

Interpreting Jane Austen for a Contemporary Audience:
Lost in Austen's Reworking of Pride and Prejudice

by

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A thesis presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

in

English (Literary Studies)

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2019

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis argues that *Lost in Austen*, as a fantasy adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, reveals the feminist and empowering elements of Jane Austen's novels. This four-part TV series uses the element of time travel to juxtapose the Georgian Era with the twenty-first century and illuminates the various weaknesses and drawbacks of both time periods. It substitutes Elizabeth Bennet's character with a contemporary woman named Amanda Price—who imagines Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as a romantic escape from her everyday difficulties, such as her mundane job as a back clerk and her unsatisfying relationship with her unfaithful boyfriend. This thesis illustrates that the marriage plots in Austen's novels are not merely conventional but directly address the necessity of marriage as women in that era have no other options for earning their incomes and economic survival. Austen provides her heroines sensitive partners which not only give them emotional satisfaction but economic stability. Amanda's key issue as a contemporary woman is her inability to oppose her boyfriend's insensitive behavior and confront his past infidelity. As an active participant in *Pride and Prejudice*, Amanda regains the assertiveness and strength in her personality, as she attempts to keep the novel's plot on track and save various characters from unfortunate circumstances. *Lost in Austen* presents a critique of the post-feminist culture where women still experience social and cultural inequalities, while possessing legal and economic freedom. The series also makes an important comment on recent adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* that have linked Austen's novel to the Chick Lit genre since *Lost in Austen* ultimately reaffirms the power and value of Austen's depiction of personal growth and female empowerment in her novels.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of a wide network of kind and wonderful people. I would first and foremost like to thank my beloved parents for their encouragement in the pursuance of my academic goals. My deepest gratitude is extended to my mother and sister for their unending love and guidance through every step of this personal journey as without them I would not be where I am today. To all my friends, old and new, for their moral and emotional support, in person, over phone calls, text, and skype. Next, I must thank my supervisor, Dr. Fraser Easton, and my committee members, Dr. Tristanne Connolly and Dr. Gordon Slethaug, for their constructive feedback and guidance on my research and writing process. For the time they have spent reading my work and for the advice that followed, as this thesis would not have been finished without their support. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Tina Davidson, the Graduate Coordinator of our English Department, for being a constant source of understanding and support through the ups and downs of this graduate journey. I am also truly grateful for all the resources that are available on campus for graduate students for improving their research and writing skills, especially the Writing and Communication Centre. My special thanks are also extended to the writing specialist Jane Russwurm for her guidance; and Nadine Fladd for conducting the Dissertation Boot camp in winter 2019. Finally, last but not least I thank my grandmother for her prayers and my aunts for their love and for enriching our lives (my sister and I) by introducing us to Jane Austen's novels when we were young — to you I will be eternally grateful.

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Introduction

Film, like the novel, is intrinsically temporal and good at telling stories. Both succeed by absorbing us into an illusion of comprehensive life – world, societies, relationships in which we live intensely for the duration of the telling. Both succeed insofar as they persuasively select what we need to know, and jettison what we do not, and in such a way that we never miss what is not there.

— Kathryn Sutherland, “Jane Austen on Screen”, *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen Second Edition*



Figure 1: Amanda reading *Pride and Prejudice* (Episode One, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

The later part of the twentieth century, specifically the last two decades, revived Jane Austen's novels through television and film adaptations. In the 1980s and early 1990s the majority of films produced were historical adaptations, as the BBC provided recurrent and authentic recreations of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. Among them the high point was the 1995 TV production of *Pride and Prejudice* starring Colin Firth, which gave rise to cultural phenomena termed the "Austen Craze" and "Darcy mania". The effects of these phenomena were further reinforced by the various Hollywood productions of Austen's novels such as Emma Thompson's perceptive screenplay and Ang Lee's emotional depiction of *Sense and Sensibility*, Gwyneth Paltrow's light-hearted and playful portrayal of Emma in the 1996 production, and Nick Dear's particular attention to realism in his screenwriting for the 1995 production of *Persuasion*. Thus, by the end of the 1990s, screenwriters and directors had explored Austen's work on a large scale.

Contemporary adaptations also played a significant part in bringing Austen's work to limelight during the nineties. *Pride and Prejudice* specifically became the locus of engagement to explore multiple contemporary issues relating to the lives and concerns of single women belonging to varying social backgrounds. Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones Dairy* paved the way for the "Chick Lit" genre to transport Austen's plots and stories into a contemporary setting. Fielding's novel focuses on issues of female identity within a post-feminist culture and the complex life of a single woman as she struggles to develop a viable career, romantic relationships, and maintain her ties with family and friends. In the book *Chick Lit and Postfeminism*, Stephanie Harzewski categorizes the Chick Lit genre:

[...] these urban period pieces offer parodic commentary on significant demographic shifts in the United States and United Kingdom. New social phenomena— the rise of

serial cohabitation, the increasing age of first marriage, the phenomenon of the “starter marriage”, and declining rates of remarriage— have led to the emergence of what Chick Lit authors call “singleton” lifestyles. (Harzewski, “Introduction” *Chick Lit and Postfeminism*)

Some other prominent examples include *Bridget Jones Diary* — the films derived from Fielding’s novel; *Clueless* directed by Amy Heckerling which portrays the life of a wealthy teenager living in Beverly Hills and mirrors the plotline of Austen’s *Emma*, and *Bride and Prejudice*, a Bollywood romantic comedy that cleverly parallels the Indian subcontinental culture and customs with Austen’s Georgian Era managing to deliver *Pride and Prejudice*’s central themes with a new colour.

Among this collage of contemporary interpretation of Austen’s work, *Lost in Austen*, the 2008 ITV television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* sheds a unique perspective on Austen’s novel. As a fantasy reworking, the four-part TV series situates itself between the historical and current present, offering the audience a fascinating transformation of Austen’s classic and beloved novel. Set in London, *Lost in Austen* presents the life of a young woman in her twenties, Amanda Price. Amanda confronts the contemporary dilemmas of her common yet chaotic life. The beginning of the series shows us glimpses of her daily routine as a bank clerk, encountering her annoying customers, and her crowded commute on the way home, as she lugs her groceries at the end of the day to her apartment. Her plans to relax in the evening are drinking wine and reading *Pride and Prejudice*. The series opens with Amanda’s declaration:

It is a truth generally acknowledged that we are all longing to escape. I escape always to my favorite book, *Pride and Prejudice*. I’ve read it so many times now the words just say themselves in my head and it’s like a window opening. It’s like I’m actually there. It’s

become a place I know so intimately. I can see that world, I can touch it. I can see Darcy.
("Episode one." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

