projects or liking the "right" characters it turns [them] off'.¹⁴¹⁴ As Jessica Seymour *et al* point out: 'some fans continued to expect a fannish space, away from originary producers, where they could discuss the text "in

¹⁴¹¹ FanLib prospectus quoted in Ibid, 180.

¹⁴¹² "What We Believe," *Organization for Transformative Works*, accessed Jan 28, 2015, <http://transformativeworks.org/about/believe>.

¹⁴¹³ Jessica Seymour, Jenny Roth, and Monica Flegel, "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries: Fan-creator interactions and new online storytelling," *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture* 4, no. 2 & 3 (2015): 105.

¹⁴¹⁴ Fan comment from Jojo the Mighty quoted in Seymour, Roth, and Flegel, "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries: Fan-creator interactions and new online storytelling," 106.

private””, and they were vocal about asserting this expectation.¹⁴¹⁵ Fans further challenge the cultural power of producers by banding as a community and drawing on their ‘collective intelligence’.

‘Collective Intelligence’ and the ‘Austen Archive’

The concept of collective intelligence, as defined by media scholar and cultural theorist Pierre Lévy as a form of ‘universally distributed intelligence’, is central to the cultural implications of digital technologies and to the development of digital fandom.¹⁴¹⁶ As Jenkins states, in the digital age:

Consumption has become a collective process...None of us can know everything; each of us knows something, and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills.¹⁴¹⁷

For some critics, collective intelligence democratises culture while for others, it is tantamount to a form of ‘mob rule’. Andrew Keen describes the digital revolution as ‘ignorance meets egoism meets bad taste meets mob rule...a flattening of culture that is blurring the lines between traditional audience and author, creator and consumer, expert and amateur.’¹⁴¹⁸ By contrast, digital media expert Abigail De Kosnik characterises amateur content creators and digital archivists as ““rogue” memory workers’ who are exploring ‘the potential of digital technologies to democratize cultural memory’.¹⁴¹⁹ For De Kosnik, the usurpation of cultural gatekeepers in the digital realm means that ‘memory has fallen into female hands, into queer hands, into immigrant and diasporic and transnational hands, into non-white hands, into the hands of the masses’ while for Keen, culture has fallen into the hands of ‘exuberant monkeys’, amateurs without skills, expertise, or accountability.¹⁴²⁰ Hills summarises these two approaches to digital culture by observing that ‘digital populists’ celebrate the democratisation of creativity ‘by

¹⁴¹⁵ Ibid, 106.

¹⁴¹⁶ Pierre Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, trans. Robert Bononno (Cambridge: Helix Books, 1997), 13.

¹⁴¹⁷ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 4.

¹⁴¹⁸ Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How blogs, MySpace, YouTube and the rest of today's user-generated media are killing our culture and economy* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2007), 2.

¹⁴¹⁹ Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016), 2. De Kosnik's choice of the word ““roguofe”” is dependent upon Jacques Derrida's relation of democracy to the ““roué””, ‘the figure of licentiousness and debauchery in French culture since the eighteenth century’.

¹⁴²⁰ Ibid, 10; Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur*, 2.

marginalizing issues of skill, competence and (fan-)cultural distinction, whilst digital elitists seek to emphasize issues of skill and competence in order to bolster a reactionary re-installation of professional/amateur'.¹⁴²¹ He suggests that these two approaches do not take adequate account of 'the hierarchies and evaluations that go on within fan cultures', and the ways in which fans themselves engage in the same debates about questions of skill and competence.¹⁴²²

In the Austen fandom, the lines between 'professionals' and 'amateurs' have long been blurred because Austen profic production has such an extensive history. As demonstrated in previous chapters, fans do not consume this profic uncritically, but rather subject these texts to their own informal version of a 'transformative use' test. Austen fans are open to profic texts or commercial adaptations that encourage the reader to look at a familiar character from a new perspective, like for example Grahame-Smith's representation of Elizabeth as an action heroine in the parodic *PPZ*. However, fans do not respond well to character treatments that are completely 'OOC' or 'out-of-character', because fans want the canon 'shaped rather than misshapen, bent rather than broken.'¹⁴²³ For example, Emma Tennant's *P&P* sequels (*Pemberley, Pride and Prejudice Continued* (1993) and *An Unequal Marriage, or Pride and Prejudice Continued* (1994)) 'met with a mixture of disinterest and derision by popular audiences' due to the recasting of Austen's 'cool but playful Elizabeth as a fretful and despairing creature'.¹⁴²⁴ Indeed, Tennant is rated as the worst sequel writer on the *Pemberley* 'Bibliography of Sequels' page because of her 'monumental' failure to capture the essence of Elizabeth.¹⁴²⁵ Unlike Keen's amateur reader, described as a 'digitalized version...of the noble savage',¹⁴²⁶ Austen fans are discerning readers who carefully evaluate the texts they consume and who possess an exhaustive knowledge of her novels and of adaptations of her novels. This shared knowledge, or 'collective intelligence', is integral to the digital experience.

Mirmohamadi observes that in the digital realm 'Austen and Austen-inspired texts function in an intertextual environment in which urtext mingles not only with

¹⁴²¹ Hills, "Fiske's 'textual productivity' and digital fandom," 131.

¹⁴²² *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴²³ Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 67.

¹⁴²⁴ Munford, "'The Future of Pemberley,'" 61 and 66. Munford notes that Tennant was positioned by fans as a 'violate interloper who had trespassed on the Austen estate.'

¹⁴²⁵ "Bibliography of Sequels," *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Oct 26, 2017, <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/austseq1.html>.

¹⁴²⁶ Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur*, 36.

tribute text, but also, in ever-widening circles of reference, with further texts inspired by those tributes, both written and visual'.¹⁴²⁷ Austen fans draw on their knowledge of the intertextual and referential *P&P* archive when evaluating the merits of new adaptations like the *LBD* meaning that the validity of expertise and knowledge has not been rejected. Some of the creators of the *LBD* are also Austen fans who are likewise knowledgeable about the *P&P* archive, further complicating attempts to draw clear distinctions between amateurs and professionals, and skilled and unskilled digital content producers. The collaborative relationship between *Pemberley Digital* and Austen fans was not wholly democratic as fans did not make money from the show, nor did they receive the same cultural credit as the 'official' producers, but the fans were also not powerless, unskilled, or lacking in expert knowledge.¹⁴²⁸ The success of the *LBD* was dependent upon the willingness of all involved to engage intelligently with the 'rich and self-conscious intertextuality' that characterises digital Austen fandom.¹⁴²⁹

In the *LBD* series, esoteric allusions to minor canonical Austen characters abound, as do references to the author's lesser known unfinished works. For example, Fitz (Colonel Fitzwilliam) mentions his friend Brandon's birthday in a Twitter post, a probable reference to Colonel Brandon from *Sense & Sensibility* (1811).¹⁴³⁰ Lydia's fake ID features the name 'Mary Crawford', a reference appreciated by fans as a 'great little detail for Janeites who know the worldly and wild Mary Crawford from *Mansfield Park*.'¹⁴³¹ Darcy's sister Gigi Darcy (Georgiana), who works for the family's digital media company, makes plans to travel to a sleepy seaside town called Sanditon to do market research on a new product under development, a name borrowed from *Sanditon* (1817), Austen's unfinished novel set in a small fishing village. The *LBD* makes intertextual references to Austen adaptations, as well as to the novels. For example, an oblique reference is made to Davies's infamous pond scene. Fans are teased with the

¹⁴²⁷ Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen*, 11. The 'urtext' refers to the original version of a text, to which later versions can be compared.

¹⁴²⁸ On the *Pemberley Digital* website, fans who contributed content to the *LBD* are not credited as being part of the 'team' behind the series. See Pemberley Digital, "Team," *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, accessed Dec 12, 2016, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/team/>.

¹⁴²⁹ Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen*, 4.

¹⁴³⁰ Pemberley Digital, "No more videos : (," (Twitter), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, March 28 2013, accessed Jan 22, 2017, <<http://www.pemberleydigital.com/no-more-videos/>>.

¹⁴³¹ Pemberley Digital, "Episode QA1: Lizzie's first QA video," (YouTube video) *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, May 5, 2012, accessed Sept 14, 2016, <<http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lizzies-first-qa-video/>>; Virginia Claire, "A Closer Look at *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*: Episodes 1-16," *Austenprose*, Feb 15, 2013, accessed Dec 18, 2016, <<https://austenprose.com/2013/02/15/a-closer-look-at-the-lizzie-bennet-diaries-episodes-1-16/>>.

possibility that they might be treated to a Colin Firth-esque dive when it is mentioned that Darcy’s office building features a rooftop pool.¹⁴³² Lizzie Bennet aligns herself with Janeites by mentioning that she is a fan of this particular actor’s work: ‘I like rain, classic novels, and any movie starring Colin Firth’.¹⁴³³ When the Bennet sisters first find out that Bing Lee’s (Bingley) handsome friend is named ‘Darcy’, Lydia remarks that this is also the name of Firth’s character in ‘that chubby Zellweger movie’, a reference to the film adaptation of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (dir. Sharon Maguire 2001) starring Firth and Renée Zellweger.¹⁴³⁴ *PPZ* is referenced when Lizzie reads a fan comment quoting its opening line: ‘it is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains’.¹⁴³⁵ By making ‘undifferentiated reference to the spectrum of Austen representation’, the *LBD* exemplifies Mirmohamadi’s theory that in digital Austen fandom ‘everything is canonical’.¹⁴³⁶ An adaptation of *P&P* can encompass responses to a vast variety of retellings in different mediums, rather than focusing on a single literary text.

The producers acknowledged fans’ encyclopaedic knowledge of Austen’s original novel (and displayed their own knowledge of *P&P*) through Lizzie, who responds to fans’ comments and tweets referencing *P&P* in ‘Q&A’ videos. For example, in one Q&A session Lizzie mentions being baffled by fans repeatedly querying if she can play the piano.¹⁴³⁷ Elizabeth Bennet’s piano playing was a source of much discussion in *P&P*, as fans of the novel would have known. In the novel, Lady Catherine finds fault with Elizabeth for not applying herself more diligently to her musical studies, declaring that she will ‘never play really well, unless she practises more’, while Darcy admires Elizabeth’s musical ability and takes pleasure in watching

¹⁴³² Pemberley Digital, “Episode 77: Tour Leader,” (YouTube Video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Jan 7, 2013, accessed Sept 18, 2016, <<http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-77-tour-leader/>>. Though the pool is mentioned a couple of times, the producers ultimately refrain from showing a Darcy dive.

¹⁴³³ Pemberley Digital, “Episode 2: My Sisters- Problematic to Practically Perfect,” (YouTube Video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, April 12, 2012, accessed Sept 14, 2016, <<http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-2-my-sisters-problematic-to-practically-perfect/>>.

¹⁴³⁴ Pemberley Digital, “Episode 4: Bing Lee and His 500 Teenage Prostitutes,” (YouTube), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, April 19, 2012, accessed Nov 8, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-4-bing-lee-and-his-500-teenage-prostitutes/>.

¹⁴³⁵ Pemberley Digital, “Episode QA2: Lizzie Answers Questions.”

¹⁴³⁶ Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen*, 14. It might be more accurate to say that everything is *archontic*, rather than canonical, as not all of the additions to the *P&P* archive achieve the canonical status of Davies’s lake scene. For example, although Emma Tennant’s profic novels form part of the *P&P* archive, her name is used by Austen fans as a coded reference to a *bad* profic writer.

¹⁴³⁷ Pemberley Digital, “Episode QA8: Lizzie and Gigi,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, (YouTube Video), Jan 19, 2013, accessed Jan 8 2018, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-qa8-lizzie-and-gigi/>.

her play, highlighting their differing estimations of the heroine's worth.¹⁴³⁸ Fans 'play' with Lizzie by demonstrating their knowledge of the source material, and Lizzie joins in the game by making allusions to *P&P* that Austen fans would understand. When a fan asks her what she would do if she woke up in the nineteenth century, Lizzie states that she probably would have enjoyed walking in muddy dresses, a reference to the mud-stained dress that horrified the Bingley sisters in the novel.¹⁴³⁹ She also mentions feeling 'strangely connected' to England, even though she has never been there.¹⁴⁴⁰

Similar allusions to the original novel are embedded throughout the series. For example, the bar that the sisters frequent is called 'Carter's Bar', a reference to Captain Carter, a minor character in Austen's *P&P*. Likewise, Lizzie jokes that Catherine de Bourgh's pampered Chihuahua Annie Kins would be a 'perfect match' for Darcy, an embedded allusion to the fact that the dog's namesake Lady Anne was intended for Darcy in the novel.¹⁴⁴¹ Darcy's digital media company is called *Pemberley Digital*, a nod to both the Pemberley estate from Austen's novel and to the web production company that produces the *LBD*. When asked about the origin of the company's name, Darcy explains that it is named after 'the place where [his] father's family comes from in England'.¹⁴⁴² Lizzie remarks that the name 'gives a sense of history to a new endeavour', drawing attention to the web series' origin as a Regency novel set in England.¹⁴⁴³ She jokes that *Pemberley Digital's* state-of-the-art facilities and impressive grounds are so perfectly presented that she feels as though she 'walked into a mythical place that only exists in stories', a very pointed reference to Pemberley's fictional status and its cultural significance as an enchanted realm.¹⁴⁴⁴

¹⁴³⁸ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 133.

¹⁴³⁹ Pemberley Digital, "Episode QA6: Lizzie and Fitz," (YouTube Video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Oct 20, 2012, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-qa6-lizzie-and-fitz/>.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Pemberley Digital, "Episode QA3: Lizzie Answers Questions," (YouTube Video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, July 28, 2012, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-qa3-lizzie-answers-questions/>.

¹⁴⁴¹ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 54: Annie Kins," (YouTube Video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Oct 11, 2012, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-54-annie-kins/>.

¹⁴⁴² Pemberley Digital, "Episode 83: Corporate Interview," (YouTube Video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Jan 28, 2013, accessed Sept 16, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-83-corporate-interview-2/>.

¹⁴⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 77: Tour Leader."

‘Capping Miss Austen’: Playing the Janeite Game

Linguistics expert Laurence Goldstein notes that when speaking to an informed audience, where it can be assumed that listeners have ‘an extensive shared knowledge’ of the subject, ‘conversationalists can converse in what might sound like a secret code’.¹⁴⁴⁵ The *Pemberley Digital* team could speak in a concise, conspiratorial language when interacting with audience members on social media because the *LBD* unfolded in a linguistic context that was ‘informationally rich’.¹⁴⁴⁶ Intertextual references could be used as a form of shorthand communication because informed fans could be relied upon to use their knowledge to contextualise information for less informed viewers. Audiences unfamiliar with the entire Austen archive could orientate themselves by drawing on the collective intelligence of knowing fans who explained obscure references or intertextual allusions in tweets, YouTube commentary, and Austen fan blogs. The *LBD* is therefore a ‘layered’ story for knowledgeable audiences who are rewarded for their close readings with a more multifaceted experience. For informed Austen fans, there were plenty of opportunities when engaging with the *LBD* to perform what Linda Hutcheon has termed ‘an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth, between the work we know and the work we experience.’¹⁴⁴⁷ This interpretive doubling serves a significant function within the Janeite community because it allows fans to revel in the exclusivity of their specialist knowledge of *P&P* and its adaptations, and consequently to feel more intimately connected to Jane Austen, their imagined co-conspirator, as well as feeling bonded as a community. By encouraging fans to look for intertextual references, *Pemberley Digital* participates in ‘the Janeite game’, discussed in Chapter Two, of using a coded language made up of resonant allusions to demonstrate ‘affectionate familiarity’ with Austen and with other readers ‘in the know’.¹⁴⁴⁸ Just like Austen’s historical readers, her contemporary fans speak a private language made up of allusions and in-jokes: they work together to decipher a hidden code, searching for clues in the subtext so that they can feel they are ‘in on the joke’.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Laurence Goldstein, “Introduction,” *Brevity*, ed. Goldstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Phrase taken from Michael Glanzberg, “A New Puzzle about Discourse-initial Contexts,” in *Brevity*, ed. Goldstein, 108.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 139.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 191.

Both producers and fans used their knowledge of the Austen archive to play the Janeite game. Indeed, when it comes to understanding the power relation between *Pemberley Digital* and the *LBD* fans, a middle-ground between the celebratory evaluation of ‘democratic creativity’ made by digital populists and the derogatory one adopted by digital elitists can perhaps be found through reference to game theory. Approaching the *LBD* through game theory is appropriate as fans’ involvement in the story as ‘characters’ makes the *LBD* text in some respects analogous to an online role-playing game. As Bennett points out, the fan practice of tweeting in character ‘has fused role playing and fan fiction through social media’.¹⁴⁴⁹ The ‘Text as Game’ is an alternative model to the ‘Text as World’ metaphor that, as Ryan argues, complements, rather than invalidates the concept of the text as world that has been discussed in previous chapters.¹⁴⁵⁰ In his monograph on digital fandom, Booth argues that there is an important linkage between fans and online gaming ‘on a theoretical level’, as both depend on a ‘philosophy of playfulness’.¹⁴⁵¹ He states that ‘the contemporary media scene is complex, and rapidly becoming dependent on a culture of ludism: today’s media field is fun, playful, and exuberant.’¹⁴⁵² Booth further expounds on this idea in *Playing Fans* (2015), where he argues that the concept of ‘play as free movement within a more rigid structure’ can be used as ‘a metaphor to describe the relationship both fans and producers have with the media.’¹⁴⁵³

Booth’s definition of ‘media play’ as something that only happens within the parameters of certain rules is drawn from the research of game theorists Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman.¹⁴⁵⁴ Rather than looking at ‘fannish media play as combative’, as producers and fans ‘at war with one another’, fannish media play can be interpreted within Salen and Zimmerman’s framework simply as ‘a way of finding new methods of following the rules’.¹⁴⁵⁵ Producers might dictate that fans ‘colour within the lines’ (as in the case of FanLib), but fans can assert their creativity by ‘using different shades to color inside the lines, thinking inside the box but changing that box’s shape.’¹⁴⁵⁶ In the

¹⁴⁴⁹ Bennett, “Tracing Textual Poachers” 8.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* 2, 118.

¹⁴⁵¹ Booth, *Digital Fandom*, 2.

¹⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴⁵³ Paul Booth, *Playing Fans: Negotiating Fandom and Media in the Digital Age* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2015), 16.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen, *Rules of Play: Game design fundamentals* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2003).

¹⁴⁵⁵ Booth, *Playing Fans*, 17.

¹⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

LBD, the producers act as game moderators and set the parameters for interaction, but fans have freedom in how they can navigate within those parameters. As Edwards states: ‘You can get from plot points A to B in an infinite number of ways, so the transmedia fun comes in making the decision of which path to take’.¹⁴⁵⁷ Online fandom allows for the exploration of alternate narrative routes and the amplification of ‘unexpected voices’, which Edwards states that she values because of ‘[an] entire lifetime spent needing fandom to give [her] stories that the mainstream couldn’t or wouldn’t’.¹⁴⁵⁸

Like Edwards, Jamison argues that ‘[p]art of the important – even crucial – social, literary, and political function of fanfiction is that people actually tell the stories they want to tell, without pre-censorship or pre-conceived notions about what will sell.’¹⁴⁵⁹ As Chapter Three demonstrated, ‘[s]ince it came out, every cultural reference to Jane Austen, and every adaptation, has had as much to do with Andrew Davies as it does to Austen.’¹⁴⁶⁰ Mainstream producers and screenwriters continue to assume that fans want ‘extra Darcy’ but the abundance of *P&P* online fanfiction from every conceivable generic category and character point of view demonstrates that Austen’s fans are not a homogenous group. It would therefore be a mistake to pigeonhole them by taking the positive reception of Davies’s romanticised Darcy as evidence that Austen fans only want one thing from *P&P*. As Edwards states, ‘it is possible to see how Jane Austen operates in a larger pop cultural context – not as a walled-off fandom estate, but rather as a popular storehouse of pleasurable tropes, ready to be taken up and transformed by all kinds of fans.’¹⁴⁶¹ Rather than giving audiences ‘extra Darcy’, the *LBD* elaborates and extends the stories of the Bennet women and their female friends Charlotte and Maria Lu. The writing team at *Pemberley Digital* had the freedom to create an adaptation of *P&P* that did not rely on the ‘pre-conceived notion’ that amplifying Darcy’s role was the only way to ‘sell’ *P&P* because were in direct contact with the audience as the text was evolving. They could therefore adapt the text in response to audience desire. The impact of the *LBD*’s young audience on the development of this female-centric text can be traced by looking at the fan commentary in the electronic margins of the *LBD* text. The following sections will draw on this auxiliary record of

¹⁴⁵⁷ Edwards, “Exclusive Interview.”

