

2016

Appropriating Austen: Pride and Prejudice and the Feminist Possibilities of Adaptation

Grace M. Jasper
Scripps College

Recommended Citation

Jasper, Grace M., "Appropriating Austen: Pride and Prejudice and the Feminist Possibilities of Adaptation" (2016). *Scripps Senior Theses*. Paper 869.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/869

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

APPROPRIATING AUSTEN:
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND THE FEMINIST POSSIBILITIES OF ADAPTATION

By

MIEL JASPER

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF A BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR MATZ
PROFESSOR DECKER

APRIL 22, 2016

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thank you to my advisor, Professor Matz, for his guidance and continued support for this somewhat unusual project. Thank you also to my Literary Theory professor, Professor Nicosia, without whom I never would have pursued fandom scholarship.

Thank you to Sara S. for giving me *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* back in the days when I scorned such adaptations, as well as for introducing me to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. If this is corruption, I've embraced it jubilantly.

Thank you to my family for their constant faith in me. Their love and support made all the difference.

Chapter One: Who Owns Jane Austen?

Amanda: I am having a bit of a strange post-modern moment here.

Mr. Darcy: Is that agreeable?

Amanda: Oh, yes. Yes.

— *Lost in Austen* (2008)

If, as Seth Grahame-Smith posits in the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, “It is truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains,” then it is also a truth universally acknowledged that a Jane Austen novel in possession of several adaptations must be in want of more adaptations (Grahame-Smith 7). In this paper, I will take as axiomatic Linda Hutcheon’s assertion in *A Theory of Adaptation* that adaptation studies’ judgment criteria should not be “proximity or fidelity to the adapted text” (Hutcheon 6). In fact, I will argue that a focus on a narrowly defined sense of ‘fidelity’ is used to discourage and devalue adaptations that work to comment on class, racial, and gender dynamics that the original author did not—a tendency generally ascribed to Austen. An emphasis on strict fidelity can also be a misogynistic response to Austen adaptations’ popularity among young women. While certainly one may have legitimate aesthetic concerns in regards to adaptations of any form—novel, film, YouTube, or otherwise—it is important to scrutinize the claim that such artistic differences are not, in fact, rooted in general disdain for narratives and media embraced by, or seemingly embraced by, women (particularly young women). Just as importantly, the motivations of those claiming to produce feminist narratives must be equally scrutinized, as I have found that these content producers at times use the very real misogyny directed at young women and their interests in order to shield themselves from criticism of their own portrayals of women and feminism. In this section, I will discuss the discourse around contemporary film and

book adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. In subsequent sections, I will evaluate two recent adaptations that have made waves in popular culture: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (a 2009 novel that inserts the undead into Austen's original tale) and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (a modern-day, vlog-style retelling).

While one can endlessly create distinctions between different forms of adapted or derivative work—adaptations, completions, sequels, and pastiches being just one possible framework (Adams), Hutcheon usefully outlines the general principle as follows: “Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication” (Hutcheon 7). The tension inherent in the latter clause is the primary interest of this thesis: what can be gained through this formula, when does it fall short of its potential, and what is it fair to demand of adaptations at all?

The first question, perhaps, to be answered is why adapt, and why adapt Austen? Hutcheon maintains that the lure of adaptation comes from “the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change” (Hutcheon 4). Austen continues to be considered a canonical author, and thus is widely read in high schools and university English departments—ritual, recognition, and remembrance, check. Part of the pleasure, then, comes from the surprise when one is confronted with a scene whose original one knows well, and thus can recognize, yet whose adapted execution is doing something different: perhaps there is a dripping Darcy emerging from a lake; perhaps there are zombies at the Netherfield ball. Naturally, such surprises do not need to be so dramatic in order to bring pleasure to the viewer or reader, but this theory can explain why they are not wholly unwelcome, and even desired by both creators and consumers.

To discuss the cultural work done, or potentially done, by Austen adaptations, it is first necessary to describe her fans, the commercial interests at play, and the relationship between the two. While the news may come as a surprise to the casual contemporary fan, Janeitism, rather than being a phenomenon tied to the popular film adaptations of the 1990s, first dates back to the late 19th century—as does the term itself. “Janeite” was first used in an 1894 edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, in an introduction written by literary scholar George Saintsbury (Lynch 24), although the ‘movement’ itself had begun after the 1870 publication of *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, written by her nephew, upon which occasion literary elites felt it necessary to distinguish their own interest in Austen from that of the masses (Johnson 221). The contemporary Austen scholar Claudia Johnson specifically defines Janeitism as “the self-consciously idolatrous enthusiasm for ‘Jane’ and every detail relative to her,” and this definition holds just as well for the early Janeites as it does for the modern (Johnson 211).

Although observers of the audiences of the last two decades’ film adaptations might be (again) astonished, “the Janeiteism of the early twentieth century was... principally a male enthusiasm shared among an elite corps of publishers, professors, and literati” (Johnson 30). Given how thoroughly current Janeites (and their practices) have been gendered, it is useful to note that

Far from regarding their interest in Austen as level-headed ‘work’ necessitated by the complexity of her novels, Janeites flaunt it as ecstatic revelation: she was not merely their *dear* Jane, but their *divine* Jane, their *matchless* Jane, and they were her *cult*, her *sect*, her *little company* (*fit though few*), her *tribe* of ardent adorers who celebrate the *miracle* of her work in flamboyantly hyperbolic terms... Although their zeal is genuine, the self-parody implicit in these pronouncements tells us that we are in an insider’s society of scholar gentleman at play. (Johnson 235)

While the immediately post-World War I (male) Janeites were viewed as suspiciously sensitive, certain literary critics, particularly following the second World War, began to “clear themselves

from the charge of effeminacy by making Austen safe for real men engaged in real study, driving a wedge between the good (masculine) queerness of Austen and the bad (feminine) queerness of etiolated Janeites” (Johnson 35). As such, although contemporary Janeitism is firmly coded as feminine, it is intriguing to note that early Janeitism was rooted in masculinity and contested definitions thereof.

As alluded to above, as Austen (and novelists generally) began to be accepted into the Academy in the 1930s and 1940s, during which period the tenets of novel studies emerged, serious scholars began to push back against, and separate *themselves* from, the original Janeites (Johnson 30). Then, as now, “Janeites constitute a reading community whose practices violate a range of protocols... dogmas holding, for example, that you cannot talk about characters as if they were real people; that reading novels requires specialist skills and knowledges developed at universities” (Johnson 30). Johnson points to media scholar Henry Jenkins to align Janeites with “trekkies, fans, and mass culture media enthusiasts” who are “marginalized by dominant cultural institutions,” but I maintain that there are more nuanced levels than just these two at play—levels that are critical for the work of this thesis (Johnson 30).

Who, then, has a stake in Jane in today’s society? First, there are the academics, who regard Austen’s work as worthy of serious literary consideration and analysis (to make the position of this paper abundantly clear, I would add: rightly so). Then, there are the Janeites, some but certainly not all of whom are also academics, who are invested in her “cult” and generally maintaining a certain conception of the Jane Austen legacy, one that privileges fidelity to the strict content of the texts over the use of Austen to explore dynamics in which

contemporary literary criticism is often interested.¹ Next, there are the less reverent (perhaps), generally younger fans: those who are ready and indeed eager to consume Austen in less traditional forms (say, by way of YouTube or with a side of zombies). Johnson places Janeites alongside trekkies (that is, devoted *Star Trek* fans), but mass media fans tend to regard their canon with far less reverence. Indeed, as Jenkins writes, “Fandom, after all, is born of a balance between fascination and frustration: if media content didn’t fascinate us, there would be no desire to engage with it; but if it didn’t frustrate us on some level, there would be no drive to rewrite or remake it” (Jenkins). Janeites may “parody” their own devotion, but their distrust and tendency to disparage both fans who engage with Austen in different ways and these new forms of Austen themselves make me hesitant to agree with Johnson’s trekkie parallel. Janeites may have been and may continue to be “marginalized” by academics, but in the Jane Austen fandom at large, *Janeites* form the dominant culture, and it is fans who would embrace depictions of war or slavery in film adaptations, or queer her works online, that are stigmatized as “violat[ing] a range of protocols,” this time established by the Janeites. Still, a line must be drawn between the online fandom itself and those corporations who would seize its tropes and media in order to gain a profit from that which intentionally exists outside of everyday capitalism.

This refers to, of course, at least a part of the fourth group that must be mentioned: content producers, both in film and in book publishing, who aim to capitalize (literally) on Austen’s following. Of course, this is made considerably easier by the fact that the copyright on her works has long expired, thus leaving them readily available for those who would tap into—and thereby solidify—her steady fan base. Austen is, after all, not merely an author but also “a

¹ That said, the dynamics between Janeites, cultural commentators, and literary critics engaged in critical race studies, feminist and gender studies, and so on, differ from that between Janeites, cultural commentators, and the content producers who actually create adaptations that at least attempt to do the work literary critics comment on theoretically.

commercial phenomenon and a cultural figure” (Johnson 232). As such, much of the struggle around the acceptability of one Austen adaptation over another is also a struggle to define Austen as high culture, middlebrow, or low culture. That is, as a nineteenth century British novelist, Austen has become rooted in high culture, which contributes to the anxiety felt by Janeites and some critics when her works are appropriated for forms or genres currently associated with middlebrow or lowbrow media. This is further complicated by the gender and age dynamics present in the main or even simply assumed audiences of each. A BBC film adaptation given the badge of ‘faithful’ might be acceptable, but add in zombies, or wrench it away from the silver screen and instead make it for YouTube, and suddenly Austen seems to have fallen far indeed.

Does *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* have the power to harm *Pride and Prejudice*?

In 1935—before Colin Firth ever emerged from a lake (onscreen or otherwise), and certainly before YouTube—Walter Benjamin wrote that:

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by the reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object (Benjamin 1236).

In short, by Benjaminian logic, *Zombies*—in the sense that it is a “reproduction” of *Pride and Prejudice*—dilutes the original: “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art” (Benjamin 1236). One must here remember Hutcheon: adaptation is not straight reproduction in the way that Benjamin means it; instead, it aims to repeat without replicating. Nevertheless, of course adaptations’ own authenticity rests or at least draws from the “historical testimony” already associated with Austen’s texts (and thus I still find Benjamin relevant). As such, the “aura” of Austen is a two-way street: from *Longbourn* to *Zombies*, adaptation relies on the aura constructed around Austen’s works over the past two centuries;

likewise, what people associate with Austen is no doubt influenced by the fact that, if Regency texts are not one's cup of tea, one can find professional, modernized versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park* via YouTube. She is not merely the property of the Academy, nor of possessive Janeites; she also can be positioned for the masses. Janeites and scholars may not, as a whole, appreciate the devaluation of Austen (in the sense of an "aura") through such appropriations, but these adaptations do work to ensure at least some sort of continued cultural power of Austen.

A number of more specific theories have emerged regarding the continued love 'Janeites' have for Austen—and thus why the constant stream of adaptations is commercially viable. Brenda Weber, in "For the Love of Jane: Austen, Adaptation, and Celebrity," suggests that Austen inspires feelings of "recognition and personal ownership—the ideas which she renders are so close to each of us who read her... that we can make no separation between her thoughts and our own" (Weber 188). Her brother, Henry Austen, worked so carefully to position his sister as a calm, feminine figure whose "genius... dwelt in her powers of observation rather than imagination" that it is perhaps understandable how any of us could imagine we, too, are sitting in a drawing room, drinking in the marriage plots of our sisters (Weber 192). Elzette Steenkamp expands upon this, remarking in "Janeites for a New Millennium: The Modernisation of Jane Austen on Film" that "Austen adaptations are the ultimate 'chick-flicks', selling happily-ever-after fantasies" (Steenkamp 3). After all, each Austen book closes with the heroine happily married to a respectable, financially secure gentleman whose personality, she is convinced, complements her own—"have-it-all fantasies" indeed (Steenkamp 9). As such, Austen offers a seemingly timeless template for audiences in search of a traditional happy ending. This is not to

reduce the complexity or genius of Austen's works, but rather to note how easily they can be simplified to a basic marriage plot and little else.

