

## Literature on the Silver Screen: A Critical Study of Joe Wright's Film Adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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### Abstract

In the present study, the film, *Pride and Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005) which is based on Jane Austen's novel by the same name has been examined in the light of the Adaptation theory. The paper provides a detailed introduction of the Adaptation theory which is followed by a critical study of the socio-economic background and influences on Austen as a creative writer. The concept provided by the adaptation theorist, Linda Hutcheon in her seminal work, *A Theory of Adaptation* has been used to form a comparative analysis between the novel and the film. The critical analysis has been done regarding the adherence of the chosen film to the novel on the basis of five common elements shared between the two namely, narration, time and temporality, setting, theme, and characterization. Specifically, the paper focuses on shattering the conventional beliefs of considering film adaptations as secondary or inferior, and has studied the film at hand more objectively as an autonomous work in relation to its source text.

**KEYWORDS:** adaptation, fidelity, narration, time and temporality, setting, theme, characterization

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### I. Introduction to Adaptation Theory

In order to analyse the adaptations critically, it is necessary to have a brief idea of the Adaptation theory as it helps in the better understanding of the arguments put forward, which in turn helps in defining the objectives clearly. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Adaptation as 'the action or process of adapting or being adapted' (2016: np). To adapt a work means 'to adjust, to alter, to make suitable' (Hutcheon 2006: 4). However, in media context, Adaptation is defined as a movie, television drama, or stage play that has been adapted from a written work, typically a novel. Although quite inclusive, this definition appears to be somewhat incomplete. As noted by the famous Adaptation theorist, Robert Stam, the contemporary theories of media adaptation are displaying 'a shift towards the era of transmedia creation by multiple entities and media conglomerates.' (2005: 128-129)

Adaptations are not new as they have existed since time immemorial. Thomas Leitch observes that the film adaptations of literary texts are as old as films. Virginia Woolf held the view that adaptations demean, or demoralize the literary texts, and she considered the former as a 'parasite' (Hutcheon 2006: 3) whereas the latter as its 'prey' or 'victim' (Hutcheon 2006: 3). However, Adaptation theorists like to relate adaptations to translations, stating that just as translating does not mean slavish copying, similarly, adaptation is also not a derivative, but a derivation. 'Literature provides the raw material for film adaptation to create new visual forms and thematic contents, there are several

variations possible' (1953: 2), notes an early Adaptation theorist, Bela Balazs in his work, *Theory of the Film*.

Another theorist, Linda Hutcheon in her seminal work, *The Theory of Adaptation*, observes:

... the term adaptation has a multi-layered application referring simultaneously to, the entity or product which is the result of transposing a particular source; the process through which the entity or product was created (including reinterpretation and re-creation of the source); and the process of reception, through which we experience adaptations as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition and variation, or in other words, the ways in which we associate the entity or product as both similar to and a departure from the original. (2006: 7)

Robert Stam in his work, *Literature to Film*, observes the various factors that hamper the receptivity of the film like, logophobia, iconophobia, class prejudice, and anti-corporeality that put down adaptations as secondary, derivative, 'belated, middle-brow, or inferior' (Naremore 2000: 6). The analysis of the film adaptations traditionally focused on the notion of fidelity. But recent trends focus on various other aspects across the transmedia model, concentrating more on intertextuality and point out the fact that adaptation helps in the survival of the original work, along with stating the idea that adaptation is as much an urge to consume, erase or question an adapted text as a desire to pay a tribute to it by re-interpretation and re-creation.

A successful adaptation, Hutcheon states, is the one which is 'a repetition without replication' (2006: 4), the one which balances 'the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty' (2006: 25). Saying thus, Hutcheon presents the process of Adaptation (for films) as 'the process of appropriation of taking possession of another's story' (2006: 10) and understanding the various elements in it: narration, time and temporality, themes, settings, and characterization, through one's own sensibility, using media techniques of cinematography, *mise-en-scene*, sound, and editing in order to 'transcode' or 'transpose' (2006: 4) them; subtracting or compressing the story which is necessary in order to fit it in a limited time frame; deploying creativity, skills and techniques so as to make the text one's own, and thus, autonomous.

Film adaptations cannot be studied without a comparative analysis of their respective source texts. Due to this, a compromise between the formal and the contextual, fidelity criterion and the infinite oscillations of intertexts and contexts should be established to form a comprehensive study of the film adaptations in order to yield fruitful results. The essence, the ideology, the spirit of the source text should be captured by the adapter for an adaptation to be successful. Hutcheon considers that the comparative analysis between the source text and its film adaptation should be formulated on the basis of the 'common denominator' (2006: 6) of story between the two. Thus, instead of establishing one's superiority over the other art form, a healthy discourse would be to study the common

elements namely, narration, time and temporality, theme, setting, and characterization that make up the story of both the novel and the film.

