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## **Pride and Prejudice 2.0**

Interpretations, Adaptations and Transformations of  
Jane Austen's Classic

In cooperation with Carolin Brühl, Anna Coogan and Ann-Sophie Treuheit

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## **Preface: Go, Lizzy, Go! Celebrating *Pride and Prejudice***

Over the last 200 years Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has been read by millions of readers all over the world – and by some of them innumerable times. It is them who allowed the text (or the experience of having read it) to remain with them wherever they went and it is the same readers who took the novel also with them through their lives and passed it on to younger generations. In other words, only due to its readership neither space nor time could counteract the continuous blossoming of the *Pride and Prejudice* phenomenon, a development that Marion Gymnich explores in her introduction.

As a result, the novel can certainly be called a globetrotter: It is rather likely that you can find an edition that was published in one of the languages that you read. But the complexities and challenges inherent in translation processes, on which Uwe Baumann's article focuses, are certainly not restricted to translations that involve 'primarily' a language transfer; *Pride and Prejudice* did not only cross borders; it has repeatedly been turned into a cultural go-between. Exhibiting a rather tricksterish demeanour, the text has been culturally appropriated, adapted and thus transferred into various (trans-)cultural realms. It is these transfer processes that Stella Butter's contribution analyses by referring to some of the most influential and certainly paradigmatic transcultural adaptations of the text rooted in Indian culture(s).

But *Pride and Prejudice* strides not only across continents, it has also travelled through centuries. Being a time traveller entails almost inevitably certain effects. First of all, any potential aging processes of the novel have been counteracted by the fact that its readers allowed it to participate in the progression of media history: *Pride and Prejudice* has resurfaced not only in many TV adaptations, such as the famous BBC version (1995), which is – especially due to the iconic 'wet shirt scene', as Imke Lichterfeld explains – one of the main sources for Darcymania, but also in video blogs such as *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, which are discussed by Elena Baeva, or online erotic rewritings, which are analysed by Silke Meyer. Secondly, *Pride and Prejudice* has naturally been swept along by literary history, which not only means that it was adapted for or worked into relatively

recent genres, such as Chick Lit (cf. Gisling Rohwer-Happe's contribution). It also follows that *Pride and Prejudice* was rewritten or modified by employing more established narrative frames, such as the genres of crime fiction (Ulrike Zimmermann) or the Gothic (Hanne Birk). Thirdly, due to the fact that readers are often also researchers, the time travelling of literary texts may have the effect that they are approached from ever new angles or analysed by taking contemporary research or discourses into account, so that perpetually new insights into the literary text can be gained. Examples in this volume include – among others – Josefine Joisten's sociocultural contextualisation of the character of Mrs Bennet and her intentions and Nadežda Rumjanceva's analysis of nineteenth-century illustrations of *Pride and Prejudice*.

The processes addressed above certainly are if not triggered then fuelled by the indisputable canonical status of Jane Austen's classic. And evidently, canonization (and its revision) are closely intertwined with teaching: As soon as or as long as a text is taught, it is read by students and talked and/or written about and thus kept 'alive'. Naturally, the validity of a text, its contemporariness or seemingly timeless relevance, is not only affirmed when the original is taught, but also when adaptations of a text are used in creative teaching situations such as those explored by Uwe Küchler.

The fact that students not only read *Pride and Prejudice* but even perform excellent research on the text was illustrated by the quality and number of responses to a 'call for papers' issued in autumn 2013, i.e. an essay competition that asked students to respond to the question whether Elizabeth Bennet really is a heroine for our times. Due to page restrictions it was regrettably not possible to include all student essays in this collection. Only two contributions could be published in full. While Bettina Burger focuses mainly on the character of the female protagonist in the original as well as in adaptations, fan fiction is discussed by Denise Burkhard and Simone Fleischer. In addition, the editors decided to publish a 'synergetic essay' consisting of excerpts from the other student essays in order to include as much research done by students as possible.

Furthermore, the presentation of selected students' work constituted a vital part of the anniversary festivities held at the University of Bonn in 2013. Coinciding with the novel's bicentenary the vitality and contemporariness of *Pride and Prejudice* was celebrated at a birthday party disguised as an academic conference called "*Pride & Prejudice 2.0 – Celebrating the Bicentenary of Jane Austen's Most Popular Novel*" in December 2013. And this is certainly the right moment to express our sincerest thanks to Anna Coogan, without whom the conference simply would not have taken place and the volume would not have been published, as well as to Carolin Brühl and Ann-Sophie Treuheit for their invaluable help and support at the conference and as members of the editorial team.



As the conference *Pride & Prejudice 2.0* revolved mainly around one single text it provided the participating scholars with the rare enough opportunity to discuss their work with others who naturally shared the same in-depth knowledge of the very same text. A fact which contributed further to the lively discussions and the enjoyable working atmosphere – for which we want to thank everyone who was there. It goes without saying that the shared experience of having read *Pride and Prejudice* (repeatedly) constitutes a condition for new research output (presented orally in 2013 and lying right in front of you in print in this very moment), but furthermore the presentations given at the conference and the contributions in this volume also do their very own job in keeping the novel alive and its protagonists present in our world(s).

Go, readers, go – thank you for reading *Pride and Prejudice*.



## 200 Years of Reading Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*; or Where the Literary Canon Meets Popular Culture

[Leonard:] "Why are you reading *Pride and Prejudice*?"

[Sheldon:] "I'll tell you why. Amy ruined *Raiders of the Lost Ark* for me, so now I'm trying to find something beloved to her and ruin that. [...] it turns out Amy's beloved *Pride and Prejudice* is a flawless masterpiece. He's got too much pride, she's got too much prejudice – it just works."

(*The Big Bang Theory*, Season 7, Episode 4 "The Raiders Minimization", 4:05–4:15;  
8:40–8:50)

### 1. Introduction

In October 1796, at the age of twenty, Jane Austen started working on a novel called *First Impressions*. Seventeen years later, in 1813, the novel was finally published as *Pride and Prejudice*, and Jane Austen sold the copyright for merely £110.<sup>1</sup> *Pride and Prejudice* is a literary text that has aged remarkably well; at the beginning of the twenty-first century this novel and its author appear to be as popular as ever. What sets *Pride and Prejudice* apart from many other literary classics is that it has become a true pop-cultural phenomenon, as the reference to Austen's novel in an episode of the enormously successful American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* already suggests. The reference to *Pride and Prejudice* in *The Big Bang Theory* is particularly telling since this sitcom is famous for being replete with references to popular culture, ranging from *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* to superhero comics. Beyond intertextual and intermedial references to Austen's novel in many movies, TV series and literary texts, there are several popular audiovisual adaptations, numerous sequels, rewritings and modernisations of *Pride and Prejudice*. The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* is for instance closely linked with the pop-cultural genre of chick lit, as Gisliind Rohwer-Happe shows in her contribution to this volume. Further evidence of the novel's status as a pop-