In "Lost in Austen: Screen Adaptation in a Post-Feminist World," George Raitt takes a slightly more complex position than the one outlined by Steenkamp. In his examination of the T.V. miniseries *Lost in Austen* (an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* in which a contemporary woman enters the plot of the novel and, to her surprise, affects its outcome), Raitt discusses the importance of the variety of genres present in the miniseries: classic novel adaptation; chick lit; coming of age; and romantic comedy (not to mention science-fiction, given the time-travelling, reality-jumping premise) (Raitt 130). In particular, by paying attention to the difference in the "coming of age" sections and the "romance" sections in the miniseries—or by reading *Lost in Austen* as "coming of age" and *Pride and Prejudice* as "romance"—one is better able to distinguish between the two heroines' choices. As such, I maintain that one of the draws of Austen to adaptation creators is that her works contain multitudes; her works can be positioned to new audiences as mostly one genre or mostly another, each telling a slightly different story, emphasizing slightly different arcs, and perhaps endearing itself to slightly different potential viewers or readers. Of course, similar remarks could be made about other authors' works, but at this point the Austen phenomenon is so deeply engrained in our culture that any adaptation has at least one built-in audience, resulting in a cycle of new adaptations capturing the attention (if not love) of long-time devotees as well as new aficionados, who then pave the way for yet more adaptations. These adaptations—period, modernized, or otherwise less-than-reverent—not only draw on the same base audience, but also from each other, the result of which is that the source text is not Austen's alone.

The variety of genres into which Austen adaptations can and do fall is further discussed by Andrea Coldwell in “Imagining Future Janeites: Young Adult Adaptations and Austen’s Legacy.” She proposes that classic, general adaptations—namely the ones set in Austen’s time, sans zombies, sea monsters, or discussion of class or racial dynamics not explored by Austen²—are made for adults who, à la Hutcheon theory of ritual and recognition, simply desire more Austen. (Or: A Janeite in possession of original Austen must be in want of more original-esque Austen.) On the other hand, young adult novel adaptations—*Pride and Popularity*; *Prom and Prejudice*; *Pride, Prejudice and Curling Rocks*—to name just a handful “[attempt] to bring young readers into relationship with Jane Austen and her novels,” thus working to reverse-engineer the pivotal remembrance cited by Hutcheon (Coldwell). Presciently, Coldwell also points to one facet of the issue that plagues Austen adaptations: the “discomfort and even frustration” provoked by the “reshaping” of a canonical author by longstanding devotees (Coldwell). Just as Weber noted the seeming lack of separation between readers and Austen, Coldwell points to a “feeling of exclusive ownership” and that “each of us has had access to her, to her characters, and to her insights” (Coldwell). When the elitism that derives from such “exclusive” feelings comes from adults, it can work to alienate younger readers who would otherwise, eventually, take up the mantle of Austen themselves. By embracing the full range of adaptations—from *Pies and Prejudice* to Joe Wright’s much-lauded 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* film version³—Janeites can enable Austen to be shared across a broad spectrum of the popular imagination.

² That is to say, Austen’s works are notoriously reticent on the wars fought during her lifetime (1775-1817), although one certainly cannot expect Austen to have inserted twentieth or twenty-first century views on race or gender into her works.

³ In “Jane Austen and Mud: *Pride & Prejudice* (2005), British Realism, and the Heritage Film, Carol Dole notes that the film is crafted to increase the film’s “potential appeal to a youth

Turning to film, however, as Dole suggests in “Austen, Class, and the American Market,” “adaptations of Jane Austen’s novels hold a mirror up to our own society even while not seeming to do so” (Dole 59). Dole is particularly interested in the intersection between the “myth of classlessness” espoused by American culture and Austen’s own analysis of class (Dole 58). Like many other critics, Dole notes that “the working class and even household servants are notoriously absent from Austen’s domestic fictions, and there is barely a mention of her era’s Luddite riots and wars and economic upheavals in the wake of the industrial revolution” (Dole 60). Nevertheless, Dole argues that it is “impossible for a filmmaker to separate off the courtship plots” from the class relations within the limited population with which her works are concerned (Dole 60). Still, given that even Dole admits American adaptations only superficially “ridicule class snobbery” while actually furthering social divisions, one could argue that American films largely *are* able to separate the courtship plots (Dole 60). They are content to remain faithful to the rather narrow slice of life presented by Austen—an artistic vision that fidelity critics might laud, even as our knowledge of the era would permit us to illustrate for audiences a much more comprehensive portrait of the times.

In comparison, Julie Sanders offers a more radical take on the possibilities of adaptation. She uses the term ‘appropriation’ to indicate that “adaptation can also be oppositional, even subversive. There are as many opportunities for divergence as adherence, for assault as well as homage” (Sanders 9). Specifically, she notes that many adaptations/appropriations “are produced as much as by the tenets of feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, queer theory, and postmodernism as by the literary canon *per se*” (Sanders 13). Edward Said’s famous essay, “Jane

audience,” and in fact that the heritage film’s transformation into a “more flexible genre” via “youth-oriented filmmaking techniques” suggests that future Austen adaptations will follow a similar pattern, one that can appeal to fans both young and old.

Austen and Empire,” no doubt contributed to some of these post-colonial adaptations, although it is a pity that his piece is more notorious than Susan Fraiman’s deft critique and extension, “Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism,” which not only correctly names the relevant Austen characters, but also more precisely frames the question to be posed of Austen’s work: “not whether Austen contributed to English domination abroad, but how her doing so was necessarily inflected and partly disrupted by her position as a bourgeois woman” (Fraiman 40). *Longbourn*, a 2014 novel that imagines *Pride and Prejudice* from the perspective of the Bennets’ housemaid, is perhaps one of the most well known novel adaptations of recent years, and one of the clearest Austen examples of Sanders’ appropriation model. As the novel foregrounds the ‘downstairs’ of the household, it thus rejects the limited class interests of the original novel and urges readers—even those who surely love Austen—to do the same. It is these types of works, and the responses to them as such, in which I am most interested. It is all very well to make an adaptation that is so recognizably Austen that Jane herself could feel at home in it; what happens when one deliberately decides not to?

First, one must be prepared to face an onslaught of possessive and outraged critics. In her analysis of the fidelity critics’ response to the 1999 film adaptation of *Mansfield Park*, Mireia Aragay cites Erica Sheen’s characterization of the literary-critical community discourse as an “articulation of loss” (qtd. Aragay 178). As Aragay references criticism specifically of *Mansfield Park*, she notes how critics saw the “imposition” of slavery into the narrative as a “betrayal” of Austen’s original text (Aragay 178). Aragay astutely notes that it cannot be the basic level of ‘unfaithfulness’ that caused such a furor around *Mansfield Park*, as the clear ‘unfaithfulness’ present in the characterizations of the male romantic leads in Ang Lee’s 1995 *Sense and Sensibility* “caused no uproar” (Aragay 180). The discourse of ‘fidelity,’ then, is in fact a way for

people—especially those in power in the literary community—to police adaptations’ political commentaries. As Sanders observes, “adaptation could be defined as an inherently conservative genre” —and indeed, that seems to be how critics would prefer it (Sanders 9). It is important to consider that while Said’s commentary as a literary critic on the role of imperialism in *Mansfield Park* has been hailed as a watershed moment, the works that put into practice, as it were, such commentary are treated less generously. If Austen generally perceived as a fairly conservative author, all things considered, then it is alarming to consider what can be done with her work—or through her work—in the hands of those committed to a different kind of politics. Critics’ cries of ‘unfaithful!’ and ‘betrayal!’ allows them to side-step what is perhaps their true uneasiness: a frank discussion of class, race, and gender divisions, along with the social structures and historical events that created and perpetuated them.

Clueless—a 1995 film set in the contemporary United States and loosely based on *Emma*—offers a rich example of what happens when the adaptation strays quite far from the source material, even as it refrains from offering a radical feminist or other social critique. For one, as the “connection with Austen is not proclaimed... the film’s success is not dependent on the recognition of the Austen association” (Steenkamp 7). Curiously, then, the film has the possibility for two distinct audiences: one that watches it as an ‘original’ movie, and one that seeks Hutcheon’s combination of familiarity coupled with surprise. Perhaps obviously, “the most modernised Austen adaptation is also the film most often accused of being frivolous” (Steenkamp 7). While Steenkamp finds this “surprising,” she shouldn’t. *Clueless* follows a rather shallow, wealthy American high school girl—exactly the kind of character critics love to mock. What’s more, the film was also heavily marketed toward teenage girls, who are, again, precisely

the group whose interests are most consistently, thoroughly, and deliberately devalued by high culture taste arbiters. Finally, what's wrong with a little frivolity?

Kyra Hunting further explores the *Clueless* phenomenon in “Furiously Franchised: Clueless, Convergence Culture, and the Female-Focused Franchise.” As she describes the history of *Clueless*, she aims to disrupt the myths that “discursively posit the franchise as masculine or frame the female-driven franchise as a novel phenomenon” (Hunting 53). Every few years, Hollywood magically discovers that a female audience can robustly support a media franchise—a cycle of discovery that reveals a general disregard for women, to be sure, but also one that ignores the role of *Clueless* (back in 1995) in truly showing the purchasing power of a female fandom. This neglect is then part of a general disdain for works that veer widely from the original texts, as well as the demographic groups who embrace such loose adaptations. If Austen's works themselves are highbrow, *Clueless* is certainly not.

The critic who perhaps most embodies this disdain for less-than-high-culture engagement with Austen would be Kate Bowles, whose essay “Commodifying Austen: The Janeite Culture of the Internet and Commercialization Through Product and Television” notably includes the following:

Worse, the Internet has actively encouraged fans to engage in the self-publication of fan fiction, sequelization, pastiche, and general amateur expansion of the oeuvre. It is one thing for family members and scholarly historians to recover an author's juvenilia and unfinished works, and perhaps even for established writers to have a go at finishing them off; quite another for a new generation of enthusiasts for whom Jane Austen is synonymous with film and television to condemn her to the hamster-wheel of posthumous productivity, publication (if not quality) guaranteed. (Bowles 16).

In referencing “family members,” “scholarly historians,” and “established writers,” Bowles sets up a very distinct high- and low-culture divide, with a select few who alone are legitimately authorized to claim Austen. What is curious is that Bowles admits she is not a Janeite (being

neither a fan nor a scholar of Austen's work), and that she deliberately set out to find these Internet communities. Clearly, their existence was not affecting her enjoyment of the Austen canon, and it seems doubtful that traditionalists could stray very far into them by accident. In fact, the communities Bowles condemns are far more invested in Austen than she, however much she is, of course, entitled to have an opinion. As with the critics cited by Aragay, it is this constructive engagement (as opposed to a passive reception) with Austen that causes anxiety. Internet production is threatening because it speaks to a shift in power dynamics, or at least a rejection of the top-down schematic Bowles embraces. Society has been presented with a canonical author; now, certain communities dare to demand other things of her: they dare to ask her work to deal with the Napoleonic Wars, or the status of women—or, as Bowles's preoccupation with fanfiction might suggest, queer relationships.

Nevertheless, Bowles manages to astutely identify one other cause for anxiety provoked by this form of Internet engagement: “the reason that Janeitism on the Internet is after all not fully conducive to commercial interests is because fandom is not mere consumerism—it is the game of cultural production itself” (Bowles 21). As the fact that I will analyze both the content of and discourse around *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in subsequent sections might suggest, the lines between fandom and consumer culture are perhaps more blurred than Bowles would care to admit. Fans—or those who can position themselves as fans and appropriate fan culture—can commercially benefit from their copyright-backed fanfiction, and benefit further when they embrace and engage the Internet communities Bowles is so quick to dismiss.