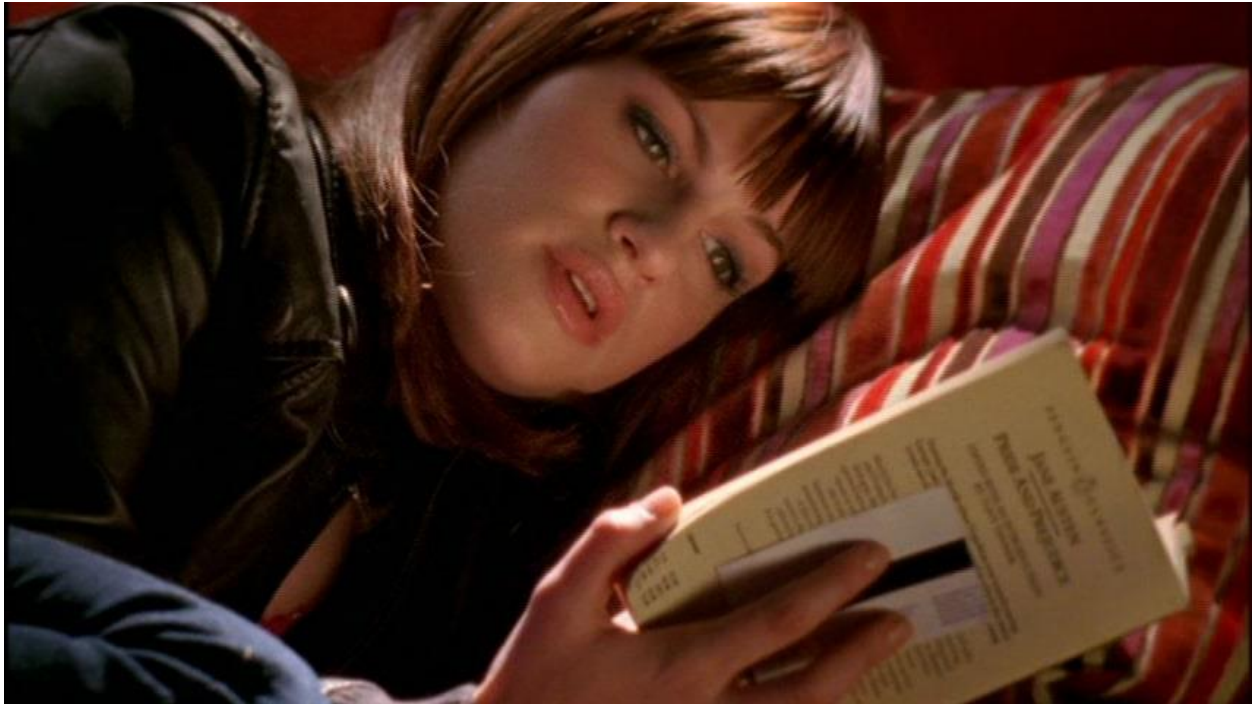


Figure 2: Amanda and *Pride and Prejudice* (Episode One, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

The series instantly introduces the audience to the daily annoyances and problems of Amanda's life while communicating her obvious and continuous desire to escape into another world and time period. Amanda's desire to escape relates to her emotional and psychological state which shows a preference for the customs, language and mannerisms of the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century English society. Furthermore, in the next few scenes, the audience meets Amanda's inconsiderate and unromantic boyfriend, Michael, who contributes towards Amanda's dissatisfaction with her present world. Like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Lost in Austen* also revolves around the issues of love and choice, and, similarly to Elizabeth in Austen's novel, the fundamental conflict for Amanda in this series is whether to accept or refuse her boyfriend's marriage proposal.

As a fantasy adaptation, *Lost in Austen* reframes the value of *Pride and Prejudice* for a contemporary TV audience as an instructive text, rather than as a romantic or historical escape, where Amanda – the protagonist of the series is thrust into the novel’s plot by means of unexplained time travel, thereby creating parallels between the modern culture and Austen’s world. Most of the series relates the limitations and difficulties of women in two apparently different social eras. As Amanda time-travels to Georgian England she is reminded of the non-existent social and legal identity of women. Their only means of survival in respectable society was through marriage which could bring them financial and social security, regardless of love and personal happiness.

Choosing a life partner in today’s western culture seems comparatively easier than in the late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century British society. But even today, there are limitations on each individual whether financial, social or emotional. Working as a bank clerk and earning twenty-seven thousand pounds, Amanda’s demand to fulfill her emotional requirement is relatively higher than financial security. Her contemporary chaotic life and her insensitive boyfriend have made her long for the morality, courtesy, and genteel mannerisms of Austen’s society. Her longing for the past era is so acute that while watching the series the viewer assumes that Amanda is happy and willing to sacrifice the independence and freedom that women have achieved in the past two hundred years. This acute desire for the past accurately highlights the gaps that exist between the development of feminism and the current state of post-feminism. Jessica Cox’s analysis of *Lost in Austen* in her article remarks upon the polarizing state of feminism and post-feminism: “[t]he post-feminist world thus becomes representative of the premature death of feminism: the movement has passed, but women are still faced with social and cultural, if not legal, inequalities, seemingly rendering the pre-feminist past an appealing

alternative to the post-feminist present” (Cox 37). Amanda is facing such a dilemma in her life and she evaluates her personal/romantic relationship with her boyfriend by comparing it to late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century social standards and mannerisms.

It is essential to consider and remember that Amanda’s perception and imagination of Austen’s world and specifically, *Pride and Prejudice*, has been influenced by the historical screen adaptations, most prominently by the Andrew Davies’ BBC 1995 television series. This screen adaptation has led her into visualizing the historical past as something of a serene and peaceful escape. Thus, Amanda as a reader of Austen’s novel, and as the viewer of this screen adaptation, subconsciously, ignores the two hundred year history of women’s fight for social and legal rights in the west. Glen Creeber refers to this psychological state as historical ‘amnesia’ in article, “Romance Re-scripted: *Lost in Austen*’s comparative historical analysis of post-feminist culture”. In the article, Creeber explains that this amnesia in the contemporary society exists because women seem to have distanced themselves from the history of feminism or what he calls “puritanical” feminism, “It is this historical ‘amnesia’ that may help to partly explain why young women now act and think the way they do. Because a ‘puritanical’ feminism is often regarded as passé...” (Creeber 564). Hence, women today are part of a broad post-feminist society, in which they are surrounded by a vast consumer culture, complex gender roles, and demanding professional lives. Post-feminism emerged as a cultural movement in the last two decades of the twentieth-century and is often closely connected to the conservative backlash of the 1980s against second-wave feminism. This connection often problematizes its perception in a wider sense, as the conservative backlash establishes domesticity as an essential and ultimate goal for women’s lives.

In *Lost in Austen* Amanda's encounter with history highlights the deficiencies and drawbacks of her contemporary society. She harbours dissatisfaction with her present situation where her personal happiness also seems to be attached to accepting a man in marriage (her current boyfriend) who is not only inconsiderate of her feelings but has displayed disloyalty towards her. Indeed, Amanda and her mother are both aware of Michael's affair with a waitress.

The series is distinctive as an adaptation because, firstly, through uncovering the historical context of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, it educates Amanda and its viewers about the unfair social facts of Austen's time which were specifically prejudiced, biased and discriminatory towards women. Secondly, it portrays the present social and psychological condition of women living in a post-feminist era. Although, comparatively women have higher social and financial independence, they still experience dissatisfaction on emotional and social ends.

The main purpose of my argument is to illustrate that *Lost in Austen* as a television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* provides an interactive platform to examine the deficiencies of two contrasting societies, i.e., the Georgian era and the current post-feminist period. The interaction between the two eras, created by Amanda's and Elizabeth's time travel, assists in establishing Austen's value as an empowering writer and mentor for a contemporary female audience. Therefore, for this examination, an analysis and comparison of the Georgian and post-feminist gender codes is needed. This assists us in understanding Amanda's frame of mind as well as the reason for her attachment to the genteel environment of Austen's novel.

Currently critics and scholars such as Alice Ridout, Glen Creeber, and Jessica Cox identify *Lost in Austen* as constructing a "post-feminist nostalgia" about the pre-feminist past. In this thesis I will not only refer to and analyze the reasons for this post-feminist nostalgia, but

further build upon this claim by closely comparing the narrative structure, characters, and selected dialogues of the series to Austen's original text. This close comparison will contribute to our comprehension of this deep nostalgia about the past as well as provide ways to illuminate the weaknesses and gaps in current post-feminist masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, this comparison shows the effect of the history of *Pride and Prejudice's* adaptation in the late twentieth-and early twenty-first centuries and Austen's specific connection to the Chick Lit genre. Thus, *Lost in Austen*, acts as an effective tool in juxtaposing the gender codes of two contrasting societies and assists us in highlighting their respective weaknesses and strengths.

The first chapter of this thesis is divided into three parts, pertaining to the issue of understanding and perception of Austen's novels in the contemporary era. The first part of this chapter deals solely with the historical context of *Pride and Prejudice*, with a discussion of primogeniture laws of England in the eighteenth-and nineteenth-centuries, the social ranks of the landed gentry, and the variation in incomes of families, which were all factors in the widespread poverty of well-bred women of this era. For this purpose, the discussion includes references from the texts of Martha Bailey, Richard A. Posner, Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster. Parts two and three of this chapter are dedicated to the analysis of two distinct factors of the late twentieth-century, affecting the perception of Austen's work in the modern world i.e. the Chick Lit genre and the Andrew Davies' 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, which is held responsible for establishing the phenomenon of "Darcymania". Altogether, the analysis and discussion in all three parts of this chapter, creates an essential framework for understanding the complex adaptation processes of *Lost in Austen*.