¹⁴⁵⁸ Edwards, quoted in Minkel, “To build a fan base, it helps to know what it’s like to be a fan.”

¹⁴⁵⁹ Jamison, “The Briar Patch,” 282.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Deborah Cartmell quoted in Barber, “*Pride and Prejudice* at 20: The scene that changed everything”

¹⁴⁶¹ Edwards, “In the Regency Alternate Universe: Jane Austen and Fanfiction Culture,” 11.

reader response to assess how much influence the audience's professed preferences had on redirecting the focus to the female characters.

From 'Darcy's Story' back to 'Lizzie's Story'

The focus on the female characters in the *LBD* does not signify that Darcy suddenly ceased to be a popular character amongst Austen fans. As Su remarks, Darcy's first appearance was highly anticipated by fans, leading to the hashtag '#DarcyDay' trending on Twitter and to Episode 60, the video featuring Darcy's first appearance, becoming the 'highest viewed first day ever'.¹⁴⁶² Yet, although undoubtedly still a significant character in the *LBD*, Darcy's character is not expanded upon in the manner characteristic of post-Davies film and television adaptations of *P&P*. His rare appearances on video make his role closer to that of the hero from Austen's novel where, as Susan Celia Greenfield remarks: 'Darcy is more absent than present for much of the action.'¹⁴⁶³

In the *LBD*, as in Austen's novel, innovative narrative techniques are used to keep the focus on the heroine's perspective, rather than that of the hero. Austen, of course, is a pioneer of free indirect discourse where she 'integrates Elizabeth's thoughts with the narrative's own point of view'.¹⁴⁶⁴ By making Lizzie the narrator of her own story, the *LBD* ensures that the heroine's perspective is dominant in the YouTube series, as in Austen's novel. The video diary format is also effective because it allows fans to experience a feeling of 'intimacy': that defining trait of Austen reception 'common across the Janeite spectrum'.¹⁴⁶⁵ Each individual vlog is equivalent to a diary entry where Lizzie shares her thoughts on her life and the lives of her friends and family in a confessional manner. Lizzie looks at the camera when she narrates as if directly addressing the audience. This filming technique creates a sense of intimacy between narrator and audience, as if Lizzie is gossiping with the viewer and sharing secret information. Therefore, although the videos are very public, they *feel* private and help to replicate Austen's own 'sleek, confiding tone' which seems to invite readers 'into an

¹⁴⁶² Bernie Su, "Lizzie Bennet BDS: Darcy Day," *Bernie Tumbles*, Nov 2, 2012, accessed Sept 21, 2015, <http://berniesu.tumblr.com/post/34852494975/lizzie-bennet-bts-darcy-day>.

¹⁴⁶³ Susan Celia Greenfield, "Pride and Prejudice at 200: Stop looking for Mr Darcy!," *Ms. Magazine*, Jan 28, 2013, accessed Sept 21, 2015, <http://msmagazine.com/blog/2013/01/28/pride-and-prejudice-at-200-stop-looking-for-mr-darcy/>.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 78.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Brodie, "Jane Austen and the Common Reader," 55.

exclusive, exclusionary in-group of the knowing'.¹⁴⁶⁶ Indeed, just as Austen's own novels 'would almost seem to be written in a letter to the reader', the videos could be interpreted as 'digital letters' because they convey a comparable sense of immediacy and intimacy.¹⁴⁶⁷ Some critics have argued that *P&P* originated as an epistolary novel, as evidenced by the fact that the novel 'turns on letters as vehicles of narrative or agents of plot at several crucial junctures'.¹⁴⁶⁸ The *LBD*'s use of YouTube videos as a narrative tool is therefore especially appropriate as, like the letters in Austen's *P&P*, these digital letters advance the plot and also 'suggest direct access to the consciousness and viewpoint' of the protagonist.¹⁴⁶⁹

As elaborated in the last chapter, 'accessible minds' are an important source of immersion in virtual reality.¹⁴⁷⁰ Lizzie's YouTube videos are therefore very effective in drawing fans into the *LBD*, encouraging them to become fully invested in this virtual version of Austen's world. The *LBD*'s innovative narrative technique distinguishes it from most Austen adaptations, where the challenge of replicating Austen's narrative voice has proven 'a crucial problem in translating [her] novels to film'.¹⁴⁷¹ Nora Nachumi argues that the loss of Austen's 'ironic' narrative voice results in adaptations 'celebrating the very tropes Austen destabilizes'.¹⁴⁷² Her criticism echoes that of numerous Austen critics who have likewise argued that Austen adaptations downplay Austen's social criticism of the marriage market and glorify 'the romantic conventions that [she] deflates'.¹⁴⁷³ The *LBD* tries to capture Austen's ironic tone, where 'irony' is understood 'as a mode of expression that calls into question the way things appear', by using parodic role play to expose the discrepancy between what people say, and what they mean.¹⁴⁷⁴

As Lizzie's videos are filmed in her bedroom and she is often the only character present, she must dramatically re-enact encounters that take place 'off-camera'. Within her costume theatre, Lizzie uses iconic signifiers as a form of shorthand communication to represent different characters. For example, Darcy is represented by Lizzie wearing a

¹⁴⁶⁶ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 28.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Arthur Ransome (1884-1967) quoted in Lynch, "Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors," 15.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Keymer, "Narrative," 4.

¹⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* 2, 80.

¹⁴⁷¹ Nora Nachumi, "'As If!': Translating Austen's Ironic Narrator to Film," *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, eds. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 130.

¹⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

bow-tie and cap, Jane by a pink flower worn in the hair, medical student Bing Lee by a doctor's head mirror, his glamorous sister Caroline by sunglasses and a black scarf, Mr. Bennet by a pipe, Mrs. Bennet by a large floppy garden hat, etc. When recreating events, Lizzie takes dramatic license by portraying the characters saying what *she* thinks they mean. For example, in Episode 5, Lizzie wishes Jane to answer questions about her feelings for Bing Lee but due to her modest disposition, the eldest Bennet is unwilling to elaborate on how she feels. Lizzie resorts to playing the part of her sister within the video to speculate about what her silence on the subject really means. While in character as Jane, Lizzie informs the audience that: 'Bing...stole my heart. We danced together almost all night. It was like the stormy clouds of loneliness parted and his face was the sun, shining happiness down into my life.'¹⁴⁷⁵ Lizzie's comic exaggeration amplifies a core of truth: Jane is falling in love with Bing. By highlighting her ironic take on events, the *LBD* ensures that this version of *P&P* is Lizzie's story, while Davies, in his own words, told the story of *P&P* 'rather as if it's about Darcy when the book is definitely a book about Elizabeth.'¹⁴⁷⁶



Figure 39: From left, Lizzie Bennet (Ashley Clements) and Charlotte Lu (Julia Cho) recreate exchanges between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet

¹⁴⁷⁵ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 5: - After the Wedding: The Real Bing Lee," (YouTube Video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, April 24, 2012, accessed 27 Dec, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-5-after-the-wedding-the-real-bing-lee/>.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Andrew Davies, "General Principles of Adaptation: Darcy and Elizabeth," in *The Making of Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Susie Conklin and Sue Birtwistle (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1995), 3-4.

‘How Differently Did Everything Now Appear’: Alternative Vlogs and Alternative Voices

Lizzie’s vlog is beneficial because it promotes immersion in the *LBD* world, but watching the story unfold exclusively through her vlog can be limiting. Some of the characters, for example Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, are *only* represented through Lizzie’s role play, meaning that we are restricted to her perception of them and we share her prejudices. As Lydia observes: ‘the thing about Lizzie’s diaries is that they’re *Lizzie’s* diaries. She sees what she wants to see.’¹⁴⁷⁷ The *LBD* storytelling format allows for the intrusion of female viewpoints other than the heroine’s, resulting in secondary characters from Austen’s novel being promoted to main characters within the *LBD*.¹⁴⁷⁸ Lydia Bennet, Maria Lu (Maria Lucas), and Gigi Darcy (Georgiana Darcy) all narrate their own video blogs that provide alternative takes on the events related by Lizzie or develop subplots. For example, Gigi’s videos illuminate how she assists Darcy in locating Wickham using a tracking app on his phone, a storyline that does not involve Lizzie directly and is not represented in the main video diaries. Gigi’s videos therefore fill in a gap from the main storyline. By choosing what vlogs to follow, the fan plays an active part in the creation of meaning, creating a coherent narrative out of fragmented pieces dispersed across different platforms, and developing a fresh insight into familiar characters as a result. Fans become, as Jenkins characterises them, ‘hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience.’¹⁴⁷⁹ Viewers that choose to engage with the spin-off videos therefore have a more layered and contextual narrative experience than those that restrict themselves to the main video blog.

Fans’ influence on the development of secondary female characters in the *LBD* is most evident in the case of the younger Bennets, whose roles were expanded as a

¹⁴⁷⁷ Pemberley Digital, “Episode 37: Lydia vs Mr Collins,” (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, May 7, 2012, accessed Oct 10, 2014, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-9-single-and-happyish/>.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Again, the use of alternative vlogs in the *LBD* as a means of highlighting other characters’ perspectives could be read as an attempt to replicate Austen’s own narrative style. As Keymer states, though Austen focuses on the heroine’s perspective, she also uses free indirect discourse ‘to look out by turns from multiple perspectives, albeit in fleeting ways’. Keymer, “Narrative,” 13.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Jenkins, *Convergence culture*, 21.

response to fan YouTube commentary. Lizzie's video diaries ostensibly seem to allow for limited fan engagement because, as Edwards states, they deal with the main plot and are therefore 'locked pretty far in advance, usually anywhere from one to two months' and the content 'isn't flexible once [*Pemberley Digital* have] filmed it'.¹⁴⁸⁰

Nevertheless, she points out that there was 'definitely room to play within that framework' and if 'a lot of fans [were] talking about something,' she would 'tailor updates based on that'.¹⁴⁸¹ When the series first started airing, a lot of fans were talking about Kitty and Mary Bennet. Su notes that one of the most commonly asked fan questions was: 'Why did you decide to cut out Mary and Kitty?' or, as one incensed fan phrased it, 'YOU KILLED MARY?!'¹⁴⁸² The team had originally made the executive decision to cut these secondary characters, as they were not deemed integral to the storyline and the producers wanted to save on production costs by having as small a cast as possible. However, when they realised how important the characters were to fans of *P&P* they decided to directly address their concerns by incorporating the characters back into the story. Kitty was transformed into an actual cat with her own Twitter account, run by Lydia. Like the novel's Kitty, who is guided by her more forceful younger sister's example, Kitty the cat follows Lydia everywhere. Mary was fleshed out more fully and was restored to life as the Bennet sisters' moody 'goth' cousin who is 'into things like reading, and darkness and having no facial expressions'.¹⁴⁸³

¹⁴⁸⁰ Edwards, "Exclusive Interview."

¹⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸² Bernie Su, "Where are Kitty and Mary," *Pemberley Digital*, April 14, 2012, accessed Dec 12, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lizzie-bennet-diaries-bts-where-are-mary-and-kitty/>.

¹⁴⁸³ Pemberley Digital, "Lydia Bennet Episode 1: Boredom," (YouTube Video) *Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, July 13, 2012, accessed Dec 12, 2016, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lydia-bennet-ep-1-bordeom/>.



Figure 40: 'Kitty Bennet', Twitter Profile, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*



Figure 41: 'Mary Bennet', Twitter Profile, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

The *Pemberley Digital* team made numerous implicit references to the fact that in *this* retelling, Mary was never meant to exist and was only resurrected because of fans' involvement in the story. Her pale face, black wardrobe, and deadened facial expressions recall the figure of the vampire, dead but capable of rising again. This casting and costume decision seems to have been intended as an 'in-joke' for the fans

who were integral to Mary's resurrection. Mary's tweets frequently reference her liminal status: the fact that she feels 'like [she] [doesn't] exist'.¹⁴⁸⁴ (See Figure 42) When Lydia neglects Mary on her birthday, she responds in characteristic form by posting a series of tweets drawing attention to her fictionality and forgotten existence. (see Figure 43) Mary's cryptic status updates, like, for example, her enigmatic tweets referring to her marginalised existence, seem to occur 'in a contextual vacuum, providing the audience with little to no guidance as to their meaning or reference'.¹⁴⁸⁵ In such instances, the audience has to play an active role in reading between the lines, and supplying what was left unsaid. They use a gap in the text (Mary's absence) as an imaginative stimulant, illustrating Wolfgang Iser's theory that it is 'the unwritten part [of the text] that gives us the opportunity to picture things'.¹⁴⁸⁶ This relationship between narrative gaps and imaginative audience response works particularly well in the case of Austen as her work draws people in, inviting them to become part of the storyworld and to act upon that world by making their own voices heard.

In a further show of complicity with the audience, Mary is alluded to as a 'forgotten' character by other characters as well. For example, Lizzie repeatedly comments on the fact that she 'always forget[s] about Mary', a mental lapse that becomes a running joke throughout the series.¹⁴⁸⁷ The many allusive references to the forgettable, invisible, almost non-existent Mary, constitute a sly wink from the producers to the fans: a tacit acknowledgment of the audience's creative involvement in the series. The producers were able to strengthen communal bonds with the audience by using these in-jokes about Mary. Her storyline resonated with fans, not because the drab and pedantic Mary was a fan favourite from Austen's novel, but because her inclusion in the *LBD* narrative encouraged the type 'playful, receptive, and sometimes appropriative' style of reading that has such special significance in this fan

¹⁴⁸⁴ Pemberley Digital, "Emoting," (Twitter) *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Sept 16, 2012, accessed Oct 15, 2016, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/emoting/>.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Ann McClellan, "A Case of Identity: Role playing, social media and BBC Sherlock," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1, no. 2 (2013): 141.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Iser, "The Reading Process," 288.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 26: Mom's Convoluted Plan," (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, July 5, 2012, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-26-moms-convoluted-plan/>; Pemberley Digital. Further references made by Lizzie to Mary as a 'forgotten' character can be found in: "Episode 72: Party Time," (YouTube video) *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Dec 13, 2012, accessed Sept 17, 2016, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-72-party-time/>; Pemberley Digital, "Lydia's Birthday Party Adventure," (Twitter), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Dec 15, 2012, accessed Sept 17, 2016, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lydias-birthday-party-adventure/>.

community.¹⁴⁸⁸ Thanks to fans' involvement, 'Mary Bennet' transforms from a marginal character in Austen's novel, and an (almost) non-existent character in the *LBD*, into 'Mary, never forgotten', at least not by Austen fans.¹⁴⁸⁹

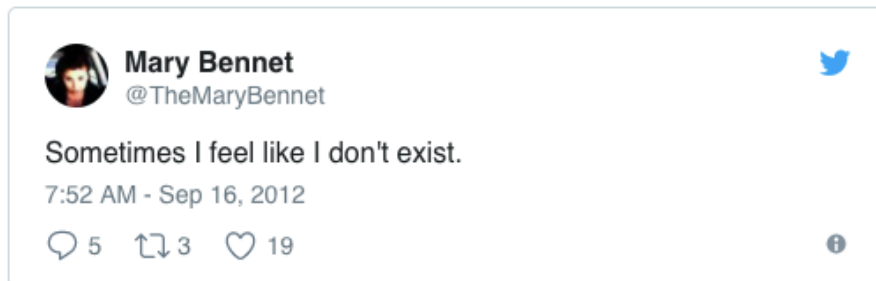


Figure 42: Mary Bennet, 'Emoting,' *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*



Figure 43: Mary Bennet, 'Birthdays and road trips,' *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

¹⁴⁸⁸ Halsey, *Jane Austen and Her Readers*, 150.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Phrase taken from Mary Bennet (@TheMaryBennet), Twitter Bio, May, 2012, <https://twitter.com/themarybennet?lang=en>.

In the *LBD*, the Bennets' neighbour Maria Lu is of special interest because her character's enlarged role provides another example of a minor character being developed as a direct response to the fan community. Indeed, Maria is represented as being a fan herself. Maria begins keeping a vlog as part of a training exercise in how to use digital media effectively whilst working as an intern at Mr. Collins's web production company *Collins & Collins*. In her first video, Maria struggles to find a topic to vlog about so Charlotte suggests she talk about her interests, which happen to include *Doctor Who*; *Harry Potter*; and her favourite web production video series, 'The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'. Fans appreciated the characterisation of Maria as a typical 'fan girl' and expressed this appreciation in the comments. (See Figure 44.) Maria's second video is described as 'a video about Lizzie's videos', i.e. it is a fan commentary video that is very obviously developed as a means of acknowledging the *LBD* fanbase.¹⁴⁹⁰ Her videos evaluate events from Lizzie's vlogs and then speculate on possible narrative developments. Maria's practices mirror those of the *LBD* fans who were performing similar speculations and interpretations of the story in the commentary sections. For example, in her third vlog, Maria talks about Lizzie's recent invitation to Bing's party and theorises about what might transpire there, just as the fans did in the comments section of Lizzie's vlog.¹⁴⁹¹ The choice to reconfigure Maria Lu as an archetypal fan is important. By including Maria's videos of fan commentary the producers acknowledge the importance of the 'fannish voice' to the development of the show.



LittleBookshelves 2 years ago
OMFG I LOVE HER! SHE'S A WHOVIAN!



Amylee 2 years ago
As soon as she said Doctor Who, I decided that I like Maria Lu. Hooray for nerdy fangirls! :)

¹⁴⁹⁰ Pemberley Digital, "Maria of the Lu: Episode 2 – What are you watching?" (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Sept 11, 2012, accessed Dec 27, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/maria-of-the-lu-episode-2-what-are-you-watching/>.

¹⁴⁹¹ Pemberley Digital, "Maria of the Lu: Episode 3 – Vlogging 2.0," (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Sept 14, 2012, accessed Dec 27, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/maria-of-the-lu-episode-3-vlogging-2-0/>.



Katie Harris 3 years ago
SHE'S ONE OF US



Saracles 2 years ago
Oh Hank, direct pandering to the Whovians is just how we Whovians like pandering.

Figure 44: Fan YouTube Commentary, ‘Maria of the Lu: Episode 1- Intro to Vlogging,’ *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

While Maria has a much more significant role in the *LBD* than she does in the novel, it is her sister Charlotte who is really elevated from minor to main character. Indeed, in brand merchandise for the show Charlotte is portrayed as if she is part of the Bennet family, as an honorary sister rather than a friendly neighbour. (See Figure 45.) Unlike the novel’s Charlotte, who is older than the heroine and at twenty-seven already considered to be an old maid, in the *LBD* both women are twenty-four. They are even born on the same day, and both are graduate students working on their joint project – ‘The Lizzie Bennet Diaries’ – for their master’s degree in Mass Communications. As the director of Lizzie’s videos, Charlotte’s presence is felt and seen within the diaries because Lizzie frequently addresses her directly or invites her to come in front of the camera. Charlotte also has the option of editing out things that Lizzie says, and inserting her own commentary instead, as she does in ‘Episode Five’ and ‘Episode QA2’ when she wants to censor embarrassing stories that Lizzie relates.¹⁴⁹² She also uses her video commentary to question the reliability of Lizzie’s accounts. For example, Lizzie claims that her marriage-obsessed mother dressed her as a spinster for Halloween when she was six. Charlotte however, is adamant that Lizzie was in fact dressed as a witch.¹⁴⁹³ In another episode, Charlotte and Jane ‘hi-jack’ Lizzie’s video to tell the story of the group’s encounter with Darcy in Carter’s Bar that they felt Lizzie had misrepresented in her own video role-play. Lizzie felt that Darcy was being cold and distant while Charlotte and Jane believed he was romantically fixated on Lizzie and that she was oblivious to this because, as Jane states: ‘Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees’.¹⁴⁹⁴

¹⁴⁹² Pemberley Digital, “Episode 5 – After the Wedding: The Real Bing Lee,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, April 24, 2012, accessed Jan 9, 2018, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-5-after-the-wedding-the-real-bing-lee/>; Pemberley Digital, “Episode QA2: Lizzie Answers Questions.”