Adaptations are very popular in the present time as almost every third movie in the film industry is an adaptation of a popular novel mainly because of the appeal it provides in terms of popularity and story-line to the makers, the economic advantage it has which is due to the fact that it had already succeeded in being a national or an international bestseller, and the fact that it is a franchise on its own which provides less risk to its investors. It should also be noted that along with earning well at the box-office and gaining a lot of attention from the audience mainly on the social networking sites, most of these adaptations in the Hollywood make it to the Academy Awards. Jane Austen is the writer whose novels have been adapted many times mainly due to the universal appeal which they provide, and the 'adaptable' quality which they adhere.

## **II. Biographical Details of Jane Austen**

Austen was born on December 16, 1775, at Steventon Rectory in Hampshire, as the seventh child of a country clergyman, George Austen, and his wife Cassandra Austen. Although Austen wrote during the Romantic period and witnessed the shift to the Gothic novel which came up in the early 19th century, yet she cannot be categorized in any of the literary periods or schools mainly because she chose to remain aloof from all of them. Her works are a product of her time, but she does not fit in any of the eras, except for the Regency period, when most of her works were published.

While Austen lived, her works registered consistence sale and were appreciated especially by the upper class gentry but none of her books became best-sellers, and very few reviews about them were written, probably because they failed to conform to the Romantic or the Victorian expectations. Her transformation from little-known to internationally renowned author began in the 1920s, when scholars began to recognize her works as masterpieces, thus, increasing her general popularity. Today, she is considered as one of the greatest writers in the history of English Literature, both by academicians as well as the general public. Her novels are often included in the lists of readers' favorites, and her letters are a source of entertainment and biographical information. Set among the English middle and upper classes, her works are notable for their wit, social observation and insight into the lives of early 19th century women.

Austen never left the South of England, and so her experience of the world was rather limited, but she made it a point of writing about what she knew from her own experiences. She was highly receptive, conscious, a keen observer of society, and made her observations as one of her greatest strengths. Thus, her social background became a major influence on Jane Austen, as most of her inspiration came from what she saw around her. Earlier women writers like, Madame de La Fayette (1634-1693) influenced Austen's writing style and purpose, but gradually, she developed a style of her own and her greatness lies in the fact that although she wrote about what she knew best, that is, the society of nineteenth century English countryside families, yet her works possess universal implications for the insight they provide. In one of her letters to her nephew,

Edward, she spoke of her works as paintings on ‘the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory’ (1870: np)- a phrase which has earned a literary reputation of its own with time.

Austen’s novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) follows the story of Elizabeth Bennet as she deals with issues of manners, upbringing, morality, marriage and education in the society of landed gentry of the British Regency era. It is a novel of manners and tells the story of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet’s five unmarried daughters after the rich and eligible Mr. Bingley and his friend Darcy move into their neighbourhood. While Mr. Bingley takes an immediate interest in the eldest Bennet daughter, Jane, Darcy and the second Bennet daughter, Elizabeth face a clash of opinions on various levels. It is considered as one of the most popular English novels, selling over 20 million copies till now, receiving considerable attention from literary scholars, resulting in a number of dramatic and film adaptations.

The chosen eponymous film adaptation of Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* was produced by Working Title Films in association with Studio Canal under the direction of Joe Wright, with Keira Knightly and Matthew Macfayden playing the main leads, Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy Fitzwilliam, respectively. It was released on September 16, 2005 in the United Kingdom and earned a worldwide gross of approximately \$121 million, with a rating of 82% from review aggregator, Metacritic labeling it universally acclaimed. It also earned four nominations at the 78th Academy Awards, with Keira Knightly being nominated in the category of Best Actress.

### III. Analysis of Joe Wright’s Film Adaptation

The resurgence of interest in Jane Austen’s works by the 1990s saw various adaptations of the author’s novels, like that of *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), *Persuasion* (1996), and *Emma*(1996). Considering the popularity of the adaptations of Austen’s novels among the masses, Working Title Films along with its French and American Company, Studio Canal and Universal Studios, respectively, decided to produce the film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, and aimed at releasing it internationally. The production company hired screenwriter, Deborah Moggach who spent more than two years writing around ten drafts, giving a perfect three-act structure to the script, trying to be as faithful to the original text as possible. Her original draft came closest to the novel, where she wrote most of the incidents from Elizabeth’s viewpoint.