Commercially speaking, it is important to note that—at least at this point—adaptations are not simply adaptations of Austen's originals. That is, adaptation-makers have not existed in a

limited world in which there are Austen's works, a void, and then the development of their particular adaptation. Instead, adaptation creators are highly attuned to the work done by earlier adaptations, indeed so much so that it is not necessarily fair to call Austen's work the only source material. One of the most famous examples may be the scene in *Lost in Austen* that "parodies the "wet shirt" sequence" from the iconic 1995 TV mini-series adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (Raitt 135).⁴ The parody scene takes place at the explicit request of the heroine, Amanda, of her Darcy, and thus "one may infer that Amanda sees not the physical person before her, but the *idea* of Darcy as portrayed by Austen (and Colin Firth)" (Raitt 135). Of course, while Raitt limits Firth to parentheses, in *Pride and Prejudice* itself, there is no such "wet shirt" scene when Elizabeth and Darcy meet at Pemberley, and it would be incorrect to conflate the characterizations made by Austen and Firth. Amanda, then, sees an idea of Darcy twice removed: her idea of Colin Firth's idea of Austen's Darcy.⁵

Such a scene pokes fun at the audience, as it illustrates how our conceptions of Darcy draw not solely from Austen herself, but also from adaptations. What's more, the repeated use of this scene emphasizes the current understanding of Austen's works as for women (if they were for men, surely there would be more scenes in which half-dressed sisters scrambled to make themselves ready for their gentlemen callers) and seems to imply a certain characterization of the largely female audience. That is, we are *not* in it for the love of Jane, but rather for the love of Darcy. It's a curious line to straddle: on the one hand, so much media content is created by and for the male gaze, surely women can have a single scene without being ridiculed; on the other

⁴ This is not the only reference made by this particular adaptation; *Lost in Austen* also makes use of the theme music of the BBC production, to give just one example (Raitt 132).

⁵ It is worth mentioning here that in the 2001 film *Bridget Jones's Diary*—which is based on a book which itself is a 'reinterpretation' of *Pride and Prejudice*—Colin Firth plays the modern Darcy character. Notably, however, the wet-shirt-lake-scene belongs to his rival, while he watches from his own rowboat.

hand, it implies that women are not interested in Austen for the protagonists or the witty conversations—for acceptably high culture literary reasons—but rather for the fulfillment of their own fantasies.

The briefest of comparisons between the lake scenes of these two films is worth making. After all of the hype surrounding the 1995 scene, from a personal standpoint, I must note I was surprised by how tame the scene truly is. Audiences do not see the moment at which Darcy emerges from the lake, and his shirt is mostly dry (and only minimally clinging and see-through) by the time audiences, and then Elizabeth, see him. Perhaps tellingly, BBC's YouTube channel names this video "The Lake Scene (Colin Firth Strips Off)," but while Darcy is underdressed by Regency standards, he does not lose either shirt or trousers. The video title (and thus how people can find it) is thus much more reflective of the cultural place it has come to inhabit—the meaning assigned to it—rather than its actual content. In *Lost in Austen*, on the other hand, after Darcy confesses his love for Amanda, Amanda asks, "Will you do something for me?" (*Lost in Austen*). Said request is immediately followed by a shot of Darcy emerging from the pond, white shirt completely drenched. As such, adaptations in fact can work to exaggerate features of their predecessors, and thereby reveal certain (perhaps condescending or misogynistic) understandings of their audiences.

If the 1995 scene in some way worked to sexualize Darcy in a way he is not in the book, then *Lost in Austen* makes fun of this reading of Darcy—of female fans' interest in what is, again, an extremely mild scene.⁶ The repetition and exaggeration of this scene thus work to

⁶ Commentary from the 1995 adaptation's director shows that this 'reading' of Darcy was very much intentional, as one might imagine: "We wanted lots of energy in the show, and the book justifies it, because Elizabeth is always running about and going on long country walks and getting all flushed and sweaty and getting the bottom of her petticoat muddy, which seems to be quite a turn-on for Darcy. So we thought, let's make it as physical as we can without being

influence how the 1995 scene is broadly understood: it is built up to be more than it is—and thus, perhaps, female fans are made out to be less than they are. Since Amanda—the time-travelling, modern-day protagonist who finds herself within the plot of the novel—is a clear audience or Austen fan stand-in, it’s worth noting that, as at least one male reviewer of *Lost in Austen* writes, Amanda’s (and therefore, perhaps Austen fans’) use of Austen is comparable to how “some men use pornography, to smooth out the disappointments of daily life” (Ridout 18). It seems likely that this reviewer is ignorant of the fact that Austen’s novels were in fact recommended to shell-shocked British soldiers after World War I (Johnson 33).

It is also interesting to note that the lake scene is not the only repeated moment to occur in multiple adaptations, as these adaptations all strive to “pander[] to the adaptation’s largely female audience” (Cartmell 26). As Cartmell analyzes *Becoming Jane* (a 2007 film that situates Austen’s life as direct inspiration for *Pride and Prejudice*), she notes that it “features the ‘female friendly interpolation’ common to adaptations, most noticeably with Jane unexpectedly batting for six in a game of cricket, summoning up moments in earlier Austen adaptations,” namely the archery scenes in the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* and the 1996 *Emma* film adaptations (Cartmell 27). Of course, *Becoming Jane* is not a standard adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, as it is a dramatized quasi-biopic, but the purposeful parallels to *Pride and Prejudice* (which Austen’s character is shown writing in the film, as her relationship with her romantic counterpart develops), along with the general Janeite phenomenon of an intense interest in Austen’s life (see: Johnson’s definition of Janeitism), would seem to permit the film to be properly included in some comparisons of typical Austen adaptations. The point remains: Austen adaptations are also

ridiculous about it. Let’s remind the audience that this isn’t just a social comedy—it’s about desire and young people and their hormones—and let’s try to find ways of showing that as much as possible.”

adaptations of other adaptations. Moreover, even as far back as 1940, creators were interested in ‘updating,’ in some sense, Austen for what they believed female audiences required. Perhaps Austen fans demand (or are seen to demand) too much: they want the satisfyingly resolved marriage plot, the shots of the enormous and beautiful Pemberley, but they also want a heroine who can transgress their notions of Regency-era gender roles. They want an athletic Emma or Elizabeth (beyond the vigorous walks she so memorably undertakes); if she can beat her love interest at archery, perchance the power imbalance afforded by their unequal wealth and status can be lessened.

Indeed, as will be explored in subsequent sections, Austen adaptations are visibly and consistently interested in commenting on—if not actually practicing—current understandings of feminism. Just as Raitt proposes reading adaptations “by *switching* between differences (or more accurately, between interpretations made possibly by differences) that can be observed when one reads/views a screen adaptation together with literary precursors and other works of art in an intertextual field of difference,” Austen adaptations often also encourage this “switching” to occur in regards to gender roles (Raitt 128). While watching *Pride and Prejudice*, one switches between understanding nineteenth-century women’s role and restrictions—such as the ‘entailed’ estates, which (as in Longbourn’s case) could cut off daughters from a steady living after their father’s death—and our own understandings of what current gender roles are or ought to be. As Ridout explores this phenomenon in Austen adaptation, she rightfully criticizes Austen adaptation scholar Martine Voiret, as

Voiret’s positive reading of the sexuality depicted in adaptations of Austen because they tend to allow ‘the female viewer the pleasures of agency and looking usually reserved to the male viewer’ (231) is typical of post-feminist reactions to women and sexual desire. Voiret fails to question whether this reversal of the usual gender of the viewer is really evidence of a feminist impulse in Austen adaptations, or simply a result of the

commercial logic of late capitalism that looks to sell everything it possibly can, to as many different sections of the market as it can attract. (Ridout 18)

As *Zombies* features a katana-wielding Elizabeth and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is at least as focused on the female characters' career arcs as it is on the 'marriage plot,' the tension between potential "feminist impulses" and definite "commercial logic" of creators is essential.

In subsequent sections, I will explore how *Zombies* means to profit from our culture's current obsession with "strong female characters," although its parody does not actually critique this concept. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* very explicitly works to engage with a specific kind of twenty-first-century feminism and how to give female characters real—rather than merely comedic or convenient—power, but this attempt, too, has several flaws. While of course the (fictional) eras of these works is critical to an understanding of their denouements—*Zombies* as Regency; *Diaries* as contemporary—it is nevertheless worth noting that *Zombies* remains faithful to the marriage plots of all of the characters, while *Diaries* rejects one of the pairings (between Lydia and Wickham) and leaves viewers with a much more tentative, albeit hopeful, understanding of the relationship between another (Jane and Bing Lee/Bingley).

Both profit from the Austenian aura, the interest of adaptations in enabling their consumers to not feel like 'bad feminists' as they enjoy Austen or appropriations thereof, and in fact the very disagreements between the factions I have outlined in this section. Although the disapproval many have for less 'faithful' adaptations is quite real and significant, the wedge between traditional Janeites and newer fans is also exaggerated. *If* all publicity is good publicity, then depicting a fight, or simply disdain, between fan groups works to bolster the commercial visibility of an irreverent or otherwise unusual adaptation. This idea is especially critical to understanding *Zombies*, to which I now turn.

Chapter Two: The Capitalist Zombie

I.

In 2009, Quirk Books published a novel adaptation that generally causes more eyebrow raising and confusion than even time-traveling. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* takes the original Austen text and inserts the undead; in attributions, Jane Austen is always listed ahead of Seth Grahame-Smith. In fact, the book is approximately eighty percent Austen, with Grahame-Smith adding zombies and substituting needlework for gun cleaning in the middle of Austen's original language. For example, where the original Darcy is soon forced to discover that Elizabeth's face "was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes" (Austen 24), *Zombies'* Darcy discovers that the face of his zombie-killing future bride "was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes, and her uncommon skill with a blade" (Grahame-Smith 24).

Given the contentiousness of even fairly standard period adaptations (such as the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* film adaptation), Quirk Books geared up for a fight with the Janeites. Marie Mulvey-Roberts, describing Quirk Books' initial hesitance regarding the book, notes that "Traditional readers of an Austenite delicate disposition are unlikely to welcome graphic descriptions of beheadings, cannibalism and mass murder, despite concessions to the mock propriety of rarely mentioning the 'Zed word'" (Mulvey-Roberts 27). However, the real, post-publication audience defied such basic stereotypes:

The zombie apocalypse symbolises the invasion of the Austen canon by a different kind of reader. While it could be said to be 'a truth universally acknowledged' that most readers of Jane Austen tend to be female, in general the readers of zombie literature are assumed to be male. So who is reading *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*? When he first signed up Grahame-Smith's book, Rekulak assumed it would appeal mainly to readers of horror and zombie fiction. This expectation is reflected in the marketing for the 2009 revised edition, which boasts '30% more zombies'. But now he says, to his surprise, that the book has been 'much more popular with Austen fans than with horror fans', including

those 'excited to re-experience the classic novel in a different way.' (Mulvey-Roberts 33-34)

Although it would certainly be an overstatement to say that *all* Austen lovers are also eager to peruse her zombification, that some of them are speaks to a disconnect between marketing professionals' view of them and their real interests and preferences. It does not seem to be far-fetched to imagine that a little misogyny is involved in the following false formula: if Jane Austen fans are all female, then Jane Austen fans will not enjoy *Zombies*, because women do not enjoy horror.