¹⁴⁹³ Pemberley Digital, “Episode 9 – Single and Happyish,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, April 24, 2012, accessed Oct 10, 2014, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-9-single-and-happyish/>.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Pemberley Digital, “Episode 15: Lizzie Bennet is in Denial,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, May 28, 2012, accessed Oct 10, 2014, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-15-lizzie-bennet-is-in-denial/>.

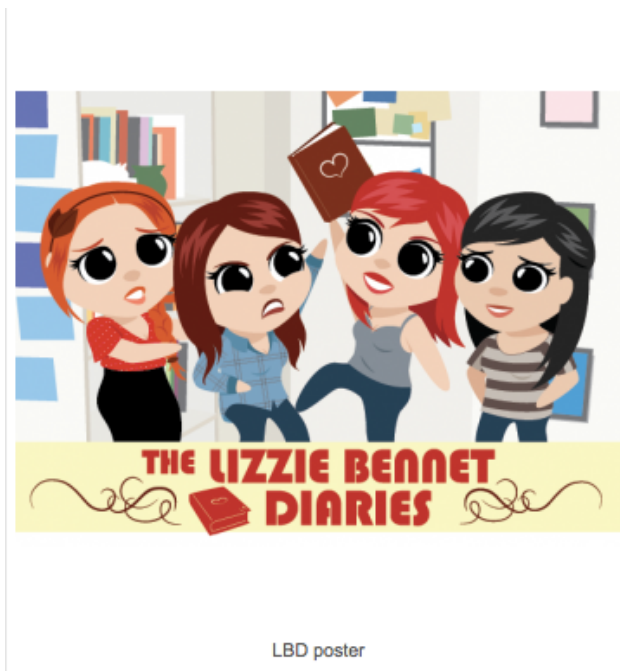


Figure 45: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Poster, From Left: Jane, Lizzie, Lydia, and Charlotte

Charlotte’s increased importance in the *LBD* narrative matters because it prompts a reconsideration of her marginal role in the original novel. Alex Woloch points out that in *P&P* the novel, ‘the confinement of Charlotte to the margins of the narrative’ is often interpreted as being ‘about the circumscription of the *viewpoint* that she represents.’¹⁴⁹⁵ In contrast to Elizabeth, Charlotte’s view of marriage is pragmatic, even cynical: she believes that ‘[h]appiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance’ and that ‘it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life.’¹⁴⁹⁶ Her loveless marriage to Mr. Collins seems to offer a stark contrast to the fairy tale marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth and for some critics, she ‘must be written out of the narrative’ precisely because her viewpoint threatens to ‘shatter the ideologically suspect romance plot’.¹⁴⁹⁷

Woloch offers a counterclaim, arguing that both Charlotte and Elizabeth’s marriages are ‘realist’. Elizabeth’s plot ‘is “realistic” insofar as it represents those lucky self-made persons who are guaranteed no property but end up with a lot of it’ while ‘Charlotte’s plot is also a “real” one – accurately representing the many people who have to make an essential compromise...to ensure material self-sufficiency’.¹⁴⁹⁸ I would

¹⁴⁹⁵ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 95.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 16.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 96.

¹⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 97.

argue that Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins is also in a sense fairy tale-like, it just represents a different kind of fairy tale marriage to that of Elizabeth and Darcy. As argued in Chapter One, the uncongenial marriages of Charlotte and Collins, Lydia and Wickham, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, represent unhappy fairy tale unions testifying to 'the knowledge of misery within marriage', that fairy tale scholar Marina Warner argues the fairy tale 'reveals in its every line'.¹⁴⁹⁹ These buried stories offer an important social criticism of marriage, yet are typically marginal to the tale as whole. In the *LBD*, fans had the means to enter the text and excavate Charlotte's story, following the seminal 'proposal' plot point involving Mr. Collins.

In the *LBD*, Mr. Collins's proposal to Lizzie and Charlotte takes the form of a job offer rather than a proposal of marriage. Lizzie turns him down as she feels that working for Mr. Collins, whose web production company specialises in creating 'corporate videos, bad reality TV and pointless commentary blogs', would be a form of 'selling out'.¹⁵⁰⁰ When Charlotte accepts his offer, Lizzie accuses her of 'throwing away her education to play second fiddle to Ricky Collins'.¹⁵⁰¹ In the novel, Elizabeth does not fully recover from her 'disappointment in Charlotte', she is 'persuaded that no real confidence could ever subsist between them again' and she distances herself from her friend while turning 'with fonder regard to [Jane]'.¹⁵⁰² Charlotte then ceases to have a major role in the novel.

In the *LBD*, Charlotte also puts 'material self-sufficiency' first but, she is not effaced from the narrative because of her choice. The concept of marrying for the sake of a 'comfortable home' might have been alien to a contemporary audience, but the reality of a graduate student burdened by debt opting to take a secure corporate position was not. Given the economic environment, fans were sympathetic to the idea of settling for a stable job (albeit with a ridiculous boss) during a recession, rather than waiting for a better opportunity that might never materialise:

¹⁴⁹⁹ Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 217.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 42: Friends Forever," (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Aug 30, 2012, accessed Aug 18, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-42-friends-forever/>.

¹⁵⁰¹ Ibid. Although Lizzie is persuaded that her friend is making the wrong choice, Charlotte is happy in her new job and demonstrates the same shrewdness as her savvy novelistic counterpart in order to take control of her situation. In the novel, Charlotte uses tact and diplomacy to sequester her odious husband to the garden and far corners of the house. Likewise, the *LBD*'s Charlotte uses her considerable business acumen and powers of persuasion to relegate her incompetent business partner to the far corners of Canada, while she takes over the management of the company's significantly more influential American branch.

¹⁵⁰² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 98.

[The Charlotte storyline is] really, really on the money as to what people are facing in the modern job market. In any case, very few people find their “dream jobs” straight after tertiary study....it often takes a while...¹⁵⁰³

The fans sided with Charlotte and admonished Lizzie in the comments sections for being ‘shortsighted and prejudiced’ (sic).¹⁵⁰⁴ Fans reminded Lizzie that ‘difficult times call for difficult measures’ and that ‘if this is what [Charlotte] needs to do to be able fix her financial issues then so be it.’¹⁵⁰⁵ Fans’ evident empathy for Charlotte’s ‘heart-wrenchingly relatable’ situation, and express desire to see her reconcile with Lizzie, was a clear motivating factor for the producers to recover her story from the margins of the narrative.¹⁵⁰⁶ The producers demonstrated a responsiveness to fans’ commentary by using Maria Lu’s videos as a means of bringing Charlotte back into the main storyline and moving her towards the centre of the narrative.

The fifth video in Maria’s vlog is very literally a video about watching one of Lizzie’s videos. She coerces her sister, who is not on speaking terms with Lizzie, into watching one of the *LBD* videos and then films her reaction.¹⁵⁰⁷ Lizzie talks about missing her best friend in the video, prompting Charlotte to reach out to Lizzie and reconcile their differences. In Lizzie’s vlog ‘Together Again’, we learn that Charlotte is working on Lizzie’s videos again and that Lizzie in turn is taking on work experience at *Collins & Collins*.¹⁵⁰⁸ Maria, the surrogate *LBD* fan, therefore functions as a means of reinserting Charlotte into the main story. Fans tweeted their appreciation to Maria for ensuring that fans got their preferred storyline. (see Figure 46.) The recovery of Charlotte’s story from the margins of *P&P* is important because it encourages a rereading of the original novel.

¹⁵⁰³ Scott Lang, “Friends Forever- Ep: 42,” (YouTube Commentary), 2013, accessed Dec 27, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XyCZwD0KP4>.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Casidy Crosby, “Friends Forever- Ep: 42,” (YouTube Commentary), 2015.

¹⁵⁰⁵ numra25, “Friends Forever- Ep: 42,” (YouTube Commentary), 2013.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Cinthyyarindi Lestari, “Friends Forever- Ep: 42,” (YouTube Commentary), 2015.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Pemberley Digital, “Maria of the Lu: Episode 5 – Mentoring,” (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Sept 21, 2012, accessed Dec 27, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/maria-of-the-lu-episode-5-mentoring/>.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Pemberley Digital, “Episode 51: Together Again,” (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Oct 1, 2012, accessed Dec 27, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-51-together-again/>.



Figure 46: Tweet to @MariaOfTheLu, "Drastic," *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

Readers of the novel view Charlotte from Elizabeth's perspective and are therefore likely to see her as the heroine's opposite and to join Elizabeth in believing that Charlotte 'cannot have a proper way of thinking'.¹⁵⁰⁹ Yet, some critics argue that Charlotte is really the heroine's double, because her marriage to Mr Collins, Elizabeth's original intended, represents an alternative possible ending for her.¹⁵¹⁰ Maria's fan vlog prompts audiences to view Charlotte from a perspective other than Lizzie's, allowing viewers to continue to sympathise with her. This identification facilitates the consideration that Charlotte is really one of Elizabeth's doubles because 'to be double is to be different and the same...to be therefore *both* one and two'.¹⁵¹¹ After viewing the *LBD*, readers returning to the novel can reread Charlotte and make a revised valuation of her role. There is evidence in the YouTube commentary that this is exactly what fans did, and that rather being read as 'unromantic', Charlotte was reinterpreted as a brave character who made 'an essential compromise'.¹⁵¹² Having arrived at a fresh understanding of Charlotte's decision, fans wondered 'if people back in Austen's day would feel the same way about book Charlotte as we do about this Charlotte.'¹⁵¹³

¹⁵⁰⁹ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 105.

¹⁵¹⁰ See for example, Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, 98-99.

¹⁵¹¹ Paul Gordon, *Critical Double: Figurative Meaning on Aesthetic Discourse* (Tuscaloosa and London: University Alabama Press, 1995), 19.

¹⁵¹² See for example comment made by Saturday, "Friends Forever- Ep: 42," (YouTube Commentary), 2017, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XyCZwD0KP4>. 'When reading novel, I thought Charlotte made terrible choice, just like Lizzie. But now I'm watching this and I know that Charlotte made her own choice which had reasonable and practical reason. I think this episode is brilliant bc it shows the other side that I couldn't see before.' (sic).

¹⁵¹³ Abigail Chang, "Friends Forever- Ep: 42," (YouTube Commentary), 2014.

From Subtext to Text: The Elevation of Lydia's Story

Lydia's vlog is the most significantly developed of the spin-off vlogs. Maria and Gigi's vlogs comprise of six episodes each, while Lydia has a total of twenty-nine videos in her personal vlog, as well as having thirty-three appearances in Lizzie's videos (compared to Darcy's ten).¹⁵¹⁴ Next to Lizzie, she has the largest fan following on Twitter of all the female characters, highlighting her importance to fans of *this* adaptation of *P&P*.¹⁵¹⁵ The serial format of the *LBD* was key to the expansion of Lydia's character.¹⁵¹⁶ Like the authors of nineteenth century serials, the *LBD* writers were 'in frequent and regular contact with the audience' and they could tailor content in response to their desires.¹⁵¹⁷ When the series was twelve videos in, Su responded to viewers' queries about whether the producers were planning to host video blogs narrated by other characters. Su felt that it would be out of character for a 'quiet, entitled, soft-spoken guy, with a high sense of social elitism' like Darcy to 'consciously turn a camera on himself to rant about his daily life to the internet'.¹⁵¹⁸ However, he did state that there was a loosely-defined plan to allow a more suitable character to vlog: 'We haven't committed to anything yet, but I'll say that we've had serious discussions about having another character do it.'¹⁵¹⁹ The particulars of these alternative blogs to be narrated by 'another character' were not predetermined, suggesting that Lydia's story evolved because fans wanted it to.

Fans' positive reception of the youngest Bennet, who was played with such compelling charisma by actress Mary Kate Wiles, gave the producers license to expand

¹⁵¹⁴ "Lydia Bennet Character Appearances," *Pemberley Digital*, accessed Dec 28, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/characters-lbd/lydia-bennet/>.

¹⁵¹⁵ As of Dec 29, 2017, Lydia Bennet has 18.2K followers on Twitter; Jane Bennet has 18.1K; Charlotte Lu has 15.4K; Mary Bennet has 8, 518 followers; and Maria Lu has 5, 152. Lizzie Bennet has the largest following at 32.1K.

¹⁵¹⁶ Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures*, 24. The expansion of Lydia's character in the *LBD* could be compared to the expansion of characters in nineteenth century serial texts. The serialised form was most thoroughly capitalised upon by Charles Dickens, who took advantage of the serial's space for reader response as a means of 'fine-tuning...the narrative to respond to audience desire.' For example, the sales of the author's first serialised novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836), were initially poor, but it became a publishing sensation following the introduction of the wise-cracking working-class hero Sam Weller in chapter ten. Readers apparently wrote to the author requesting that he enlarge Weller's role and Dickens demonstrated a 'true responsiveness' to his audience, as opposed to the type of 'stimulated responsiveness' discussed earlier, 'by making Sam central to the *Pickwick* adventures.'

¹⁵¹⁷ Simon Eliot, "The business of Victorian publishing," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 45.

¹⁵¹⁸ Bernie Su, "A Darcy Video Blog?," *Pemberley Digital*, May 19, 2012, accessed Sept 17, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/a-darcy-video-blog/>.


¹⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

upon her story. The *Pemberley Digital* team knew that audience members were responsive to Lydia because they were monitoring the YouTube commentary. From the time of her first exuberant appearance onwards, where she high-fived the camera and fans admitted in the commentary section to ‘smacking [the] computer screen to high-five’ her back, the audience expressed their ‘LOVE [for] the LBD version of Lydia!’.¹⁵²⁰ The fan favourite became a popular source of inspiration for fan-made art, memes, and GIFs on Tumblr. (See Figure 47.) *Pemberley Digital* paid homage to the audience’s love for Lydia early on by re-blogging a series of fan-produced GIFs of Lydia on the character’s own social media account.¹⁵²¹ (See Figure 48.) The expansion of Lydia’s story is therefore directly related to fans’ ‘active reading and reactive writing’ while the text was evolving.¹⁵²²

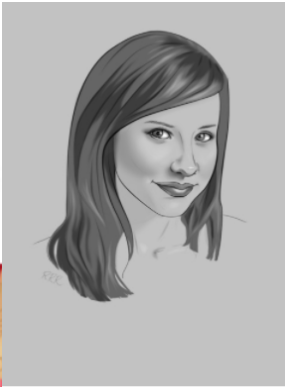
¹⁵²⁰ Comments by J Arduino and Wokanshutaideo Snape, “Episode 1: My Name is Lizzie Bennet,” (YouTube Commentary), 2014, accessed Jan 2, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KisuGP2lcPs>.

¹⁵²¹ Fan appreciation post by thepoundofthebakervilles, “Lydia is everywhere,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, May 1, 2012, accessed Jan 2, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lydia-is-everywhere/>.

¹⁵²² Mirmohamadi, *The Digital Afterlives of Jane Austen*, 5.

 mayaameliaoswald Follow

When you're feeling like a nobody and the unexpected Lydia Bennet gives you the word of wisdom

... and now Lydia Bennet (I'm hoping to eventually do all the LBD ladies)

#lizzie bennet diaries #lydia bennet #mary k.

🤔from an unexpected character too. Mainly, I hate Lydia from the book and from the 2 adaptations (1995/2005 especially the Lydia from 1995) that I've watched but this web series makes me love Lydia. She isn't just an annoying character anymore she has a personality that a lot of people especially young people can be related to (well not me bc I'm not really a rebellion). And Mary Kate is awesome in it. I may not be a rebellion but I adore every rebellious character that I know.

 gogenevieart Follow



The Ly-di-yuh 🤔

#the lizzie bennet diaries #quotes #lydia ben

Figure 47: Fan-Made Content archived on the *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Tumblr



thepoundcakeofthebakervilles:

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries – Lydia Bennet Appreciation Post

But seriously, how great is Lydia?!

Figure 48: thepoundcakeofthebakervilles, 'Lydia Bennet Appreciation Post,' *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

The resurrected Mary Bennet played a key role in the development of a new subplot focusing on Lydia. When following Lizzie's vlog we are limited to her perspective of Lydia, who is rather ungenerously characterised by her older sister as 'a stupid whorey slut'.¹⁵²³ In Lizzie's videos, Lydia seemingly only interrupts her sisters' lives when she wants to lure them to a bar or talk about boys. Her chaotic appearances in Lizzie's videos are suspended when she must temporarily move in with Mary while Mrs. Bennet redecorates the family home. While staying with Mary, Lydia decides to produce her own series of videos 'like Lizzie's, except way more awesome' because she can no longer appear in those of her elder sister, who is staying with Charlotte.¹⁵²⁴ Mary is first introduced in these videos and her interactions with Lydia reveal a more reflective and vulnerable side to the character of the youngest Miss Bennet.

In contrast to Lizzie's videos, which are designed to look edited by aspiring digital media professionals, Lydia's videos lack professional polish. They are filmed on a camera phone which gives them a 'DIY' look and they are presented as if containing no pre-planned material. Lydia's candid conversations with Mary in these videos allow for a rereading of her character: they reveal that although the youngest Bennet sister often behaves selfishly or impulsively, she is still capable of growth and introspection. For example, in 'Lydia Bennet Episode 19: Friends', Mary informs her cousin that she is hurt that Lydia only seems to want to spend time with her when her sisters are unavailable.¹⁵²⁵ Lydia re-evaluates her actions, and apologises for her thoughtless behaviour: 'I shouldn't just hang out with you when Lizzie and Jane are gone, I mean I like hanging out with you and I just never really thought about it that way'.¹⁵²⁶ As the series progresses, Lydia continues to develop into a more sympathetic and self-aware character than her novelistic counterpart, partly due to her cousin's positive influence. Mary is very literally Lydia's teacher: she tutors her cousin, who has been failing her classes at Community College, and Lydia's grades begin to improve. Lydia puts time and effort into strengthening her relationship with Mary and into showing her appreciation for her friendship and tutelage. In return, Mary recognises that Lydia's attention-seeking behaviour stems from loneliness and she tries to make her feel valued,

¹⁵²³ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 2: My Sisters- Problematic to Practically Perfect."

¹⁵²⁴ Pemberley Digital, "Lydia Bennet Ep 1: Boredom," *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, July 13, 2012, accessed Dec 28, 2017, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lydia-bennet-ep-1-boredom/>.

¹⁵²⁵ Pemberley Digital, "Lydia Bennet Episode 19: Friends," *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Nov 20, 2012, accessed Dec 12, 2016, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lydia-bennet-episode-19-friends/>.

¹⁵²⁶ Ibid.

often cancelling plans with her boyfriend Eddie to spend time with her cousin, in contrast to Lydia's sisters who rarely prioritise their youngest sister. If it were not for Mary, then, viewers would not have been encouraged to start seeing Lydia in a new light as Lizzie's videos stay true to her perspective and therefore portray her as the impulsive, flirtatious, self-absorbed (though highly entertaining and charismatic) Lydia from the novel. And if it were not for fans, there would have been no Mary to develop this more vulnerable side of Lydia for the viewers.

The elevation of Lydia's story from subtext to text is the most significant change of emphasis from Austen's novel, and the element that resonated most with reviewers and fans. As Myles McNutt writes in his review of the series, 'the show's characterisation of Lydia was its biggest accomplishment and its most substantial "addition" to the *Pride and Prejudice* story as far as adaptation goes.'¹⁵²⁷ Similarly, in a review on the popular fan blog *Austenprose*, Janeite Virginia Claire describes actress Mare Kate Wiles as 'the most engaging Lydia [she] has ever seen.'¹⁵²⁸ Indeed, some fans even expressed a preference for Lydia's vlogs over those of Lizzie, making her story a competing source of fan interest.¹⁵²⁹ (See Figure 49.)