Joe Wright, who was a television director at that time, made his directorial debut in the feature film through this movie. Wright had an experience in working on Social Realism and so, he was initially apprehensive when he was approached by the producers to work on British Period Drama, as he hardly had any idea about it. He had not read Austen’s novel but when the script of the movie was sent to him, he loved it and in one of his interviews stated that he was quite moved by it. Wright then read the novel and found it possessing a lot of truth and understanding on overcoming one’s personal prejudices and seeking love. He prepared for his direction by watching various film adaptations of Austen’s novels but purposely avoided watching other adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* out of the fear that he may employ their way of presentation which in turn

would hamper his originality. Owing to his talent, creativity, and diligence, the director has greatly contributed to the narration of the film and can be credited for being its auteur. This paper aims at forming a critical analysis of the truthfulness and fidelity of the film adaptation to the novel on the basis of five common elements namely, narration, time and temporality, setting, theme, and characterization.

### **Narration:**

Narration is regarded as easily adaptable since it is made up of story and plot both of which are essential parts of the novel and the film. But the method of narration in these two genres, that is, novel and film, is quite different owing to the difference in their respective forms. The narration in Austen's novels is quite powerful as the author does not state the events and actions directly, rather she implies them most of the time with the use of indirect statements, wordplay, irony, humour and satire. The very first line of the novel, 'It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife' (Austen 1813: 233) captivates the attention of the readers and prepares for an interesting beginning, and this interest continues throughout, thus, making the book quite a page-turner. Austen has maintained third person omniscient narration in *Pride and Prejudice* but in some places, the events are narrated or rather seen from the perspective of the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet.

In Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*, the narration has been done through camera, sound, and the film techniques of *mise-en-scene*. The camera has acted as the objective narrator half of the time and as the subjective narrator for the other half where the events are shown as Elizabeth perceives them. The film begins with the presentation of an early morning scene showing the sunrise in the countryside. The camera focuses on the lush green surroundings, after which a medium-tracking shot presents Keira Knightly (Elizabeth) walking towards her home in Longbourn. The tracking shot continues to provide us details of the Bennet household with Mary on the pianoforte, Lydia and Kitty roaming in the drawing-room, and the servants performing the household chores, till Elizabeth arrives and sees her parents in conversation. The next scene that follows is entirely depicted from Elizabeth's point of view.

Apart from camera, dialogues have also served the purpose of narration. Moggach altered the language of the source text considerably as she found it necessary to make it easier for the comprehension of the present day viewers. Thus, very few lines have been taken in their original form from the novel and while the base of the conversation among the characters in most of the scenes remains the same, the language has been altered or modified. Wright felt that in the family of five daughters, a father and a mother, it would be impossible to have a discussion where one speaker would let the other finish his/her speech. He noticed the limitation of Austen's dialogues in depicting reality, and so, in the film, he made the characters overlap each others' dialogues- as one character begins to speak the dialogue, the other character interrupts him/her midway, and finishes it. This technique has greatly helped in inducing realism in the movie along with making it interesting for the audience as when they see the various characters finishing each others' sentences, their attention is captivated.

The technique of voice-over has been avoided by Moggach as far as the narration is concerned but at two places it has been used in the movie namely, a) when Elizabeth (Keira Knightley's voice-over) reads her own letter written to Charlotte stating her delight at receiving her dear friend's (Charlotte's) letter and accepting her invitation to arrive at the Collinses' house at Hunsford to stay, and b) when Elizabeth is seen reading Mr. Darcy's letter (Mathew Macfayden's voice-over) in which the latter provides the reason for keeping Mr. Bingley away from Jane and exposes the disposition of Mr. Wickham. Considering the genre of film, the voice-over in these two scenes has not only helped in unfolding the contents of the letters in an effective way, but also in revealing other details which have a bearing on the later events. Thus, in the first case, as Keira Knightley is seen arriving at Hunsford in the carriage and entering Mr. Collins' house after warmly meeting Charlotte outside, the voice-over is heard in the background of this scene simultaneously. Similarly, in the second case, as Keira Knightley is seen reading Mr. Darcy's letter at Hunsford, Mathew Macfayden's voice is heard in the background. Apart from helping in narration, this technique of employing voice-over while making the actors perform on the screen simultaneously has also helped in saving the limited time that the genre of film possesses.

Certain details that were not part of the novel have been introduced in the film in order to highlight certain aspects. The colour symbolism in the costumes of the characters is evident if one sees the film with a critical eye. Costume Designer Jacqueline Durran has dressed Keira Knightley in earthy colours like, different shades of brown and green for most part of the film that highlight her love for simplicity. Rosamund Pike has worn light-coloured gowns of light blue, pink, and white, sporting golden hats with ribbons that highlight the physical beauty of her character. Actors playing the characters namely, Lydia and Kitty (Catherine) have worn similar colours which depict a visual symmetry between the two, and the actor playing Miss Bingley has worn richly coloured dresses that show her wealth and class superiority. The film highlights the rural atmosphere, especially of the Bennet household, by showing the farm animals like pigs, poultry, and cattle in the background in several scenes. In one of the scenes, Mr. Bennet moves a pig out of his drawing-room as it had accidentally entered there. Such a depiction has been criticized by various literary critics and scholars, however, Wright believed that it was necessary to show the Bennets in close proximity with their rural life, and also to emphasize on their status in society which in turn will highlight the difference in the social status of the Bingleys, Mr. Darcy and the Bennets.