The second chapter of this thesis provides a socio-historical background for *Lost in Austen*. The chapter analyzes and critiques the TV series as a post-feminist artifact. The chapter

begins by outlining the history of second-wave feminism and liberal feminist thought. A discussion and explanation of the tenants of second-wave feminism is necessary as it is essential in understating the pervasive politics of the conservative backlash of the 1980s and 1990s, which emerges in the media through magazines, books and films, providing portrayals of anxious, unsuccessful, single women in search for the perfect romantic relationship. This chapter will make use of critical texts by scholars Imelda Whelehan, Stephanie Genz, Benjamin A Brabon, Dianne Negra, Yvonne Tasker and Angela McRobbie. Besides the socio-historical background, this chapter will delve into a direct comparison of post-feminist and eighteenth-century gender codes, therefore creating a platform to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of both time periods. The chapter then examines post-feminist masculinity which bares resemblance to the patriarchal values of the past, hence illuminating Amanda's dissatisfaction with the current contemporary society.

The third chapter of this thesis will revolve around the concept of accountability in the post-feminist world and the Georgian Era. As Amanda's enters *Pride and Prejudice*, she at once becomes the victim of late eighteenth-and early nineteenth- century social codes and the extreme judgement and scrutiny of her social peers. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen conveys the importance of active accountability for individuals for their wrongdoings. This sense of accountability in the novel also becomes an appeal and satisfaction for Amanda. Amanda's inability to hold her boyfriend accountable for his infidelity and insensitive behaviour within the post-feminist culture is one of the reasons for her aversion from her current society and her attraction towards the genteel mannerisms and set gender code of the early nineteenth-century. The chapter refers to the texts of Kathryn Sutherland and Lawrence Stone. It also contains a

discussion of the eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century conduct literature, and highlights Austen's allusions and references to this literature in her novel.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis delves into an analysis and comparison of the narrative structure of *Pride and Prejudice* as well as *Lost in Austen*. For this purpose the chapter will make use of concepts and definitions prevalent in adaptation theory and narrative theory. The chapter will make use of texts like *Story and Discourse* by Seymour Chatman, *A Theory of Adaptation* by Linda Hutcheon, and *Adaptation and Appropriation* by Julie Sanders. The chapter then delivers a comparison of specific characters and dialogues in the novel and in the TV series (such as Amanda, Piranha and Michael from the TV series; and Elizabeth, Charlotte, Jane and Mr. Darcy from the novel), hence highlighting the complex and intricate adaptation processes of *Lost in Austen*.

Chapter I

The Changing Perception of Jane Austen in the Contemporary Era

Herself a single woman of small means, Austen can represent the bleak existence of such women, as well as the happier fate of the heroine who finds fulfillment in marriage to the right man.

— Juliet McMaster, "Class", *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen Second Edition*

Part I

Jane Austen's Marriage Plots

Austen's stories revolve around the axis of marriage. All of her novels contain the underlying marriage plot but the pursuit of men and specifically wealthy men to secure financial stability is most explicitly dealt within *Pride and Prejudice* as indicated by the novel's famous opening lines:

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a large fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man on his first entering the neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters. (Austen, *Pride* 1)

These lines are immediately followed by the casual conversation between a husband and wife considering future prospects for their daughters. The back and forth between Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet introduces us to the premise of the story and to the major characters of Elizabeth, Jane, Lydia and Mr. Bingley. Austen's dialogue further reveals the social structure and customs of early nineteenth-century rural England. The landed gentry of the British society often lived in these rural towns and villages. The majority of the families belonging to the ranks of the landed gentry lived on modest incomes earned as rents from their lands. Within these families, it was

essential to find eligible men for daughters through proper social interactions such as visiting neighbours and cultivating friendships within one's immediate social circle. As Richard A. Posner explains in his essay, "Jane Austen: Comedy and Social Structure", the society depicted in Austen's novels is of the landed gentry living in rural England, who did not work, earning their living as rentiers. Though they might be landowners or property owners through their inheritance or social rank, in no way were they all living wealthy, luxurious lives:

The subculture that Jane Austen's characters inhabit (as did she in 'real life') is that of the English landed gentry. Not all the characters in the novel belong to the landed gentry; even gypsies make an appearance (in *Emma*, very briefly) [...] It is a society of gentleman and ladies (and their children), including some aristocrats but not those of the highest ranks; it contains no peers of the realm or members of the royal family. The landed gentry live of course in rural England, though some of them have secondary houses in London. They do not work; this is central to understanding of the novels. They are rentiers. Though upper class by the virtue of their social status and usually of their incomes as well, by the standards of the early-eighteenth-century England most of them are not really wealthy even by those standards, and some of them are economically precarious. A preoccupation with money is pervasive. (Posner 85-86)

In this era financial security for both men and women became a vital aspect of social survival. For daughters without substantial inheritance, finding a husband with good, stable social standing was imperative. Similarly, men also sought economic advancement either by adapting a respectable profession for supplementary income or by aspiring marriage to wealthy women with considerable inheritance.

In *Pride and Prejudice* and her other novels, Austen has depicted the economic plight of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women. It is crucial to understand the causes of women's poverty in this era, specifically women belonging to the landed gentry and upper classes, because the society and culture did not provide them with any options for earning money, except through matrimony. The only respectable option available to women was working as a governess, when they were unable to get married and had no relatives to support them financially. In the essay, "Money", Edward Copeland speaks about the condition of these women and how they were depicted by writers in their novels, "[t]he novels of Charlotte and Anne Brontë amply dramatize the painful position of well-educated girls from impoverished upper classes who become virtually the servants of families often much less well-bred than themselves" (Copeland 122). Austen also portrays the situation of governesses in her novels, especially in *Emma*, through the characters of Miss Taylor, and Jane Fairfax who anxiously contemplates her future as a governess.

The major causes for the poverty of well-bred women were mainly rooted in the inheritance laws of England, more accurately known as primogeniture laws. As Martha Bailey states: "Austen shows how the tradition of keeping family property together by bequeathing it to the eldest son, rather than breaking up the property to provide for all, left women in particular at the mercy of the charity of their male relatives" (Bailey, "The Marriage Law", par. 4). Juliet McMaster in her essay, "Class", also discusses the system of primogeniture, which resulted in a wide disparity of rank and status even within siblings of one family. She explains that both aristocracy and inheritance of land depended on this system, causing significant variation of rank between son and daughter, or eldest son to younger son or elder daughter to younger daughter. She remarks that, "the entail, so prominent in *Pride and Prejudice*, legally formalizes this

customary practice.” (McMaster, “Class” 115). Hence, the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* sums up an essential fact about Mrs. Bennet’s: “The business of her life was to get her daughters married” (Austen, *Pride* 3). In the novel, Mrs. Bennet is fighting and struggling against this unfair circumstance, where her husband’s (Mr. Bennet), moderate inheritance has been entailed away to a distant cousin, “Austen notices this, and dramatizes it; but not without conveying a strong sense of the inequity of such arrangements. The five Bennet girls are to be turned out of Longbourn when their father dies, since the estate is entailed on a distant male cousin, Mr. Collins, who shows precious little sign of being morally worthy of it” (McMaster, “Class” 115). Thus, considering these economic facts Mrs. Bennet preoccupation with getting her daughters married as quickly as possible is not too unjustified.