The issue of the gender dynamic regarding the making-, marketing-, and consuming-of is worth pursuing. In her essay "Jane Austen... Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem," Camilla Nelson maintains that the "most notable feature of the runaway bestseller is the way in which it appropriates elements and techniques of amateur creativity more commonly associated with digital networks of fans" (Nelson 339). Eckart Voigts-Virchow, in "Pride And Promiscuity And Zombies, Or: Miss Austen Mashed Up In The Affinity Spaces Of Participatory Culture," echoes such sentiments, writing, "this established furniture Jane Austen is an ideal breeding ground for fan-fiction appropriation" (Voigts-Virchow 40). Austen's texts are well known, making it (relatively) easy for comprehensible parodic adaptations. That said, while content-creating fans tend to be female, *Zombies* is an "industry made text," commissioned and (co) written by men. Jason Rekulak, the editor of Quirk, explicitly stated that he "had developed a list of 'popular fanboy characters like ninjas, pirates, zombies, and monkeys' with a list of public domain book titles" (Nelson 339). To be sure, there are plenty of male authors with public domain classics, but

Pip and the Zombies, *A Zombie Christmas Carol*, and *A Christmas Carol of the Living Dead* have all equally failed to find a place in the greater cultural milieu.⁷

The most telling word in Rekulak's statement is "fanboy." He deliberately sought to place "male" tropes into a female-penned and -oriented text and assumed the male fanbase would follow. Out of the number of aspects he failed to account for in this dynamic, one of the first is that male fans have been primed as a consumer base of a specific sort of "pure" content—to purchase encyclopedias and guidebooks—not as a group that encourages mash-ups, and certainly not one culturally allowed to embrace such a text as *Pride and Prejudice*, whose current audience is (and is perceived as being) mostly female (Spence 24). Indeed, while female fans often and infamously have "altered and rewritten male dominated texts to suit their own needs," *Zombies* is an odd reversal of typical fandom dynamics: here, men have inserted their tropes for their own commercial needs (Booth 203).

The commercial aspect, of course, is key. Authors and publishers have a legitimate interest in making money, and as Austen's works are indisputably in the public domain, they are perfectly within their rights to do whatever they see fit with them. But while (primarily female) fans have written amateur Austen crossovers with *Harry Potter* and BBC's *Sherlock* (a type of fanwork of its own), or romantically paired Georgiana and Lydia to add in some queer representation to a heteronormative canon for themselves and for each other—for free—men

⁷ *Little Women and Werewolves* and *Jane Slayre* are two more examples of this type of nineteenth-century novel adaptation, although the *Little Women* adaptation differs from many of the rest due to the fact that its author was American rather than British. As Mulvey-Roberts notes, "It is tempting to read into this a postcolonial sub-text" (Mulvey-Roberts 19). As with Austen, these other nineteenth-century authors' works have secured places both in the canon (enabling a broad familiarity) and general culture, through film, stage, and TV adaptations.

have harnessed the mash-up spirit, packaged it, and sold it for a hefty profit⁸. Tellingly, *Zombies* was “originally promoted as the work of an ‘anti-fan.’ It originally positioned itself as a form of populist rebellion against the oppressive cultural authority of Jane Austen’s work” (Nelson 339). I can only assume that the creators’ description of Austen’s authority was satiric, although perhaps grounded in the stereotypical adolescent male’s desire for more violence and fewer genteel women on his secondary school reading lists. Regardless, this ‘anti-fan’ strategy worked less well once they realized Austen fans actually enjoyed the book; that it was the scorned fans who were buying and sharing and discussing the book, contrary to all expectations. Indeed, Grahame-Smith “was soon to be found telling audiences at bookshop signings that they ought to be reading the original Austen” (Nelson 341). Given that Nelson goes on to describe the various ways in which the publishing house so obviously shifted their marketing plans toward Austen fans, the advice seems redundant.

II.

What has perhaps been lost amidst all the back-and-forth, will-they-won’t-they of cultural commentators, commercial interests, and a variety of real and potential audiences, is how fitting a descendent of Austen *Zombies* truly is. At its heart—and passing over the debates on the differences between adaptation, appropriation, mash-up, and how implicit criticism changes the categorization—*Zombies* is a parody, and although zombies may not precisely fall into the gothic, their classification is surely close enough to be relevant. Austen, of course, wrote a satiric gothic novel in *Northanger Abbey*. Even beyond this obvious comparison, other Austen works

⁸ This dynamic is not particular to *Zombies* or even Austen adaptations generally, but is part of both a broader adaptation trend and typical relationship between content owners and content consumers (especially when the they are also unofficial content re-writers).

contain kernels (or more than) that make *Zombies* seem less of a hideous progeny and (slightly) more of a natural and legitimate descendent.

Over-exaggerated sentiments and reactions are a key element of *Zombies*. When Lydia prattles on in the carriage after Jane and Elizabeth's return, Elizabeth fantasizes about cutting off her sister's head, and the fantasy scene only ends as "when she spared another glance toward Lydia, she was surprised to see her head very much attached" (Grahame-Smith 176). After Lydia's disappearance with Wickham, Elizabeth "can remember no symptom of affection on either side, other than her carving his name into her midriff with a dagger; but this was customary with Lydia" (Grahame-Smith 227). Characters regularly vomit after distasteful scenes (or, in the case of Mrs. Bennet, simply to be dramatic), and Elizabeth is ready to cut Darcy's throat after he slights her at the ball, and would have, "had not the unmentionables distracted me from doing so" (Grahame-Smith 19). While this type of exaggeration is at times the physical opposite of Marianne Dashwood's sensibility, there is still some thematic resemblance, a resemblance which becomes stronger when one looks beyond Austen's published works to the her juvenilia.

If *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* are yet too proper to be considered the foremothers of *Zombies*, the juvenilia are not. Austen's "Jack and Alice" is full of the hyperbole with which *Zombies* readers are met throughout the text. Even in smaller details, a relationship can be detected, as Lucy "dedicated five minutes in every day to the employment of driving him from her remembrance" (Austen 26), the original Mr. Bennet informs Kitty that "you are never to stir out of doors, till you can prove that you have spent ten minutes of every day in a rational manner" (Austen 290), and the Mr. Bennet of *Zombies* prohibits the same "till you can prove that you have spent ten hours of every day in pursuit of your studies" (Grahame-Smith 240). The

particulars of the conflicts in “Jack and Alice” are less important for this analysis than the references to casual violence. In the story, “The Dispute at length grew so hot on the part of Alice that, “From Words she almost came to Blows,”” (Austen 18) and “cruel Charles” has “wound the hearts & legs of all the fair” (Austen 22). The physical is often inextricable from the emotional, and the ladies at least consider violence in a most un-ladylike way (contrary to the supposed “delicacy” of most Austen readers). Indeed, Lucy describes how another woman “has threatened, & sometimes endeavoured to cut my throat” (Austen 27).

Violence is pervasive in *Zombies*; no walk, journey, or description of daily pursuits is without a reminder of the dreadfuls plaguing the country. Grahame-Smith takes the violence lingering on the edges of Austen—and sometimes underwriting it, as with the presence of the militia in *Pride and Prejudice*—and places it front and center. As Mulvey-Roberts notes, “zombified mash-ups actualise the horrors lurking in the margins of Austen’s novels, particularly slavery and war, at the same time as making ironic concessions to the decorum of Regency society” (Mulvey-Roberts 17). While duels between Willoughby and Colonel Brandon, and a feared one between Mr. Bennet and Wickham, are briefly alluded to in the original Austen, in *Zombies* the violence and injury actually take place: at the end of the book, Darcy paralyzes Wickham in punishment and in exchange for paying his debts.⁹ More notably, however, is that the women are included in the system of honor, and as such fight their own battles. The famous first proposal scene turns into a fight between Elizabeth and Darcy, as does the confrontation between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine near the end of the novel. There is, of course, a distinction between Austen’s subtle allusions and *Zombies*’ fantastical insistence on their full

⁹ Ultimately, this also serves as a punishment for Lydia, as, being Wickham’s wife, it falls to her to care for him. Much more could be said on this matter, including from the viewpoint of disability studies.

inclusion, but that seems to be the right of the parody: to take elements that can be exaggerated and made absurd, and do so.

It is also curious to consider violence in *Zombies* alongside the numerous but abstract references to “violent love” in the original Austen. As Elizabeth discusses Darcy’s (second, more well received) proposal and intervention in Wickham and Lydia’s wedding with her father, Mr. Bennet proclaims, “Had it been your uncle’s doing, I must and *would* have paid him; but these violent young lovers carry every thing in their own way. I shall offer to pay him to-morrow; he will rant and storm about his love for you, and there will be an end of the matter” (Austen 365). Grahame-Smith keeps this revelation word-for-word. During the second proposal itself, Darcy “expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do” (Austen 354). Naturally, this is related to the sensibility and hyperbole that exist, to some extent, in the original, and certainly in the adaptation, as upon the news of Lydia’s impending marriage, the “eldest daughters endeavoured to give some relief to the violence of these [Mrs. Bennet’s] transports” (Austen 296). Of course, the use of ‘violent’ in regards to love in *Pride and Prejudice* is but a simple adjective, meant to convey the strength of feeling, yet nevertheless it seems relevant in discussion of a book that inserts violence into a marriage plot with very little trouble. If all is fair in love and war, then *Zombies* is doubly justified.

Finally, *Zombie* alludes to its own status as an adaptation with a slight reference to the much-adapted lake scene, if only in the sense of a dramatic and sensual entrance by Mr. Darcy at Pemberley. Here, Elizabeth first espies Mr. Darcy “upon a steed, holding a still-smoking Brown Bess... the smoke from Darcy’s musket hung in the air around him, wafting Heavenward through his thick mane of chestnut hair. His steed let forth a mighty neigh and reared upon his hind legs—high enough to throw a lesser horseman clear” (Grahame-Smith 199). Surely no

Pride and Prejudice parody post-Colin Firth could be complete without such a moment, and *Zombies* helpfully provides an illustration to accompany the description.

III.

With the release of the film adaptation in February 2016, reviewers from as diverse publications as *Wired* and *Bustle* have been falling over themselves declaring the tale to be a feminist one. To be sure, a film can take on a different lens from the original work, but here it is worth asking whether the book succeeds as a feminist adaptation. The first point that must be made, however, is to question whether the original *Pride and Prejudice* ‘needs’ a feminist re-vamping in the first place. *Zombies*, after all, is not merely a zombification of the Austen story: it gives swords and muskets and hand-to-hand combat skills—not to mention a code of honor—to women. The impetus for this question is not to re-hash the arguments for and against the canon, but rather to point out the instances of feminism (or proto-feminism) in the original novel and examine whether *Pride and Prejudice*’s feminism carries over in the new rules proposed by *Zombies*. This is particularly relevant given Grahame-Smith’s statement that “No feminism has been added to the book that wasn’t there in the original. It’s just taking what Austen already did and injecting it with steroids” (McFarland). But how accurate of a characterization of *Zombies* is that, truly?

Perhaps the most dramatic specific difference between *Zombies* and the original is the arc of Charlotte Lucas’s character. In *Zombies*, Charlotte is bitten by a dreadful and is thus doomed to transform into a zombie. Her motivation for accepting Mr. Collin’s offer of marriage, therefore, is altered: “All I ask is that my final months to be happy ones, and that I be permitted a husband who will see to my proper Christian beheading and burial” (Grahame-Smith 99). When Elizabeth visits Charlotte in Hunsford, she is witness to the continuing decline of Charlotte’s

condition: this is not a character that can seek comfort in “her parish and her poultry,” much less live to be mistress of Longbourn (Austen 212).¹⁰ In the original text, Charlotte’s engagement provides a moment for reflection on Elizabeth’s views concerning marriage; Elizabeth clearly does not approve of her friend having “sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage,” further describing the match as “humiliating” and moreover incapable of enabling Charlotte to be “tolerably happy” (Austen 125). One of the purposes of Charlotte’s original arc and character is to show the limited options available to women of the ancient age of twenty-seven, especially those who have neither great beauty nor great fortune to recommend them as potential wives. While of course Mr. Collins could never do for our heroine, he is good enough for someone—or someone will accept him as good enough, lacking any other alternatives. The change in impetus for Charlotte’s acceptance mutes one of the themes behind the marriage plots of the original: that gentlewomen, especially those on margins, without independent fortune, as the Bennet sisters, needed to marry so that they would be provided for after their fathers were dead—which thus sets up Elizabeth’s refusal of two eligible men as bold indeed. Here, Charlotte has only a very short-term future and chooses to leave friends and family who surely would see to her Christian beheading and burial themselves. Charlotte’s revamped arc is certainly fascinating—for one, it gives further motivation for Lady Catherine, a famed zombie killer, to insist upon frequent visits as she tests a zombification-slowing serum on her new neighbor—but it ignores what was so vital about Charlotte’s marriage in the first place (beyond giving Elizabeth an excuse to meet Mr. Darcy in a new setting, of course). Indeed, one could say that the change in Charlotte’s arc, including the omission of Elizabeth’s philosophy of marriage, is illustrative of one of the largest underlying thematic difference between *Zombies* and Austen’s original.