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1 Cf. TOMALIN, Claire. *Jane Austen: A Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998 [1997]. 220. For an account of Jane Austen's publishing career, see FERGUS, Jan. "The Professional Woman Writer." In: Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 12–31.

cultural icon is provided by the existence of a wide range of fan fiction and merchandise related to Jane Austen in general and *Pride and Prejudice* in particular, ranging from jewellery to bumper stickers.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as Allison Thompson observes, it seems “ironic that an author who used a character’s [for instance Mr. Collins’s, M.G.] obsession with material items as a sure sign of snobbery, boorishness, or moral deficiency should now have so many material goods associated with her”.<sup>3</sup> While *Pride and Prejudice* has made its way into popular culture, it of course also continues to be taught and discussed regularly in academic contexts.<sup>4</sup> Heta Pyrhönen even argues that

[c]ontemporary culture knows two Jane Austens. The first Jane Austen is the literary innovator respected for her groundbreaking contributions to the art of the novel. In her six novels she honed a bold ironic style, helped establish a sense of character as an individual, and experimented with various strategies for representing consciousness; in particular, she excelled in new ways of employing free indirect discourse. [...] The second Austen is the creator of a memorable and emotionally appealing fictional world where delightful characters are looking for true love but always encounter various obstacles before happiness is theirs. The status of this Austen as primarily a world-maker is best illustrated by the staggering number of adaptations of her novels into various media. The darling of the general reading and movie-going public, this Austen wrote romances set in a world that fosters immersion for the reader.<sup>5</sup>

The key to the lasting success of *Pride and Prejudice* seems to be that it is situated at the intersection of the literary canon and popular culture. In other words, it

2 Cf. Juliette WELLS’s observation: “Austen’s name sells merchandise, especially to women” (“True Love Waits: Austen and the Christian Romance in the Contemporary U.S.” In: *Persuasions On-Line* 28,2 (2008): n.p.).

3 THOMPSON, Allison. “Trinkets and Treasures: Consuming Jane Austen.” In: *Persuasions On-Line* 28,2 (2008): n.p.; THOMPSON distinguishes three different types of Austen-related merchandise: “The first group might be called ‘evocative’ and includes the items that evoke either the author or the Regency period in general. The second major category of Austen artifacts consists of the crafts and games created largely by individual fans and marketed principally, though not exclusively, through the internet. The third category of Austen artifacts embraces the hip and ironic, items that create an image of Austen directly opposed to the traditional romantic Austen.”

4 A substantial part of the research that has been done on Austen in recent years focuses on the adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* in other media or by other writers, since “[...] in the last twenty years Austen’s works, and *Pride and Prejudice* in particular, have become such an inherent part of cultural discourse that it is becoming more and more difficult to separate the original novel from the layers of tributes, adaptations, interpretations, reconstructions and reworkings.” (TERENTOWICZ-FOTYGA, Urszula. “Lost in Austen? The Afterlife of the Literary Classic.” In: Katarzyna Pisarska and Andrzej Sławomir Kowalczyk (eds.). *The Lives of Texts: Exploring the Metaphor*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012. 263–75, 264.)

5 PYRHÖNEN, Heta. “Generic Stability despite Hybridization: The Austenian Dominant Construction Principle.” In: Michael Basseler, Ansgar Nünning and Christine Schwanecke (eds.). *The Cultural Dynamics of Generic Change in Contemporary Fiction: Theoretical Frameworks, Genres and Model Interpretations*. Trier: WVT, 2013. 183–200, 183.

appears to cater to a remarkable range of tastes and lends itself to being adapted for very different purposes.

## 2. The growing interest in Jane Austen

In the early nineteenth century, Austen's novels did not start out as bestsellers.<sup>6</sup> Still, right from the beginning, *Pride and Prejudice* was more successful than Austen's first novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, which had been published in 1811. The famous English playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan for instance "recommended it as one of the cleverest things he had ever read".<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the popularity of her second novel "eventually meant the end of Austen's anonymity".<sup>8</sup> In the first decades after Austen's death, the interest in her novels remained moderate, but one can observe an increasing popularity of her works from the 1880s onwards.<sup>9</sup> This interest was mainly triggered by the publication of James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1870 as well as by "the wider publication of Austen's novels singly and in sets, ranging from Routledge's cheap issues of 1883, and the Sixpenny Novel series starting in 1886 [...]; to the quasi-scholarly ten-volume set of R. Brimley Johnson for Dent in 1892, reissued five times in as many years."<sup>10</sup> In particular the illustrated editions which appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century enhanced the popularity of Austen's novels.<sup>11</sup>

Today *Pride and Prejudice* has come to be seen as a prototype for chick lit as well as for romance plots in a wider sense, and it is more or less taken for granted that women constitute the majority of Jane Austen readers and fans. Yet the first well-known Jane Austen enthusiasts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were actually men belonging to the cultural elite, including Thomas Babington Macaulay, R.W. Chapman and Winston Churchill.<sup>12</sup> Rudyard Kip-

6 Cf. JOHNSON, Claudia L. "Austen Cults and Cultures." In: Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 211–26, 211.

7 TOMALIN. *Jane Austen: A Life*. 220.

8 FERGUS. "The Professional Woman Writer." 22.

9 Cf. JOHNSON. "Austen Cults and Cultures." 211.

10 Ibid.

11 Cf. MAUNDER, Andrew. "Making Heritage and History: The 1894 Illustrated *Pride and Prejudice*." In: *Nineteenth Century Studies* 20 (2006): 147–69, 148: "In the case of the publishing history of Jane Austen, illustrated editions of her novels are intricately involved with the rehabilitation of the novelist in the later nineteenth century as a cultural icon." In her contribution to this volume, Nadežda Rumjanceva takes a closer look at the significance and the aesthetics of selected nineteenth-century illustrations of *Pride and Prejudice*.