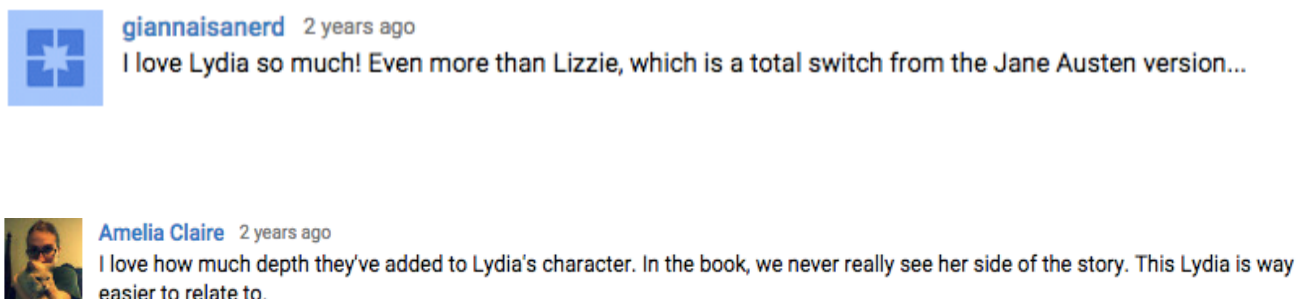


Figure 49: Fan YouTube Commentary Responding to 'Lydia Bennet: Episode 13 – Runaway,' *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

Lydia's youth and unfiltered YouTube commentary likely endeared her to the young *LBD* demographic who were likewise used to sharing their lives on the internet. Though, as Louisa Ellen Stein observes, Lydia's 'emotional displays encompass more

¹⁵²⁷ Myles McNutt, "Webseries phenom *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* made it to 100 entries (and beyond)," *Cultural Learnings*, March 28, 2013, accessed Oct 12, 2014, <http://cultural-learnings.com/2013/03/28/lydia-legacy-and-the-end-of-the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/>.

¹⁵²⁸ Claire, "A Closer Look at *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*: Episodes 1-16."

¹⁵²⁹ See also Louisa Ellen Stein, *Millennial Fandom: Television Audiences in the Transmedia Age* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015), 164. Stein compiles a series of fan responses to the *LBD* to 'demonstrate the strong conviction felt throughout the fandom about Lydia's centrality to the series.'

than giddy exuberance'.¹⁵³⁰ The *LBD* 'recuperates Lydia from her prior role as [the novel's] bad object': in this version of *P&P* 'Lydia facilitates engagement with...the darker experiences and senses of self that millennials face.'¹⁵³¹ Her story became increasingly relevant to the digital generation as the story progressed, because of how it was used to comment on women's digital experience.

The serial storytelling format of the *LBD* allowed audiences to develop a close identification with Lydia's online experiences. Hughes and Lund note that the serial is peculiarly enmeshed into people's everyday lives and as a result the unfolding story often reflects contemporary events and concerns.¹⁵³² The *LBD* incorporates 'socially relevant storylines' by using Lydia to highlight the problem of online harassment, a contemporary issue that would have been of special significance to the predominantly female and connected generation of young Austen fans engaging with the series.¹⁵³³ The first wave of cyber theorists envisioned the internet developing as a potentially utopian space, where people could become disembodied entities free of race, age, and gender. For example, Howard Rheingold rather optimistically declared that in cyberspace we 'are unable to form prejudices about others before we read what they had to say: race, gender, age, national origin, and physical appearance are not apparent' because '[i]n cyberspace, everyone is in the dark.'¹⁵³⁴ Similarly, Mark Dery proclaimed that the 'upside of incorporeal interaction is a technically enabled, postmulticultural vision of identity disengaged from gender, ethnicity, and other problematic constructions.'¹⁵³⁵ Yet, as Rhiannon Bury argues, the 'body and its identities are (re)produced through online interaction', meaning that they can still be subject to threat and violation even though the physical self is absent.¹⁵³⁶

Although men and women are subject to online harassment, the bodies of women and minority groups are particularly vulnerable to attack. Research suggests that

¹⁵³⁰ Ibid, 165.

¹⁵³¹ Ibid, 164.

¹⁵³² Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 12.

¹⁵³³ Phrase taken from Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures*, 44.

¹⁵³⁴ Howard Rheingold, "A slice of life in my virtual community," in *Global networks: Computers and International Communication*, ed. Linda M. Harasim (Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press, 1993), 66 and 61.

¹⁵³⁵ Mark Dery, "Flame Wars," in *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, ed. Mark Dery (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 2-3.

¹⁵³⁶ Bury, *Cyberspaces of their Own*, 6-7. Bury draws on a poststructuralist understanding of the body 'as a product of discourse rather than as a physical entity'. Therefore, she argues that material bodies are welded to discourse and 'thereby to systems of signification, including language' and can be discursively (re)produced online.

women's harassment differs from men's in that it 'is more likely to be gender-based and that has specific, discriminatory harms rooted in history' because historically, public spaces were the domain of men.¹⁵³⁷ Thus, for women in public spaces, whether online or on the street, harassment is 'often about men asserting dominance, silencing, and frequently, scaring and punishing them' as a way of reminding them of their 'place'.¹⁵³⁸ In short, while men are typically harassed 'for their ideas and actions', women are more likely to be harassed simply *because they are women*.¹⁵³⁹ Therefore, threats to women often focus on forms of harm that can be inflicted upon the female body, such as 'cyber mob' attacks, consisting of hundreds or even thousands of systematic rape and death threats.¹⁵⁴⁰ One of the most high-profile cyber mob attack cases in recent years was targeted against journalist Caroline Criado-Perez and involved Jane Austen. When the British government announced its intention to replace Elizabeth Fry with Winston Churchill on the £5 bank note, Criado-Perez made the reasonable suggestion that the Bank of England recognise the need for gender equality by featuring at least one woman, other than the Queen, on their bank notes. Her petition led to the Bank of England announcing a plan to feature Austen on the £10 bank note.¹⁵⁴¹ The success of Criado-Perez's campaign resulted in her being targeted with 'months of violent, misogynistic abuse' on Twitter, including hundreds of threats to rape her, to kill her, to mutilate her with scissors, and to burn her alive.¹⁵⁴² In the *LBD*, the expansion of Lydia's story in response to fan desire can be read as a celebration of the democratic potential of digital spaces, but one aspect of her story, 'Lydia's fall', also functions as a reminder that these spaces can be used for coercion, manipulation, and abuse.

¹⁵³⁷ Soraya Chemaly, "There's no comparing male and female harassment online," *Time*, Sept 9, 2014, accessed Dec 29, 2017, <http://time.com/3305466/male-female-harassment-online/>.

¹⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵³⁹ Danielle Keats Citron, *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 15.

¹⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2, 13-14.

¹⁵⁴¹ Caroline Criado-Perez, "We need women on British banknotes," *change.org Petition*, July 23, 2013, accessed Dec 29, 2017, <https://www.change.org/p/we-need-women-on-british-banknotes>.

¹⁵⁴² Criado-Perez, ".@Twitter: Optimised For Abuse," *WordPress*, May 11, 2014, accessed Dec 29, 2017, <https://weekwoman.wordpress.com/2014/05/11/twitter-optimised-for-abuse/>. Criado Perez states that '[t]he abuse was widely reported, although the worst tweets (most of the tweets), were never broadcast or printed, because the media deemed them too offensive.' She therefore made the decision to curate some of the tweets on her blog so that people would be aware of the extent of the problem and the urgent need to put systems in place to tackle online harassment.

‘Can I suppose her so lost to everything?’: Lydia’s Fall

‘[S]he is lost forever.’

- Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* ¹⁵⁴³

‘The internet is forever.’

- Pemberley Digital, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* ¹⁵⁴⁴

The producers knew that readers familiar with *P&P* would be expecting Lydia to elope with the duplicitous Wickham, as this is an essential plot point in Austen’s novel.

Lydia’s elopement is crucial to the narrative because it creates an obstacle that separates the hero and heroine, the resolution of which leads to the eventual narrative closure. In the *LBD*, Lydia’s vlog shows her encountering Wickham in Las Vegas, leading some fans to predict ‘a quick Vegas wedding between Lydia and Wickham’.¹⁵⁴⁵ However, others pointed out that ‘Vegas marriages aren’t notoriously binding’, they can easily be undone by an annulment or a divorce if necessary, so an elopement would not be an adequately catastrophic representation of a ruined reputation.¹⁵⁴⁶ Some fans therefore speculated that the scandal would play out online, where the repercussions would have a more lasting effect due to the difficulty in erasing digital footprints. As one fan stated: ‘What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Unless you put it on the internet. Then it will stay everywhere for ever.’¹⁵⁴⁷

Lydia does not marry Wickham in Vegas, but her desire for acceptance causes her to become entangled in a destructive relationship with him. Viewers that watched Lydia’s vlog series were privy to a tale that Austen never told, one that relates how Wickham managed to coerce Lydia into becoming embroiled in a social scandal. Lydia’s vlog represents her affection for Wickham as being genuine. She feels validated

¹⁵⁴³ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 209.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Pemberley Digital, “Episode 85: Consequences,” (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Feb 4, 2013, accessed Aug 28, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-85-consequences/>.

¹⁵⁴⁵ zahavah8, “Vegas, Bitches!!,” (YouTube Commentary), 2012, accessed Dec 27, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nl6rSVCTXAo>.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Grenn1471, “Vegas, Bitches!!,” (YouTube Commentary), 2012.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Jag519, “Vegas, Bitches!!,” (YouTube Commentary), 2012.

by him because he makes her ‘feel good enough for somebody for once’.¹⁵⁴⁸ The videos record Wickham’s gradual attempts to break Lydia down, to persuade her that her family does not really care about her, and that she must prove her love to him if she wants him to stay. When Lydia exhibits signs of slipping from his control Wickham angrily declares: ‘Everything I’ve done for you since we have been back together has been for you. Can you say the same about your sisters? I mean, I’m here for you Lydia! Where are they?’¹⁵⁴⁹ Fans following Lydia’s vlog had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with Lydia gradually over time, to reflect on her character development between instalments, and to pick up on visual clues providing insight into her increasingly fragile state of mind. For example, fans remarked in the commentary section that as Lydia became more dependent upon Wickham, her wardrobe of bright pinks faded to a muted palette of dull greys.

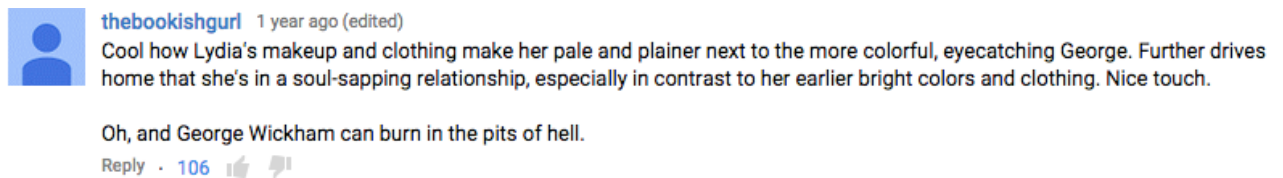


Figure 50: Fan YouTube Comment Responding to, ‘Lydia Bennet: Episode 27- Heartbreaker,’ *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

When Lydia starts dating Wickham she is feeling particularly vulnerable and insecure, believing that both her sisters, who are busy advancing in their careers, have ‘moved on’ and that she is an embarrassment to her family. Wickham takes advantage of Lydia’s vulnerability and loneliness and abuses her trust by coercing her in to making a sex tape that he sells to a ‘countdown website’ without her consent.¹⁵⁵⁰ The producers created a real website online—www.lydiabennettape.com—advertising the sex tape of ‘YouTube star Lydia Bennet’. In ‘Episode 87: An Understanding’ Lydia succumbs to a panic attack while talking about her followers’ responses to her relationship with Wickham and their reactions to the advertisement of the tape. In the video, Lydia quotes comments taken from the *LBD*’s actual YouTube commentary section: ‘Lydia, get over yourself’; ‘Lydia, you’re being too dramatic’; ‘Lydia, you dragged Lizzie away from

¹⁵⁴⁸ Pemberley Digital, “Lydia Bennet: Episode 29-Good Enough,” *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, May 7, 2012, accessed Aug 16, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/lydia-bennet-episode-29-good-enough/>.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵⁰ A ‘countdown website’ features a timer that ‘counts down’ the time until a website is set to reveal advertised content. The Lydia sex tape website was set to reveal the video on Valentine’s Day 2013.

Darcy and Gigi where she could have been happy forever, you're so selfish.'¹⁵⁵¹ She grows increasingly distressed as she references the comments, resulting in convulsive shaking and loss of breath. The *LBD* narrative therefore critiques the very medium the series depends upon by highlighting that social media commentary can be used to bully and harass, as well as to contribute and create.

The comments selected for quotation by Lydia position her as blameworthy. Yet, it should be noted that the majority of fans recognised Lydia as a victim and tried to warn her, and other characters, about the sex tape as soon as the website launched. A fan noticed the website online; she tweeted Charlotte alerting her of the tape and Charlotte subsequently tweeted Lizzie. (See Figure 51.) In Austen's novel, the news of Lydia's elopement was communicated in two letters written by Jane: a hurried letter followed by a lengthier one, both reaching Elizabeth at the same time due to a postal misdirection.¹⁵⁵² In the *LBD*, the action was summed up in two brief tweets. Detailed exposition was unnecessary because audiences understood the significance of the tweets and could piece together the story using their knowledge of the novel's events. Of course, in Austen's original novel it is Jane, not Charlotte, who takes on the role of messenger. Having Charlotte notify Lizzie based on a prompt by a fan altered, but did not impair, the story. The writers and fans recognised that although certain events had to take place for the *LBD* to remain an adaptation of *P&P*, there was room for experimentation in the spaces between plot points. Lizzie had to find out about Lydia's potential downfall so that Darcy could prove his love to the heroine by saving Lydia's reputation. This was a fixed plot point. However, *how* Lizzie found out and from *whom* was more fluid. An audience member recognised what had to happen next and therefore inserted herself into the story to keep the plot moving in the desired direction. In other words, she stayed within the lines, but used different colours to shade the narrative.

¹⁵⁵¹ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 87: An Understanding," (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Feb 11, 2013, accessed Oct 12, 2014, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-87-an-understanding/>.

¹⁵⁵² Austen, *P&P*, 206-208.



Figure 51: 'Lizzie's New Phone,' *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

Some fans went even further in their attempt to save Lydia's reputation. They proposed drawing on their 'collective intelligence' to take down the sex tape website themselves:

What if...IT'S THE FANS WHO HELP TAKE THE SITE DOWN AND 'SAVE' Lydia. Surely, among the thousands of us, there are some...who know how to do a DOS attack on a site.¹⁵⁵³

In the *LBD*, the combined expertise of fans had the potential to function as a positive form of fan activism. Yet, the *Pemberley Digital* team ultimately had to curtail audience's agency as the fans risked usurping Darcy's role as saviour. They released a statement asking fans 'not to attack the site because its position in the narrative was necessary to facilitate Darcy and Lizzie's relationship'.¹⁵⁵⁴ In other words, they asserted their position as game masters, reminding fans that although they could pull the

¹⁵⁵³ Fan comment cited by Julie Salmon Kelleher, "What Jane Austen Can Teach Us About Our New Internet Selves," *TEDx Talks*, 24 June, 2015, accessed Jan 2, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VBs8Oqbw3k>. A denial-of-service attack (DoS attack) is a cyber-attack where the perpetrator seeks to make a network resource unavailable to its intended users by temporarily, or indefinitely, disrupting services of a host connected to the Internet.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Seymour, Roth, and Flegel, "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries: Fan-creator interactions and new online storytelling," 104.

narrative in new directions, they could not break the rules of the game entirely, making the *LBD* both an ‘embedded’ and ‘emergent’ game narrative.

In their study of game theory, Zimmerman and Salen define an ‘embedded narrative’ as ‘a crafted story interactively told’ containing pre-generated story elements that are relatively fixed and provide a template for player interaction.¹⁵⁵⁵ The *LBD* contains elements of an ‘embedded narrative’ because there are fixed plot points, events that must take place that are tantamount to ‘rules of the game’. However, the story also shares the characteristics of an ‘emergent narrative’ described as a narrative that allows for creative possibility, user-led content, and improvised play.¹⁵⁵⁶ The emergent aspect of the narrative comes from fans exploring new paths on the way to the desired destination, or by changing the colours within the lines. The Twitter text allowed for improvised play because it was written ‘in conversation’ with the audience. Edwards compared the process to ‘comedy improvisation’: the writing team would set the scene by posting social media updates on behalf of the characters, then fans would ‘respond, and how the conversation [went] really depend[ed] on that interaction’.¹⁵⁵⁷ Although fans could not always affect Lydia’s story the way they wanted to, she emerged as a more fully developed and fully rounded character in this adaptation because fans’ engagement with her on social media led to her role being expanded.

In the novel, Lydia, like Charlotte, ‘is part of the social excess that remains after the marriage plot has produced a stable plot for “a single man” and “a wife”’ and her incompatible marriage functions as a contrast to the balance and harmony of the Darcys.¹⁵⁵⁸ She is ‘a force of disorder in the system, an excess which threatens the sparkling, the tidy, and the wholesome, an object lesson in the voracious nature of female sexuality, a force that must be contained.’¹⁵⁵⁹ Unlike the novel’s Lydia, the *LBD*’s Lydia is not supplementary to ‘the individual marriage plot’, and she is not sacrificed to an unhappy ending with Wickham.¹⁵⁶⁰ Through the Darcy siblings’ intervention, the compromising video is removed from the countdown website before it goes live and Lydia is consequently given an opportunity to start afresh and learn to function without Wickham. She was given a second chance at happiness in this

¹⁵⁵⁵ Zimmerman and Salen, *Rules of Play*, 383.

¹⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 383.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Edwards, “Exclusive Interview.”

¹⁵⁵⁸ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 76.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen’s Unbecoming Conjunctions*, 93.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 76.

adaptation because as, one fan commented, the audience was ‘too invested in her story and character not to have a satisfying conclusion...[they wanted] to see Lydia’s happy ending as much as Lizzie’s.’¹⁵⁶¹

Pemberley Digital continued to be responsive to fans’ desire for ‘more Lydia’ years after her last vlog was aired, publishing a novel from the perspective of the fan favourite entitled *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet* in September 2015.¹⁵⁶² In fact, the demand for Lydia was so high that the book’s authors, *LBD* writers Rachel Kiley and Kate Rorick, even released several chapters of the book on the fanfiction site Wattpad in advance of the novel’s official release to gratify eager readers’ wish for the story to be handed over to Lydia.¹⁵⁶³ The book picks up where Lizzie’s story left off, and follows ‘the youngest Bennet as she navigates the joys and pitfalls of becoming an adult in the digital age.’¹⁵⁶⁴ By fine-tuning the narrative in accordance with the audience’s desire to hear more about Lydia, the producers showed they were responsive to fans’ preferred narrative, challenging ‘the conventional belief that fan interpretations are merely secondary discourse’.¹⁵⁶⁵ Of course, as Austen’s novel discourages a sympathetic reading of Lydia, it could be argued that by absolving her of blame, the producers were privileging pleasing the fans over being ‘faithful’ to Austen’s portrayal of her.¹⁵⁶⁶ However, I would argue that the layers of meaning that fans helped add to Lydia’s story ultimately exposed similarities between Austen’s Lydia and Elizabeth, which are often overlooked by contemporary readers.

¹⁵⁶¹ MrLennaBear, “Vegas, Bitches!!,” (YouTube Commentary).