¹⁰ Indeed, as Mr. Collins commits suicide after beheading Charlotte once her condition can no longer be ignored, Mr. Collins likewise will not control the property after Mr. Bennet’s death.

That said, before such a theme can be further explored, it is necessary to point out that Charlotte's is not the only marriage to occur under altered circumstances. While in the original, Lydia leaves Brighton with Wickham of her own free (if foolish) will, in this adaptation, Wickham overpowers and kidnaps her. However, "in spite of his abducting her, she claimed to love [him] more than anything on earth" (Grahame-Smith 259). It seems to be an odd and unnecessary change; Lydia can clearly be foolish with or without zombies roaming the land. Indeed, this rather makes Lydia even more incomprehensible, and almost asks the reader to blame Lydia for her own kidnapping and subsequent misfortune—for she still marries Wickham. Here, the event is taken as a slight against Lydia's skill as a warrior, but if Wickham were honorable, she would not have need of any such skill. Is this a mode of highlighting the violence against and precarious position of women, of the power differential between men and women? Does the novel ask us to blame a victim who does not see herself as one? I would answer this second question in the affirmative; the novel does not ask readers to investigate Wickham's power (social, physical, or otherwise) over Lydia, instead expecting them to agree her fate is her rightful comeuppance. The fraught question of Lydia and Wickham is one to which we will return in the next chapter, but for now, there is still the issue of marriage as such in *Zombies*.

From the very first lines of Austen's novel, the reader is told that general opinion will have a large role to play in the marriage plot(s) of the book. *Zombies*, the other hand, opens with "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains. Never was this truth more plain than during the recent attacks at Netherfield Park" (Grahame-Smith 7). Indeed, zombies change the entire dynamic of the marriage plot, by supplanting some of the preoccupation with general opinion and, more notably, by altering the dimensions of Elizabeth's conception of the general. In the original, Elizabeth's initial view of

the universal is truthfully limited to her own neighborhood. As she details for Mr. Darcy the reasons for which she will not marry him, she declares that he has “[exposed] [Bingley] to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, the other to its derision for disappointed hopes” (Austen 190). However, as Bingley’s world is not limited to the neighborhood at Longbourn and his sisters are certainly not desirous of informing anyone of his fondness for Jane, to say that Bingley has been exposed to the “world” is to reveal how small Elizabeth’s world truly is. Although Mr. Darcy, prior to his declaration of ardent love, proclaims, “*You* cannot have a right to such very strong local attachment. *You* cannot have been always at Longbourn,” Elizabeth’s world is not nearly as large as his (Austen 178). *Zombies* negates this entire idea, as in the adapted version of the scene, Elizabeth reminds him, “Sir, you forget that I have twice made the journey to the darkest reaches of the Orient... I assure you, my picture of the world is rather a bit bigger than Longbourn” (Grahame-Smith 140). It is a direct repudiation of the original Elizabeth’s geographical (and social) limitations that oddly doesn’t affect Elizabeth’s ultimate choices.

While there is more to be said on Elizabeth’s limits, a brief discussion of Mr. Bennet’s altered role is here necessary. In the original, Mr. Bennet’s opinion holds weight with Elizabeth for the first part of the novel, which includes his conception of “the world.” Later, it is Mr. Darcy’s opinion of her that Elizabeth holds most dear, and with it, Mr. Darcy’s conception of “the world.” Mr. Bennet is a negligent father, having failed to properly attend to his children’s education, given the obvious inability of his wife to do so (although Elizabeth and Jane manage to acquire one on their own) and having equally failed to economize such that his daughters could be appropriately provided for upon his death. His negligence is an important underlying plot device: the younger sisters are silly and unchecked to the degree that Lydia ends up living

with a man before marriage and none of the girls can bring any money into a marriage, other than their portion of the small amount owed to them after their father's death. The precariousness of their position is not merely due to the entail, but to Mr. Bennet's character.

In *Zombies*, Mr. Bennet is oddly (though not completely) rehabilitated: "The business of Mr. Bennet's life was to keep his daughters alive. The business of Mrs. Bennet's was to get them married" (Grahame-Smith 9). As such, *all five* daughters have been trained in the "deadly arts" so necessary to protect themselves and others from the rampaging zombies; all five are more than competent, pointing toward an attention to their education that the original does not. In fact, as Mrs. Bennet first decries the unjustness of the entail, "Jane and Elizabeth tried to explain that all five of them were capable of fending for themselves; that they could make tolerable fortunes as bodyguards, assassins, or mercenaries if need be" (Grahame-Smith 50). Mr. Bennet has, in fact, provided the education that would enable his daughters to make their way in the world after his death, and their options are not, as they seem to be in the original, limited to marriage or precarious poverty. Bizarrely (or not, if one considers that a driving impetus behind every change in the adaptation seems to be simply to cause shock), the adapted Mr. Bennet *is* "of a disposition to seek comfort for the disappointment which his own imprudence had brought on" (Austen 231). Although Grahame-Smith quotes the above passage exactly, it is followed by a description of Mr. Bennet's "continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum," namely with "many a beautiful Oriental" on the family's travels East (Grahame-Smith 189).¹¹ ¹² Mr. Bennet is a worse

¹¹ There is much to be said about the (disturbing) racial dynamics of *Zombies* that will not be discussed here, although Mulvey-Roberts does include some analysis in her essay. Furthermore, while the line about "obligation and decorum" does appear in the original, the follow-up is in regards to exposing the ridiculousness of Mrs. Bennet to her children, not to blatant infidelity.

¹² To be fair to the gender dynamics of the novel, the old friend Mrs. Gardiner visits in Derbyshire is, in *Zombies*, an old lover with whom she resumes her dalliance while in the county.

husband than in the original, but he is somewhat of a better father—although seemingly to no end, as the ultimate marriages of each daughter do not change.

The threads of violence, femininity, and the feminist (or not) project of the book here come together. If the book is feminist *beyond* or *outside* of any of the ways in which the original could be considered feminist, it is upon first glance mainly in that most superficial, contemporary mode in which any woman character who commits violence is a ‘strong female character’ and therefore to be lauded as a feminist icon.¹³ Give a woman a sword or a bow and one is allowed to have as many male gaze scenes as one desires: *she kicks ass! Can’t you see she’s feminist?* Nelson claims *Zombies* to have a “recognizably postfeminist reconstruction [in] the ‘kickarse’ Bennet sisters” (Nelson 345). But the adaptation’s relationship with feminism is vexed, perhaps because our culture’s contemporary relationship with feminism is also vexed.

The vexed relationship with feminism at least partially must spring from the novel’s vexed relationship with femininity. On the one hand, the Bennet sisters’ warrior skills are respectably compatible with their status as the daughters of a gentleman. Lady Catherine’s “skill with blade and musket are unmatched,” and she is the epitome of acceptable pursuits for gentlewomen (Grahame-Smith 51). Likewise, Mr. Darcy gifts Georgiana a Katana, rather than a piano. Clearly, these skills are acceptable and even desired among gentlewomen. However, combat skills are not quite accepted as feminine *as such*, or as inherently compatible. Elizabeth reminds Charlotte than Jane is “a warrior first and a woman second” (Grahame-Smith 20), and as Mr. Darcy first begins to admire Elizabeth, he observes that “her arms [were] surprisingly muscular, though not so much as to diminish her femininity” (Grahame-Smith 21). Likewise,

¹³ A few of the feminist threads of the original: the critique of the entail system; the unflattering picture of male guardianship in Mr. Bennet; Elizabeth’s refusal of two eligible men despite her small future inheritance and thus presumably limited prospects.

Darcy refers to Georgiana's training not only "of the female arts, but the deadly as well" (Grahame-Smith 34). Elizabeth's contribution to the adapted discussion of what makes a truly accomplished woman is telling: "In my experience, a woman is either highly trained or highly refined. One cannot afford the luxury of both in such times. As for my sisters and I, our dear father thought it best that we give less of our time to books and music, and more to protecting ourselves from the sorry stricken" (Grahame-Smith 34). In short, Elizabeth summarizes the modern dilemma of 'having it all,' and the novel does not propose that we can. Women can either be traditionally feminine *or* capable of making their way in the wider world (see: the workplace). There is even an explicit gender-class dimension, as Miss Bingley refers to "Miss Bennet's unladylike affinity for guns, and swords, and exercise, and all those silly things best left to men or ladies of low breeding" (Grahame-Smith 42). Mulvey-Roberts specifically claims that "Metaphorically, these female warriors may also be seen as trained in class warfare" (Mulvey-Roberts 29). Working class women have long been deprived of some of that 'delicate' femininity reserved for upper class women, and indeed their very classification as 'working class' is a reminder that they were in the workforce before their higher-class counterparts.

In the world of *Zombies*, women are allowed to enter the world of honor, but only upon the exclusion of their femininity. That is, the Bennet sisters have taken a "blood oath to defend the Crown" (Grahame-Smith 184)—a serious indication of women warriors' status in this society—and as the family contemplates whether or not Wickham can really be persuaded to marry Lydia, Mrs. Gardiner posits, "Could he expect that her sisters would not pursue him to the ends of the earth with their swords?" (Grahame-Smith 224). Here, Lydia's honor is not (wholly) dependent on her male relatives; her sisters are considered equally capable and suitable for

defending it.¹⁴ Nevertheless, as Darcy quits the room after his first, ill-conceived marriage proposal (which, one must remember, turns into a physical fight in the adaptation), Elizabeth “knew not how to support herself, and from the feminine weakness which she had so struggled to exercise from her nature, sat down and cried for half an hour” (Grahame-Smith 153). When women do fight, their femininity is emphasized; when zombies attack the Netherfield ball, for example, Elizabeth and her sisters attack in unison, “each thrusting a razor-sharp dagger with one hand, the other hand modestly tucked into the small of her back” (Grahame-Smith 14). It is easy to be irritated by the novel’s gender politics; they can be viewed as simplistic and predictable in the dichotomy the book proposes, as Grahame-Smith has not chosen to write an adaptation that questions what one might imagine a period-typical response to a zombie-fighting gentlewoman might be. But perhaps to demand interesting gender dynamics of such a hyperbolic parody would be to ask too much of adaptations; after all, contemporary culture has certainly not devised an easy pattern to follow.

It is here important to note that *Zombies*’ women are expected to cease fighting once they marry; they are released from their vow to the kingdom upon marriage. What’s more (although it is not surprising), fighting and love are set up in contrast to one another. When Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy, and others call on Elizabeth in Derbyshire, when Elizabeth looks at Mr. Darcy “she felt an excitement greater even than the thrill of confronting the Devil’s legions” (Grahame-Smith 210), and she is “capable of considering the last half-hour as one of the happiest she had ever spent without spilling a drop of blood” (Grahame-Smith 211). It would be too simple to declare that Elizabeth’s bloodlust has been replaced with lust, for love is certainly as explicitly integral

¹⁴ Contrast this with the discussion in the original, in which Elizabeth is convinced all is lost because “Lydia has no brothers to step forward” and her father cannot be depended upon to adequately protect her (Austen 274). Lydia is arguably in a more powerful, protected position than in the original, and still she ends up married to Wickham.

as it is in the original, but Grahame-Smith does insist on some crassness to further remind readers that they are not in Austen's original. As Miss Bingley attempts to ingratiate herself with Mr. Darcy by decrying the manner of carrying out balls, Mr. Darcy replies that she "should like balls infinitely better... if you knew the first thing about them" (Grahame-Smith 44). When the discussion is later somewhat carried over into a dance between Elizabeth and Darcy, Elizabeth notes that she "find[s] that balls are much more enjoyable when they cease to remain private" (Grahame-Smith 73). Still, the greatest no doubt occurs after Mr. Darcy has successfully vanquished several zombies that caught Elizabeth and her relatives unawares at Pemberley, and Elizabeth has taken his gun while he returns to the house: "She remembered the lead ammunition in her pocket and offered it to him. "Your balls, Mr. Darcy?" He reached out and closed her hand around them, and offered, "They belong to you, Miss Bennet"" (Grahame-Smith 205). The woman who can attract him, in the end, knows how to make a dirty pun.