Among the landed gentry of rural England, there existed a huge variation in social status of men, depending upon their inheritance, often consisting of land and fortune. In *Pride and Prejudice*, this is evident by the comparison of incomes of Mr. Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Though, both belong to the landed gentry, one’s annual income is modest while the other is significantly wealthy. A person’s income and wealth are openly discussed in this era as Posner remarks, “They are remarkably candid, by our standards, about their incomes, with the result that everyone seems to know everyone else’s income almost to the shilling. It appears that ‘fortunes’, whether in land or in bonds, yield about 5 percent annually, so that if you know the size of a person’s fortune you know his income, and vice versa” (Posner 86). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen begins chapter VII of Volume I, with a declaration of Mr. Bennet’s income:

Mr. Bennet’s property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, was entailed in default of heirs male, on a distant relation; and their mother’s fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill

supply the deficiency of his. Her father had been an attorney in Meryton, and had left her four thousand pounds. (Austen, *Pride* 20)

Thus, based on the annual income, Mr. Bennet's inheritance/fortune amounts to almost forty thousand pounds as Posner comments, "...Mr. Bennet's fortune of £40,000 which yields an income of £2,000 a year is adequate...", although, considering by late eighteenth-century economic standards, this is a modest income for an individual, however, circumstances change when you are married with five dependant daughters. Copeland accurately comments upon the insecurity of this situation, "at £2,000 a year (the landed gentry income of Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and of Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility*), domestic economy still must hold a tight rein, especially in *Pride and Prejudice* where there are five daughters in need of dowries. Mrs. Bennet is noted as a poor economist; Mr. Bennet is better, though still inadequate considering his daughters' situation... (Copeland, "Money", 132). Upon Mr. Bennet's death the potential of facing harsh economic circumstances is quite real for all the daughters, unless of course, they get well-married.

In contrast, in the novel the wealth and social situation of Mr. Darcy as a landowner is pretty significant. In the opening chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*, he is declared as one of the most eligible bachelors in the country, considering he owns the largest estate in Derbyshire with an annual income amounting to about ten thousand a year. "Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year" (Austen, *Pride* 6). Mr. Darcy instantly becomes a target for all of the families living in the village and a potential partner for their daughters present in that room.

Through the above discussion it is evident that although Mr. Bennet and Mr. Darcy belong to the same social class, there are vast economic and social differences in their lifestyles. It is these differences that create social hurdles and barriers for Elizabeth when she finally resolves her feelings for Mr. Darcy and acknowledges her love and respect for him. The final confrontation in *Pride and Prejudice* happens between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine, who debate this social and economic difference in their angry exchange. In the conversation, Lady Catherine insults Elizabeth's family background, which Elizabeth's attempts to counter in the following dialogues:

'I will not be interrupted. Hear me in silence. My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. They are descended on the maternal side, from the same noble line; and, on the father's, from respectable, honourable, and ancient, though untitled families. Their fortunes on both sides are splendid [...] and what is to divide them? The upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune. Is this to be endured? But it must not, shall not be. If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere, in which you have been brought up?'

'In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal.' (Austen, *Pride* 272)

Austen therefore presents this social phenomenon to her readers in a fantasy-like plot where the major characters of the novel, Elizabeth and Jane, are not only able to secure rich husbands but in the process also acquire personal happiness and love for their future lives.

Claudia Johnson identifies Austen's technique and premise as "wish-fulfilment":

[...] *Pride and Prejudice* is a categorically happy novel, and its felicity is not merely incidental, something that happens at the end of the novel, but is rather at once its

premise and its prize. In its readiness to ratify and to grant our happiness, *Pride and Prejudice* is almost shamelessly wish fulfilling. The fantasies it satisfies, however, are not merely private—a poor but deserving girl catches a rich husband. They are pervasively political as well. (Johnson, *Women, Politics and the Novel* 73)

When *Lost in Austen* transports Amanda into *Pride and Prejudice*'s plot, it not only shatters her fantasy image of the novel, but gives her an impossible challenge which is to maintain that aspect of wish fulfillment and fantasy in the narrative. By the end of episode two, the fantasy image of the novel is completely destroyed when shocking and unpredictable events happen, such as Jane Bennet gets married to Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas decides to leave for Africa to be a missionary.

The close analysis of the conversation between Elizabeth and Charlotte in Chapter VI, Volume I of *Pride and Prejudice* reveals that finding “a rich husband or any husband” (Austen, *Pride* 15) is not Elizabeth's prime object, but rather that the majority of women of the Georgian era are bound to this necessity of marriage for economic survival. Austen's use of marriage plots in her novels is not just adhering to social conventions/requirements for women; rather, for her it is an essential tool to show a perfect combination of affection and harmony in a relationship as well as achieving financial stability for most of her heroines. For instance, Emma Woodhouse does not require any financial support due to her wealthy and elevated status in society but Austen takes her on a journey of self-realization, kindness, affection and love. It is not necessary for contemporary adaptations of Austen's work to show women's fulfillment in life through romance and marriage. This could also be translated or depicted in professional and personal developments. Chick Lit's translation of Austen's plots and characters ignore the aspect of personal development which is an essential component of her narratives. This highlights a major

problem and issue in constructing or presenting Austen as an empowering writer to the contemporary audience.

Some of the weaknesses of *Lost in Austen* as an adaptation are tied to its adherence to the norms of Chick Lit. Amanda's empowerment lies in her detachment from Michael. The series achieves this by transporting Amanda back to the Georgian era; however, this empowerment could also have been achieved by alternate means, such as by keeping Amanda in the present and giving her further professional and personal successes, rather than attaching her in a relationship with Mr. Darcy. Therefore, it is necessary to visit the historical context of the Georgian Era and understand women's precarious conditions and Austen's preoccupation with marriage in her novels.

Part II

Pride and Prejudice and the Chick Lit Genre of the late Twentieth-Century



Figure 3: Amanda reading and drinking wine (Episode one, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Amanda's image as a singleton and the brief survey of her mundane and somewhat miserable routine invokes memories of Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones. The way she sits on her sofa, wearing her pajamas while drinking and reading is quite reminiscent of the opening scene and credits of the 2001 film adaptation of Fielding's book. Her language, manners, habits, and style are all reflective of the contemporary, urban woman who uses common slang in her sentences and wears the high fashion of the day such as her leather pants and jacket, a provocative purple blouson with a belt, and high heel boots. These elements are clues to her contemporary post-feminist identity which is not only influenced by the media (like Fielding's books and novels). Her identity is also dominated by rituals of consumption that is indicated by her wine and clothes. As a modern woman she is able to enjoy certain freedoms and is independent from the rules and traditions of a certain community as she has the agency to work and earn her living. While analyzing Bridget Jones and commenting upon the emotional and social status of single women, McRobbie states: "[...] Bridget... is a free agent, single and childless and able to enjoy herself in pubs, bars, and restaurants. She is the product of modernity in that she has benefited from those institutions (education) that have loosened the ties of tradition and community for women... However, this also gives rise to new anxieties. There is the fear of loneliness for example, the stigma of remaining single, and the risks and uncertainties of not finding the right partner..." (McRobbie 36) All of these fears and anxieties are visible in Amanda's personality as she declares, "I know I sound like this terrible loser...I mean, I do actually have a boyfriend" and her mother's ominous warnings as she attempts to persuade Amanda in accepting Michael's proposal: "I'm reminding you, Amanda, that you are what you are. If you waste your life pretending to be something else, you'll regret it" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Her mother's words also remark upon her social and economic status as a

contemporary women. It is revealed in episode two of the series, that Amanda earns £27,000 as a bank clerk and that she also has a younger fifteen year old brother. Her mother is recently divorced and there is no mention of Amanda's father. It is evident from her mother's remarks that she does not see or predict any further economic advancement in Amanda's future and neither does she encourage Amanda to focus on her personal and professional growth. She is encouraging her to marry Michael, in spite of his infidelity and with no mention of his profession and income. Through the character of Amanda, *Lost in Austen* comments upon the contradictory yet fluid value of Austen for the contemporary culture. Her adaptation into the popular culture, specifically by Fielding in the 1990s, has connected it to the chick lit genre as Stephanie Harzewski states in her book, *Chick Lit and Postfeminism*:

The chick lit genre is best exemplified by HBO's *Sex and the City* series and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, both originally newspaper columns [...] It is propelled by and responds to what has been dubbed "The Bridget Jones Effect", a syndrome, some journalists maintain, afflicting especially thirtysomething women who become consumed with "dating panic" and strategies for meeting Mr. Right (Match.com Public Relations Team). (Harzewski 3)