12 Cf. LOOSER, Devoney. "The Cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author." In: Janet Todd (ed.).

ling's short story "The Janeites" (1926) also pays tribute to the appeal Austen's novels had for a male readership. In this story, "the shared love of Jane Austen generates community among the officers at the front during World War I, and their discussions of Austen provide an oasis of sanity amidst the chaos of war".<sup>13</sup> After the First World War "Austen's novels were [...] recommended to British veterans suffering post-traumatic shock syndrome".<sup>14</sup> According to Claudia Johnson, in particular the "limited dimensions of Austen's fictional world could feel rehabilitative" and the notions of femininity implied in Austen's novels could help to reaffirm a masculinity which had been challenged by the war experience.<sup>15</sup> So far there has been little research on the appeal *Pride and Prejudice* had specifically for female readers in the nineteenth century. We know, however, that feminist writer and literary critic Virginia Woolf joined the (male) chorus of praise for her nineteenth-century predecessor at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Woolf enthusiastically referred to *Pride and Prejudice* as a "polished masterpiece blazing in universal fame".<sup>17</sup>

The lasting popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* has also been displayed in the countless transformations into other genres and media which this particular novel has been subject to. Since the late nineteenth century, *Pride and Prejudice* has repeatedly been adapted for the stage. Already in 1895 Rosina Filippi published a collection of shorter dramatic texts called *Duologues and Scenes from the Novels of Jane Austen, Arranged and Adapted for Drawing Room Performance*. This collection consists of seven scenes, two of which were derived from *Pride and Prejudice*.<sup>18</sup> In the following decades, material based on *Pride and Prejudice* continued to be used frequently in dramatic readers; moreover, the first play based on the entire novel was written by Mary Medbery MacKaye in 1906.<sup>19</sup> In the following decades a number of further plays based on *Pride and Prejudice* were staged, including one by Gopal Chimanj Bhate, which was written in Marathi, in 1912.<sup>20</sup> Thus, contrary to what one might assume, Gurinder Chadha's movie *Bride and Prejudice* from 2004 is not the earliest instance of an Indian rewriting

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*The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 174–85, 175–77.

13 FRANCUS, Marilyn. "Austen Therapy: *Pride and Prejudice* and Popular Culture." In: *Persuasions On-Line* 30,2 (2010): n.p.

14 JOHNSON. "Austen Cults and Cultures." 217.

15 Ibid.

16 Cf. LOOSER. "The Cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author." 178.

17 WOOLF, Virginia. "Jane Austen at Sixty." In: Susannah Carson (ed.). *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen*. New York: Random House, 2009 [1925]. 259–68, 262.

18 Cf. LOOSER. "The Cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author." 179–80.

19 Cf. ibid. 180.

20 Cf. ibid.

of Austen's novel. There are also a number of musicals based on *Pride and Prejudice*; the early examples include an American musical from 1959 and a South African musical from 1964.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. The international success of *Pride and Prejudice*

As some of the examples just mentioned already suggest, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has turned into an international success. In the United States in particular, Austen's novel has been received enthusiastically, and many of the rewritings and modernisations of the story have been created by American authors. But the success of *Pride and Prejudice* is not limited to predominantly Anglophone cultures, as the history of translations of this particular novel indicates. The first language *Pride and Prejudice* was translated into was French. In fact, rivalling French translations were published already in 1821 and 1822.<sup>22</sup> These translations modified the original text in various ways, however. While some of the departures from the original may certainly be due to linguistic differences between English and French, the changes seem to have been motivated primarily by considerations resulting from current literary taste and expectations associated with the genre. As Valérie Cossy has shown, many features of the early translations into French can be attributed to the fairly rigid system of literary genres that French literature relied upon at the time: "By the standards of the French novel, the realist and sentimental modes excluded each other [...]. [...] Austen's novels, centering on courtship and marriage, were assimilated to sentimental novels."<sup>23</sup> Thus, many of the characteristics of Austen's novels which result from her realist approach to the depiction of society are quite simply 'lost in translation', which of course alters the tone of the text significantly. For instance allusions to "money and the marriage market [...]" are omitted entirely from the first French translation<sup>24</sup> since mundane references of this kind were deemed inappropriate in French sentimental novels at that time. Moreover, the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet was reinterpreted and turned into what was regarded as a "more [...] respectable heroine: she speaks less, and with a less forthright manner".<sup>25</sup> The history of translations into German can likewise be traced back to the first half of the nineteenth century; the first translation into

21 Cf. *ibid.* 183.

22 Cf. Dow, Gillian. "Translations." In: Janet Todd (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 122–36, 122.

23 Cossy, Valérie. *Jane Austen in Switzerland: A Study of the Early French Translations*. Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 2006. 123.

24 Dow. "Translations." 125.

25 *Ibid.*

German was published in 1830.<sup>26</sup> The first translations into a number of further European languages – including Finnish, Danish, Norwegian, Spanish and Italian – were only published in the 1920s or 1930s.<sup>27</sup> Since the 1950s, *Pride and Prejudice* has been translated into even more languages. There have for instance been several Turkish translations since the early 1950s,<sup>28</sup> and Feng Zhang points out that *Pride and Prejudice* has also been popular in China since the 1950s, when an influential translation was published despite the political climate in China at the time, which hardly encouraged Chinese readers to appreciate a romance set in the English gentry in the early nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Today, there are several different translations of *Pride and Prejudice* into Chinese.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to translations, intertextual references and rewritings in many different literatures provide further evidence of the international recognition of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as an important reference point. An early example of a Japanese rewriting of Austen's novel is Nogami Yaeko's novel *Machiko*, serialised from 1928–1930, which, as Emily Auerbach puts it, “features a kimono-clad heroine initially refusing a proposal from the haughty head of the Kawai Financial Group.”<sup>31</sup> A further interesting case in point is the Japanese novel *Yume No Ukihashi* (*The Floating Bridge of Dreams*, 1971) by Kurahashi Yumiko, who is known for her experimental and controversial writing style. In *The Floating Bridge of Dreams* the author has drawn upon Jane Austen's works and has combined them with ideas, motifs and patterns from Japanese classics. The novel focuses on a young woman called Keiko who has to cope with her parents' adulterous affairs and the repercussions these have for her own life when she finds out that she and her boyfriend Kōichi might actually be brother and sister.<sup>32</sup> The intertextual references to Austen in Yumiko's novel are marked by the fact that the protagonist is shown to be working on a thesis on Jane Austen. According to Ebine Hiroshi, the similarities between *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Floating Bridge of Dreams* are particularly apparent in the characterisation of the female protagonist:

26 Cf. *ibid.* 126. In his contribution to this volume, Uwe Baumann explores the history of translations into German in more detail.

27 Cf. Dow. “Translations.” 126–28.

28 Cf. TEKCAN, Rana. “Notes on a Turkish Edition of *Pride and Prejudice*: An Editor's Perspective.” In: *Persuasions* 30 (2008): 235–40.

29 Cf. ZHANG, Feng. “A Brief Analysis on the Two Chinese Versions of *Pride and Prejudice* from the Perspective of Ideology.” In: *English Language Teaching* 3,3 (2010): 194–97, 194.

30 Cf. *ibid.*

31 AUERBACH, Emily. “Pride and Proliferations.” In: Janet Todd (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 186–97, 190.