Attraction aside, femininity (such that would lead to marriage) and combat skills continue to be set in opposition. Hints of the denouement occur early on, as Elizabeth finds herself unable to kill an infant zombie and feels "a shame that demanded no vengeance," which thus causes her to question herself: "Could there be honor in mercy?" (Grahame-Smith 92). Such reflections "contradicted everything she had been taught, ever warrior instinct she possessed" (Grahame-Smith 92). Even Elizabeth Bennet falls prey to latent, traditionally feminine instincts. One of the most telling passages in this regard occurs after the Darcy party's visit to them in Derbyshire:

... where she had been taught to ignore all feeling, all excitement—now she found herself with an excess of both. How strange! For the more she dwelled on the subject, the more powerful she felt; not for her mastery of the deadly arts, but for her power of the heart of another. What a power it was! But how to wield it? Of all the weapons she had commanded, Elizabeth knew the least of love; and of all the weapons in the world, love was the most dangerous. (Grahame-Smith 213).

It's a trite if coherent conclusion for this Elizabeth to reach. It is underlined by Mr. Bennet, as he reflects on Lydia's connection with Wickham: "For it was I who resolved that you should be warriors, and not ladies. It is I who saw to your instruction in the ways of death, while neglecting to teach you anything of life" (Grahame-Smith 240). To be sure, this is a real failure on the part of Mr. Bennet, but it also serves to underscore the dichotomy the novel has engineered between the deadly arts and the feminine, between fighting and feeling. *Surely* such matters are not destined to be so black-and-white as all that. It's another easy allusion to the 'strong female character'—of course she has no emotional awareness, and once she does, she will be unable to fight. Ultimately, the satire falls less on the contemporary trope than it perhaps could have, instead keeping the original Austen as the main object of its satire.

Although Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship begins on their status of equality as warriors, the ending only drives home Mr. Bennet's ideas (and Grahame-Smith's general conceit). That is, at an early Netherfield dinner party, when Mr. Bingley suspects that zombies have eaten his kitchen staff, Elizabeth insists on accompanying Darcy to assess the situation: "I have no doubt in my ability to form my own opinion on the matter. Now, do you wish to cause a stir, or shall we to the kitchen?" (Grahame-Smith 80). Later in the novel, when Elizabeth fantasizes about what their life could have been together, if not for Lydia's situation, she imagines, "What a pair of warriors they would make! ... their children eager to master death as their mother and father had before them" (Grahame-Smith 250). Elizabeth, unlike her world and even perhaps the novel itself, imagines a way to make marriage, children, and her interest in combat compatible with each other. Nevertheless, the final lines of the book contest such a dream, as the three Bennet sisters "were now... brides of man, their swords quieted by that only force more powerful than any warrior" (Grahame-Smith 317). In short, their marriages—even

Jane's and Elizabeth's—are hardly triumphs. In this set-up, in some way, the resolution of their marriages plots do not seem to be as straightforward of victories: they are conquered by love. The book itself falls subject to the marriage plot, as although it opens with zombies, it closes with quieted swords. Certainly there would have been other ways to frame love and marriage within the conceit of a zombie-plagued Regency England... but perhaps this was the only proper way to do so in an Austen adaptation.

Again, perhaps *Zombies* would stray too far thematically if it completely ignored the limitations placed on Austen's heroines. Although *Zombies* does seem to offer the sisters an out through a warrior profession, it ultimately constrains them to the original marriage plot, and fails to make marriage or the embrace of love a clear-cut victory. In D.A. Miller's essay "Austen's Attitude," he concisely deals with the issue of the unavoidable marriage plot in Austen: "In the same degree that Austen's so-called obsession merely represents her willingness to transcribe the tyranny of an objective ubiquity, the usual would-be worldly response to her subject, of saying that it is "narrow," only expressed a quasi-infantile longing that it be so" (Miller 1). In short, to a generous reader, *Zombies* posits that *even* a world where women are honored warriors—even in such a far-fetched, absurd conceit of there being zombies in an Austen novel—women are constrained to the marriage plot. Austen heroines, warriors or not, zombies afield or no, must marry. If so, this seems less a criticism of Austen's use of the formula than an acknowledgement that women then had no other choice. Even in a world in which Elizabeth's view of the world is not nearly as small as that of her original, she is still bound to follow the "narrow" ending of the marriage plot. A less generous reader, on the other hand, wonders why a parody that envisions Austen with more zombies could not also imagine an Austen with fewer marriages.

Chapter Three: Whose Feminism Is It, Anyway?

I.

If being the first digital series to win an Emmy is anything to go by, the YouTube adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, has found a cultural niche that makes it worthy of examination. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (LBD), with co-creators and co-executive producers Hank Green and Bernie Su, ran from April 9, 2012 to March 28, 2013. The retelling is vlog-style, the conceit being that Lizzie—American and slightly older than in the original—is sharing her story through vlogs, which lends the series a self-awareness typically lacking in silver screen adaptations. Unlike in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* or period adaptations, Lizzie speaks directly to viewers, and while many secondary characters do eventually appear in the diaries, Lizzie regularly uses costume theater to portray other characters, thus keeping viewers within her perspective.

As with many other adaptations, this one also calls attention to its status as such. In the opening video, Lizzie displays a t-shirt, which is a gift from her mother, on which the famous opening line is written. She then goes on to question the true universality of this statement, facetiously detailing percentages of the types of young, single men not looking for wives—for example, Lizzie declares that 22 percent are sleaze balls and scumbags (“My Name is Lizzie Bennet”). In another video, Lizzie informs viewers that she likes “any movie starring Colin Firth” (“My Sisters: Problematic to Practically Perfect”). Indeed, when the Bennet sisters first become aware of a person named Darcy, Lizzie asks, “Isn’t that Colin Firth’s name in that chubby Zellweger movie?” (“Bing Lee and His 500 Teenage Prostitutes”). (That would be *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, and yes.) In an episode in which Jane and Lizzie discuss whether or not Darcy likes Lizzie, Lizzie speaks directly to viewers, saying that she expects some are going to

“go off and write fan fiction about us having epic adventures together,” but the statement is indulgent rather than truly outraged, as she adds, “I am not one to squash creativity” (“Nope! He Doesn’t Like Me”). Even minor characters are pulled into the postmodernism: Charlotte and Lizzie’s mothers met when they were in a book club and both pregnant (the book was *Sense and Sensibility*), and Mary (a cousin in this adaptation) mentions how she was supposed to visit Mansfield Park with her boyfriend. Clearly, the creators took their cues from other adaptations in regards to including their own references to them and the original. While YouTube and traditional Janeites might not be a clear match, effort nonetheless was expended to ensure fans of the original (Janeite or otherwise) would have specific moments of familiarity amidst the texting, vlogging, and socializing at bars rather than balls. While the LBD is not a parody, it does poke fun at its status as an adaptation; perhaps especially given that it is a vlog series, not an Ang Lee-directed period film, it wouldn’t do to take itself too seriously.¹⁵ The abundance of references may also be an indication of its status as a rare moneymaking fanwork, which will be explored in further detail later in this section.

As the fact that the narrator is a vlogger might imply, the original story is relentlessly updated (through a particular liberal lens) for contemporary times. For one, the cast is racially diverse. The Lucases become the Lus; the Bingleys the Lees. Fitz (Colonel Fitzwilliam) is black (and has a boyfriend). As the modern United States doesn’t have a landed gentry the way Regency England did, the details of the characters’ socioeconomic classes differ, although their relative stature is the same. Lizzie is studying mass communications in graduate school; both she

¹⁵ That said, Su has critiqued this view in interviews, saying “That’s that stigma that web video had, that it still has in a sense, because it’s not television, it’s not a movie” (Whyte). Web video is then the new low-culture art form attempting to be accepted as worthy of the title of ‘art.’

and Jane (for the first part of the show) live at home. Bing Lee is studying to be a doctor, while Darcy is the young CEO of a digital media company (Pemberley Digital).

Part of this deliberate modernization is the examination of contemporary women's choices and the attempt to give *Pride and Prejudice* a feminist retelling. While *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* parodies the Strong Female Character (albeit in Regency garb), the LBD, not being a parody, confronts the issue seriously; in a *Daily Dot* interview, co-creator Bernie Su said, "I don't know if geek guys can really empathize with geek girls because they're taught that a "strong woman" is a scantily clad woman. I like women in my entertainment to be independent and vocal and strong—not because they can kick ass, but because they're great thinkers" (Daily Dot). With this description, it's clear why Austen's Elizabeth Bennet was selected as source material. The interview then takes a fascinating turn:

DD: *Pride and Prejudice* is such a female-dominated thing. Do you feel like the show, because it's produced by men but is all about women, is changing perceptions about what men and women can do within geek culture?

BS: I hope so. [...] With this series, I knew we couldn't make it all about marriage. Let's bring in education, and career, and dreams, and these grander things in life. It really was important to me to pass the Bechdel test, and not have all the girls fight over guys. I've never identified with the super guy geeks.¹⁶ I feel like I can give voice to what I've seen women experience regarding racism and sexism. (Daily Dot)

To be fair to the show, much of the behinds-the-scene team is composed of women, from the producer to the transmedia editor to several of the writers. Unlike with *Zombies*, there were a number of women working on the adaptation, whose ultimate audience, Su reports, was 90

¹⁶ Su and *Daily Dot*'s use of "geek" is interesting, not only because of the male connotations of the word, but also because of the cultural understanding of the (current) Austen fandom as primarily composed of women. There are and have always been women in "geek" culture, and their contributions ought to be more recognized and valued, but as it's unclear why Austen should fit into geek culture as such, the question seems to position online video as a whole as part of geek culture, which seems an extreme (and inaccurate) generalization. That Su's co-creator, Hank Green, is part of online video geek culture, is true, but it doesn't necessarily follow that everything Green creates is part of that culture as well.

percent female (Callaghan). To be sure, having the co-creators and executive producers as men creates a certain backstage power dynamic, but perhaps Su can be forgiven for, in some ways, claiming stories of sexism as his to tell, given that women are well represented elsewhere on the team. Or not: Su's 'I'm not like those other sexist geek guys and I can give women my vision of feminism' shtick is condescending. As with *Zombies*, of course male creators are perfectly within their rights to adapt Austen, but there is something off-putting about the assumption in the question posed—that “changing perceptions” is really about men appropriating works by women, associated with women, and denigrated because of at least one of these associations.

Su's assertion that the LBD focuses on the “grander things in life”—and that these things are not men or marriage—is at the core of the feminism espoused by the series. It is of course a fact that Lizzie has more options in her life than Austen's Elizabeth, but to say that love is not one of the “grander things in life”—indeed, to assert that education and career are grander than love—seems to be an unnecessary denigration of one of the core elements of the human experience. This is not to say that women should be wholly defined by their love lives (or lack thereof), or that a full life requires romantic love, but to say that love is *not* one of the “grander things” seems patently false. Indeed, love as such—if the financial aspect of marriage can be at all extracted—seems in a way “grander” than a job. The series' position speaks to a reading of Austen that understands her as a “narrow” author, wherein her focus on the lives of a certain class of women somehow makes her work lesser and thus that it is up to the LBD team to rectify this narrowness.

As Lori Halvorson Zerme maintains her in article “Ideology in the Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” “the romance plot is secondary to the story of Lizzie's career” (Halvorsen Zerme). From this point of view, then, the LBD's feminist ideology largely revolves around capitalism. Unlike in

the novel, Lizzie has only two romantic suitors: George and Darcy. Mr. Collins's original romantic proposal is instead a proposition to become his business partner—although Lizzie is so confused by the beginnings of this offer that she believes him to be asking for a romantic relationship. (The situation is made all the more humorous by the detail that, as a second grader, Lizzie asked a young Ricky Collins to marry *her*.) At one level, the simple substitution speaks to the fact that marriage was a financial transaction and the means by which a woman of Elizabeth's class would ensure she had the means to live in relative comfort. On the other, the substitution ascribes the same level of feeling to a certain job as to a certain marriage partner.