This connection has resulted into the over-simplification or easy understanding of Austen's plots and characters and results in being conveniently adapted into the traditional romantic comedies of the day. This fact cements the status of Austen's novels as conventional and conservative, perpetuating marriage plots for her female protagonists, providing happy endings for her readers/audience. In "Post-feminist Austen", Vivien Jones, while exploring this strong and pervasive connection between Austen and Chick Lit, states:

[...] I'm not suggesting – or not, I hope, in any simplistic way, at least – that Austen's novels are the Regency equivalent of “chick lit”. But the claims that chick lit has been making on Austen over the last fifteen years or so are nevertheless suggestive. Ever since Helen Fielding's unblushing theft of the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* for *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), it has become a commonplace for popular post-feminist fiction writing to identify as its precursor. (Jones 66)

Lost in Austen attempts to comment on the relevance and status of feminism within the post-feminist culture. For this purpose it uses *Pride and Prejudice's* plot as an effective tool to reveal the radical and feminist origins of Austen's stories which are present within her intricate dialogues, characters and irony. *Lost in Austen* endeavors to renew the understanding of Austen by not only deconstructing *Pride and Prejudice's* plot but also challenging some of the dominant tropes of the chick lit books and films which are rooted in post-feminist ideologies.

McRobbie explains in the beginning of her article that post-feminism is a complex framework which engages in undermining the feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s. She proposes that “through an array of machinations, elements of contemporary popular culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to ‘feminism’” (McRobbie 27). Furthermore she comments “that by means of the tropes of freedom and choice that are now inextricably connected with the category of ‘young women’, feminism is decisively ‘aged’ and made to seem redundant” (McRobbie 27). *Lost in Austen* achieves multiple goals by its complex approach of adapting Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. As *Lost in Austen* provides a happy ending to Amanda's character, it also exhibits Chick Lit's dominant trope of providing female characters personal/domestic happiness rather than professional achievement. On the flip side this acts as

personal growth for Amanda as she is choosing Darcy whom she actually loves and respects in comparison to Michael. Darcy exhibits maturity and sensitivity towards Amanda and her circumstances as a contemporary woman. The alternative endings that the series provides to other characters in the story attempt to challenge Chick Lit's dominant norms. For instance, Elizabeth's character decides to stay in modern London and lead a life as an independent woman away from the cultural restrictions of the Georgian Era. Lydia elopes with Mr. Bingley, but she safely returns home and lives with her parents, safe from getting married at an immature age that indicates personal and social growth for a young girl. Finally, Jane's horrible marriage to Mr. Collins is annulled and she is reunited with Mr. Bingley, who decides to take her to America and begin a new life. This scenario is indicative of the ultimate happiness, where a young couple is saved from social slander and cruelty and would be able to develop their lives in freedom. In giving these alternative endings to various characters, *Lost in Austen* delivers various exchanges between the past and the present, and gives its audience a chance to observe the similarities and differences between two contrasting social eras.

Stephanie Harzewski outlines the history and development of Chick Lit and establishes it along the lines of a more complex and realistic fiction than its other predecessor or competing genre of the Harlequin romance fiction, which rose in popularity around the 1970s and 1980s. In the introduction she states, "Though bearing strong ties to earlier courtship novels in their protagonist's quest for a husband, chick lit's novels' representation of modern love is starkly different, as is their depiction of the single woman and her economic status" (Harzewski 4). Harzewski considers Chick Lit a subgenre of the Harlequin fiction while also having its roots in the consumer and fashion culture of the late twentieth century. She considers Chick Lit a new incarnation of the courtship novel which emerged in the 1990s. This new genre seeks to

understand the social and economic conditions that contribute to its continued popularity.

Harzewski further states:

Marrying elements of the popular romance with the satiric aspects of the novel of manners, Chick Lit extends Jane Austen's comedic legacy and brings elements of adventure fiction to the contemplative traditions of the novel of manners. Chick Lit revisits the 'class without money' conflict central to the novel of manners tradition.

(Harzewski 4)

Chick Lit is a somewhat ideal representation of post-feminist culture as it provides the complex amalgamation of commodification, consumerism, and a limited or selective engagement with the history and discourse of feminism. As Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra comment in *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, "Postfeminist culture works in part to incorporate, assume or naturalize aspects of feminism; crucially it also works to commodify feminism via the figure of woman as empowered consumer" (Tasker and Negra 2). When Amanda enters *Pride and Prejudice's* plot, her postfeminist self comes under strict scrutiny under the rules and regulations of Georgian England. This scrutiny challenges her many assumptions about Austen's world as well as forces her to ask and address crucial questions about her own identity and freedom as a young woman of the twenty-first century. Her entrance into *Pride and Prejudice's* plot produces many comic, anachronistic, and shocking scenarios which assist the audience's examination of the Amanda's post-feminist being. Moreover, these scenarios highlight the subtle gender politics of Austen's novels' as Claudia Johnson declares:

[...] we should not let our own rather modern preference for ideological conflicts predispose us to undervalue Austen's achievement in *Pride and Prejudice*. To imagine versions of authority responsive to criticism and capable of transformation is not

necessarily to ‘escape’ from urgent problems into ‘romance’ and to settle for politically irresponsible ‘consolations of form’ which offers us a never-never land and leaves structures of the ‘real world’ unchanged (Johnson, *Women, Politics and the Novel* 74)

Additionally, Johnson highlights Austen’s facing off powerful characters and engaging them in progressive debates which is evidence of the novel’s providing apt political and social commentary rather than presenting an escape from prevailing social problems of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century. For example the confrontation between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine as discussed earlier in part one of this chapter. Hence, when Amanda enters the novel’s plot through her bathroom wall, she comes in direct contact with these prevailing social problems, with marriage and economic survival of women as being the most prominent.

The complex connection between Jane Austen, Chick Lit and the tenants of postfeminism reveal the perception of Austen’s work during the twenty-first century. As Amanda’s character progresses through the narrative of *Lost in Austen*, her inability to preserve *Pride and Prejudice*’s story increases her anger and frustration. The high point of this frustration occurs when she visits Pemberley. She is rejected by Darcy due to her contemporary ways of living and her social and sexual liberation. Amanda expresses anger and dejection by tearing up the pages of the novel she carries in her leather jacket. She throws the torn up novel and the pieces fall into the fountain at Pemberley. Darcy finds the torn up novel, reads it and confronts Amanda in these words:

What a jaundiced impertinence is this, to write a roman à clef about gentle people who have received you as their guest. You have not even the grace or wit to disguise our names. It is a monstrous ingratitude and a shameful betrayal of trust. No wonder nothing

about you seems plausible. Is your name Price or is it Austen? Frankly, madam, I cease to care. ("Episode Three." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Darcy's words mirror this contradictory and complex nature of *Lost in Austen* as an adaptation of Austen's novel. Amanda is caught between the role of an author and adaptor, and in the process of time travelling between two centuries, she educates the viewers in multiple ways. Firstly, she and the viewers witness Austen's Georgian society first-hand; secondly they learn and understand *Lost in Austen's* postfeminist social context that reveals the various cultural factors, like the prevalence of Chick Lit, which affect the perception and value of Austen's work in contemporary society.

Part III

***Pride and Prejudice* and the Emergence of Darcymania**

Amanda's imagination of the novel is also prominently influenced by the Andrew Davies 1995 BBC miniseries, which is often held responsible for cementing Darcy's image as a romantic, sensitive and somewhat Byronic figure, through its unexpected and voyeuristic moment of Darcy (played by Colin Firth) jumping into the lake. This moment is significant for the 1995 BBC adaptation, as it was a new and unique attempt at depicting and conveying Darcy's emotions and feelings to the audience. This scene laid the foundation for the cultural phenomenon often termed as Darcymania, which often dominated the media productions and adaptations of Austen's works during the 90s and early 2000s including the Bridget Jones's films and Joe Wright's 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* starring Matthew Macfadyen.