The shots of various objects used in the movie have also helped in its narration. The shot of the full moon from the window of Elizabeth and Jane's room while they sleep after meeting the Bingleys and Mr. Darcy, with soft piano music playing in the background, emphasize the aspect of romance that is to arrive in the lives of the sisters. Similarly, Lydia tosses a white handkerchief in the air while the militia arrives in Meryton, in the hope of a soldier picking it up for her but nobody does that and she is left smirking at the ignorance of the soldiers. In the later scene, a similar handkerchief is shown on the footpath which is picked up by Mr. Wickham who approaches Elizabeth and asks if it belongs to her.

The facial expressions, actions, and gestures of the characters have significantly contributed to the film's narration. An important way by which the mutual affection between Mr. Bingley and Jane is depicted is by 'touch.' In their first meeting at Mr. Lucas' Ball, a close-shot of Mr. Bingley and Jane holding hands while dancing is indicative of the beginning of their romantic relationship. In the Netherfield Ball, Mr. Bingley is seen touching Jane's skirt while walking behind her which conveys to the viewers that he has fallen in love with her. The filmmakers have effectively used 'silence' in the narration as in various scenes, the characters convey their emotions entirely through their expressions. For instance, when Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy dance at the Netherfield Ball, the mutual attraction between them is apparent through their expressions. In another scene, Mr. Darcy hurriedly arrives at the house of Mr. Collins, and finds Elizabeth alone. The 'shot-reverse shot' depicting both the characters in total silence with their expressions alone speaking for them adds to the emotional intensity of the film.

Music has been skillfully employed as a narrative technique in the film. Wright's adaptation contains wonderful music composed by Dario Marianelli that keeps on playing in the background on a number of occasions. In fact, various times the music continues to play in the background while the characters are made to recite their dialogues, and has greatly helped in providing aesthetic appeal to the film. In one of the scenes, as Keira Knightly takes rounds on a swing, soft piano music is heard in the background that corresponds with her melancholic mood. Similarly, in another scene in the movie, she stands on the edge of the cliff, and the melancholic music in the background serves to reveal her emotions.

Moggach and Wright have incorporated Austen's humour in the film adaptation by suffusing it into various dialogues, and it has been brought out in different ways in the very address of Mr. Collins, Mr. Bennet's sarcasm and Mrs. Bennet's anxiety, Elizabeth's expressions as she responds to Mr. Collins' proposal; the geese running after Elizabeth as she storms out of the house towards the lake after rejecting Mr. Collins' proposal, and the vanity of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. The filmmakers have effectively narrated the story of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* although differently owing to the difference in the two genres of novel and film. Although the filmmakers have altered the narration from the source text to a certain extent, yet they have succeeded in transposing the appeal of Austen's story.

### **Time and Temporality:**

A novel offers temporality since a reader can take as much time as he/she pleases to, and can skip certain sections, or re-read some others, flip backwards or forward through the pages, all while maintaining his/her own speed of reading. But the film has a limited time duration in which it has to present its story to the viewers. The two genres are quite different from each other, as a result of which, the exact replication of the details from novel to film during the process of adaptation is impossible. Furthermore, since a film adaptation is a separate work of art, having its own techniques, it observes changes in the presentation of the nuances pertaining to the source text. Although Wright is the main

force behind the adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, the beauty of his film lies in the fact that it is not a mere copy of its source text, but a slightly altered version of it. Wright has compressed the details of Austen's novel, thereby fitting its 300 pages in the duration of 121 minutes of the film. However, in doing so, he has maintained the core idea as a result of which the film comes across as a straight adaptation of the original text.

The novel was published in 1813 and depicts the manners of the society of Regency England. It follows a chronological order where the events are depicted in a linear manner, with no flashbacks or flash-forwards, except when Mr. Wickham narrates about his past, and when Mr. Darcy writes the letter to Elizabeth mentioning about his former association with Mr. Wickham. The movie follows the pattern of the novel presenting the events in a chronological order one after the other in the same way as have been depicted in the novel. However, due to the limited time-frame that the genre of film possesses, certain events from the novel have been compressed while some have been eliminated entirely. This has also been done to highlight the romance between Elizabeth and Darcy, which is the focus of the film. Several major sequences that have been compressed in the movie are that of Wickham's arrival in the beginning where he meets Elizabeth several times, and his departure by the end of the novel when he talks to her at length; Colonel Fitzwilliam's light conversations with Elizabeth; Elizabeth's visit to the Rosings and then to the Pemberley; Lydia's elopement with Wickham and subsequent crisis; and Elizabeth's chapter-long change of mind after reading Mr. Darcy's letter. Moreover, several minor characters namely, Mr. and Mrs. Hurst, Colonel and Mr. Forster, Mr. and Mrs. Philips, and Mrs. Lucas, have been eliminated from the movie for maintaining the limited time-frame that the genre possesses.