32 Cf. HIROSHI, Ebine. “Experimenting with Jane Austen: Kurahashi Yumiko.” In: *Persuasions On-Line* 30,2 (2010): n.p.



Her [Keiko's] deliberate conservatism is part of a more general independence of character that is able to disregard not only shallow ideas of political radicalism but also conventional codes of female behavior. Keiko's sense of herself as a 'rational creature' is categorical; she is as confident as Elizabeth Bennet of her ability to be mistress of her own life [...].<sup>33</sup>

This assessment hints at some of the potential interpretations of a character like Elizabeth Bennet in a Japanese context. As Juliette Wells observes, "cross-cultural adaptations depend, of course, on the capacity of Austen's central themes and characters to be transposed compellingly into other languages and cultures [...]. In other words, such adaptations implicitly rely on the perceived universality of Austen's primary concerns."<sup>34</sup> The countless references to *Pride and Prejudice* in different cultures indeed suggest that the concerns of this particular novel have been regarded as universal by many authors, readers and viewers.

Further evidence of the fact that *Pride and Prejudice* translates well into many different cultural contexts is provided by Azar Nafisi's memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003). In this text, Nafisi, who used to teach English and American literature at the University of Tehran before the Islamic Revolution and migrated to the United States in 1997, discusses her former students' reactions to several works of Western literature, including *Pride and Prejudice*. In particular Austen's emphasis on social norms that turn marriage into the only respectable goal in a woman's life resonated with her students. She recalls one of them saying:

'The Islamic Republic has taken us back to Jane Austen's times. God bless the arranged marriage! Nowadays, girls marry either because their families force them, or to get green cards, or to secure financial stability, or for sex – they marry for all kinds of reasons, but rarely for love.'<sup>35</sup>

As the example just mentioned shows, it is in particular the way Austen addresses the plight of women in a society that imposes rigid norms and expectations on women which lends itself as a starting point for modern rewritings. One of the more recent expressions of the universal appeal of the concerns addressed in *Pride and Prejudice* is Gurinder Chadha's movie *Bride and Prejudice*, which was released in 2004 and which, as Elena Oliete Aldea puts it, "includes elements of Hollywood, Bollywood and British cinematic traditions to create a hybrid transnational film".<sup>36</sup> The movie takes the character con-

33 Cf. *ibid.*

34 WELLS. "True Love Waits." n.p.

35 NAFISI, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. London/New York: Fourth Estate, 2004 [2003]. 258.

36 ALDEA, Elena Oliete. "Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*: A Transnational Journey

stellations and tensions that one encounters in Austen's novel as a starting point and adapts them in order to create a space for articulating the concerns of upper middle-class women in India at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. The impact of audiovisual adaptations

Audiovisual adaptations have certainly played a major part in establishing the current iconic position of *Pride and Prejudice* in popular culture. Claire Grogan, for instance, argues that "[t]hrough her [Austen's] novels have risen steadily in popularity since their first publication in the early 1800s it is the more recent film adaptations that have catapulted first Austen's works and then her person to their current celebrity status."<sup>38</sup> The first film based on *Pride and Prejudice* was produced by MGM in 1940. The black-and-white movie was directed by Robert Z. Leonard; the script was written by Aldous Huxley and Jane Murfin; and the movie starred Laurence Olivier as Darcy and Greer Garson as Elizabeth Bennet. This version of *Pride and Prejudice* departs in several respects from the novel: A number of scenes have been deleted, added or changed extensively, including the ending, where *all* Bennet daughters are provided with eligible suitors. Some of the characters have been modified in terms of their characterisation. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, for instance, has been turned into a grumpy but essentially well-meaning old lady, who visits Elizabeth in order to support her nephew's proposal. Moreover, the costumes suggest that the story is set in Victorian England rather than in the Regency period, a fact that "allowed the actors and actresses to be dressed in obviously *Gone with the Wind* fashion", which means that "Elizabeth Bennet looks [...] suspiciously like Scarlett O'Hara".<sup>39</sup> Jessica Durgan aptly describes the 1940 movie as "a comic romp, rather than dramatic adaptation, for wartime England".<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the interpretation of Austen's novel in the 1940 movie has been regarded as an attempt to create a positive image of England, the future ally of the United States in the Second World War, by

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through Time and Space." In: *International Journal of English Studies* 12,1 (2012): 167–82, 168.

37 Stella Butter examines this particular transformation of Austen's novel in more detail in her article in this volume.

38 GROGAN, Claire. "From *Pride and Prejudice* to *Lost in Austen* and Back Again: Reading Television Reading Novels." In: Tiffany Potter (ed.). *Women, Popular Culture, and the Eighteenth Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. 292–307, 292.

39 FAVRET, Mary A. "Free and Happy: Jane Austen in America." In: Deidre Lynch (ed.). *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000. 166–87, 181.

40 DURGAN, Jessica. "Framing Heritage: The Role of Cinematography in *Pride and Prejudice*." In: *Persuasions On-Line* 27,2 (2007): n.p.

featuring members of the English upper class who may appear to be snobbish at first sight, but are essentially good-natured.<sup>41</sup> This approach explains the re-interpretation of Lady Catherine's attitude which was referred to above: One of the least likeable characters from Austen's novel for once is not shown as someone who is entirely governed by class prejudice; instead, she "learns to admire Elizabeth and therefore favor the match between her and Darcy".<sup>42</sup> In addition, according to this interpretation, even "the marriages at the end of the film represent the democratization of the upper classes in Britain".<sup>43</sup>

There are also a few TV adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, including BBC productions from 1967 and 1980. These, however, have had very little impact compared to what has arguably turned out to be the most influential adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* so far: the BBC mini-series broadcast in 1995, a production that appears to be responsible for much of the intense interest in Austen's novel in recent years. As far as academic responses are concerned, the majority of papers addressing the BBC adaptation are quite positive, at times even enthusiastic; yet there has also been some harsh criticism.<sup>44</sup> Due to its enormous popularity, the BBC series has by now become "an important inter-text with a life of its own, examined and quoted on an equal footing with the novel".<sup>45</sup> Many literary and audiovisual versions of *Pride and Prejudice* have paid tribute to this particular adaptation of the text, including Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the movie based on Fielding's novel and the TV series *Lost in Austen*. What has made this BBC production famous is – more than anything else – its portrayal of Mr. Darcy. Laurie Kaplan, for instance, refers to this audiovisual adaptation as "the Colin Firth series",<sup>46</sup> and Olivia Murphy argues that "[t]he impetus for [the] sudden explosion in interest in Jane Austen can be traced to one week in September 1995, when ten million people in Britain watched Mr. Darcy dive into his pond at Pemberley".<sup>47</sup> Devoney Looser argues

41 Cf. LAWSON-PEEBLES, Robert. "European Conflict and Reconstruction of English Fiction." In: *Yearbook of English Studies* 26 (1996): 1–13.