¹⁵⁶² Rachel Kiley and Kate Rorick, *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

¹⁵⁶³ Hannah McLeod, “Read the first 7 chapters of *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet* NOW on Wattpad!,” *Pemberley Digital*, Sept 8, 2015, accessed Oct 15, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/read-the-first-7-chapters-of-the-epic-adventures-of-lydia-bennet-now-on-wattpad/>.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Christina Cooper, “The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet: Now Coming Fall 2015,” *Pemberley Digital*, Jan 21, 2015, accessed Aug 15, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/the-epic-adventures-of-lydia-bennet-now-coming-fall-2015/>.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Rekha Sharma, “Community clip show: Examining the recursive collaboration between producers and viewers of a postmodern sitcom,” *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1, no.2 (2013): 183 2013.

¹⁵⁶⁶ How Roode, “Episode 87: An Understanding,” (YouTube Commentary), 2015, accessed Jan 2, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LdEPWt0R60>. Fans debated this very point in the commentary section, with some accusing the *LBD* of misrepresenting Lydia’s character, while others defended her positive portrayal as it offers a new insight into the original Lydia. As one fan stated: ‘We’ve seen Lydia portrayed faithfully (and unsympathetically) in every other version of the story’ and while ‘[f]rom a purist’s perspective’ the adaptation could be considered unfaithful, for those ‘who want to see something fresh with each new adaptation’, the *LBD* provides a ‘bold approach to Lydia’s character’

‘Widely different was the effect of a second perusal’: Rereading Lydia

As established in Chapter One, Elizabeth is an atypical fairy tale heroine. Readers are encouraged to view her unconventionality as attractive while Lydia’s wilfulness invites disapproval. Johnson argues astutely that this is because Lydia performs the function of a scapegoat in the novel:

Lydia is a decoy who attracts the disapproval to which Elizabeth herself could otherwise be subject, and by lamenting Lydia’s glaring excesses, Elizabeth is cleared for her less egregious but still ‘improper’ rambles, conceit, and impertinence without arousing her discomfort or incurring our censure.¹⁵⁶⁷

Austen’s use of free indirect discourse encourages the reader to look sympathetically upon Elizabeth, and to view Lydia from her sister’s disdainful viewpoint. Therefore, Lydia distracts readers from the fact that Elizabeth, too, is guilty of ‘continual infractions of the rules of propriety’, which a close reading of the novel reveals.¹⁵⁶⁸

In the novel, Lydia is very obviously not the model of female propriety advocated by conduct books like James Fordyce’s *Sermons To Young Women* (1766). Indeed, when Mr. Collins attempts to ‘instruct’ his cousins in the rules of female behaviour by reading aloud from this very book, Lydia responds by interrupting him with gossip ‘before he had, with very monotonous solemnity, read three pages’.¹⁵⁶⁹ Embarrassed by her sister’s indiscretion, Elizabeth joins Jane in bidding Lydia to ‘hold her tongue’.¹⁵⁷⁰ Yet, as Johnson remarks, ‘Fordyce’s injunctions to modesty and humility damn Elizabeth’s behaviour every bit as decidedly as they do Lydia’s’.¹⁵⁷¹ Although Elizabeth has more tact than Lydia, she is equally forthright and frequently exhibits a directness that rivals that of her younger sister. For example, when refusing the obtuse Mr. Collins’s unwanted addresses, she plainly states that accepting his proposals ‘is absolutely impossible’ because her ‘feelings in every respect forbid it’.¹⁵⁷² She evinces the same candour when speaking to the imperious Lady Catherine, who is unsettled by her lack of reserve and remarks disapprovingly to Elizabeth that: ‘you give

¹⁵⁶⁷ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, 76-77.

¹⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 52.

¹⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁵⁷¹ Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 76.

¹⁵⁷² Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 83.

your opinion very decidedly for so young a person'.¹⁵⁷³ Indeed, even Elizabeth is occasionally shocked by the realisation that although she is 'incapable' of the same 'coarseness of *expression*' as Lydia unthinkingly exhibits, 'the coarseness of *sentiment* was little other than her own breast had formerly harboured and fancied liberal'.¹⁵⁷⁴

As well as being alike in terms of character, Elizabeth and Lydia's storylines have many parallels. The sisters each disappoint a parent through their wilfulness; they each exercise bad judgment by falling for Mr. Wickham's charms; and they each display 'unladylike' levels of levity at key moments throughout the novel. Elizabeth, 'the happiest creature in the world', and Lydia, who can hardly 'write for laughing' as she 'euphorically prepares to elope', are each linked by '[t]heir expressions of joy'.¹⁵⁷⁵ They both seem determined to pursue their own happiness regardless of how it impacts upon those around them. Elizabeth turns down Mr. Collins even though their union would safeguard the entire family from future destitution. Similarly, Lydia elopes with Wickham even though such an alliance was sure to adversely affect her sisters' prospects for marriage. She returns from her elopement with her rakish husband unburdened by shame or regret and is apparently oblivious to the suffering she occasioned her family: 'Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless.'¹⁵⁷⁶

Austen uses free indirect speech to give us a glimpse of Elizabeth's contempt for the couple's careless lack of concern: 'They seemed each of them to have the happiest memories in the world. Nothing of the past was recollected with pain'.¹⁵⁷⁷ Elizabeth is disgusted by her sister's insouciance; yet, she has a very similar philosophy regarding the primacy of personal happiness over painful recollections. When Darcy reproaches himself for his past behaviour, Elizabeth encourages him to '[t]hink of the past only as its remembrance gives you pleasure'.¹⁵⁷⁸ It is Elizabeth's professed resolve to 'act in that manner, which will, in [her] own opinion, constitute [her] happiness' without reference to anybody else, just like Lydia.¹⁵⁷⁹ In a contrast with the novel which 'inhibits [readers] identification with Lydia Bennet, and...disables vicarious enjoyment of her pleasure', the *LBD* actively encourages identification with Lydia by making her

¹⁵⁷³ Ibid, 128.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, 168.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, 100.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 239.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 240.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, 282.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, 273.

the narrator of her own vlog, meaning that her similarity to the heroine is emphasised, not diminished.¹⁵⁸⁰ Indeed, as Lizzie's own videos develop, they also end up encouraging this identification between the sisters.

In the *LBD*, Lizzie initially attempts to distance herself from Lydia and to stress their differences: 'her definition of fun differs from mine. While I prefer peace and quiet and maybe a good book, Lydia needs to be surrounded by large crowds at all times'.¹⁵⁸¹ She tries to correct her boisterous sister's perceived flaws by gifting her with a self-help book entitled *Where did I Park My Car: A Party Girl's Guide to Becoming a Successful Adult*. The instructional manual is arguably a modern-day equivalent of a conduct book, and Lydia does not appreciate the gesture. Lizzie defends her choice of gift, telling Lydia that 'maybe it would be good for you not to be so "energetic" all the time'.¹⁵⁸² Lydia points out that Lizzie's word choice is suspect, as Darcy used the adjective "energetic" in a negative context when denigrating both Lydia and their Mother for their behaviour. She argues that Lizzie should support her, rather than condemning her with the same censorious language that Darcy used when criticising her outgoing personality.¹⁵⁸³

The conduct book causes a rift between the sisters, with Lydia holding a grudge against her older sister that rivals the one that Lizzie herself held earlier against Charlotte. Lizzie fails to see the parallels between her own uncompromising attitude towards Charlotte and Lydia's intractable stance. However, Jane later reminds Lizzie, and the viewer, that her 'two wonderful stubborn sisters' have 'always been so alike'.¹⁵⁸⁴ Lydia and Lizzie are obstinate, opinionated, quick to form impressions, and as Jane points out, both 'spend more time talking to thousands of people they've never met than to each other'.¹⁵⁸⁵ The viewer is continually encouraged to see Lydia as a distilled version of her older sister and to consider how the story might have turned out if Lizzie had not learned of Wickham's false nature from Darcy. As Lizzie herself points out, 'George has a history of convincing smart women to do dumb things'.¹⁵⁸⁶ The reader is forcibly reminded that Lydia's fate could potentially have been Lizzie's

¹⁵⁸⁰ Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, 93.

¹⁵⁸¹ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 72: Party Time."

¹⁵⁸² Pemberley Digital, "Episode 73: 2+1," (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Dec 17, 2012, accessed Aug 28, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-73-2-1/>.

¹⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁴ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 86: Sisterly Support," *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Feb 7, 2013, accessed Aug 28, 2015, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-86-sisterly-support/>.

¹⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁶ Pemberley Digital, "Episode 85: Consequences."

own. Like Charlotte, Lydia is one of Elizabeth's doubles, and the *LBD* highlights this for the reader by freeing her from 'the one-joke role' in which she was previously stuck and allowing her to move off the page into a new and expansive digital realm.¹⁵⁸⁷

Vitana Kostadinova notes that the *LBD*'s focus on female solidarity and sisterhood gives the series a strong feminist appeal, which clearly resonated with the audience.¹⁵⁸⁸ The increased focus on secondary female characters led one blogger to conclude that the 'real love story of the series isn't between Jane and Bing or Lizzie and Darcy. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* has been about sisterly love all along.'¹⁵⁸⁹ Similarly, Hannah W. observes that: 'Although romance still plays a large role within the broader context of the story, it is the dynamic between Lizzie and her sisters Jane and Lydia and her best friend Charlotte that give the show its heart and depth.'¹⁵⁹⁰ Myles McNutt summarises that, 'while Lizzie's story undoubtedly concerns love, it is not *about* romantic love... Where *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* stands out is in telling a story about female friendship and sisterhood.'¹⁵⁹¹ The audience's interest in the sisterhood aspect of the story may explain why the producers chose not to include Darcy in the final video of the series, and to focus instead on the female characters. When asked about the decision not to include Darcy in the final episode, Bushman responded with the following comment on his Tumblr page:

[H]ere's my take on it: this show is primarily about Lizzie and her relationships with the world around her. And that since we spent the first 59 episodes on her relationships with people other than Darcy, it would feel pretty lousy if the show ended with her only focused on him without any recognition of all the other people in her life who are so important – and all

¹⁵⁸⁷ Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, 93.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Vitana Kostadinova, "Jane Austen Adapted: Female Lifestyles in *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*," in *Growing Up a Woman: The Private/Public Divide in the Narratives of Female Desire*, ed. Šnircová, Soňa and Milena Kostić (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 2015), 312-334. Kostadinova argues that some of the heroine's choices can be interpreted as anti-feminist, but that the focus on sisterhood gives the series a feminist feel.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Sarah T., "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries and the Reclamation of Lydia Bennet," *Girls like Giants*, March 31, 2013, accessed Dec 12, 2014, <https://girlslikegiants.wordpress.com/2013/03/31/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries-and-the-reclamation-of-lydia-bennet/>.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Hannah W., "Ten Things You Might Not Know About The Lizzie Bennet Diaries," *Many A True Nerd*, July 3, 2015, accessed Jan 26, 2015, <http://manyatrue nerd.com/2013/07/03/ten-things-you-might-not-know-about-the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/>.

¹⁵⁹¹ Myles McNutt, "Webseries phenom *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* made it 100 entries (and beyond)," *A.V. Club*, March 2, 2014, accessed Jan 26, 2015, <http://www.avclub.com/article/webseries-phenom-the-lizzie-bennet-diaries-made-it-201003>.

the other relationships that make our version of this story different than all the others.¹⁵⁹²

The final video posted in March 2013 therefore mirrors the first video, in featuring the same three characters as the debut vlog: Lizzie, Charlotte, and Lydia. Although this finale video is entitled ‘The End’, *Pemberley Digital* posted four follow-up videos in May and June of 2014, calling into question the finality of the show’s conclusion. Additionally, fans exemplified that the notion ‘of an always ongoing, always renegotiated work in progress’ is ‘central to fandom’,¹⁵⁹³ by continuing to post fanfiction based on the *LBD* on sites like fanfiction.net and Archive of Our Own, thereby expanding the story in an infinite number of directions and ensuring that ultimately, it has no end.¹⁵⁹⁴

The Janeites – From ‘Squires’ to ‘Seahorses’

P&P was the first text to be adapted by *Pemberley Digital* into an ever-expanding textual world and it continues to be their biggest success story. Indeed, the company re-released the entire series in June of 2017 on Facebook to celebrate the show’s five-year anniversary, and once again it attracted a large following of dedicated fans.¹⁵⁹⁵

Pemberley Digital’s subsequent adaptations of classic novels have failed to resonate with audiences in the same way as the *LBD*, achieving lower viewing figures and less cultural longevity.¹⁵⁹⁶ The fact that *P&P* has become a mythic narrative known in a variety of forms offers one explanation as to why this series gained greater traction than

¹⁵⁹² Jay Bushman, “Why/How the team decided that Darcy shouldn’t be on the last episode,” *The Loosefishery*, March 26, 2013, accessed Sept 9, 2015,

<http://jaybushman.tumblr.com/post/46384899428/whyhow-the-team-decided-that-darcy-shouldnt-be>.

¹⁵⁹³ Busse and Hellekson, “Introduction: Work in Progress,” 2 and 7.

¹⁵⁹⁴ There are currently 303 stories based on the *LBD* hosted on fanfiction.net. *Fanfiction.net*, accessed Jan 22, 2016,

<https://www.fanfiction.net/search.php?keywords=the+lizzie+bennet+diaries&ready=1&type=story>.

There are 1040 stories based on the *LBD* hosted on *Archive of Our Own*. *Archive of Our Own*, accessed Jan 7, 2018,

https://archiveofourown.org/works/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&work_search%5Bquery%5D=THE+LIZ+ZIE+BENNET+DIARIES.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Danny Rivkin, “Celebrating the Lizzie Bennet Diaries Five Year Anniversary,” *Pemberley Digital*, March 21, 2017, accessed Jan 2, 2018, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/celebrating-the-lizzie-bennet-diaries-5-year-anniversary/>.

¹⁵⁹⁶ View counts for *Pemberley Digital* productions are as follows: *LBD*, 8,527,427 views; *Welcome to Sanditon* (2013), 630,901 views; *Emma Approved* (2013-14), 4,703,014 views; *Frankenstein MD* (2014), 505,301 views; *The March Family Letters* (2014-15), 485,605 views. *Pemberley Digital*, *YouTube Channel*, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/user/PemberleyDigital/featured>.

the adaptations that followed. As Edwards observed, ‘most people know the story of *Pride and Prejudice*’, therefore it was easy for audience members to get involved in the storytelling process.¹⁵⁹⁷ Even people who had never read the novel still came to the *LBD* with certain narrative expectations from having experienced screen adaptations, theatrical productions, or romance novels based on *P&P*. Yet, I would argue that the main reason why this adaptation of *P&P* was so successful is that it resonated so well with established patterns of Janeite behaviour.

In the nineteenth century, Janeites were characterised as devoted ‘squires’ ‘of the order of St Jane’, in the twentieth century they became ‘the frilly bonnet brigade’ of middle-aged Darcy fanatics, while the young digitally connected *LBD* audience dubbed themselves ‘the Seahorses’.¹⁵⁹⁸ Yet, despite these changes in the gender and age demographics of the Janeites, a playful, appropriative, style of reception has remained consistent in the Janeite fan community over time, as this chapter has shown. Indeed, the *LBD* community name ‘Seahorses’ arose from an in-joke. Fans were speculating about how the *Pemberley Digital* team would update the story of Lydia’s elopement, with some suggesting that Lydia might become pregnant by Wickham. A fan jokingly suggested that in this event Darcy would save Lydia by carrying the baby for her, like a male seahorse.¹⁵⁹⁹ The fan exchange inspired the creation of a meme depicting Darcy as a seahorse, which was circulated around the fandom. (See Figure 52.) The Seahorses created their own community groups for discussing the series and sharing fanart, fanfiction, and fan videos on Google Hangouts, Tumblr, and YouTube.¹⁶⁰⁰ Lizzie even makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to the ‘Seahorses’ within the series: when a fan asks her for her ‘personal opinion of seahorses’, Lizzie states that ‘now that I’m around them so much, they’re growing on me.’¹⁶⁰¹

¹⁵⁹⁷ Edwards, “Exclusive Interview.”

¹⁵⁹⁸ ‘Squires’ taken from George Saintsbury, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol. 2*, 65; ‘Frilly Bonnet Brigade’ taken from Lynch, “Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors,” 8. ‘Seahorses’ taken from the *LBD* Seahorses fan club, “The Seahorses,” *Tumblr*, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <http://thelbdseahorses.tumblr.com/>.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Mamaleh6994, “The *LBD* Seahorse: An Explanation,” *Tumblr*, January 6, 2012, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://mamaleh6994.tumblr.com/post/39873581356/the-lbd-seahorses-an-explanation>.

¹⁶⁰⁰ “The Seahorses,” *Google+*, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <https://plus.google.com/communities/105398565043472947663>.

“The Seahorses,” *Tumblr*, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <http://thelbdseahorses.tumblr.com/>.

“The Seahorses,” *YouTube*, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/user/LBDSeahorses>.

¹⁶⁰¹ Pemberley Digital, “Episode QA9: Lizzie and Bing,” (YouTube video), *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Feb 23, 2013, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/episode-qa9-lizzie-and-bing/>.



Figure 52: The LBD Seahorses, ‘Darcy as Seahorse Meme’

The *LBD* exemplifies the continuing importance of intertextuality and in-jokes to the Janeite fan community. As demonstrated, the series’ inclusion of allusive references and in-jokes was integral to its success as it gave fans an opportunity to demonstrate their intertextual knowledge and to experience the ‘passion and possessiveness’ towards Austen and her characters that is paramount in this fan community.¹⁶⁰² By utilising specialist knowledge and employing a private language, knowing Janeites could feel an intimate personal connection with Austen while participating in the construction of the *LBD*. Serial fiction is also a particularly appropriate form for Austen adaptations because it depends ‘on audiences’ anticipation and delight in “more to come”, and therefore caters to the ‘desire for more’ that is a key feature of Janeitism.¹⁶⁰³ Austen’s fans always want to prolong the pleasure of her novels because, in their own words, they ‘just love her characters and they don’t want to give them up.’¹⁶⁰⁴ Their desire to explore their afterlives has turned Austen’s characters

¹⁶⁰² Dryden, “Inventing Jane,” 103.

¹⁶⁰³ Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, 6.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Laurel Ann Nattress quoted in Jon Kelly, “Janeites: the curious American cult of Jane Austen,” *BBC News Magazine*, Jan 28, 2013, accessed Sept 9, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21036818>.

into ‘transmedial’ figures who have been able to move from the pages of the source novels, to the stage, the screen, YouTube, and the Twittersphere.

Encouraged by the success of the *LBD*, *Pemberley Digital* created a ‘sequel’ to the initial series called *Welcome to Sanditon* (dir. Bernie Su; 2013), an online role-playing game set in a virtual Californian beach town in which fans could become residents and interact with the *LBD*’s Gigi Darcy, who replaces *Sanditon*’s original protagonist Charlotte Heywood.¹⁶⁰⁵ Another *Pemberley Digital*-produced adaptation, *Emma Approved* (dir. Bernie Su; 2013), replaces the character of Mrs. Elton from Austen’s *Emma* with the *LBD*’s Caroline Lee (Caroline Bingley).¹⁶⁰⁶ As noted in Chapter Two, early profic texts like Sybil G. Brinton’s *Old Friends and New Fancies* (1913) also intertwine ‘the lives of the most beloved characters from all six Austen novels’ into a shared fictional universe. Commenting on the decision to create a shared Austen universe, writer Margaret Dunlap states that ‘threading the worlds of stories together makes a lot of sense...Not only is it fun for the fans, you also get to continually deepen your story world instead’.¹⁶⁰⁷ By envisioning Austen’s novels as a shared world for fans to invest in, the *LBD* again demonstrates cultural continuities with established Janeite practices.¹⁶⁰⁸

Conclusion

Pemberley Digital created an intertextual adaptation of *P&P* that acknowledged the referential nature of Austen fandom and that allowed fans to fully immerse themselves in a virtual Austenland. Rather than colonising a fannish space from the outside, *Pemberley Digital* used their insider knowledge of the Austen fandom to create an immersive and interactive text aimed at a knowledgeable and appropriative community of Austen fans. As noted in Chapter Two, Ryan once argued that when applied to traditional printed texts like *P&P*, the concept of interactivity is perceived to stand ‘more for the reader’s awareness of his collaboration with the text in the production of meaning than for personal initiative and decision making’ because in

¹⁶⁰⁵ *Welcome to Sanditon*, dir. by Bernie Su (Pemberley Digital, 2013), <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/welcome-to-sanditon/story-wts/>.