The time period shown in the movie has been altered by Wright, that is, he has situated the novel in 1797 instead of 1813 partly due to his dislike for the dresses that had empire silhouette which became popular in the later period of Regency, and also because he was interested in depicting the differences in the various classes within England that was affected by the French Revolution. Journalist Joanna Briscoe in her online review of the movie for *The Times* claimed that the reason for the change in the time period was done by Wright because he attempted at creating 'a costume drama with muddy hems' (2005: 1). Wright stated that the social realism of the late 18th century where the French Revolution affected the country of England, making the upper class of the town to mingle with the country folk, appeared more appealing to him, and that's why he chose to situate the film in that era.

In an online interview with Sara Michelle Fetters, Wright stated that his main goal was to present young people's first love, and for that, he chose to situate his film in the late 18th century where the 'muddy' (2005: np) description is symbolic of one's heart in true love. Moggach altered the setting to give a twist to the movie in order to present something new to the audience - the filmmakers did not want their version to be overshadowed by the 1995 BBC adaptation of Austen's novel. Various techniques have been used to portray the time period namely, the dialogues, the setting, and the appearance of the characters, the last one being more efficacious in serving the purpose. The characters have been dressed in tune with the time period and their character traits.

The characters belonging to the countryside, the Bennets, and the Lucases, are depicted as wearing less fashionable costumes, whereas the belonging to town, the Bingleys, Mr. Darcy, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, are depicted as wearing highly fashionable clothes.

Music has been artistically employed in the film to transport the audience to the time period depicted in it. The film contains seventeen instrumental tracks; the soundtrack features French pianist, Jean-Yves Thibaudet who worked in collaboration with English Chamber Orchestra. Following his discussion with Wright, composer Dario Marianelli used piano sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven as his inspiration for composing the film's music. Pieces such as *The Militia Marches In* and *MerytonTownhall* were composed with the intention that they could conceivably be heard at that time. The music keeps on flowing in the background in the various scenes simultaneously as the actors are shown performing on the screen, and the amalgamation of aural and visual has helped in transporting the audience to the time period of late 18th century England. It can be said that although the filmmakers have altered the time period and have made several changes, cropping and eliminating certain details from the original text and adding some new ones in their film, yet they have succeeded in capturing the essence of Austen's text as far as maintaining temporality is concerned. The film, just like its source text, follows a linear narration of events thereby revealing the story scene after scene. In doing so, it has succeeded in holding the interest of the viewers; they feel transported into the time period depicted in the film.

### **Setting:**

Setting constitutes an important element in both the novel and the film, and is considered easily adaptable. Like her other novels, Austen has hardly provided description of the various places talked about in *Pride and Prejudice*, except for one or two lines that she states generally for the development of the story. It was for this reason that the Location Manager, Adam Richards, along with his crew had to spend around four to five months finding out locations that could match with the ones provided in the novel in order to maintain its authenticity. Partly due to Wright's love for creating reality where actors could feel more comfortable in the natural surroundings, the entire film was shot on location, except for the scene of the first dance that was shot in the potato warehouse in Lincolnshire. The manor house of Groombridge Palace in Kent was chosen for representing Longbourn, Basildon Park in Berkshire which is an 18th century site was chosen for representing Netherfield, Hunsford was chosen for representing Mr. Collins' parsonage and church. Lady Catherine de Bourgh's estate of the Rosings which is described by Austen as 'a handsome modern building, well situated on rising ground' (1813: 325) was represented by Burghley House in Cambridgeshire, and its adjacent town of Stamford served as Meryton, the two buildings of Wilton House in Salisbury and Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, the latter being the largest privately owned house in England, were chosen for representing the interior and exterior of the estate of the Pemberley, respectively.

Austen has described the Pemberley estate as ‘a large, handsome, stone building ... without an artificial appearance. Every disposition of the ground was good ... The rooms were lofty and handsome ... with less of splendor, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings’ (1813: 376-377). It is often believed that the Chatsworth House stood for Austen’s inspiration for Darcy’s residence, and so, in order to remain as faithful to the novel as they could, the filmmakers chose to shoot certain scenes in the exterior of the building as they were not allowed to shoot inside it. Some additional locations include, the Banqueting Hall at Haddon that was used for representing the Inn at Lambton, Temple of Apollo in Stourton, Wilts that was used for representing the gardens of Rosings, and Peak District in Derbyshire that was used to represent the countryside of Derbyshire in the movie.