Mr. Darcy's jump into the lake in the 1995 BBC production is a somewhat cathartic and triumphant moment as he contemplates his feelings for Elizabeth and tries to overcome them. This specific scene of the adaptation becomes a symbol of perfect masculinity for the female

viewers. Gisliind Rohwer-Happe calls this the “Mr. Darcy Complex” in the article, “The Mr. Darcy Complex – The impact of a literary icon on contemporary Chick Lit”. In the article she discusses the prevalent cultural appeal of Darcy’s character by citing the comments and views of various bloggers who represent the feelings of many women. Rohwer-Happe begins the article by saying, “Even though the Mr. Darcy complex has not found its way into serious psychology (yet), it certainly exists and is widely discussed by articles in journals and magazines as well as blogs from around the world” (Rowher- Happe 207). Rowher-Happe explains how one blogger’s comment clarifies that Austen’s name has become synonymous with Mr. Darcy’s icon: “Let’s face it, whenever any woman says ‘I love Jane Austen’ what she is really saying is, ‘I love Mr. Darcy, and he is the standard by which all the men I know are doomed to be judged’” (Rowher-Happe 208). The fictional character of Darcy is more or less overshadowed by its popular cultural representations by Colin Firth and Matthew Macfadyen. These representations are deeply entrenched in the imaginations of the viewers – specifically many female viewers of the series and Janeites of the late twentieth-century. Rowher-Happe comments on this complexity of Darcy’s representation as follows:

Mr. Darcy, and here the ‘real’ Mr. Darcy—which is of course a paradox in itself—is referred to as well as the representations of his character by Colin Firth and Matthew Macfadyen and the layers of attractiveness which have been added to Darcy’s original appeal by their performances, apparently have a strong influence on women’s ideas of the perfect man and ideal husband. Indeed, it was especially Colin Firth’s representation of Mr. Darcy that transformed Jane Austen’s hero into an icon. (Rowher- Happe 208)

This overall visual depiction of Darcy holds much sentimental value for the modern audiences, especially for the heterosexual female audience. They are given an opportunity to visually

connect with the character's feelings and emotional struggle. Darcy's figure here becomes an object of the female gaze. It may have been one of the first attempts in Austen's filmic adaptations where the focus moves away from the portrayal of emotional struggles of a female character in favor of the male. And this also assists in breaking the stern, stiff and harsh image of Darcy's character which often persists in the readers' imagination. This visual depiction becomes a manifestation of the female fantasy in which the desire of witnessing an emotional, sensitive yet a powerful hero is fulfilled. Rowher-Happe further comments upon this point by citing Sarah Cardwell whose views on Darcy's visual and sexual appeal and its transformation into a cultural icon are as follows:

Colin Firth's Darcy escaped the bounds of the serial and, lusted after by millions, became a 'free floating signifier', [...] Darcy's appeal is primarily sexual, as is the case with traditional icons. Yet, it is the ways in which he differs from those predecessors that make him such a curious and important example of iconicity, and that indeed, guarantees his salience in contemporary popular culture despite the apparent hindrances of his functionality and his 'birthplace' (television)¹. (Rowher- Happe 209)

Lost in Austen presents a complex dilemma when Amanda, while being inside the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*, refers to Darcy as Colin Firth, disregarding the fact that she is residing two hundred years ago, where nobody understands her cultural references.

The first of these instances happens in episode one of the series during a conversation between Jane and Amanda. They have just returned from the dancing at the assembly rooms and share their views on Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy:

Jane: You prophesied Mr. Darcy would attend the ball and he duly came. Did he prove equal to your expectations?

¹ Cardwell, Sarah. "Darcy's Escape." 239.

Amanda: Yes. And no. I mean, he's not Collin Firth. But even Colin Firth isn't Colin Firth. They had to change the shape of his head with make-up. But, no, Mr. Darcy was pretty spectacularly unfriendly but that's what one would expect. Physically, he fills his britches pretty well, but he doesn't, you know, float my boat. All that aristocratic languor. I know he can't help it, but it's really not very attractive. To me. (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

In the above dialogue, we see how Amanda’s perception of Darcy has been formed by the representation of Colin Firth. And we can notice her clear preference for Colin Firth in favour of Darcy, effectively relaying the tension that exists between the fictional character and its salient popular culture iconography.

Amanda’s preference for the image of Colin Firth is accurately depicted in *Lost in Austen*’s re-enactment of the lake scene in Episode three. After Mr. Darcy’s declaration of love for Amanda, he fulfills her rather bizarre and absurd request by going into Pemberley’s lake/pond and literally imitating the image and moment from the 1995 BBC miniseries, to which Amanda’s response is: “I am having a bit of a strange post-modern moment here” (“Episode Three.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). George Raitt categorizes this scene as parodic; *Lost in Austen* parodies the ‘wet shirt’ sequence from the 1995 television production. Darcy (Elliot Cowan) looks stoic, and somewhat pompous, in obliging Amanda’s strange request. Because this is a re-enactment, one may infer that Amanda sees not the physical person before her, but the idea of Darcy as portrayed by Austen (and Colin Firth)” (Raitt 135). Thus, as viewers of the series, we see the concept of intertextuality at play.



Figure 4: Mr. Darcy in the lake (Episode Three, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Julie Sanders in her book, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, examines the concept of intertextuality and bestows the credit of its creation to Julia Kristeva:

[...] the notion of intertextuality is most readily associated with Julia Kristeva who, invoking examples from literature, art, and music, made the case in essays such as the ‘The Bounded Text’ (1980) and ‘Word, Dialogue, Novel’ (1986) that all texts invoke and rework other texts in a rich and ever-evolving cultural mosaic. The impulse towards intertextuality, and the narrative and architectural *bricolage* that can result from that impulse, is regarded by many as a central tenet of postmodernism (Allen 2000)²”.

(Sanders 17)

² Allen, Graham (2000) *Intertextuality*, London: Routledge

Lost in Austen stands as a “postmodern” and a “postfeminist” entity that not only comments upon the various adaptation practices of the novel but also transforms our perception of the original text by submerging us into various historical epiphanies throughout the series.

An interesting moment occurs in the last episode when Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth finally meet. Elizabeth instantly recognizes him, as she has become aware of Austen’s novel and her character in the story by living in the modern world. The scene communicates that she is well aware of Austen as an author and also the film adaptations of the novel as she turns on a laptop and shows Darcy the images from the 1995 BBC adaptation. Their dialogue effectively conveys the intertextual and postmodern scenarios of *Lost in Austen*:

Amanda: Darcy!

Elizabeth: Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy of Pemberley? I am your wife.

Mr. Darcy: I do not recall marrying you, madam. I think I would have noticed if I had.

Elizabeth: We have been married nearly 200 years. Look.

[Elizabeth turns on a laptop and searches for *Pride and Prejudice* on the internet. She shows Darcy the information and images from the 1995 BBC miniseries]

(“Episode Four.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

This scene finally provides the audience the relief and pleasure of seeing Elizabeth and Darcy together; however, it is of very short duration. In the scene Amanda also smiles and observes them (Darcy and Elizabeth) with a look of happiness and contentment as she finally has some hope of bringing the plot and story of the novel back on track. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Sanders also examines the aspect of pleasure and repetition that exists within the process of adaptation as well as the concept of intertextuality:

In all of these categorizations and definitions of adaptations, it remains crucial that we keep in sight the pleasure principle. In a very suggestive account of film's impact upon our experiences of canonical literature, John Ellis argues that adaptation enables a prolonging or extension of pleasure connected to memory: 'Adaptations into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original presentation, and repeating the production of a memory' (1982: 4-5)³. Ellis's thesis is, of course, equally resonant in its application to the recent vogue for the television adaptation of classic texts, best exemplified by the genre of the BBC period drama in the UK: examples include adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, and George Elliot's *Daniel Deronda* [...] (Sanders 24)