42 BROSH, Liora. "Consuming Women: The Representation of Women in the 1940 Adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*." In: *Quarterly Review of Film & Video* 17,2 (2000): 147–59, 149.

43 Ibid.

44 For a very negative assessment of the BBC production, see HANNON, Patricia. "Austen Novels and Austen Films: Incompatible Worlds?" In: *Persuasions* 18 (1996): 24–32.

45 TERENTOWICZ-FOTYGA. "Lost in Austen? The Afterlife of the Literary Classic." 265. In a similar vein, Veerle VAN STEENHUYSE refers to the BBC adaptation as "a secondary canon" (VAN STEENHUYSE, Veerle. "Jane Austen Fan Fiction and the Situated Fantext: The Example of Pamela Aidan's *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman*." In: *English Text Construction* 4,2 (2011): 165–85, 178).

46 KAPLAN, Laurie. "Lost in Austen and Generation-Y Janeites." In: *Persuasions On-Line* 30,2 (2010): n.p.

47 MURPHY, Olivia. "Books, Bras and Bridget Jones: Reading Adaptions of *Pride and Prejudice*."

that the BBC series constitutes a turning point in readings of *Pride and Prejudice* in so far as it “marked the moment that Darcy became for many readers and viewers the imaginative centre of *Pride and Prejudice*, taking that role over from Elizabeth”.<sup>48</sup>

While the BBC adaptation has certainly drawn more attention to Mr. Darcy, the character of Elizabeth also remains crucial for the attractiveness of *Pride and Prejudice*. After all, what makes Mr. Darcy attractive is not merely the way his physical presence is depicted on screen. Arguably he is also interesting for (female) viewers because he falls in love with a woman like Elizabeth Bennet, i. e. with a woman who is far from perfect and whose independent spirit rather than her looks turns out to be what makes her attractive. In *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth, who is initially considered to be merely “tolerable”<sup>49</sup> by Mr. Darcy, is obviously the character female readers are invited to identify with, a fact that is emphasised by her function as focalizer in many scenes throughout the novel. The paper by Bettina Burger in this volume explores a number of reasons for the lasting popularity of Austen’s female protagonist.

The movie from 2005 starring Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen to a certain extent shifts the interest from Darcy to Elizabeth again, showing a lively, independent and in many respects very modern version of Austen’s heroine. This film constitutes a milestone for the British film industry, since it marks a departure from some of the conventions of the so-called ‘heritage film’, thus presenting Austen’s Regency England in a new, arguably more realist fashion. Heritage films, which thrived in the 1980s, tended to “have a narrow and typically older audience” and their producers employed “period settings (usually the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries) and literary antecedents [to] align them with the cultural capital of ‘higher’ art forms like literature and theatre”.<sup>50</sup> In the 1980s the heritage film primarily catered to “middle-class values of conservative Thatcherism” by “turning Britain into a cultural museum”.<sup>51</sup> In addition to modernising Elizabeth Bennet in terms of her demeanour and her body language, the 2005 movie also updated the heritage genre by means of introducing a “gritty realism”<sup>52</sup> and departing from the relatively static cinematographic style that had come to be associated with heritage films. Making use of strategies that were meant to modernise the characters as well as the audiovisual style, the 2005 movie contributed to keeping the popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* alive, ad-

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In: *Sydney Studies* 31 (2005): 21–39, 21. In her contribution to this volume, Imke Lichterfeld examines the impact of Colin Firth’s portrayal of Mr. Darcy in more detail.

48 LOOSER. “The Cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author.” 183.

49 AUSTEN, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985 [1813]. 59.

50 DURGAN. “Framing Heritage.” n.p.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

dressings a potentially younger target audience. Of course the popularity of actress Keira Knightley, who had become famous due to her roles in movies such as *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) and *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003) enhanced the attractiveness of Elizabeth Bennet for a younger audience.

*Pride and Prejudice* has not only been appropriated by Hollywood and Bollywood, but also by what some critics refer to as 'Mollywood', i. e. the Mormon film industry. The term 'Mollywood' has been used to subsume

relatively low-budget Latter-day films of various genres, created by Mormon directors and companies, addressed either to the Latter-day population and thus distributed within limited geographical areas with a high density of Mormons, or to a wider audience with the purpose of educating it on Mormonism.<sup>53</sup>

In 2003 the 'Mollywood' film *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter-Day Comedy* was produced – a movie that (at least on DVD) has presumably been distributed more widely than most productions of the Mormon film industry. Similar to literary rewritings of the novel that are associated with the American evangelical scene, which will be discussed below, the movie directed by Andrew Black privileges a conservative stance towards sexuality; but at least "Austen's readiness to apply pointed satire to a member of the clergy"<sup>54</sup> is reflected in the 'Mollywood' production, given the fact that the Mormon preacher Collins in *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter-Day Comedy* appears to be every bit as ridiculous and pompous as Austen's Mr. Collins.

The audiovisual versions of Austen's novel even go beyond movies and TV productions. Recently, *Pride and Prejudice* has also been adapted in new audiovisual formats that are characteristic of the Internet, as Elena Baeva shows in her analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a video blog on YouTube, in this volume. Moreover, there have already been several attempts to use Austen's novel as the starting point for a videogame. Apparently, the possibilities of transforming and updating Jane Austen's classic in new media are virtually endless. The Internet has also provided a space for *Pride and Prejudice* fan fiction, a facet of the reception of Austen's novel that Denise Burkhard and Simone Fleischer look into in their contribution to this volume.

The increased interest in Jane Austen since the mid-1990s has affected the British tourism industry. Both places associated with Austen's life and locations that have appeared in one of the audiovisual adaptations of her novels have benefited from Austen's popularity, attracting additional visitors because of their association with Austen – a phenomenon that Sarah Parry refers to as 'the

53 ANNUS, Irén. "Trans-Culturing Jane Austen: The Mollywood Adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*." In: *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies* 8,1 (2012): n.p.