That is, while Elizabeth would be joined to Mr. Collins for the duration of his lifetime, Lizzie could leave the company as soon as she found a job that was more agreeable to her. This is not to say that Lizzie does not have legitimate reasons for declining her job—namely, she would have to leave her Master's program. Still, she accuses Charlotte of “selling out” when her friend accepts the job; just as Elizabeth disapproves of Charlotte marrying without love, Lizzie disapproves of Charlotte taking a job that doesn't follow Lizzie's checklist for a fulfilling job (“Friends Forever”). In the series, this reveals a class privilege on the part of Lizzie: Charlotte needs the immediate employment far more than Lizzie does, and does not have the luxury of waiting for a job that meets her (or Lizzie's) standards of artistic integrity. Through the substitution and focus on some sort of integrity, the series places selecting a job—especially the ‘right’ one—on par with choosing one's spouse. Again, while marriage was a financial necessity for Elizabeth and Charlotte, the series oddly places the same moral weight on this career decision. In a 2012 *Forbes* article on Millennial job-hopping trends, Jeanne Meister cites data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that indicates the average Millennial stays at a job for roughly three years (Meister). Charlotte may be angling for “the “long job”—that is, the

traditional 20-year capstone to a career,” but most people in their early- to mid-twenties are not assuming they will be at their first post-college job for even five years, much less a lifetime (as with marriage) (Kamenetz). Of course creative types may still be concerned with “selling out,” but it seems unrealistic to think—or for Lizzie to think—that a single, first sell-out job means Charlotte will stagnate in the same position at the same company forever if she doesn’t want to. She is a partner in the business: she could sell her stock and leave if a better offer came her way. Ultimately, ascribing the moral weight and temporal longevity to this job seems a misstep, and one that reveals a too-hasty willingness to substitute work for marriage, without a thorough investigation of the nuanced implications of the switch.

With the creators’ stated focus on career, it’s worth noting that, despite the fact that Lizzie lives at home and Jane has defaulted on her student loans, the progression of their careers throughout the series is utopian. It’s almost as if the series is saying, *if you make all the properly twenty-first century feminist decisions, you, too, will have your dream job in your ideal location.* After Bing abruptly leaves town for Los Angeles, Lizzie suggests that Jane move to LA as well: “Maybe you should go to him... It’s the 21st century, we are strong, proactive women,” even if it only results in “closure” as opposed to a renewal of the relationship (“Snickerdoodles”). This isn’t presented as a desperate, man-chasing suggestion, but rather one that emphasizes Jane’s right and ability to ask questions and seek explanations. *Before the seven-minute, forty-five second episode is over*, Jane is able to transfer to a new, better position within her current company that very conveniently is based out of Los Angeles. This is, of course, fiction, and some allowances for narrative convenience (not to mention following Austen’s plot) may be made, but in a series that claims to be about the modern struggles of women—that emphasizes Jane and

Lizzie's university debts and their need for employment—the question must be asked: *what world are they living in?*

It is true that Jane loses her Los Angeles job late in the series, as she returns home to be with her family following George Wickham's exploitation of Lydia. This speaks to the difficult, impossible choices women are often asked to make between work and family, and perhaps critiques the notion of being able to truly 'have it all.' Nevertheless, the series opts not to explore this theme too far, instead giving Jane a new, even better job in New York as soon as she wants one. The day before she leaves, Bing comes to see her, and Jane says, "I couldn't have you to asking me to stay... this is a really incredible opportunity" and furthermore insists it would be "unfair" of him to ask her to remain in California for the sake of their relationship. However, Bing reveals that he quit medical school and instead asks if he can accompany her to New York—to which she initially says no, because "that's too much." Finally, she relents, saying, "If we do this... it wouldn't be coming with me... I'm going for my career, my life" ("Goodbye Jane"). Again, there is an emphasis on Jane's career and how Jane herself privileges (however painfully) her career over a potential relationship. Even though Bing 'follows' her in a reversal of the conventional gender dynamic, there is an insistence that both of their careers will benefit from the move. Still, this is an odd moral: deny yourself the relationship, and you'll still end up acquiring what you want—you'll still end up with both a partner and a job. Realistically, Jane would job hunt for significantly longer before being hired, and many young adults are stuck in jobs or graduate programs far from their partners. That Jane and Bing are not so constrained is due to Bing's financial privilege and his ability to move to New York and begin a new career there at will. The series declines to continue its modern update of Austen by separating the lovers. More than that, it declines to illustrate the true distress faced by women who are

presented with these difficult decisions, as Jane is not forced to suffer long (or even almost at all) the consequences of her decisions in this regard.

Lizzie's career decisions follow a similar theme. When she and Darcy do (finally!) get together, she declines his offer of a job at his company—indeed, to have a whole department around her, insisting that “I don't want to be the girl who dates the boss.” In fact, Lizzie informs him that, although she will be moving to San Francisco (partially to be with him, partially because it's the place to be if one works in online media), “I was thinking of becoming one of your competitors” (“Future Talk”). In the LBD, Lizzie's financial security and romantic prospects are separated in a way unavailable to the original Elizabeth, and Lizzie (and the series) insists on keeping them so. Like Jane, by ‘declining,’ Lizzie is permitted everything: a move to the geographic center of her dream industry, a job she desires, a boyfriend. How realistic is it, really, for an individual to attract investors due to one's video blog? And to be perfectly clear, not just any individual, but a young woman who blogs about her personal life. According to Forbes, “only about 5% of total venture investment goes to women-led businesses” (MacBride). But of course, not all of us can have the kinds of love stories Lizzie has to document and share with the world.

The curious gender dynamics of Lizzie's career are further passed over in her initial interactions with Mr. Collins. Lizzie is forced to listen to Mr. Collins pontificate at some length on web video, “a subject I'm not sure he actually knows anything about.” The show plays up the original Mr. Collins's ridiculousness at the expense of the gender dynamics in the scenes between Lizzie and Mr. Collins. In the original, Mr. Collins talks of subjects of little interest to Lizzie; in the video diaries, his work is both her hobby and her field of academic study. Nevertheless, he enthusiastically explains how “web video blog” contracts to “vlog” and praises

her for filming, calling the endeavor “exceedingly savvy” (“Mr. Collins Returns”). The level of thoughtless condescension and privilege in a man explaining a woman’s own work to her could have been further explored—but perhaps could not be expected of a show in which at least one of the creators aims to explain modern sexism to women. This dynamic continues as Mr. Collins informs Lizzie, “I believe that you could be doing so much more” and that she is “far too talented to confine your professional endeavors to a confessional-style vlog centered largely around your sister’s love life” (“Mr. Collins Returns”). How often are women’s hobbies (not to mention actual labor) denigrated by men as not worthy of cultural or commercial consideration? The analogy to Jane Austen herself is evident: why did she ‘limit’ her heroines to the marriage plot? As this opinion comes from Mr. Collins, viewers are invited to view it as absurd and unjust. Viewers are implicitly told that Lizzie’s diaries do have value, and the vlogs do in fact capture more than Jane’s love life—although much of the women’s career arcs are only beginning at this point in the narrative—but the broader gender critique is silent.¹⁷ This (lack of) critique regarding gender and form becomes further relevant when one views the LBD at large as a piece of fanwork.

II.

Although I have been writing of the LBD as an adaptation broadly speaking, it is worth noting the ways in which its particular type of adaptation differs from many of the films discussed in the first chapter, as well as *Zombies*. *Zombies* is *Pride and Prejudice*, plus the

¹⁷ This is interestingly contrasted with a conversation Darcy and Lizzie have while she is shadowing Pemberley Digital for her independent study. Although Lizzie is trying to interview him about the company, Darcy turns the compliment on her, saying, “you discovered something that you love to do and do well.” When Lizzie demurs, he continues, “I’ll show you what you do is special. Walk me through how you make a video” (“Corporate Interview”). While perhaps the more powerful statement would be for Lizzie to believe in the value of her work without a man validating it first, at least Darcy does find her work meaningful, and even if not ideal as an overall message, the self-doubt is realistic.

undead and a few key world changes to accommodate the zombies. The time period, character relationships, and ending are all essentially the same. Likewise, while the period films may be criticized or lauded for romanticizing a lead or for a portrayal of ports, in plot and essence, they are very much the same as their originals. Like *Zombies*, the LBD benefited from fan culture, but it went much further in its appropriation of fandom strategies for engaging with and re-writing texts.

In his book *Textual Poachers*, fandom scholar Henry Jenkins offers a number of ways in which television fans approach their re-writes. The series as a whole is an example of “character dislocation,” in which “characters are removed from their original situations and given alternative names and identities” (Jenkins 171). One more specific, notable method used by the series is “refocalization,” when “writers shift attention away from the programs’ central figures and onto secondary characters, often women and minorities, who receive limited screen time” (Jenkins 165). This is a strategy employed throughout the LBD, as although Lizzie indisputably remains the main character, not only are there videos on her channel in which she does not appear (for part or all of the video), but the series also contains three side channels. As Lydia proclaims, “You’re only a secondary character if you let yourself be” (“Swimming with Scissors”). The side channels, belonging to Lydia, Maria Lu, and Gigi (Georgiana) Darcy emphasize these characters’ autonomy and that they have their own legitimate feelings and character arcs, independent of Lizzie. Lydia’s channel offers key insight into her character and relationship with George, Maria’s channel brings a focus to Charlotte, and Gigi’s not only explains how Darcy finds George, but gives power to George’s original victim.

While I agree with Halvorsen Zerne’s assessment that “the YouTube series privileges career over romance,” I also think there is a greater focus on sisterhood, friendship, and Lizzie’s

overall character development than there is in the novel, and possibly that these additional elements of interest—bolstered by the focus on side characters—even surpass the career narrative. While the “prejudice” of the novel centers on Lizzie’s quick judgment of Darcy, in the series, her prejudice is pervasive. The emphasis on the side characters enables her to recognize her prejudiced treatment of Caroline and Lydia; Charlotte’s repeated interventions eventually end her immature treatment of Mr. Collins; and a more assertive Jane is able to make Lizzie recognize and begin to conquer her own fears about adulthood. In fact, I believe that the emphasis on Lizzie’s relationships with these other women—as well as the side characters’ relationships with each other—does more to de-center the romance than the career arcs. Lizzie is enabled to grow, personally and professionally, through her relationships with these side characters, even if (as with Caroline) her initial judgment is ultimately proved to be correct. That Lizzie can confront her own prejudice not in regards to Darcy illustrates that she has learned the lesson of the narrative (at least to some extent) without him or outside of him, which lessens her dependence on him and their romantic plot.

Critically, these side characters do not simply further Lizzie’s character development. The relationships between Jane and Lydia, Lydia and Mary, and even Charlotte and Maria are explored through the side channels. The focus on side characters and the side channels in particular are used for a second method outlined by Jenkins: “moral realignment.” In this strategy, which is “Perhaps the most extreme form of refocalization, some fan stories invert or question the moral universe of the primary text, taking the villains and transforming them into the protagonists of their own narratives” (Jenkins 168). To be sure, Lydia is not a ‘villain’ in the original book, but she is the least well-off sister at the end. According to the book’s moral

universe, Lydia had lessons to learn from her sisters and failed to learn them, and her sisters had nothing to learn from her. In the series, this view is soundly rejected.

In the LBD, the potential scandal is a sex video of George and Lydia, and a website George has set up with a countdown clock until the video's release. Critically, although the video was filmed with Lydia's (somewhat coerced) consent, she is ignorant of the website's existence—yet her sisters initially assume otherwise. Here lies the crux of the matter: despite consistent and repeated instances throughout the show where Lydia proves herself to be compassionate, clever, and fiercely dedicated to her family, Lizzie views her only as a flirty partier who doesn't take life seriously and doesn't know anything about responsibility. Over time, it becomes clear that Lydia sees no point in trying to be a supportive, mature sister if Lizzie will refuse to recognize that side of her. Halvorsen Zerne notes that “This Lydia clearly uses her energetic and flighty persona to hide her insecurity” (Halvorsen Zerne). Indeed, it's clear that Lydia feels the weight of her own performance, which is reified and reinforced by others' expectations. Eventually, some of Lydia's school troubles are revealed to be because of her attempts to avoid an ex-boyfriend, and viewers are invited to pass judgment on two older, intelligent, educated sisters who left her to study on her own, even as she was struggling in class. Lydia's portrayal is both more complex and much more sympathetic than it is in the original.