The pleasure principle often relates to the success and entertainment value of many film/screen adaptations of various authors' work. This is especially true for Austen, as we see her becoming a part of the consumer culture through the phenomenon of adaptation in the late twentieth-century. The pleasure principle works as a double edged sword—a very effective tool for the entertainment industry as it entices the public two ways. Firstly, screen adaptations satisfy the factors of repetition, pleasure and memory and aid the viewer's imagination of the original text. In some ways the visual experience becomes more accessible and enjoyable, however, the need for reading the original text does not goes away. This is evident by Amanda's continuous reading of *Pride and Prejudice* even though she is influenced by its various adaptations. In addition, *Lost in Austen* as an adaptation breaks this pleasure principle of the adaptation process, due to its deconstructive nature as a TV series. The audience is unable to repeat the pleasure as the original story, events, and characters are transformed. Secondly, this continuous practice of adapting a text into various media forms helps to commodify its value in the contemporary culture. In *Lost*

³ Ellis, John (1982) 'The Literary Adaptation: an Introduction', *Screen* 23 (1), 3-5.

in Austen we witness Austen's manifestation in the consumer culture and Amanda's everyday life. In the beginning of the series, we see Amanda's cell phone ringing. The ring tone, which is the opening soundtrack of the BBC's 1995 production of *Pride and Prejudice*, illuminates the cultural significance of these adaptations and how they contribute towards Austen's value in the contemporary culture. These adaptations cement Austen's connection to the consumer and the chick lit culture of the twentieth-and twenty-first centuries and complicate her status within history as a radical, liberal or revolutionary female writer of the early nineteenth-century.

Chapter II

Amanda's Post-Feminist Self: Finding "Feminism" in Austen

The existence of postfeminism as a cultural media phenomenon is undisputed; after all it was the popular press that resurrected the terms in the 1980s in order to indicate a shift from-and at times also enact a ritualistic denunciation of-second-wave feminism. Since then the term 'postfeminism' has been used widely in popular culture, in particular as a descriptive marker for a range of female characters, from the 1990s emblematic figures of Bridget Jones and the Spice Girls – who now have been elevated to the status of postfeminism canon – to self-branded reality stars like Kim Kardashian. Yet, the resolutely popular character of postfeminism has often been criticized for somehow lessening in analytical potential and undermining more thorough and systematic social and academic movements.

— Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism*, "Chick Lit")

Post-feminism as a cultural, social, and ideological movement seems far removed from the fictional worlds of Jane Austen and her own life in the Georgian Era. However, at a closer look post-feminist mechanics and its media productions bear resemblance to the writings of Austen in many ways. Considering the above quote, post-feminist artifacts are closely connected to the lived experiences of young girls and women in late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These artifacts which often belong to the popular culture include books, films, music and other diverse media, which give voice to women's emotional and psychological complexities, resulting from their demanding professional lives and complicated personal relationships. Likewise, Austen's novels are deeply rooted in the representation of the lives of women of the Georgian and Regency Era, mostly belonging to the landed gentry or gentry ranks of the British society, whose best option of survival in a respectable society was through matrimony. Austen's novels also give voice to the struggles and difficulties of women living two hundred years ago. Her novels provide well-built structures and storylines to be adapted and transformed into the narratives of contemporary women.

Lost in Austen is an example of a contemporary adaptation of Austen's novel, which gives us an opportunity to closely examine the life of a post-feminist subject, Amanda Price. Amanda's anxieties and dissatisfaction in life stem from her feelings of disempowerment which are connected both to her mundane job as a bank clerk but more specifically to her unsatisfying relationship with her boyfriend, Michael. She finds comfort and solace from her chaotic life by reading Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, imagining it as a serene and romantic escape in comparison to her contemporary life. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is a source of psychological fulfillment and comfort for Amanda. Nonetheless, Amanda needs a reminder about the social struggle and progression of women in the past two hundred years, which may help to revive her assertiveness and develop her sense of empowerment in the current post-feminist culture.

In the book *Feminism and Political Theory*, Judith Evans presents the concept of feminism as, "While there are deep and sometimes bitter ideological disagreements between feminists, any feminist is, at the very minimum, committed to some form of reappraisal of the position of women in society. Feminism, then, is avowedly not value neutral, but politically engaged" (Evans, "An Overview of the Problem" 2). In light of this quote, the focus of this chapter is to identify Austen's attempts and efforts to raise the position of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women in *Pride and Prejudice* as well as to cross-examine Amanda's personal circumstances in *Lost in Austen*. Through the element of time travel the TV series juxtaposes the cultural situation of women almost two hundred years apart and in doing so demonstrates that Amanda's responses and reactions to her contemporary circumstances are an indication of her social and psychological regression rather than progression. The simultaneous analysis of Austen's original text (*Pride and Prejudice*) as well as *Lost in Austen* assists in the identification of certain complexities of the post-feminist culture pertaining to gender norms and

individuals' personal lives. Moreover, the series' contrast and clash of the societal pressures within the late eighteenth-century British society and early twenty-first century contemporary society, helps Amanda's character to understand and value the achievements of second-wave feminism. Amanda's personal circumstances require a certain interrogation, specifically in relation to the tenants of second-wave feminism, and demand Amanda's assertive and direct action.

Amanda's psychology is a product of contemporary gender norms in which women are free and liberated social agents. Besides being an independent woman, Amanda's disempowerment arises from her inability to hold her boyfriend accountable for his inconsiderate attitude and past infidelity. For this reason, this chapter presents a comparison of the Georgian Era masculinity as depicted in Austen's novel and post-feminist masculinity, which highlights the differences in the behaviors of men of both time periods. These differences in masculinity become one of the major factors and catalyst for Amanda's attraction and admiration for Austen's world. By immersing herself in Austen's narrative through a process of continuous rereading of the novel, Amanda has internalized and idealized her preferences in regards to men, as considerate and genteel models of late eighteenth-century society and desperately searches for these qualities in her boyfriend. However, these idealized preferences of genteel Georgian masculinity also get shattered when she encounters Austen's men in real life through time travel, and she is forced to bring out her assertiveness and power in her personality to either challenge their authority or condemn their weaknesses. (This topic is further discussed in Chapter three and four of this thesis). To an individual of the contemporary era, Austen's stories seem linear with strict social rules and defined gender roles for men and women. But on closer examination, *Pride*

and Prejudice, which depicts the intricate late eighteenth-century social dynamics, create a ground of familiarity for Amanda's life.

The viewers of *Lost in Austen* need to fully understand its status as post-feminist cultural product, while being a fantasy adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Understanding this connection is crucial because it is the various shortcomings of the post-feminist culture, which push Amanda into thinking of Austen's novels as a romantic escape. Furthermore, revisiting the history of feminism and second-wave feminism is required to analyze the emergence of post-feminism and the ensuing conservative backlash in the last decades of the twentieth-century.

Part I

Second-Wave Feminism and Conservative Backlash

In *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second wave to 'Post-feminism'*, Imelda Whelehan discusses the emergence of second-wave feminism and the liberal feminist thought to which we owe the civic and legal equality of women in this contemporary age. As explained by Whelehan, post-feminism emerged in the late twentieth-century due to certain limits and gaps present in the liberal feminist ideology. Post-feminism has close ties to the conservative backlash which also emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s in US and UK accompanied by the Thatcher and Reagan Eras. The conservative backlash is essentially anti-feminist which blames feminism for women's social anxieties and troubles. It critiques the idea of "achieving it all" for women in both professional and domestic realms which consequently results in a burn-out or crash phase for women and therefore succumbs to ultimate failure. Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon also discuss the characteristics of the conservative backlash in *Postfeminism*. In the text they discuss the views of the famous American journalist Susan Faludi's and her 1992 bestseller

*Backlash*⁴, in which the “backlash is seen to be fueled by an entirely hostile media that blames feminism for a series of female illnesses and troubles, from burnout and infertility to depression and mental health problems” (Genz and Brabon "Backlash, New Traditionalism and Austerity-Nostalgia" 87-104). They also connect the conservative backlash to the emergence of the Chick Lit genre in the nineties as well as to the destruction of the image of a successful single woman through movies and narratives like *Bridget Jones* or *Fatal Attraction*:

Feminism is depicted as ‘women’s own worst enemy’ and they are admonished that they cannot ‘have it all’ and must choose between private and public life, home and career [...] backlash fears are pervasive in many popular narratives and representations of women—including Bridget Jones’s desperate search for ‘Mr. Right’ narrated in her fictional diaries... (Genz and Brabon "Backlash, New Traditionalism and Austerity-Nostalgia" 87-104)

Lost in Austen deals with the mechanics of post-feminism, and its relation to the Chick Lit genre, that reiterates the tenets of the conservative backlash. Chick Lit recreates domesticity as women’s final escape for achieving happiness and satisfaction in their lives. However, *Lost in Austen* attempts to topple some of the prominent Chick Lit tropes and in doing so emphasizes the importance and struggle of second-wave feminism and highlights the need for its re-implementation and progression by the young women of the contemporary age.