54 WELLS. "True Love Waits." n.p.

Pemberley Effect' in her eponymous article.<sup>55</sup> There seems to be an immediate impact of audiovisual adaptations on 'Austen tourism'. In comparison to the previous year, the number of visitors to Lyme Park almost tripled after the house had been presented as 'Pemberley' by the BBC in 1995.<sup>56</sup> The marketing of those houses that have become famous because of their appearance in audiovisual adaptations of Austen's novels relies on the interest in prolonging the 'Austen experience'. Basildon Park, which appeared as Netherfield in the 2005 movie, for example, started organising special activities centred on Jane Austen:

During the special Jane Austen Weekends held in the summers at Basildon Park since the movie was released, many of the staff dress in Regency costume, there are Regency-themed displays and talks within the house, the soundtrack from the movie is played along part of the visitor route through the house, and there is a Jane Austen-themed children's trail.<sup>57</sup>

Parry emphasises that the name Jane Austen has come to fulfil the function of a 'brand name', which is apparent in 'Austen tourism', but also in the selling of merchandise, as was pointed out above.<sup>58</sup>

## 5. *Pride and Prejudice* sequels and rewritings

All novels by Jane Austen have given rise to a number of sequels (in the form of narrative and dramatic texts) which constitute "narrative prolongations that seek to write beyond the (happy) endings of Austen's novels".<sup>59</sup> Yet *Pride and Prejudice* is clearly the novel by Austen that has provoked the largest number of such sequels.<sup>60</sup> The idea of continuing the story beyond the ending provided in the novel can be traced back to Jane Austen herself. As Emily Auerbach points out,

Austen's nephew reports in his 1870 *Memoir* that his Aunt Jane 'would, if asked, tell us many little particulars about the subsequent career of some of her people', including the fates of the two unmarried sisters of *Pride and Prejudice*: 'Kitty Bennet was satisfactorily married to a clergyman near Pemberley, while Mary obtained nothing

55 Cf. PARRY, Sarah. "The Pemberley Effect: Austen's Legacy to the Historic House Industry." In: *Persuasions* 30 (2008): 113–22.

56 Cf. *ibid.* 116.

57 *Ibid.* 120.

58 Cf. *ibid.* 113.

59 MUNFORD, Rebecca. "'The Future of Pemberley': Emma Tennant, the 'Classic Progression' and Literary Trespassing." In: Gillian Dow and Clare Hanson (eds.). *Uses of Austen: Jane's Afterlives*. New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 59–76, 60.

60 Cf. MUNFORD. "'The Future of Pemberley'." 64; AUERBACH. "Pride and Proliferations." 187.

higher than one of her Uncle Philips' clerks' and became an admired personage in Meryton.<sup>61</sup>

This account by her nephew suggests that Jane Austen stayed true to the pattern of the romance plot when imagining a possible 'future' for her characters. Many sequels to *Pride and Prejudice* have since proceeded in a very similar fashion. Taken together, they sketch an enormous range of different happy endings for the minor characters. But the sequels of course also reveal a strong interest in exploring the married life of Jane and Bingley, Lydia and Wickham and, most of all, Elizabeth and Darcy.

The existence of an astonishing number of published sequels plainly suggests that readers just cannot get enough of *Pride and Prejudice*. The phenomenon of sequels written by other authors is familiar from popular culture and in particular from the field of fan fiction. Austen sequels in fact display a number of features one tends to associate with fan fiction as well as with popular culture in general. There are for instance occasionally 'crossovers' between Austen's novels. Such crossovers at times even lead to weddings 'across books', such as Kitty Bennet marrying James Morland from *Northanger Abbey*.<sup>62</sup> The fact that sequels often feature minor characters from the original text as main characters also corresponds to a pattern that is well-known from fan fiction. There are novels exploring Mary Bennet's future (e.g. Colleen McCullough's *The Independence of Miss Mary Bennet*, 2008),<sup>63</sup> novels focusing on the 'bad boy' George Wickham (e.g. Amanda Grange's *Wickham's Diary*, 2011) or on Charlotte Lucas/Collins (e.g. Elizabeth Newark's *Consequence, or Whatever Became of Charlotte Lucas*, 1997). Another case in point is the play *The Heiress of Rosings* by Cedric Wallis, which was first performed in 1955 and which turns Anne de Bourgh into the protagonist, who is arguably one of the most marginal characters in *Pride and Prejudice* and thus presumably a relatively unlikely candidate for a sequel. Other sequels explore the fate of the 'next generation' (for example Elizabeth Aston's *Mr. Darcy's Daughters*, 2003) or feature foreign (usually French or American) cousins, thus enriching the set of familiar characters in order to generate new complications and plot developments.

Sequels to *Pride and Prejudice* were published throughout the twentieth century, but the number of sequels published each year has multiplied since the 1990s, when a number of popular audiovisual adaptations of Austen's novels

61 AUERBACH. "Pride and Proliferations." 186.

62 Cf. GLANCY, Kathleen. "What Happened Next? or The Many Husbands of Georgiana Darcy." In: *Persuasions* 11 (1989): 110–16. Glancy provides many examples.

63 For an interpretation of the character of the 'middle daughter' Mary in *Pride and Prejudice*, see SCOTT, Steven D. "Making Room in the Middle: Mary in *Pride and Prejudice*." In: Bruce Stovel and Lynn Weinlos Gregg (eds.). *The Talk in Jane Austen*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002. 225–36.

were produced, making Jane Austen an even more popular author.<sup>64</sup> While many sequels to *Pride and Prejudice* seek to imitate the tone and the value system of the original text, others depart from Austen's novel in various ways, for example in terms of their sexual politics, thus potentially giving rise to a feminist critique. Literary critics have tended to react to the sequels with mixed emotions; a number of sequels have even been accused of drawing upon the very literary traditions that Austen parodied in her works, i. e. in particular the melodramatic mode as well as the Gothic tradition.<sup>65</sup> Emma Tennant's sequels, including *Pemberley* (1993) and *Pemberley Revisited* (2005), for instance have been criticised for turning Elizabeth Bennet into a melodramatic character and making Pemberley resemble a Gothic mansion.<sup>66</sup> Mr. Darcy often plays a particularly prominent role in recent sequels and rewritings, which "often add his childhood background, fill in gaps in the novel (dialogue showing Darcy convincing Wickham to marry Lydia), thaw his reserve, follow him into the bedroom and add his tormented internal thoughts."<sup>67</sup> Such sequels exemplify the general tendency to pay particular attention to the male protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice* which can be traced back to the audiovisual representation of this character in recent filmic versions and specifically to Colin Firth's interpretation of the character in the 1995 BBC production.

Jointly, the BBC series from 1995 and the 2005 movie have contributed to the fact that the number of novels based on *Pride and Prejudice* has multiplied; Devoney Looser claims that "[f]rom 2009 to 2011, at least 130 *Pride and Prejudice*-inspired novels appeared in print."<sup>68</sup> The majority of these novels are either straightforward sequels or rewritings of the nineteenth-century novel, or they transfer the plot and the characters to a contemporary setting. The most well-known examples of a modernisation of *Pride and Prejudice* include Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), which has been seen as "the first classic of chick lit",<sup>69</sup> and the TV series *Lost in Austen*, which is discussed in Uwe K  chler's article in this volume. *Pride and Prejudice* (as well as other novels by Austen) has also been appropriated by a group of writers in the United States who are associated with evangelical Protestantism and aim specifically at an evangelical female readership, transferring the plot into a contemporary evangelical context and presenting the protagonists as resolute Protestant Chris-

64 Cf. MUNFORD. "‘The Future of Pemberley’." 61.

65 Cf. *ibid.* 65.

66 Cf. *ibid.* 65–66.

67 AUERBACH. "Pride and Proliferations." 188.

68 LOOSER. "The Cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author." 183.

69 RIDOUT, Alice. "Lost in Austen: Adaptation and the Feminist Politics of Nostalgia." In: *Adaptation* 4,1 (2010): 14–27, 16.



tians.<sup>70</sup> Their texts encompass both novels and advice books, such as “Sarah Arthur’s *Dating Mr. Darcy: A Smart Girl’s Guide to Sensible Romance* (2005) [...] [which] coaches young evangelical readers through reflections on themselves and their potential marriage partners, using *Pride and Prejudice* as a touchstone”.<sup>71</sup> While *Pride and Prejudice* has been appropriated by writers associated with evangelical groups in the United States, it has likewise inspired numerous pornographic rewritings, as Silke Meyer shows in her contribution to this volume. This emphasises that *Pride and Prejudice* can indeed be read very differently, depending on one’s world view.