¹⁶⁰⁶ *Emma Approved*, dir. Bernie Su (Pemberley Digital, 2013), <http://www.pemberleydigital.com/emma-approved/>.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Quote from blurb to Sybil G. Brinton, *Old Friends and New Fancies: An Imaginary Sequel to the Novels of Jane Austen* (Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2007).

¹⁶⁰⁸ Margaret Dunlap, quoted in Pemberley Digital, “Fan Appreciation no.2: Pemberley Digital,” 57.

order for it to be truly ‘interactive’, a reader must be able to modify the text.¹⁶⁰⁹ Yet, Ryan has since conceded that ‘[a]ny immersive world can be made interactive by dedicated fans’, stating that ‘even when the medium does not allow real interaction, as is the case with novels and films, people may participate spontaneously in the world’s creation through external contributions such as fan fiction’.¹⁶¹⁰ By expanding *P&P* through fanfiction and profic, Janeites have long been disrupting the traditional text, making these fan contributions both immersive and interactive. The innovative *LBD* obviously allows for a much more immersive and interactive fan experience as the reader is actually part of the virtual world. Yet, though it is a new kind of story, the *LBD* is also an extension of the playful style of reading and immersive form of world-building that has been an established part of Janeite reception since the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Audiences responses to the *LBD* illuminates the digital Janeites and their social and cultural preoccupations for us. Enquiry into Austen’s reception in the digital sphere is therefore timely and useful because it illustrates how her characters are reconstructed in new mediums and reinvented in specific technological contexts, whilst also revealing continuities in Janeite behaviour over time.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Ryan, *Immersion vs. Interactivity*.

¹⁶¹⁰ Ryan, “Why Worlds Now?,” 10.

Conclusion: ‘An attention which it had hardly received on the first perusal’ – Rereading *Pride and Prejudice* through Fanfiction

One doesn't read Jane Austen; one re-reads Jane Austen.
- William F. Buckley Jr.

I hope if my books influence in any way, they lead readers back to Jane's books, and give them a different perspective they might not have considered before.
- Jane Odiwe, Austen profic writer¹⁶¹¹

The main aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate that Austen profic and online fanfiction merits serious critical attention. Thus far, the literary output of her readers has been underexplored by Austen critics, who have been more interested in the Janeites' role as readers rather than as writers, and by fan studies critics, who have 'extensively engaged with the popular' but have conducted comparatively little analysis of fanfiction inspired by liminal figures like Austen, who straddle the divide between high and popular culture.¹⁶¹² My thesis has attempted to address this gap, thereby making an original contribution to Austen studies, fan studies, and the study of popular literature. Engaging with Austen fanfiction and profic is important because these texts provide insight into specific cultural moments whilst also revealing the ways in which the author's confiding, playful, spare style draws readers into her work, inviting them to expand upon her 'world'.

Prejudging and Rejudging: The Main Issues Revisited

This thesis has demonstrated that the desire to prolong the pleasure of Austen's texts by imagining afterlives for her characters and by building on her world, in other words the desire for *more*, is a characteristic aspect of Janeite behaviour common to both Austen's historical admirers and her contemporary fans. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Janeites would indulge this desire by going on pilgrimages in search of

¹⁶¹¹ Odiwe, "Fan Appreciation no. 3," 108.

¹⁶¹² Pearson, "Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, and Sherlockians," 98.

‘Austenland’, an imaginary world communally inhabited by Janeites through ‘the willing activation of pretense’.¹⁶¹³ Janeites engaged in play-acting by talking about Austenland as if it was a real place that they could travel to, and by treating Austen and her characters ‘*as if all had equally together walked this earth.*’¹⁶¹⁴

In the late twentieth century fans began to expand on Austenland online by building virtual country houses like *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire*. An examination of fan activity on these sites highlights other continuities in Janeite behaviour that persist despite changes in how her work is produced and received, such as a tendency to use intertextual references as a ‘secret code’ and a longing for intimacy with Austen, her characters, and fellow Janeites. This type of playful, passionate, and possessive Janeite behaviour is a transhistorical mode of reception that this thesis has argued was initially stimulated by Austen’s unique writing style, and that continues to be facilitated by intertextual, interactive, and immersive adaptations like the *LBD*. The theories of Michael Saler and Marie-Laure Ryan have informed much of the argument about the transformation of Austen’s textual world into a virtual one. Yet, the thesis also draws on the work of cultural studies critics like Stuart Hall and Michel de Certeau, whose theoretical frameworks were so influential on foundational fan studies texts. Accordingly, the thesis has considered how fans’ responses are shaped by their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as by Austen’s style.

Austen adaptations, and the fanfiction they inspire, can be situated within different cultural-historical moments and studied for the insights they provide into how her work is adapted to different uses in new contexts. Indeed, this thesis has shown that peaks in *P&P* fanfiction and profic production coincide with specific industrial and cultural trends. For example, the growth of Austen fandom during the 1990s is related to the popularity of heritage adaptations in Britain and America, as well as to the changing emotional and political climate in which Austen adaptations were circulated and received. Similarly, the rise of the predominantly American vampire and zombie-infused *P&P* profic in the late noughties was connected to broader production trends like the phenomenal popularity of paranormal romance novels and zombie-related cultural products. Additionally, Austen’s *P&P* had special appeal to writers and readers during the post-2008 financial crash period because of the bankability of Austen’s name during a time of economic instability, coupled with the symbolic significance of the

¹⁶¹³ Saler, *As If*, 28.

¹⁶¹⁴ Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes and her Friends*, 145. (added emphasis mine).

undead as the ‘monsters of the recession’. As texts that respond to their cultural moments, Austen profic and fanfiction offer ‘readers a window to a particular time and place’ by revealing what people ‘cherished, celebrated or felt strongly about at a certain point in time.’¹⁶¹⁵

The thesis has had a specific focus on rereadings of *P&P*. Given the immense volume of popular responses to Austen’s novels, narrowing the focus to one text was necessary to ensure that the thesis did not lose focus by attempting to cover too much material. *P&P* was an obvious choice because it is the most popular novel in Austen fandom, and yet is comparatively underexplored in Austen criticism. As Woloch states:

Pride and Prejudice has a peculiar double status within Austen’s body of work. Many critics regard it as a less mature and perhaps intricate novel than *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, or *Persuasion*, but it is also the best-known and most canonically popular Austen text.¹⁶¹⁶

Woloch even suggests that *P&P* may be ‘*too good a novel*, partly because our awareness of its ingenious construction dilutes our engagement with the fictional universe that is depicted’.¹⁶¹⁷ Critics thrive on deciphering hidden difficulties and detecting narrative ambiguities; therefore, *P&P*, the ‘most perfect’ and ‘most characteristic’ and ‘most eminently quintessential of its author’s works’, has often been found to be too flawless to be truly challenging.¹⁶¹⁸ Boone even contends that the novel is so aesthetically perfect that ‘the text in effect becomes a static work of art.’¹⁶¹⁹

Fanfiction reanimates *P&P* by translating it into new mediums and contexts, rather than treating it like a ‘static’ museum piece. It allows the reader to enjoy a fresh take on an old story whilst simultaneously facilitating a re-consideration of the original text. When one reads fanfiction ‘one is really reading two texts at once’ because ‘the prior text is available and remains in the mind even as one reads the new version.’¹⁶²⁰ Re-evaluating *P&P* through fanfiction is particularly appropriate given that the novel is essentially about the importance of rereading and re-evaluating a narrative. As Tony Tanner has argued, the novel is ‘a drama of recognition – re-cognition, that act by which a mind can look again at a thing and if necessary make revisions and amendments until

¹⁶¹⁵ Berberich, “Introduction: The Popular – Literature versus literature,” 4.

¹⁶¹⁶ Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 45.

¹⁶¹⁷ *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁶¹⁸ Saintsbury, quoted in Southam, ed., *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Vol2.*, 214.

¹⁶¹⁹ Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition*, 82.

¹⁶²⁰ Derecho, “Archontic literature,” 73.

it sees the thing as it really is.’¹⁶²¹ The study of *P&P* fanfiction matters because it could encourage critics to ‘look again’ at a work that does not always get the same degree of critical attention as her other novels. Of course, as *P&P* is often deemed to be aesthetically perfect, it is important to query why fans feel the need to rework this flawless fairy tale through fanfiction. The thesis has accordingly attempted to account for *why P&P* is the novel most often rewritten by Austen’s fans.

Chapter One drew on fairy tale scholarship to explore how the repetition of familiar fairy tale functions has contributed to the novel’s attraction and adaptability. Austen’s use of the ‘Cinderella’ story as an underlying structure makes *P&P* pleasingly familiar to readers and the use of fairy tale patterns offers writers scope for ‘infinite possibilities of repetition and variation’.¹⁶²² Yet, Austen’s *revision* of the fairy tale, rather than simply her use of repetition, is an even more significant factor in the novel’s lasting cultural afterlife. Only ‘the most telling or catchy’ fairy tales are ‘reprinted and reproduced in multiple forms’ and it is the revisions that writers make that help these tales to achieve this special cultural resonance.¹⁶²³ In *P&P*, Austen’s most significant revision to the ‘Cinderella’ tale, and the element that has helped it to ‘stick’, is her creation of an unusually self-assured and spirited heroine who is the antithesis of the passive, persecuted Cinderella prototype. The singular Elizabeth Bennet has become increasingly conflated with Jane Austen by critics, biographers, and fans, meaning that readers searching for greater intimacy with their imagined ‘friend’ Jane Austen, often find her in *P&P*, giving this novel a unique status in the Austen fandom. The novel’s fairy tale ending, which has a strong utopian drive, but is yet undercut and anti-climactic, is also a source of fascination and frustration for readers, and thus a major stimulant for fanfiction writers. As Jenkins notes: ‘If the original work did not fascinate fans, they would not continue to engage with it.’¹⁶²⁴ By extension, ‘[i]f it did not frustrate them on some level, they would feel no need to write new stories — even if the frustration comes from an inadequate amount of material’, as is often the case with Austen.¹⁶²⁵ The harmonious fairy tale union of Darcy and Elizabeth satisfies, but Austen’s characteristically concise ending leaves many readers wanting *more*, and hence stimulates a desire to continue on the story.

¹⁶²¹ Tony Tanner, *Jane Austen* (Basington: Macmillan, 1986), 105.

¹⁶²² Grandi, “Web Side Stories,” 39.

¹⁶²³ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, 1.

¹⁶²⁴ Jenkins, “Fan Fiction as Critical Commentary.”

¹⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*

Elizabeth's Story to Darcy's Story, and Austen's Story to Davies's Story (?)

Chapter Two explores the change in focus in fanfiction and profic from Elizabeth's to Darcy's story, a shift which was instigated by the popularity of Davies's Darcy-centric reading of *P&P*. This adaptation has been a major focus of the thesis because of its seminal place in contemporary Austen fandom. The rapid growth of online fandom is obviously indebted to Davies as well as Austen with fans frequently declaring that: 'It is reasonable [*sic*] to assume that most of the P&P fic out there was largely inspired by this BBC production' with its 'brooding, smouldering, and sexy Mr. Darcy'.¹⁶²⁶ Although not the first adaptation to romanticise Darcy, Davies's emotionally and erotically enhanced hero had a greater cultural impact than previous adaptations partly because of the favourable conditions of reception. American audiences have long been responsive to a demonstratively emotive Darcy, but English audiences did not become especially open to a rewriting of his character until the 'Darcymania' of the 1990s. Chapter Two argues that this new responsiveness is directly related to the primacy of 'emotion' in English culture during this period and its symbolic significance in heritage adaptations where emotion is linked to a new conception of English national identity. Darcy challenges the 'ethic of restraint' associated with 'Old England' and traditional English values, whilst still embodying 'heritage' for audiences interested in the glamorous associations of his culture and class. As well as reaching a broad audience of general heritage film enthusiasts in England and America, the adaptation had special appeal for established Austen fans because its serial format allowed for greater immersion in Austenland, the enchanted land for which Janeites have long been searching. Fans could invest emotionally in the show by talking about it between episodes, by expanding on *P&P* through fanfiction, and by constructing virtual versions of Austen's world.

The adaptation has become so culturally resonant that it is now a competing canonical source to Austen's novel, with the addition of the lake scene achieving special resonance. As the thesis has made clear, every adaptation of *P&P* that has come out since 1995 has been created in dialogue with Davies's vision. This influence is obvious in cases where adaptations very consciously reuse purely Davies elements, like 2008's *Lost in Austen*, which not only pays tribute to the lake scene but also contains a meta

¹⁶²⁶ imacartwright, "Pride and Prejudice: An Overview."

reference to this scene's origins.¹⁶²⁷ The dependency on Davies is also apparent in cases where the references are more oblique, as in Joe Wright's 2005 film adaptation of *P&P* which visually recalls the lake scene on the numerous occasions where Darcy is clad in a wet shirt. Davies's influence is also present in adaptations like the *LBD*. This 2012 digital adaptation writes *against* the 1995 television adaptation by moving the focus back to the female characters. Yet, the female-focused web series still relies on the Darcy-centric television series as a point of reference to highlight what makes it different. Austen fans critically comment on the repeated resurrection of the lake scene in popular culture through fanfiction texts which draw a parallel between its numerous reproductions and the 'patterns of repetition and recirculation' associated with the 'recurring return of the living dead'.¹⁶²⁸

Given the centrality of Davies's adaptation to the expansion of the *P&P* archive, it is imperative to look at the implications of fans being arguably more familiar with a television series than Austen's novel. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, references to the lake scene have become so widespread in popular culture that people forget that this episode is not in the novel. Pugh speculated in 2005 that:

For those who have not read Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, or who read it after they saw the series, some of the purely Davies elements may well become indispensable to their vision of the story. Who knows, perhaps one day in the far future, Darcy's plunge into the Pemberley lake, will, like Maid Marion in the Robin Hood stories, become accepted as canon.¹⁶²⁹

Pugh's comment now seems prescient given that the two-hundredth-year anniversary of the *novel* was celebrated in 2013 with a larger-than-life recreation of a scene from the *television adaptation*. Wolf notes that it is common for a text that has been adapted into many different mediums, such as Austen's *P&P*, to become 'less tied to its medium of origin, giving it greater independence as more media windows are available through which to experience it.'¹⁶³⁰ Because the series has 'almost usurped the original novel in the minds of the public', there is a concurrent fear amongst Austen critics that the author's original novel might be diminishing in importance.¹⁶³¹ Indeed, from the outset, foundational critical studies of the Austen adaptations addressed the fear that 'these films

¹⁶²⁷ "Episode Three", *Lost in Austen*.

¹⁶²⁸ Boluk and Lenz, "Generation Z, the Age of the Apocalypse," 3.

¹⁶²⁹ Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 22.

¹⁶³⁰ Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 267.

¹⁶³¹ Cartmell quoted in Barber, "*Pride and Prejudice* at 20: The scene that changed everything."

(and the proliferating Internet websites devoted to them) may substitute for the novels'.¹⁶³²

P&P is available through innumerable different forms – from television and film to board and virtual reality games – therefore, readers are certainly not reliant on Austen's novel for their understanding of the story. Yet, this thesis has attempted to show that the 'world' that Austen created in *P&P* has in many ways grown clearer because of the way that numerous authors and adapters, including fanfiction writers, have contributed new storylines to Austen's original. Wolf points out that when viewing an imaginary world, 'no one window shows everything, and only an aggregate view combining a variety of [media windows] can give a complete sense of what the world is like and what has occurred there.'¹⁶³³ Multiple 'media windows' can enrich our understanding of an imaginary world because they open up 'portals through which these worlds grow in clarity and detail, inviting us to enter and tempting us to stay'.¹⁶³⁴ Looking at *P&P* from the multiple angles explored by fanfiction and profic texts gives us the opportunity to consider the story from different critical viewpoints. Additionally, as we have seen with the *LBD*, telling the story of *P&P* through innovative technologies invites new audiences as well as fresh interpretations of the source material. Austen's signature novel is becoming more, not less, culturally significant as it continues its transmedial and transauthorial spread.

'America's Jane' and the Utopian Pull of *Pride and Prejudice*

Another important and perhaps more surprising finding to emerge from this study, is that online Austen fandom and the Austen profic industry are dominated by American writers, even though the author herself is frequently described by critics as 'the *most* English writer'.¹⁶³⁵ This thesis has explored the possibility that Austen's nationality is pliable because the utopian world of her novels, which reaches its clearest expression in the 'light and bright and sparkling' *P&P*, has been appropriated as a mythic version of America, a textual expression of 'freedom and the pursuit of happiness'.¹⁶³⁶ Indeed, critics like John Sutherland have argued that from the country's very origins as a

¹⁶³² Troost and Greenfield, "Introduction: Watching Ourselves Watching," 9.

¹⁶³³ Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 2.

¹⁶³⁴ *Ibid*, 1-2.

¹⁶³⁵ Roger Sales, *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 11. (emphasis mine).

¹⁶³⁶ Favret, "Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America," 168.

democracy, ‘America was peculiarly suited for the development of a popular fiction industry’ because ‘the new state’s founders enshrined rights to freedom of expression and the pursuit of happiness’, and popular fiction aims ‘to supply those commodities’.¹⁶³⁷ The popular allure of *P&P* for American readers is not simple Anglophilia, rather it is related to the quest for a better ‘more leisurely world’, the promised land that Favret identifies as being such an attractive concept in America.¹⁶³⁸

In Chapter Two we look at how Davies’s visually sumptuous adaptation, with its lush landscapes, opulent country houses, and fetching ball gowns, very effectively sold ‘a vanished era of beauty and light’ to American audiences.¹⁶³⁹ In the late noughties, during the social upheaval caused by the financial crisis, novels like Grahame-Smith’s *PPZ* exemplified that Austen’s ‘lost world’ of stability and traditional values had special therapeutic appeal for readers craving the restoration of ‘an earlier, mythic version of America’.¹⁶⁴⁰ These examples of how American audiences appropriate Austen suggests that Favret was correct in speculating that Austen fulfils ‘a fundamental American, not English, myth’ when she is exported abroad.¹⁶⁴¹ There is obviously much more work to be done on Austen’s reception in America, and recently published critical works like Juliette Wells’ *Reading Austen in America* (2017) illustrates that this is a topical area of interest in Austen studies. Wells’ monograph draws on original archival research to reveal the significant part American readers have played in establishing Austen as an international icon and global celebrity. Although my thesis has a very specific focus on *P&P* fanfiction, it has the potential to complement developing research on Austen’s American readers as much of this fiction is written by, and for, her American audience. As fanfiction provides unique insight into what readers get from Austen, it is hoped that this thesis will provide a helpful framework within which to view the output on Austen’s reception history more comprehensively.

***Pride and Prejudice* and Never-Ending Romances**

As this thesis has attempted to show, *P&P* fanfiction and profic falls into numerous generic categories. The range of terms that are paired with the titular word ‘Pride’ in

¹⁶³⁷ Sutherland, *Bestsellers*, 4.

¹⁶³⁸ Favret, “Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America,” 168.

¹⁶³⁹ Keller, “Austen’s Powers.”

¹⁶⁴⁰ Campbell, “Popular Vampires: The Twilight Effect,” 270.