It should be noted that the production staff selected grand-looking residences in order to focus on the wealth of Mr. Darcy, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and the Bingleys. Likewise, the interior of Groomsbury Bridge was designed by the production designer Sarah Greenwood and set decorator Katie Spencer in such a manner that it appears to be the house where a family with five daughters resides. The house in the beginning of the movie is shown as messy and shabby with clothes kept in a disorganized manner, with Mary playing the pianoforte, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet engrossed in conversation, and Lydia and Katie laughing heartily almost falling from the sofa. Double Negative, a visual effects company, was employed by the production house in order to restore the aura of the late 18th century. They removed all the contemporary objects of electricity pylons, and gravel driveways, and decorated the houses with gold plating on window frames, and cleared the weeds from the gardens.

The filmmakers changed various scenes in the movie in order to enhance the theme of romance. In the novel, Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth for the first time at the Hunsford parsonage, but in the movie, this scene takes place in the Temple of Apollo where it rains heavily and both the characters are drenched; the second proposal takes place on the moors at the break of dawn in the movie, where as in the novel, this scene takes place in daytime where Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are depicted as walking down the country lane. The setting of the film comes quite close to its source text; the chosen locations justify Austen’s description and serve the narration, theme and depiction of time period in the film.

### **Theme:**

Theme represents the central idea in a work of art that is brought out with the help of the other elements namely, narration, character, and setting. As an element, it is considered as easily adaptable from novel to film. The theme of compatibility in marriage by overcoming one’s pride and prejudices stands out prominently in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, and the other themes woven around it include family, class and money. All these themes have been brought out in Wright’s film, but the theme of romance has been focused upon to a great extent by the director as he has highlighted the romantic relationship between the characters of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Releasing the movie with the tag-line, ‘A romance ahead of its time’(Wright 2005: 1) the aspect of romance has

been enhanced in various ways namely, a) by the depiction of the scenic beauty of the countryside; b) by focusing the camera on the image of full moon in the night sky; c) by making Mr. Darcy propose to Elizabeth in the Temple of Apollo where they are both drenched in rain and where the 'close shot-reverse shot' of them standing close to each other depicts the romantic liaison between the two; d) by the various walks that Elizabeth takes outside contemplating on the issues surrounding her as well as her family; e) by the various conversations between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy; f) by the aspect of 'touch' and Mr. Darcy's 'right hand' that have been discussed earlier in this chapter, and g) by the background score which is full of melodious country music that compliments the time period depicted in the film.

It is due to the focus on the theme of romance that the two couples of Jane and Mr. Bingley, and Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are not shown to be married but are rather shown to be engaged by the end of the movie. Austen had ended the novel with the depiction of Elizabeth as perfectly happy in the Pemberley, keeping herself in close connection with Jane and the Gardiners, along with financially assisting Lydia and Wickham from time to time. But Wright has ended the film with Elizabeth accepting Mr. Darcy's second proposal by kissing his right hand, after which their faces (in a close-shot) fade away as silhouettes in the light of the rising sun. The screen gradually turns black after this and the 'end credits' of the movie start rolling in. Furthermore, descriptions of the hatching of plots of Wickham and Colonel Fitzwilliam have been largely compressed by Moggach and Wright because he aimed at focusing on the love story between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. It can be said that all the diversions have been negated by the filmmakers in order to highlight the growing romantic streak between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy.

Another prominent aspect in the movie is the depiction of social realism. As has been noted earlier in the paper, Wright presented the Bennets in close proximity with the rural life to emphasize on their status in society, and in order to highlight the difference in their status with the Bingleys and Mr. Darcy. The Director dressed their characters in simple fabric, and depicted their farm various times to highlight the aspect of realism in the movie. The aspect of realism in the movie as presented by Wright can be studied from the scene of Netherfield Ball. In this scene, Kitty is seen stumbling on the sofa after getting drunk; Mrs. Bennet asking Lydia to wipe the perspiration off her face, Mr. Collins in self-pity as he plucks the petals of a flower and sighs heavily; and Elizabeth hiding in a dark room contemplating on the heated conversation that she had had with Mr. Darcy. All these actions of the characters provide a real picture of what used to happen at the private balls of Austen's time. Furthermore, the estates of the Pemberley and the Rosings are presented as grand and majestic by the use of several 'crane and tracking' shots in order to show the class-superiority of Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