Moreover, in recent years *Pride and Prejudice* has been a major source of generic hybrids. There are for instance numerous crime novels derived from Austen’s novels, including Carrie Bebris’s series of ‘Mr and Mrs Darcy mysteries’ and P.D. James’s *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011), which Ulrike Zimmermann examines in her article in this volume. There are also many hybrid novels which seek to inscribe Austen’s classic into the paradigm of Gothic or horror fiction, as Hanne Birk shows in her contribution. In Jonathan Pinnock’s *Mrs Darcy versus the Aliens* (2011), the Regency-style setting is even combined with twentieth-century alien abduction lore. It is noteworthy that even such rather radical revisions of Austen’s comedy of manners do not necessarily give up the romance plot. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which was published in 2009, for instance, presents a heroine who is “physically strong, capable of independence, and yet still chained to the necessity of finding the ideal mate that is the touchstone of the original text.”<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth’s fighting skills certainly do not reduce her value on the marriage market. In fact, as Andrea Ruthven points out, “it is her very prowess in fighting the zombie offensive, her abilities with a sword and her capacity for killing which win her the esteem of those around her and garner her the greatest prize of all – Mr. Darcy, a rich and handsome (and equally well-trained) husband.”<sup>73</sup> In recent years, *Pride and Prejudice* has also repeatedly been transformed into graphic novels, including a series of graphic novels published by Marvel, the publishing house best known for its comics about superheroes.<sup>74</sup>

70 On these rewritings of Austen’s novels, see in particular WELLS. “True Love Waits.”

71 WELLS. “True Love Waits.” n.p.

72 RUTHVEN, Andrea. “*Pride and Prejudice* and Post-Feminist Zombies.” In: María Alonso Alonso (ed.). *Weaving New Perspectives Together: Some Reflections on Literary Studies*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012. 155–70, 155.

73 Ibid. 155–56.

74 Cf. BURNINGHAM, Hilary and Rachel Phillips ILLUS. *The Graphic Novels Series: Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen*. London: Evans Brothers, 2004 and BUTLER, Nancy and Hugo PETRUS. *Pride and Prejudice: Adopted from the Novel by Jane Austen*. New York: Marvel, 2009.

## 6. Conclusion: The many uses of *Pride and Prejudice* today

What do the countless references to, adaptations and rewritings of *Pride and Prejudice* tell us about the reception of this canonical text today? Many of these references can be regarded as a straightforward tribute to Jane Austen and to the lasting appeal of her literary works. In addition to borrowing plot elements and character constellations from Austen's novel, the modern versions of *Pride and Prejudice* often incorporate verbal or visual tributes to the literary text and/or to its author. Very often these tributes appear in the form of quotations from the novel, but they may also involve visual strategies, such as showing a portrait of Jane Austen. Nora Ephron's romantic comedy *You've Got Mail* (1998) starring Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks, which may also be seen as a modernised version of *Pride and Prejudice*, is a case in point. It shows the protagonists discussing and reading Austen's novel (and quarrelling about its meaning in a style that is clearly reminiscent of Elizabeth and Darcy).

Many rewritings of and intertextual references to *Pride and Prejudice* are based on the premise that Austen's novel, the prototypical romance, caters to an escapist desire on the part of the female protagonist as well as the female reader. This is particularly apparent in the TV series *Lost in Austen*, where rereading *Pride and Prejudice* enables the protagonist Amanda Price "to escape into a fantasy world where things seem calmer, more ordered and ultimately more romantic".<sup>75</sup> As Laurie Kaplan argues, in the mini-series *Lost in Austen* it is specifically the utterly unromantic proposal of the protagonist's boyfriend which serves as the trigger for the appearance of a magical door allowing Amanda Price to enter the world of *Pride and Prejudice* in a very literal sense.<sup>76</sup> In *Lost in Austen*, but also in novels such as *Austenland* (2007) by Shannon Hale and the film based on this novel, which was released in 2013, the world projected in Austen's novel appears to be an attractive alternative to "a dreary contemporary reality".<sup>77</sup> This shows that *Pride and Prejudice* continues to be seen as the prototypical romance. The plot pattern which involves a man and a woman who overcome their initial antagonism and gradually realise that they are in love with each other has been drawn upon in countless novels, films and TV series, ranging from Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854–55)<sup>78</sup> to contemporary romantic comedies, such as *You've Got Mail*. Even the formulaic romance plot

75 GROGAN. "From *Pride and Prejudice* to *Lost in Austen* and Back Again." 297.

76 Cf. KAPLAN. "*Lost in Austen* and Generation-Y Janeites." n.p.

77 Ibid.

78 Janine BARCHAS argues that *North and South* "may be the first full-length reworking of *Pride and Prejudice*" (BARCHAS, Janine. "Mrs. Gaskell's *North and South*: Austen's Early Legacy." In: *Persuasions* 30 (2008): 53–66, 53).

one can identify in Mills and Boon/Harlequin popular romances “comes close to the skeleton of *Pride and Prejudice*”.<sup>79</sup>

Yet by seeing *Pride and Prejudice* exclusively as “romantic fantasy”<sup>80</sup> one misses many other components that have likewise ensured the canonical status and the popularity of Austen’s novel – and that can be traced in many recent appropriations of the text. There is for instance a remarkable correlation between references to *Pride and Prejudice* and the depiction of intelligent, resourceful young women, who strive to achieve a certain amount of independence despite social pressure. In addition, the female protagonists often have a special relationship to books, being booksellers, working in publishing houses, studying literature, striving to become writers or being at least avid readers. Occasionally adaptations even seem to merge the fictional character of Elizabeth Bennet and the author Jane Austen; after all, Elizabeth Bennet is a *reader* and not a *writer*.<sup>81</sup> With respect to the movie *Pride and Prejudice: A Latter-Day Comedy* for instance, Irén Annus argues that the protagonist “embodies not only Elizabeth Bennet, as made obvious numerous times throughout the story, but also Jane Austen herself”.<sup>82</sup> The protagonist in this movie is a writer, and the (romance) “novel on which she is working is set in 1813, as we can see from a quick glimpse at her computer screen, the year *Pride and Prejudice* was first published”.<sup>83</sup>