Accordingly, the ending also takes a more favorable view of her. Darcy, with help from Fitz and Gigi, is able to take the website down before the video is released, and Lydia does not stay with or return to George. Gigi's involvement creates powerful moment and a strong statement of support for survivors of such coercive relationships: Gigi is able to choose her own level of engagement and is instrumental in helping to limit the damage George can inflict upon the Bennet family. In the modern, explicitly feminist (of a sort) world of the LBD, forcing Lydia

to remain with a man who took advantage of her would go too strongly against the narrative grain—against the moral alignment of the series.

Nevertheless, I would offer a critique of this supposedly feminist rejection of the original's ordained relationship between Lydia and Wickham. It is implied that Lydia really only began cultivating her party girl image after a boy she dated in high school began spreading rumors about her. What's more, her refusal to consider serious romantic relationships (at least before George) is shown to be grounded in a fear of intimacy, not in a simple matter of preference. The implication seems to be that behind every "stupid, whore-y slut" (as Lizzie calls Lydia in the second episode) is a good girl who has been hurt by a mean boy ("My Sisters: Problematic to Practically Perfect"). Is it really so impossible that a twenty-year-old (later twenty-one-year-old) would not be interested in a serious relationship? Is enjoying parties and casual sex so awful and morally suspect that a tragic backstory must be invented? Lydia may not be stuck with George forever, but she still is punished for rebelling against Lizzie and engaging in a relationship with him. George is extremely manipulative, and, as one can imagine after such a gross violation of trust, the Lydia of the final episodes is more subdued than the Lydia of the beginning of the series. While this post-George Lydia does show a few signs of her former energy—and Lizzie learns to recognize the other elements of Lydia's character—it is assumed that Lydia also learns the lesson Lizzie had to teach her: namely, how to be certain type of responsible adult.

Jenkins further posits that "fan writers do not so much reproduce the primary text as they rework and rewrite it, repairing or dismissing unsatisfying aspects, developing interests not sufficiently explored" (Jenkins 162). Although the LBD differs from most fanworks in significant ways, the series' focus on "repairing" Austen and inserting a particular brand of 21st

century feminism certainly brings it closer to a fanwork than a typical adaptation. In a piece for *MIT Technology Review*, Jenkins writes that “Contemporary Web culture is the traditional folk process working at lightning speed on a global scale. The difference is that our core myths now belong to corporations, rather than the folk” (MIT Technology Review). Austen, as a writer whose works are in the public domain, belies that, but the LBD does belong to a company. The series earned money from YouTube ads; the team’s second full-length series, *Emma Approved* (a vlog-style *Emma* adaptation) also used fashion sponsorships to bring in additional revenue. Of course, filming is very expensive, and on the whole I believe people who work in creative industries (writers, actors, and so forth) ought to be paid for their labor. Nevertheless, there is an altered dynamic when the (male-created) series liberally uses the strategies of fanfic and fandom, which are meant to resist the usual societal power structures, but does so within the capitalist structure. Overall, the LBD seems to be a series ready to critique Austen, but less ready to recognize critiques of its engagement with her, both within the values scheme of the series and in regards to the creation of the series at large.

III.

In the introduction of this project, I discuss critics who seem to believe that adaptations that are non-period and fail to adhere to a certain interpretation of Austen are in some way disrespectful of the work. *Zombies* and the LBD—two works that purposefully stray far from the original—are ready to name this criticism and thereby claim protection from it. Nevertheless, claiming to be a feminist adaptation or to appeal to a certain subset of fans cannot shield a creation from scrutiny, especially since both of these adaptations not only fall short of feminist possibilities, but also of feminist engagement with the spaces in which they place themselves. That is, the Austen fandom, as a whole, is currently a female space, as is content-creating

fandom as such. The male creators of these adaptations not only appropriated fandom storytelling means—strategies that were created for people traditionally shut out of narratives—but claimed to be giving fans the feminism they wanted. In that sense, these light-hearted adaptations are a double blow, as the proposed feminism not only fails in the content itself, but also in the conception and execution.

Particularly since the creators of these adaptations specifically framed them as feminist projects, it is not unreasonable to demand more of them—and to ask that future adaptations that make similar claims do better. As adaptation creators ask culture at large to respect them—or at least loudly reject their own need for cultural approval—they ought to make more of an effort to respect the communities from which they are drawing in order to create and sell their work. Currently, it seems as if feminism is a convenient marketing ploy and feminists a convenient market for those with capital.

Creators of such adaptations as the LBD seem to want to give us permission to enjoy *Pride and Prejudice* again; if *Zombies* is *Pride and Prejudice* with the addition of the undead, the LBD would likely position the web series as *Pride and Prejudice* with the addition of twenty-first century feminism. As flawed as this self-congratulatory endeavor was, I can't regret the attempt. Through the changes made or not made, adaptations reveal, perhaps even more so than new 'original' work, cultural values and preoccupations. As Lizzie says, I am "not one to squash creativity." Austen does not *need* adaptation; her brilliance does not need zombies or a lake scene or a particular brand of twenty-first century feminism to become interesting or palatable, but of course that itself ought not to prevent people from trying to grapple with new questions—or old questions, in new times and circumstances—through versions of her work.

Works Cited

- Adams, Ted. *The Value of Criticism and Pastiches*. 2006.
- Austen, Jane. "Jack & Alice." *The Works of Jane Austen*. Ed. R.W. Chapman. Vol. 6. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983. 12-28. Print.
- Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 1813. Print.
- Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Aragay, Mireia. "Possessing Jane Austen: Fidelity, Authorship, And Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* (1999)." *Literature Film Quarterly* 31.3 (2003): 177-185. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web.
- Barber, Nicholas. "Pride and Prejudice at 20: The scene that changed everything." BBC. N.p., 22 Sept. 2015. Web. 13 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150922-pride-and-prejudice-at-20-the-scene-that-changed-everything>>.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. 2nd ed. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Blackwell Publishing, 2004. 1235-41. Print.
- Booth, Paul. *Playing fans: negotiating fandom and media in the digital age*. N.p.: University of Iowa Press, 2015. Print.
- Callaghan, Dylan. "Jane Austen, Video Blogger." *Writers' Guild of America, West*. N.p., 27 Nov. 2013. Web. 31 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.wga.org/content/default.aspx?id=5357>>.
- Cartmell, Deborah. "Familiarity Versus Contempt: Becoming Jane And The Adaptation Genre." *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation: Literature, Film, and the Arts*. 25-33. Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter, 2012. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web.
- Coldwell, Andrea. "Imagining Future Janeites: Young Adult Adaptations and Austen's Legacy." *Persuasions* 35.1 (2014/12/01/): n. pag. Web.
- Dole, Carol M. "Austen, Class, And The American Market." *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. 58-78. Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 1998. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web.
- Fraiman, Susan. "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry* 21.4 (1995): 36-53. Print.
- Grahame-Smith, Seth, and Jane Austen. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Classic Regency*

- Romance--now with Ultraviolet Zombie Mayhem*. Philadelphia: Quirk, 2009. Print.
- Hunting, Kyra. "Furiously Franchised: Clueless, Convergence Culture, And The Female-Focused Franchise." *Cinema Journal* 53.3 (2014): 145-151. MLA International Bibliography. Web.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press, 2006.
- Jenkins, Henry. "Digital Land Grab." *MIT Technology Review*. N.p., 1 Mar. 2000. Web. 12 Apr. 2016. <<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/400696/digital-land-grab/>>.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. N.p.: Routedledge, 2012. Google Books. Web. 12 Apr. 2016. <<https://books.google.com/books?id=7ZHhRyfJdBAC&dq=textual+poachers+henry+jenkins>>.
- Johnson, Claudia L. "Austen cults and cultures". *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Eds. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Johnson, Claudia L. "The Divine Miss Jane: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies." *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*. Ed. Deidre Lynch. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. 25-44. Print.
- Kamenetz, Anya. "The Four-Year Career." *Fast Company*. N.p., 12 Jan. 2012. Web. 12 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.fastcompany.com/1802731/four-year-career>>.
- Lost in Austen*. Screenplay by Guy Andrews. Dir. Dan Zeff. Perf. Jemima Rooper. ITV, 2008. Film.
- Lynch, Deidre. "Introduction: Sharing with Our Neighbors". *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*. Ed. Deidre Lynch. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- MacBride, Elizabeth. "Why Women-Led Businesses Are The Best Bets." *Forbes*. N.p., 28 May 2015. Web. 12 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabethmacbride/2015/05/28/how-to-find-undervalued-high-growth-companies/#7ea9a09412f5>>.
- McFarland, K.M. "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies is one braaaaaainy mashup." *Wired*. N.p., 5 Feb. 2016. Web. 20 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.wired.com/2016/02/pride-prejudice-zombies-empowerment/>>.
- Meister, Jeanne. "Job Hopping Is the 'New Normal' for Millennials: Three Ways to Prevent a Human Resource Nightmare." *Forbes*. N.p., 14 Aug. 2012. Web. 12 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2012/08/14/job-hopping-is-the-new-normal-for-millennials-three-ways-to-prevent-a-human-resource-nightmare/#416159845508>>.

- Miller, D.A. "Austen's Attitude." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* (1995): 1-5. Print.
- Mulvey-Roberts, Marie. "Mashing Up Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* and the Limits of Adaptation." *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies, The* 13 (2014/06/01/): 17-37. Web.
- Nelson, Camilla. "Jane Austen Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem." *Adaptation* 6.3 (2013/01/01/): 338-54. Web.
- Pride and Prejudice*. Adapt. Andrew Davies. Dir. Simon Langton. Firth, Colin, perf. 1995. Film.
- Raitt, George. "Lost in Austen: Screen Adaptation in a Post-Feminist World." *Literature Film Quarterly* 40.2 (2012): 127-41. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web.
- Ridout, Alice. "Lost in Austen: Adaptation and the Feminist Politics of Nostalgia." *Adaptation* 4.1 (2011/01/01/): 14-27. Web.
- Roberts, Amy. "Why 'Pride And Prejudice And Zombies' Is The Perfect (Feminist) Date Movie." *Bustle*. N.p., 22 Oct. 2015. Web. 20 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.bustle.com/articles/118922-why-pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-is-the-perfect-feminist-date-movie>>.
- Romano, Aja. "Behind the scenes of 'The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.'" *The Daily Dot*. N.p., 27 Aug. 2012. Web. 31 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.dailydot.com/interviews/lizzie-bennet-diaries-cast-interview/>>.
- Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. N.p.: Taylor & Francis, 2005. Print.
- Spence, Jennifer, "Labours Of Love: Affect, Fan Labour, And The Monetization Of Fandom" (2014). *University of Western Ontario - Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. Print.
- The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Dir. Bernie Su. Prod. Jenni Powell. By Hank Green. Perf. Ashley Clements. YouTube. Pemberley Digital, 09 Apr. 2012. Web.
- Voigts-Virchow, Eckart. "Pride And Promiscuity And Zombies, Or: Miss Austen Mashed Up In The Affinity Spaces Of Participatory Culture." *Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation: Literature, Film, and the Arts*. 34-56. Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter, 2012. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web.
- Whyte, Marama. "Interview: 'Lizzie Bennet Diaries' showrunner Bernie Su on the end of the series." *Hypable*. N.p., 3 Apr. 2013. Web. 20 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.hypable.com/interview-lizzie-bennet-diaries-bernie-su-part-1/>>.
- Zerne, Lori Halvorsen. "Ideology In The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line* 34.1 (2013): *MLA International Bibliography*. Web.