The film also presents the two weddings of Charlotte and Mr. Collins, and Lydia and Wickham that adds to the aspect of social realism in it. Apart from developing the story, Austen aimed at providing the readers with the marriage of Charlotte and Mr. Collins in order to convey the disposition of women in her time, and the marriage of Lydia and Wickham to warn against charming but exploitative men. These marriages have universal application, as even in the contemporary society, a single girl of considerable age with

very limited prospects like Charlotte Lucas would certainly find it suitable to marry a clergyman like Mr. Collins for financial security. Also, a young girl of sixteen like Lydia in her romantic passion can be easily flattered into believing herself to be in love by a charming man like Mr. Wickham. Such unhappy marriages or marriages based on conditions have been depicted in the film in the same manner, with almost an equal weight as has been accorded to them in the novel in order to highlight realism in it. Thus, it can be said that the dual aspects of romance and realism has led to the development of a sort of hybrid that provides the aesthetic appeal to the film and contributes to its appeal among the viewers.

Wright has made several alterations in the portrayal of the Bennet family, the major one being that the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet has been shown to be healthier in comparison to the novel. In the novel, Austen shows Mrs. Bennet forcing her husband to get himself acquainted with Mr. Bingley, but in the film, he himself visits the Netherfield and upon returning home when he informs his wife about the same, she kisses him out of pure delight. Through such a presentation, Wright attempted at depicting a happy family where the father is more considerate in his disposition in comparison to the novel. The filmmakers have presented Mrs. Bennet in a more sympathetic light; her dialogues and expressions convey her dilemma as a mother of five unmarried daughters. The Bennet household is depicted as more lively and spirited as compared to the novel by the employment of overlapping dialogues, by making Lydia and Kitty giggle constantly, by showing the servants running about the house performing different chores in several scenes, and by making Mrs. Bennet constantly complain about one thing or the other. However, amidst such chaos, the love that runs in the Bennet family has not been neglected in the film.

### **Characterization:**

As far as the characterization in the film is concerned, the producers insisted on casting popular actors where as Wright wanted actors who could match the personality of the characters depicted in Austen's novel. Thus, when *Bend it like Beckham* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* fame actor, Keira Knightly was chosen to play Elizabeth Bennet by the producers, Wright displayed his doubt initially as he considered her too beautiful for the role. But after meeting her, Wright found Knightly to be rather a tomboy with a great sense of humour, and so he agreed to work with her. While Knightly was a known star, Mathew MacFayden had no international recognition, but Wright found him perfect for the role of Mr. Darcy. Austen initially described Mr. Darcy as 'superior ... clever ... at the same time haughty, reserved and fastidious, and his manners, though well bred, were not inviting' (1813: 239) but later through Mrs. Gardiner, the character is depicted as 'perfectly well-behaved, polite and unassuming ... not as handsome as Wickham ... his features are perfectly good' (1813: 384). Wright considered MacFayden perfect to play Mr. Darcy owing to his physical appearance and personality.

The filmmakers chose Rosamond Pike for the role of Jane Bennet owing to her physical beauty, Simon Woods for the role of Mr. Bingley, Brenda Blethyn and Donald Sutherland for the roles of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, respectively, Kelly Reilly for the role of

Miss Bingley whom Austen has described as a fine lady, ‘not deficient in good humour when pleased ... but proud and conceited ... rather handsome ... in the habit of associating with people of rank’ (1813: 238-239). The major characters in the film have remained true to their basic nature as has been depicted in the novel. For instance, Keira Knightley has spoken some bold dialogues in the film to justify the attributes of Elizabeth Bennet. The viewers find Elizabeth’s ‘quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper’ (Austen 1813: 283) when they watch Knightley engaged in wordplay with Miss Bingley at the Netherfield, sarcastically commenting on Mr. Darcy’s behavior on several occasions, and engaged in argument with Lady Catherine de Bourgh when the latter visits Longbourn at midnight.

Similarly, the minor characters namely, Mary Bennet who has been described by Austen as having, ‘neither genius nor taste ... [possessing] a pedantic air and conceited manner’ (1813: 244), has been played by Talulah Riley who is seen wearing dark colours of blue and black, on the pianoforte most of the time in the film, and lost in her own thoughts, speaking very little; Catherine (Kitty) Bennet has been played by Carey Mulligan; and Lydia Bennet who has been described by the author as a ‘stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance ... she had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence’ (1813: 257) has been played by Jena Malone who has maintained fidelity to her character. Mr. George Wickham who has been described in the novel as possessing ‘all the best parts of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address’ (Austen 1813: 274) has been played by Rupert Friend owing to his handsome demeanor; Lady Catherine de Bourgh who has been described as ‘a tall, large woman, with strongly marked features ... [whose] air was not conciliating ... authoritative’ (Austen 1813: 329) has been played by Judi Dench who has remained quite faithful to her role; and Miss de Bourgh who has been described by the author as ‘pale and sickly ... her features though not plain were insignificant; and she spoke very little’ except in a low voice’ (1813: 329) has been played by Rosamund Stephen who has only appeared once and has not spoken a single word in the scene.