Another component of quite a number of appropriations of *Pride and Prejudice* that is particularly interesting from a feminist perspective is the fact that reading Austen’s novel and/or watching an adaptation of her work is shown to create a communal experience shared by a group of women. In Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, “watching *Pride and Prejudice* is a communal event”<sup>84</sup> which serves to assure Bridget and her friends of shared values, hopes and romantic ideals. Likewise, in Karen Joy Fowler’s novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004) and the eponymous movie from 2007, five women from different generations and one man learn to cope with their personal problems and find new hope through their discussions of Austen’s six novels.<sup>85</sup> In a similar vein, reading

79 TODD, Janet. “The Romantic Hero.” In: Janet Todd (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 150–61, 159.

80 FRANCUS. “Austen Therapy.” n.p.

81 In fact, in Austen’s novel it is Caroline Bingley who says that Elizabeth “‘is a great reader and has no pleasure in anything else’” (AUSTEN. *Pride and Prejudice*. 83), i. e. someone who certainly does not seek to pay the protagonist a compliment in this way. Elizabeth, in contrast, emphasises: “‘I deserve neither such praise nor such censure, [...] I am *not* a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things.’” (Ibid.)

82 ANNUS. “Trans-Culturing Jane Austen.” n.p.

83 Ibid.

84 FRANCUS. “Austen Therapy.” n.p.

85 Cf. ibid.: “Although their readings of Austen’s novels differ, Austen brings them together, and

and discussing *Pride and Prejudice* is depicted as an empowering communal experience for a group of Iranian female students and their teacher in Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

It is a truth widely acknowledged by scholars that literary texts may provide multiple interpretations. This is certainly true for Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. As the interpretations, adaptations and rewritings of Austen's classic continue to show, *Pride and Prejudice* is an enormously flexible text, which has appealed to men and women in different periods, to readers and viewers of different ages and in different cultures.<sup>86</sup> One may be tempted to argue that the more recent adaptations of Austen's novel generally have been produced with a younger target group in mind. Laurie Kaplan argues that the mini-series *Lost in Austen* for instance "[a]imed primarily at a new generation of Jane Austen fans, some of whom were hooked on Austen's novels via the Colin Firth video and the Keira Knightley movie".<sup>87</sup> Similarly, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* on YouTube presumably appeal mainly to a younger target audience. Yet *Pride and Prejudice* can already look back on a long history of being marketed for young readers. As Devoney Looser points out, the novel "appeared in 1908 in 'a series of English texts, edited for use in elementary and secondary schools'".<sup>88</sup> Given the different reactions by readers and literary critics in the course of the last two hundred years as well as the interpretations which are suggested by the sequels, rewritings, intertextual references and filmic adaptations, one feels compelled to agree with Devoney Looser, who argues that "*Pride and Prejudice* functions more like a cultural Rorschach test than a 'universal' work of fiction."<sup>89</sup> Examining the different interpretations, rewritings, adaptations and translations of *Pride and Prejudice* thus promises to provide insights into "the changing cultural codes"<sup>90</sup> which have informed these readings of Austen's classic. In 1925 Virginia Woolf offered an assessment of Austen's writings which could actually provide a very intriguing explanation for the fact that *Pride and Prejudice* continues to inspire adaptations and rewritings – in the guise of evangelical novels, pornography, chick lit, Gothic stories and crime fiction. Woolf argues:

Jane Austen is [...] a mistress of much deeper emotion than appears upon the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet

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as the members of the club coalesce as a community, they support each other through a number of crises [...]."

86 For more information on the current readership of Austen, see KIEFER, Jeanne. "Anatomy of a Janeite: Results from the Jane Austen Survey 2008." In: *Persuasions On-Line* 29,1 (2008): n.p.

87 KAPLAN. "Lost in Austen and Generation-Y Janeites." n.p.

88 LOOSER. "The Cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author." 175.

89 Ibid. 183.

90 TERENTOWICZ-FOTYGA. "Lost in Austen? The Afterlife of the Literary Classic." 265.

is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind and endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial.<sup>91</sup>

In other words, *Pride and Prejudice* encourages readers to be creative, to use their imagination. Two hundred years after *Pride and Prejudice* was published, the novel seems to be more alive than ever. It has remained a subject of academic discussions, but it has likewise become a part of popular culture. The contributions to this volume seek to explore various facets of this cultural/pop-cultural phenomenon and to provide new insights into the reasons for the lasting popularity of Jane Austen's most famous novel.

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91 WOOLF. "Jane Austen at Sixty." 262–63.

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## The Serious Business of Mrs Bennet and the Consequences of a Mother's Fear

Oh! Mrs. Bennet! Mrs. Norris too!  
While memory survives we'll dream of you.<sup>1</sup>  
(from "The Lady and the Novel" by George W.F.H. Earl of Carlisle)

Even though critics have highlighted a variety of different aspects of *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen's novel is, without doubt, first and foremost a text concerned with marriage. The fact that *Pride and Prejudice* begins with the prospect of finding a husband and ends with the accomplishment of matrimony cannot be ignored and, similar to much early nineteenth-century literature, the extremely popular motive of money informs the concept of marriage that is presented in the novel. This link is partially due to the circumstance that "[i]n England, the ability of married women to own property came late. Although writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, such as Frances Burney, Jane Austen, and George Eliot, criticize marriage, they see few alternatives for women, and the marriage plot is the preoccupation of their novels."<sup>2</sup> Given the fact that *Pride and Prejudice* features a family with five daughters and an estate entailed to the male line, it is no surprise that "Austen's concern with money and incomes permeates [this] novel,"<sup>3</sup> as Hume puts it. That the idea of marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* is irrevocably connected to financial concerns contradicts purely romantic readings of the text and provides an adequate assessment of the economic status of women at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Despite a general awareness of the necessity of marriage, none of Mrs Bennet's daughters seems to be particularly inclined to marry. Neither the elder daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, who are expected to consider marriage sooner rather than later because, as Lydia points out, "Jane will be quite an old maid

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1 CARLISLE, George W.F.H. *Poems by George Howard, Earl of Carlisle*. London: E. Moxon, 1869. 91.

2 LIVINGSTON, Sally A. *Marriage, Property, and Women's Narratives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 3.

3 HUME, Robert D. "Money in Jane Austen." In: *The Review of English Studies* 64,264 (2013): 289–310, 289.