¹⁶⁴¹ Favret, “Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America,” 167.

lists of *P&P* profic attests to the generic range of these texts. For example, *Pride & Prometheus* (Science-Fiction); *Pride & Prescience* (Detective Fiction/Mystery); *Pride & Popularity* (Young Adult); *Pride & Promiscuity* (Erotica/Comedy); *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* (Horror/Comedy); *Pride & Princesses* (Young Adult/Fairy Tale). Yet, if there is a dominant genre across profic and fanfiction, it is obviously ‘romance.’ This is particularly true on sites like *Pemberley* where the fanfiction archive has been described by the community as ‘a collection of romances’.¹⁶⁴²

The thesis has explored numerous reasons for the supremacy of romance in the Austen fandom. Austen’s own elliptical writing style is one of the obvious stimulants. As in Lydia’s letters to Kitty about her Brighton flirtations, sex in Austen consists of ‘lines under the words’, rather than explicit exposition.¹⁶⁴³ As Austen is perceived to have ‘failed to write of these things,’ namely overt scenes of romantic desire, fans ‘feel compelled to do so in her place’.¹⁶⁴⁴ A consideration of sociological changes in romantic relationships is also important to understanding why the story of *P&P* acquired new significance as a dating manual in the late twentieth century, as explored in Chapter Two. Here we see that the ritualized romantic order of *P&P* appeals to readers looking for signposts to follow when navigating the chaotic world of contemporary dating. The film adaptations released during the Austenmania of the 1990s, which were accused by Austen critics of reducing ‘her novels to little more than sappy love stories’, were also a major influence on fanfiction writers’ choice of genre.¹⁶⁴⁵ As Robens states: ‘the romance has been magnified by the film adaptations and by [fans’] imaginations’, therefore ‘at the Republic of Pemberley at least, Jane Austen has very directly been the mother of romance.’¹⁶⁴⁶

The focus on romance in Austen fandom has been roundly criticised by Austen critics who feel that ‘those embarrassing Janeites, with their soppy sequels and cutesy costumes’, have ‘lowered the level of conversation around her’.¹⁶⁴⁷ This thesis has tried to combat pejorative assumptions about romance writers and readers by showing that criticisms levelled at romance are often outdated and based on a cursory understanding of the genre. Scott McCracken argues that it is more helpful for critics studying genre

¹⁶⁴² Robens, “Words of a ‘Janeite.’”

¹⁶⁴³ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 182

¹⁶⁴⁴ Haker quoted in Licalzi O’Connell, “A World Without End for Fans of Jane Austen.”

¹⁶⁴⁵ Troost and Greenfield, “Introduction: Watching Ourselves Watching,” 7.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Robens, “Words of a ‘Janeite.’”

¹⁶⁴⁷ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, 94; Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 13.

fiction to look ‘at the relationship between a particular audience (or coalition of reader groups) and a particular text or genre’ rather than make overly broad conclusions about the readership for that genre.¹⁶⁴⁸ Asking interesting questions about *why* fans write scenes of elevated romance when Austen herself studiously avoids them, is thus more productive than dismissing an entire readership as being ‘[o]bsessed with...the self-congratulatory pleasures of repetition, real profits, and ideal lovers and breasts’.¹⁶⁴⁹ Exploring online fanfiction in the romance genre is especially illuminating as these texts often articulate readers’ desires that are not catered to by commercial romance publishers.

Jamison argues that one of the benefits of online fanfiction is that while it ‘can be nearly indistinguishable from commercially published books in content, style, and structure, it usually is not’.¹⁶⁵⁰ Therefore:

A fic can represent relationships and characters that would be deemed insufficiently universal or popular to justify a publisher’s investment of time and capital – and it can do so in 250 or 250,00 words. Driven by an engagement with commercial culture but free from that culture’s market constraints, fanfiction can experiment with the popular – with no need for backers, no need to sell the product before it’s been realized, and with the luxury of an audience that is already eager to see its works.¹⁶⁵¹

Online fanfiction writers are free from the constraints of commercial culture and so they can write the kinds of stories that *they* want to read, rather than reading what publishers and suppliers think they *should* want to read. These online texts are therefore ‘genuinely a manifestation of popular taste’ rather than something that is ‘imposed upon people by those for whom culture is a business.’¹⁶⁵² As demonstrated in Chapter One, many of the fanfiction stories hosted on *Pemberley* in the 1990s are sequels which explore the married life of Darcy and Elizabeth. The abundance of romance sequels in Austen fandom is interesting given the comparative rarity of sequels to mainstream romance novels, which have ‘almost exclusively’ focused on ‘how romantic love is developed’ but until recently have not looked beyond the HEA (Happily Ever After) to consider

¹⁶⁴⁸ Scott McCracken, *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 5.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 247.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Jamison, “Introduction,” 23.

¹⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶⁵² Glover and McCracken, “Introduction,” 3.

‘how romantic love is sustained’.¹⁶⁵³ Novels focusing on marriage rather than courtship are problematic because all romances are expected to have ‘an emotionally satisfying ending’ where the hero and heroine achieve their HEA.¹⁶⁵⁴ Indeed, the happy ending is so integral to the genre that Regis argues that it is the ‘one formal feature of the romance that virtually everyone can identify’.¹⁶⁵⁵ Sequels are therefore rare in romance because ‘[s]erialization has the potential to destabilize the romance form by subverting one of the genre’s defining narrative features’, threatening the romance reader’s perceived ‘desire for closure’ with ‘the concomitant deferral of satisfaction.’¹⁶⁵⁶

Although sequels pose a challenge to the conventions of the romance genre, Goris notes that ‘post HEA’ romance novels have become a prominent trend in romance novels in recent years: between 2008-2012, ‘no less than sixty-three percent of RITAs were awarded to serialized romances’.¹⁶⁵⁷ The serialisation of romance novels has also become a lucrative trend because of the commercial success of novels like James’s *Fifty Shades of Grey* series, which was of course originally online fanfiction. Although such novels are only a *recent* phenomenon in mainstream publishing, online fanfiction archives like *Pemberley*’s ‘Bits of Ivory’ archive started posting romance sequels in the 1990s, while Austen profic sequels date to the nineteenth century, revealing that romance readers have wanted to look beyond the HEA for quite some time. Fiction written by fans has therefore long challenged assumptions about what romance readers want by showing that a desire to read about romantic love that endures beyond marriage is as important to many readers as the courtship phase of the relationship. Serials and sequels are innovative additions to the romance, a generic category that is often criticised for being too formulaic, because they disrupt the traditional ending and allow for the exploration of new narrative possibilities. As online fanfiction articulates reader desires that mainstream culture might be slow to address, continuing enquiry into these texts has the potential to offer further insight into future developments in genre fiction.

¹⁶⁵³ Goris, “Happily Ever After...and After: Serialization and the Popular Romance Novel.”

¹⁶⁵⁴ “About the Romance Genre,” *Romance Writers of America*, accessed July 6, 2016, <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=578>.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, 9.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Goris, “Happily Ever After...and After: Serialization and the Popular Romance Novel.”

¹⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Death Comes to Pemberley.com: Disappearing Texts

As a form of writing that is essentially about reading, online fanfiction is clearly a valuable source of contemporary reader response that needs to be investigated while the opportunity is still there. Unlike physical records of reader response like letters or diary entries, online fanfiction is not vulnerable to water damage or fire. Yet, these texts can be (and have been) removed and websites taken down. For example, as noted in the Introduction, *Pemberley* had to unexpectedly downsize in 2014, resulting in the loss of large quantities of fanfiction. ‘We are no longer the 10,000,000 page views a month site that required a dedicated server,’ Robens explained on one of her blogs: ‘we are down to about 3,000,000 that we hope, in conjunction with a more streamlined platform, will live happily on a smaller, less expensive, server.’¹⁶⁵⁸ The move to a smaller server has proven to be a temporary fix. In September 2016, *Pemberley*, once the largest fan forum dedicated to Austen, came close to closing for good and was saved only by last minute fan donations.¹⁶⁵⁹ As of August 2017, the site remains online, but the message board discussion groups have closed.¹⁶⁶⁰

Most of *Pemberley*’s activity remained confined to message boards until very recently, leading to community membership diminishing over time.¹⁶⁶¹ Although *Pemberley* has started a Facebook discussion group following the closure of the message board groups, not all of its citizens have made the move to this new platform. As Janeite and long-time *Pemberley* member Deborah Yaffe states:

In the month since Robens announced the changes, a number of Pemberleans have given notice that they won’t be coming along to the new venue -- because of privacy concerns, disdain for Facebook’s corporate policies, or fear that *Pemberley*’s uniquely civilized form of discourse will be coarsened and corrupted in a more freewheeling social media space.¹⁶⁶²

¹⁶⁵⁸ Myretta Robens, “Report from the Front,” *The Risky Regencies*, Sept 13, 2014, accessed Jan 24, 2018, <http://www.riskyregencies.com/2014/09/13/report-from-the-front/>.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Deborah Yaffe, “Pemberley survives for now,” *Deborah Yaffe Blog*, Sept 1, 2016, accessed Jan 24, 2018, <http://www.deborahyaffe.com/blog/4586114521/tags/Republic%20of%20Pemberley>.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Yaffe, “The day is come,” *Deborah Yaffe Blog*, Aug 31, 2017, accessed Jan 24, 2018, <http://www.deborahyaffe.com/blog/4586114521/tags/Republic%20of%20Pemberley>.

¹⁶⁶¹ Over the last few years, posts to the main *Pemberley* Facebook page have been infrequent and haphazard. *Pemberley* has a presence on Twitter, but it has not been capitalised upon as a resource for interacting with fans. Instead of engaging in conversations, the site managers post extracts from Austen’s diary or provide factual information about Austen’s life and times.

¹⁶⁶² Yaffe, “The day is come.”

The failure to embrace new avenues of communication in a timely fashion is detrimental to fandom because, as Bennett observes, ‘communication and connection with other fans has always been, for some, a central tenet of fandom.’¹⁶⁶³ Fans wishing to branch out and form wider communication networks began migrating from message boards to social media platforms some time ago. As Yaffe observes:

The frenzied Austen-mania of the mid-‘90s has quieted, and Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites have absorbed some of the community-building impulses that fueled Pemberley’s growth. The conversations are quieter now.¹⁶⁶⁴

New digital spaces not only allow for more immediate forms of communication, they also have lower barriers to entry than message board forums which are regulated by community gatekeepers.¹⁶⁶⁵ Death came to *Pemberley* largely because the community failed to profit sooner from digital technologies.

Even texts that do embrace the latest technologies, like the *LBD*, have a precarious existence. Social media archives are constantly mutating and changing: videos are taken down, comments removed, and ‘old tweets disappear from the readily accessible public stream and new ones are added.’¹⁶⁶⁶ Given the ephemeral nature of online digital content, there is a greater urgency to critically engage ‘with and capture such moments of narrative play’ before they potentially disappear.¹⁶⁶⁷ Recent studies of popular fiction stress that ‘[f]anfiction and fan responses to popular texts’ are ‘the subject of fascinating and much-needed critical research’ and have highlighted the ‘transformation in popular reading habits, reception, production and distribution brought about by the Internet and social media’ as a particular ‘area of urgent academic significance’.¹⁶⁶⁸ It is hoped that online Austen fandom will begin to attract more deserved critical attention before additional fan-produced content is lost.

¹⁶⁶³ Bennett, “Tracing Textual Poachers,” 7.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Yaffe, “Pemberley downsizes,” *Deborah Yaffe Blog*, Sept 18, 2014, accessed Jan 24, 2018, <http://www.deborahyaffe.com/blog/4586114521/tags/Republic%20of%20Pemberley>.

¹⁶⁶⁵ *Pemberley*’s strict rules of interaction have placed some unwelcome restrictions on fan interaction and creativity. Yet, it should be noted that their ‘real name policy’ also ensures that people are held accountable for what they say, meaning that online harassment is less of a problem in these older fan forums than in new digital spaces. From the outset, contributors were warned that: ‘[i]f you like to be rude (or love a brawl), you will not like our company. If you don’t like our ways, don’t come here.’ ‘FAQ’, *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Aug 21, 2010, http://pemberley.com/?page_id=11744.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Inger-Lise Kalviknes Bore and Jonathan Hickman, “Continuing The West Wing in 140 characters or less: Improvised simulation on Twitter,” *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1, no. 2 (2013): 225.

¹⁶⁶⁷ McClellan, “A Case of Identity,” 155.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Bernice Murphy, *Key Concepts in Popular Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 11.

Austen and the Popular Culture/High Culture Debate

The thesis began by considering Austen's unique status as 'the ultimate crossover artist, equally welcome at Yale and on YouTube', so it seems fitting to conclude by briefly revisiting this issue.¹⁶⁶⁹ Austen is one of those transgressive figures whose 'ability to cross the boundaries between categories that so many people, particularly those who defend high culture, would dearly like to keep in place – undermines or undoes both the categories and the distinctions claimed for them.'¹⁶⁷⁰ Her borderline existence has made it impossible to legitimately claim the author for any one cultural camp. As outlined previously, the difficulty in pinning her in place has resulted in Austen being left out of discussions of popular culture and fan culture and has even raised questions as to whether such a wildly popular figure deserves her reputation as 'one of the truly great' representatives of the canon. Yet, a more fruitful question raised by Austen's crossover appeal is whether the hierarchal contradistinctions between 'Literature' and 'popular literature' are necessary at all, a question that is being increasingly addressed by both Austen critics and popular culture critics.

In a recent study of popular fiction, Christine Berberich argues that the 'already oversimplified division into Literature and literature' outlined by theorists has, 'in recent years, been further complicated as the boundaries between the two, ever tenuous, have become increasingly blurred'.¹⁶⁷¹ Literary novels are now often marketed like popular fiction novels: they are recommended by television book clubs, they appear on supermarket shelves alongside popular bestsellers, and even literary prizes are used as promotional tools.¹⁶⁷² Literary novels have become more accessible to a mass audience thanks to these methods of distribution and promotion, meaning that literary fiction is becoming increasingly embedded in popular culture. Consequently, Jim Collins argues, when discussing contemporary literature 'superstores, blockbuster film adaptations, and television book clubs' must be taken into account, 'not just as symptoms of the current state of the *culture industry* but as the sites, delivery systems, and forms of connoisseurship that [form] the fabric of a *popular* literature culture.'¹⁶⁷³ Literary

¹⁶⁶⁹ Yaffe, *Among the Janeites*, xvii.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Brenda Silver, *Virginia Woolf Icon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 4. Silver is referring to Virginia Woolf but the comment can easily be applied to Austen.

¹⁶⁷¹ Berberich, "Introduction: The Popular – Literature versus literature," 5.

¹⁶⁷² *Ibid*, 37.

¹⁶⁷³ Jim Collins, *Bring on the Books for Everybody: How Literature Culture Became Popular Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

writers often acquire ‘the brand-name recognition once enjoyed by writers of bestsellers’ precisely because ‘a great mass of reading-addicted television watchers’ have been brought together ‘through book clubs, superstore bookstores, and glossy high-concept adaptations.’¹⁶⁷⁴ The distinction between genre fiction and literary fiction is also challenged by ‘the fact that an award-winning literary novelist can now write an acclaimed zombie novel (Colson Whitehead’s *Zone One* (2011))’ and genre writers such as Stephen King can receive prestigious medals for services to literature.¹⁶⁷⁵ Critic Joshua Rothman has argued that a ‘process of genrefication’ is now occurring.¹⁶⁷⁶ The hierarchal distinctions between Literature and popular fiction are no longer taken for granted because genre is not necessarily ‘unliterary’ and ‘the literary’ does not resist genre, rather the two can overlap as in Emily St. John Mandel’s award-winning *Station Eleven* (2014), a beautifully written novel about a post-apocalyptic world that ‘is both a literary novel and a genre novel’.¹⁶⁷⁷

The examples highlighted above demonstrate that the realms of popular fiction and literary fiction have become increasingly mixed making it difficult to maintain artificial conceptual or aesthetic distinctions between the two. As a popular culture icon and stalwart of the canon, Austen, more than any other author, has long exemplified the potential futility of trying to maintain clear distinctions between two aspects of culture that feed into and sustain each other. Recent research into Austen’s reception within Austen Studies registers a shift in how critics are approaching the author’s boundary-crossing appeal. Rather than trying to ‘rescue Jane from the Janeites’, there has been an attempt to rescue Austen from the critics who have been telling her story as a literary-critical one and downplaying her popularity.¹⁶⁷⁸ For example, Looser’s monograph *The Making of Jane Austen* (2017) argues that Austen’s popularity is not, as it is often mistakenly portrayed to be, a late twentieth/twenty-first century phenomenon. Her research looks at the ‘Austen influencers’ who have shaped the author’s reputation, drawing from previously unexplored material relating to her appropriation by illustrators, dramatists, men’s club members, suffragettes, and students. Looser reveals that: ‘Holding the attention of scholarly and popular audiences alike is precisely what

¹⁶⁷⁴ Ibid, 3.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Murphy, *Key Concepts in Popular Literature*, 12.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Joshua Rothman, “A Better Way to Think about the Genre Debate,” *The New Yorker*, November 6, 2014, accessed February 2, 2017. <http://www.newyorker.com/books/joshua-rothman/better-way-think-genre-debate>.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Phrase taken from Boyd Tonkin, quoted in Lynch ed., *Janeites*, 8.

Austen has done through two centuries of images, stages, screens, schools, and soapboxes'.¹⁶⁷⁹ In other words, Austen did not move from the high cultural to the popular cultural sphere because of her contemporary fans, she has always been part of popular culture. Looser contends that 'many of us have remained in the dark' about how far Austen's influence extends in popular culture 'because the story of her afterlife has thus far been told as a literary-critical, rather than a popular culture, story, especially before 1995' by the scholars who have been 'packaging her story for wider consumption'.¹⁶⁸⁰

Austen's literary reputation is not, and perhaps cannot, be tarnished by her current fans because her 'literary and popular legacies have travelled quite well together... for a long time' and will likely continue to do so, no matter how often her novels are reworked and reinvented.¹⁶⁸¹ Indeed, as this thesis has tried to show, Austen's fans are carrying her work forward by reworking it in different mediums, ensuring that her novels will continue to generate discussion and debate amongst the next generation of readers on new technological platforms. For established fans of Austen who have already read the books, digital technologies 'complicate the process of reading and do not replace it', because they provide new media windows through which to view the texts, much as the film adaptations of the 1990s did.¹⁶⁸² The story of Austen's cultural legacy is being rewritten as research continues to uncover the diverse and surprising ways in which nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century audiences love the author and appropriate her work for their uses. My research into fanfiction fills in some of the gaps that have hitherto existed in this narrative of how her reputation has been shaped. Further research into the tradition of Austen-love is likely to reveal yet more continuities between past and present admirers who have kept Austen's work alive, and it is hoped that my research will make a substantial contribution to this area of critical enquiry.

As a new understanding of her popularity is being formed, the terms used to describe Austen's popular audience are also inevitably being given new meaning. Lynch, writing at the tail-end of 1990's Austenmania, interpreted Janeiteism as 'high-risk behavior' because fannish love was perceived as being antithetical to scholarly

¹⁶⁷⁹ Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen*, 218.

¹⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 218.

¹⁶⁸¹ *Ibid*, 217.

¹⁶⁸² Troost and Greenfield, "Introduction: Watching Ourselves Watching," 9.

objectivity.¹⁶⁸³ Consequently, she argued, the ‘career-conscious’ critic must distance herself from the Janeites and guard ‘against letting the wrong people know of her desire to, for instance, wear Regency costume and dance at a Jane Austen Literary Ball.’¹⁶⁸⁴ However, I would argue that the negative connotations of the word ‘Janeite’ are starting to diminish as more critics exhibit a willingness to share accounts of the *emotional* as well as the intellectual investment that comes from studying Austen. For example, Johnson characterises her academic labour on Austen’s texts as an attempt to collapse the distance between herself as reader and Austen as author that is comparable to that of Janeites’ quest for intimacy with Austen. She states that ‘[t]he textual scholar... does nothing if not attempt to channel an author’s hand and voice, preparing a text she would regard as correct, and, as is the case with fans, that labor is also a matter of intense intimacy and devotion.’¹⁶⁸⁵

‘Janeite’ no longer necessarily represents the ‘Other’ (non-academic) reader; indeed, some Austen scholars have even started to pointedly refer to themselves as Janeites. For example, Looser was one of Yaffe’s research subjects for her ethnographic account of the Austen fan community, and she shows her allegiance to ‘Jane’ and the Janeities by embracing the term.¹⁶⁸⁶ As well as lecturing and writing on Austen, Looser competes in roller derbies under the name ‘Stone Cold Jane Austen’, thereby extending her academic interest in Austen to an appreciation of ‘Jane’ in her leisure time. (See Figure 53.) Indeed, she is credited as being ‘the only Jane Austen scholar ever to star in a[n] [Austen-themed] roller-derby vampire movie’.¹⁶⁸⁷ Scholarly readers also join in Janeite practices by playing games and taking a ludic approach to reading Austen. For example, John Sutherland and Deirdre Le Faye have produced a ‘literary quizbook’ which tests readers’ fact-based knowledge of the novels in the hopes that ‘this challenge to reading expertise will enhance the pleasure’ that readers take in them, much like in the historic Janeite game ‘Capping Miss Austen’, as well as contemporary online Austen quizzes.¹⁶⁸⁸ Given these many overlaps between academic and fan activity, the symbolic partition once erected between the Janeites’ ‘Jane’ and academics’ ‘Austen’ would no longer seem to hold up under close scrutiny.