The other actors namely, Tamzin Merchant as Georgiana Darcy, Claudie Blakley as Charlotte Lucas, Cornelius Booth as Colonel Fitzwilliam, Penelope Wilton and Peter Wight as Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner have remained equally faithful to their roles in the movie. However, an alteration has been done in the portrayal of the character of Mr. Collins in a manner that Austen depicts him as ‘a tall, heavy looking young man of five and twenty. His air was grave and stately, and his manners were very formal’ (1813: 269), but in the film, the character has been played by Tom Hollander who is rather short, not as healthy, and carries poker-face expression on his face. Such a portrayal of the character of Mr. Collins has enhanced the humour on the screen.

While the actors stay true to the basic nature of the characters in the novel, a slight change has been made in their personality to give them a more contemporary look in order to enhance the appeal of the film. Thus, Elizabeth has been made more bold, sarcastic and fearless: a woman who knows how to assert herself as during the scene showing Mr. and Mrs. Long’s Ball, she has been made to advise Mr. Darcy on how to be

more sociable - she states that one should not refrain from dancing, 'even if one's partner is barely tolerable' (Moggach 2005: 20). Such a statement is made in retaliation to Mr. Darcy's comment when he stated to Mr. Bingley that Elizabeth is 'barely tolerable' (Moggach 2005: 20). In the novel, Elizabeth did not retaliate on such a comment, but in the film, Moggach made Elizabeth retaliate directly, thus, making her character more bold and fearless.

Similarly, Mr. Darcy's pride has been mitigated, and he is made to appear more sensitive in the film in order to highlight his emotional struggle. One manner in which his character has been developed in the film is by making alteration in his costumes. In the beginning of the movie, he has been seen as wearing buttoned shirts, and stiffly tailored jackets that depict rigidity in his character; towards the middle he has been seen as sporting much softer fabric, with the first few buttons of his shirt undone; and in the last scene, when he proposes to Elizabeth for the second time, he has been seen as wearing loose-fitting clothes depicting the development in his character. Despite the alterations in the characterization, the film succeeds in transposing this element from Austen's novel; the various characters in the film look appealing on the screen and in no way threaten the authenticity of Austen's characterization.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

A kind of dichotomy exists between literature and film. Hutcheon in her work, *Theory of Adaptation* notes that literature is conceptual and is a passive endeavour where as film is perceptual and is an active endeavour; reading is generally a solitary activity where as films are viewed in the theatre hall. But it should not be assumed that literature is better or worse than film. Both the genres have their own limitations as well as merits, and both aim to provide pleasure to the readers/viewers as both are the works of art. So, it would be wrong to assume that the written word is aesthetically and culturally superior to the newer genre of film as such an opinion clearly shows inclination towards the more traditional experience. Both the genres are different, and so, both should be judged in accordance with the pertinent criterion rather than establish the dominance or superiority of one over the other.

Comparison of the film adaptation to its source text is certainly inevitable but Adaptation theory demands an unbiased study of the film in relation to its source text. It treats novel and its film adaptation as two different works of art made by two different artists. If we judge Wright and Moggach's film in this light, then it can be said that the film holds the capability to hold the interest of the audience. Its narration is appealing, characterization is interesting, setting is on point, editing is crisp, and the overall development of the story is smooth. Wright has tried to remain faithful to the source text by keeping the story-line, names of the characters and even their ages, and setting of the movie quite similar in order to maintain fidelity to the source text. However, as per the demand of the genre of film, and also due to the fact that the transposition from one genre to the other requires alteration, he has provided various twists by changing its time period owing to his personal dislike for the fashions of late Regency period; infusing his own interpretation of romance as he perceived through Moggach's screenplay; portraying

realism against romanticizing the British Heritage, and making slight changes in the characterization in order to provide a contemporary outlook to the movie. In doing so, the director has adhered to the core idea of the novel.

Considering the popularity of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, it is a challenge in itself to even dare to adapt such a novel. But the filmmakers with their talent and creativity have come quite close to the source text, and have been successful in transposing the nuances of it on the screen. As noted by Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation*, that a film adaptation is an effective 'reinterpretation and re-creation of the source text' (2006: 7), it must be taken into account that a filmmaker interprets a novel with his/her own sensibility and works upon it accordingly. In doing so, certain deviations in the representation of the story from novel to film occur that are unavoidable. Wright's film adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is not an exact transmutation of the text, but considering the number of details the former has been able to incorporate in her movie, it can be said that the film comes quite close to its source text. At the same time, if one pays attention to the minor details and subtleties, the film will come across as an independent work of art in itself.

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