¹⁶⁸³ Lynch, *Janeites*, 14.

¹⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Johnson, *Jane Austen’s Cults and Cultures*, 11.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Looser is profiled in the chapter “The Knowledge Business,” *Among the Janeites*, 93-116.

¹⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 93.

¹⁶⁸⁸ John Sutherland and Deirdre Le Faye, *So You Think You Know Jane Austen?: A Literary Quizbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), viii.



Figure 53: Devoney Looser competing as 'Stone Cold Jane Austen' (left), and pictured in her role as an English Professor in an academic setting (right)

Austen scholars are beginning to not only acknowledge the existence of fanfiction, but also to consider the potential benefits of incorporating it into the classroom. For example, Amanda Gilroy tested the boundaries between fan and academic discourse by getting students to write ‘collaborative pieces of short fiction that respond[ed] in various ways to one or more of Austen’s novels.’¹⁶⁸⁹ The aim of this experiment was to ‘construct a space where academic insight into Austen’s work and the participatory modalities of fandom could converge’.¹⁶⁹⁰ Students initially struggled with the ‘fan’ aspect of the assignment because, as Gilroy points out: ‘Most of the students had been trained to value critical distance as the predominant sign of academic capability, quite the opposite of the affective transformations and emotional investments of fandom.’¹⁶⁹¹ However, she considered the results of the experiment fruitful: students incorporated their scholarly learning into the stories and appreciated the opportunity to pool their knowledge and work collaboratively to produce creative readings of the author.¹⁶⁹² Fanfiction is a valuable alternative form of interpretive discourse because, as

¹⁶⁸⁹ Amanda Gilroy, “Our Austen: Fan Fiction in the Classroom,” *Persuasions On-Line* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2010), <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol31no1/gilroy.html>.

Gilroy mentions more Austen critics who have incorporated fanfiction, Regency dance, Regency recipes, and other forms of ‘exhibits on Austen’s legacy as part of a course requirement’ such as Laurie Kaplan; Juliette Wells; Marilyn Francus; Brandy Foster; Phyllis Roth and Annette LeClaire; Natasha Aleksiuik Duquette; and Celia A. Easton.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹² Ibid.

Jenkins argues, it ‘invites us to reconsider the place of popular response, of personal speculations and non-authorized meanings in the reception of artworks.’¹⁶⁹³ Considering the ways in which fan and academic criticism can converge and complement one another is important because these responses all open up discussion about Austen’s novels, and their different points of entry. It is hoped that my research into fanfiction will contribute to this conversation by showing that reader response as expressed through fanfiction can lead to unexpected avenues of interpretation and raise new questions about Austen’s work.

Research into fanfiction inspired by boundary-crossing artists like Austen, also addresses a recent call from fan studies critics who have advocated for an expansion of the field ‘beyond its traditional remit of the avowedly popular’ to include canonical figures as well.¹⁶⁹⁴ In so doing, it is hoped that ‘these scholars will demonstrate the value of the field’s insights to those scholarly disciplines that study high and middlebrow culture.’¹⁶⁹⁵ In the recently published edited collection *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies* (2018), Roberta Pearson notes that while her 2007 article exploring high cultural and middlebrow fandoms is the most widely cited of her publications, her fellow fan studies scholars have yet to broaden their research interests to include ‘the study of canonical literature, classical music, or indeed of Sherlockians – the field still primarily focuses on popular culture.’¹⁶⁹⁶ Matt Hills notes that ‘fan studies’ failure to investigate high cultural fandom’ is paralleled by literary disciplines’ refusal to engage with fandom, meaning that ‘what we encounter are mutually reinforcing interdisciplinary discourses of exclusion.’¹⁶⁹⁷ Consequently, the lack of analysis of high cultural or literary fandoms is ‘not merely a disciplinary problem that further work in fan studies can address by itself’; rather, fan studies ‘needs to open up new dialogues with theorists of theatre, art, and literature to adequately address fandom outside the parameters of popular culture.’¹⁶⁹⁸ As my research on Austen fanfiction is located at the intersection between Austen studies, fan studies, and studies of popular fiction, it would appear to be especially timely in its focus.

¹⁶⁹³ Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 26.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Pearson, “Janeites and Sherlockians,” 497.

¹⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 508.

¹⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 495.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Hills, “Implicit Fandom in the Fields of Theatre, Art, and Literature,” 477.

¹⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 477.

Future Work

This thesis has attempted to address a wide range of *P&P* adaptations, professionally published texts, online fanfiction, and digital commercial/fanfiction hybrids. Yet, even a work of this length, with a specific focus on popular responses to one particular Austen novel, must necessarily exclude a large number of texts, genres, and critical angles. There is much scope for future work on *P&P* fanfiction, as well as fiction inspired by Austen's other five completed novels as well as her two unfinished novels, *The Watsons* and *Sanditon*. Additionally, research on non-fiction popular responses to Austen need to be considered – such as fan-made videos, fan art, and fan memes.¹⁶⁹⁹ The social media fandom 'Drunk Austen', for example, creates original memes which juxtapose images taken from Austen film adaptations with humorous captions that provide ironic commentary on the images. An exploration of fan activities like 'cosplay (costume play) can also inform our understanding of how fans elaborate imaginary worlds. Saler argues that readers can enhance their identification with an imaginary world and its characters by 'dressing in the attire of the world or of a specific character.'¹⁷⁰⁰ Austen fans wear Regency attire at Austen balls, and also illustrate the porous nature of the boundaries between imaginary worlds by participating in cross-over cosplay. For example, there has been a recent vogue for combining Regency dresses and lightsabers in Austen/Star Wars cosplay.¹⁷⁰¹

¹⁶⁹⁹ An 'internet meme' is an image with a humorous caption that is copied and spread via the internet, often with slight variations on the caption.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Saler, *As If*, 26.

¹⁷⁰¹ Lyn Adams and Elendrial Alastair, "The Force is Strong with this Regency Cosplay," *Drunk Austen*, Jan 17, 2018, accessed Sept 5, 2018, <https://drunkausten.wordpress.com/2018/01/17/the-force-is-strong-with-this-regency-cosplay/>.



Figure 54: Fan-made Meme, Image Source 'Drunk Austen'



Figure 55: Austen/Star Wars Fan-made Meme, Image Source 'Drunk Austen'

 drunk_austen • Follow

drunk_austen #maythefirthbewithyou this May the Fourth! -b #maythe4thbewithyou #maythefourth #starwars #colinfirth #janeausten #mrdarcy myloveaffairwiththewrittenword 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔

karinjohannamargareta @lilottosson 😊

akrozes @eaglemaiden

ladenwithflowers @shmartarts :-)

lilottosson Haha that's my kind of firth

elliea5 @kansasgal19 🤔

mism005 Love the Firth!

lizwoolnough Men dressed so well in those days

kansasgal19 @elliea5 oh my!!!!!! YESSSS

eaglemaiden Be still my heart ❤️

eaalemaiden Or revenge of the Firth...

📍🗨️📌

373 likes

MAY 4

Log in to like or comment. ...

There are also numerous profic and fanfiction texts featuring Austen herself as heroine that warrant critical attention.¹⁷⁰² These ‘Austen fictionalizations’, Marina Cano López argues, ‘subvert seemingly fixed categories (high and popular, public and private, author and character), questioning fixed definitions of Jane Austen by depicting a novelist who simultaneously inhabits both elements of the binary’.¹⁷⁰³ The ‘most extensive contemporary portrayal of the author as character’ is found in Stephanie Barron’s detective series *Jane Austen Mysteries* (1996-2016), which currently comprises thirteen titles.¹⁷⁰⁴ This series envisions Austen as ‘[a]dventurous, courageous, and compassionate’ and encourages us to compare the author’s talent for incisive social criticism to a detective’s keen observation skills.¹⁷⁰⁵ Michael Thomas Ford’s *Jane Bites Back* (2009-2012) vampire trilogy encourages another reading of Austen. Austen’s form of verbal violence and analytic penetration has frequently been linked to images of ‘knives and scissors.’¹⁷⁰⁶ Ford’s sharp-tongued and sharp-fanged vampire Jane pays tribute to this penetrating Austen, who is ‘beloved not for the primness, propriety or romantic conventionality imputed to her, but for the energy of her satire, for the irreverence and to some even the bitchiness of her wit’.¹⁷⁰⁷ The representation of a transgressive figure like Austen as an undead monster, existing on the boundaries between life and death, is appropriate given that ‘culture and cultural critics have always placed [monsters] on the boundaries of what is acceptable, policing them by their very presence.’¹⁷⁰⁸ Cano López argues that the vampire also emerges as ‘the perfect metaphor’ for the author because: ‘alive and apparently eternal, Jane the vampire has adapted to different fashions while retaining her nineteenth century identity.’¹⁷⁰⁹ The reconstructions of the author as a heroine have played a part in transforming Austen into a highly visible, yet paradoxically invisible cultural icon about whom much is written but little is known. Critically engaging with Jane Austen-inspired

¹⁷⁰² For a list of Jane Austen ‘Real Person Fiction’ see “Jane Herself,” *Inspired by Austen*, accessed May 2, 2017, <http://inspiredbyausten.com/genre/jane-herself2/>.

¹⁷⁰³ Cano-López, “In Flesh and Blood: Jane Austen as a Postmodern Fictional Character,” 152-153.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 159.

¹⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 159. Barron justifies her choice to reinvent Austen as a detective by comparing her novelistic skills to those used to solve crimes: ‘Her genius for understanding the motives of others, her eye for detail, and her ear for self-expression – most of all her imaginative ability to see what *might* have been as well as what *was* – were here essential tools in exposing crime’.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen*, 273.

¹⁷⁰⁷ Claudia Johnson, “Run mad but do not faint: the authentic audacity of Rozema’s Mansfield Park,” *Times Literary Supplement*, Dec 31, 1999, accessed May 21, 2010, www.patriciarozema.com/mad.htm.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Silver, *Virginia Woolf Icon*, 11.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Cano-López, “In Flesh and Blood: Jane Austen as a Postmodern Fictional Character,” 153.

‘Real Person Fiction’ has the potential to deepen our understanding of the fictionalised, and often conflicting, representations of ‘Jane’, and there is a wealth of material in this area to be explored. Research into this untapped reservoir of fanfiction would enrich existing research on the multiple representations, reconstructions, and reinventions of Austen conducted by critics like John Wiltshire, Emily Auerbach, and Juliette Wells, to name but a few.¹⁷¹⁰

As Austen becomes more everywhere present, we may paradoxically be moving further away from her image. For example, her picture may be on British banknotes, but the image is based on a ‘prettified’ version of a ‘horrid scratch’ of a portrait originally sketched by her sister Cassandra.¹⁷¹¹ The banknote does not feature the formidable-looking woman represented by her sister, but a highly idealised representation of Austen (re)created for public consumption complete with softened features and a homely bonnet. Even the accompanying quotation (‘I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading’), is not an expression of the author’s own sentiments, but rather a quotation attributed to the author taken from *P&P* that is ironically uttered by one of her most disingenuous characters, Caroline Bingley. Fans have constructed a different image of Austen to the staid mob-capped woman on the bank notes. For example, prolific writer Jane Odiwe creates paintings of ‘the young Jane Austen, the girl in [her] imagination who leaps off the page as vibrantly as her heroines’.¹⁷¹² This author/heroine is young, vibrant and adventurous; therefore Odiwe removes ‘her matronly cap and [gives] her a hint of a smile’.¹⁷¹³ Foundational forums like *Pemberley* revere the ‘honest, moral and forthright ways’ of an older, more conservative version of the author.¹⁷¹⁴ By contrast, social media-based fan groups like ‘Drunk Austen’ and ‘Austentatious Library’ celebrate an Austen who is playful, witty, and irreverent, while fan blogs like the ‘Bitch in a Bonnet’ seek to reclaim a ‘wicked, arch, and utterly merciless’ Austen ‘from the stiff, the snobs, the simps and the saps.’¹⁷¹⁵ Clearly, it is difficult to speak of a Jane Austen because there are multiple verbal and visual “versions” of her circulating in

¹⁷¹⁰ See Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen*, Auerbach, *Searching for Jane Austen*, and Juliette Wells, “Envisioning Austen: Portraits, Fiction, Film,” in *Everybody’s Jane: Austen in the Popular Imagination*.

¹⁷¹¹ Cassandra’s drawing was referred to as a ‘horrid scratch’ by Austen’s relations. Cassy Esten Austen declared of the ‘improved’ portrait commissioned for the *Memoir* that: ‘It is a very pleasing, sweet face, - tho’, I confess, to not thinking it *much* like the original; - but that, the public will not be able to detect’. See Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, 146.

¹⁷¹² Odiwe, “Fan appreciation no. 3,” 106.

¹⁷¹³ *Ibid*, 106.

¹⁷¹⁴ ‘FAQ’, *The Republic of Pemberley*, accessed Aug 21, 2010, http://pemberley.com/?page_id=11744.

¹⁷¹⁵ Robert Rodi, “A proposition, and a plan,” *Bitch in a Bonnet*, July 31, 2009, accessed Sept 5, 2018, <http://bitchinabonnet.blogspot.com/2009/07/proposition-and-plan.html>.

popular culture. The term ‘versioning’ is borrowed from literary studies where it describes the practice of publishing all the different versions of an author’s work, thereby challenging the authority of any one version. There is scope for the various versions of Austen in fandom to be studied within this theoretical framework.¹⁷¹⁶



Figure 56: From Top Left: Cassandra Austen, portrait of Jane Austen, c. 1810, Engraved version for 1870 *Memoir*, Version for the Bank of England Ten Pound Note which entered circulation in 2017

¹⁷¹⁶ See Silver for a discussion of the ‘versioning’ of cultural icons into numerous different visual and verbal representations. Silver, *Virginia Woolf Icon*, 13.



Figure 57: Jane Odiwe, Jane Austen and Tom Lefroy dancing at the Ashe Ball



Figure 58: Profile Image used for 'Drunk Austen' Social Media Sites

Wells argues that '[c]uriosity about the person behind the author lies at the heart of an amateur reader's endeavour to forge a personal connection with Austen in spite of

temporal, and often geographical, distance.¹⁷¹⁷ The continuing Janeite desire for Austen intimacy is registered in the latest digital fan projects devoted to ‘Jane’. For example, the ‘Dear Jane Project’ was set up in 2016 by an Austen admirer who wanted to create a blog where fans could post letters to ‘Jane’, ‘in order to express how Jane Austen has affected their lives’.¹⁷¹⁸ The choice of the letter format as a means of responding to Austen is fitting given that the author’s confiding writing style creates the effect of intimate correspondence with the reader. As Arthur Ransome declared of the Austen novel, ‘it would almost seem to be written in a letter to the reader,’ and to thereby invite a personal response.¹⁷¹⁹ More research into such projects will continue to shed light on the ‘powerful and authoritative intimacy that is made in the course of reading Jane Austen’, and the ways in which readers respond to this aspect of her style.¹⁷²⁰

I would suggest that there is also much more research to be done on the virtual versions of Austen’s world that continue to spread online. Virtual country estates like *Pemberley* may be losing citizens, but Austen fans have not stopped building Austenland, they have merely moved house to more interactive and immersive digital neighbourhoods. For example, *Ever Jane* (2015), ‘an on-line role-playing game set in the virtual world of Regency England and the works of Jane Austen’, testifies to fans’ continuing desire to communally inhabit and expand Austen’s world.¹⁷²¹ A recent Kickstarter campaign also managed to raise \$78K to create *Good Society: A Jane Austen RPG* (role-playing game).¹⁷²² According to game designer Hayley Gordon, the aim of creating this RPG set in the world of Austen’s novels is to show that ‘you can make an amazing roleplaying game that is about relationships, romance, and obligation rather than simply focusing on violence.’¹⁷²³ Players must navigate a ‘complex social web’ by attending virtual events such as Regency balls.¹⁷²⁴ Narrative change can also be effected in the ‘epistolary phase’ of the game, which ‘provides characters a chance to

¹⁷¹⁷ Wells, *Everybody’s Jane*, 164.

¹⁷¹⁸ “About,” *Dear Jane Project*, 2016, accessed Jan 29, 2018, <https://dearjaneproject.wordpress.com/about/>.

¹⁷¹⁹ Arthur Ransome quoted in Lynch, “Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors,” 15.

¹⁷²⁰ O’Farrell, “Jane Austen’s Friendship,” 58.

¹⁷²¹ *Ever Jane*, 2015, accessed Jan 8, 2018, <http://www.everjane.com/>.

¹⁷²² Rob Wieland, “Support this Jane Austen RPG Kickstarter to turn P&P into D&D,” *Geek & Sundry*, March 5, 2018, accessed March 19, 2018, <https://geekandsundry.com/support-this-jane-austen-rpg-kickstarter-to-turn-pp-into-dd/>. The goal of the campaign was to raise \$3K but the end result was \$78K.

¹⁷²³ Hayley Gordon, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*

create letters and diary entries that move the story along’, much like in an Austen novel where letters are an important narrative structuring device.¹⁷²⁵

The ways in which virtual reality transforms how we construct and receive narratives is of topical significance given the ‘current surge of interest in imaginary worlds of all stripes’ across a number of disciplines.¹⁷²⁶ As Wolf argues, the ‘study of imaginary worlds transcends the study of individual media, authors, and stories, and connects a wide range of texts and intellectual properties’ as well as connecting ‘people from different cultures, as the international fandom of many franchises attests.’¹⁷²⁷ As worlds continue to ‘appear in new forms and find new uses, there has never been a better time for studying them’, and work on virtual manifestations of Austenland would greatly inform these studies.¹⁷²⁸



Figure 59: Images from the online role-playing game *Ever Jane*, 2017

¹⁷²⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷²⁶ Ryan, “Why Worlds Now?,” 3.

¹⁷²⁷ Mark J.P. Wolf, “Introduction,” in *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), xxix.

¹⁷²⁸ Ibid, xxix.



Figure 60: Storybrewers Roleplaying, *Good Society: A Jane Austen RPG*

Austen produced a finite number of finely honed novels which continue to inspire an infinite number of online fanfiction texts, professionally published Austen-inspired novels, and a proliferation of virtual worlds, like the recently constructed *Ever, Jane* and the soon to be developed *Good Society*. Austen's brevity inspires verbosity in others partly because her spare, confiding, playful style encourages readers to speculate about the characters' textual afterlives, to fill in gaps in the text, and to concretise her world. Working together to share knowledge, to decode intertextual references, and to heighten emotional investment in Austen's novels by expanding on her world have been characteristic of Janeite behaviour since the nineteenth century. Online fan forums founded in the late twentieth century like *Pemberley* and *Derbyshire*, and twenty-first century transmedia texts like the *LBD*, allow for a more immersive and interactive experience of Austen's world. Although online virtual worlds are a recent phenomenon, they share a lineage with the textual imaginary worlds that Austen fans have long inhabited, exemplifying that, as Edmond Bentley stated: '[t]he novels of Jane Austen| Are the ones to get lost in'.¹⁷²⁹

¹⁷²⁹ E. Clerihew [Edmund Clerihew Bentley], *Biography for Beginners*, illustrated by G.K. Chesterton (London: T, Werner Laurie, [1905/6]), 55.

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