To grasp an understanding of post-feminism and post-feminist mechanics one has to revert back to the concept and definition of liberal thought, which is the fundamental principle upon which liberal feminism and second-wave feminism are developed. Revisiting this definition or concept assists in understanding the various gaps and limits of second-wave feminism which makes it a victim of conservative backlash in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Whelehan,

⁴ Faludi, Susan. *Backlash: The Undeclared War against Women*. London: Vintage, 1992.

these limits of the second-wave feminism create issues of relevance for many women in the society belonging to varying social classes and cultures:

The liberal feminist strategy for social change is hence tightly restricted by the desire not to overturn the status quo; they prefer the tactics of reasoned argument via non-coercive demonstrations and lobbying for legal and civil reforms. Since liberals have staunchly protected the individual's rights to self-advancement, liberal feminists would generally assert that a meritocracy is not sexist as long as women acquire the same social and legal status as male citizens. Inevitably, as Friedan's work readily illustrates, liberal feminism is centered on the needs of the middle class women, and would possibly not accept class or racial difference as significant handicap in the paths to self-advancement. (Whelehan 39)

Liberal feminism is fundamentally based on the liberal principles of a person's freedoms, abstract individualism, and rights to private property. It resists state and government intervention which is the most basic boundary in demarcating the public sphere from the private sphere. However, this protection of the private realm creates boundaries/limits around certain issues of the society which might require further public or personal interrogation. The social boundaries created by this protection of privacy, hides/veils specific sources of oppression which need to be addressed by assertive and direct intervention from individuals.

Whelehan highlights this issue of identifying the source of oppression within varying forms of feminism:

One of the major sites of difference, however, is in defining the 'oppressor' and locating the source of oppression—indeed, the term 'oppressor' itself might be exchanged for something more moderate, since it conjures up images of tyranny which are unpalatable

to liberals. The sometimes conflicting positions within feminism tend nonetheless to foreground the same substantive issue: it is when it comes to isolating ‘causes’, or posing ‘solutions’ that seems to be little or no agreement. (Whelehan 25-26)

The liberal principle or liberal feminism is unable to break the status quo. It leaves some aspects of the private realm unaddressed, thus providing particular opportunities or spaces for specific issues to emerge.

Post-feminism is born out of one such space and opportunity as it connects itself to women’s domestic and emotional anxieties of the late twentieth-and early twenty-first centuries. Whelehan describes the important yet complex nature of liberal feminism, which during its development advocated for moderation in opposition to radicalism:

Just as liberal feminism provided the impetus for the most significant transformation in women’s status for centuries—the acquisition of the vote—their faith in liberalism prescribed the limits of their radicalism, limits which informed the moderate arm of second wave thinking in the sixties and seventies. The emphasis of liberal politics upon the bourgeoisie also influenced liberal feminist agendas. It explains their prime focus on the value of education, on lobbying (acquiring rights through rational argument), and the importance of women as individuals (rather than as militant groups) to pursue their potential— accepting personal responsibility if they failed. It also meant that ‘a strictly liberal analysis left the private sphere untouched’ (Donovan 1992:27)⁵ (Whelehan 33-34)

Liberal feminists advocated for women’s equal rights in civic, legal and private property realms, which granted women legal rights as well as their greatest achievement the “right to vote”. On

⁵ Donovan, Josephine. *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism*. The Continuum Publishing Company, 1992.

the other hand, acquisition of the legal rights still left certain social and domestic issues hidden for women. This boundary between the public and private makes it difficult to interrogate specific aspects of an individual's lifestyle. This is evident through Amanda's interactions and dynamics with her boyfriend, Michael.

The development of a contemporary society with newer cultural practices and complex gender roles present women with increased societal or cultural injustices rather than legal inequalities. In *Lost in Austen*, an example of this scenario is Amanda's unsatisfactory relationship with Michael and his infidelity towards her. She is unable to find a source of support (emotional/psychological) within her contemporary culture which assists her in reasserting her power and freedom. Amanda is caught within a complex contemporary culture, in which she finds it difficult to hold Michael accountable for his actions. As Alice Ridout remarks in her essay:

When Amanda tells her mother that she 'loves the manners, and the language, and the courtesy' of Austen's novels and that she does not 'trust' her boyfriend because he 'had it off with a waitress' 'two nights running', she is questioning the real benefits for women of the sexual revolution. In this respect, Amanda's nostalgia for the world of Austen actually aligns her with a feminist critique of the sexual revolution. (Ridout 18)

Ridout further explains Imelda Whelehan's views on the feminist critique of Sexual Revolution in the book, *The Feminist Bestseller*⁶: "[f]eminists generally saw this vision of a Sexual Revolution as a chimera where women were being sold the idea of sex as liberation but often it cast them in just as strong a thrall to men, with new pressures to perform sexually at every occasion (109)" (Ridout 18). In episode one of *Lost in Austen*, Michael's disregard of Amanda's privacy is an indication of this social pressure. In the conversation with her friend Piranha, it

⁶ Whelehan, Imelda. *The Feminist Bestseller*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005.

becomes evident that Amanda has requested Michael not to visit her that night. However, he ends up visiting Amanda after Boys' Night and disrupting Amanda's solitary and peaceful reading. This social pressure is also evident in Piranha's inquiry about Michael and whether he would be visiting Amanda in the evening.⁷ The main purpose of *Lost in Austen*, as an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, is to force or persuade, contemporary individuals like Amanda to further interrogate their private and public spheres and overcome the limitations and weaknesses in the post-feminist culture.

Part II

Lost in Austen as a Post-feminist entity

Lost in Austen aired on ITV in fall 2008. It stands as a contradictory yet multifaceted adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, as it delivers alternate endings for certain characters of the novel like Elizabeth Bennet and Lydia, which relays a sense of progression for women belonging to Georgian England. It provides a traditional and as some would suggest an outrageous ending for a contemporary woman who chooses to stay in the early nineteenth-century with a wealthy and arrogant landowner. The series was released in the midst of the 2008 economic crash and portrays a common survival narrative (popular trope of twenty-first century narratives) of the bust economy where an individual, in this case a single woman is doing her best to survive in her low paying and unsatisfactory job. Genz and Brabon explain the specific

⁷ With reference to Amanda's and Piranha's conversation on page 43, this conversation is significant because it illustrates the expected gender norms of the contemporary society. It comments upon Amanda's and Michael's relationship as a couple as well as the subtle and unequal power dynamics that exists within it. Through Piranha's comments it is foreshadowed that Michael will disregard Amanda's request for privacy. It is pretty clear to Piranha that Michael will visit Amanda that evening, even though she has requested some alone time for reading and relaxing. Thus, the conversation indicates the lack of control Amanda has over her daily routine and choices. Furthermore, this highlights the social demand to be sexually active with her partner, even if she prefers to be alone at certain times.

differences between the two different forms of post-feminism in the last decade of the twentieth-century and the first decade of twenty-first century:

With this in mind, we need to engage with a new post-feminist vocabulary that pre-recession was marked by optimism, aspirationalism and opportunity to prosper, but which post-recession becomes unquestionably more pessimistic and less congratulatory. The interplay of economic uncertainty and gender further intensifies a number of (post)feminist dilemmas and points of contentions and casts doubt on the discourses of self-regulating entrepreneurship and choice that have been the hallmark of celebratory post-feminism of the 1990s and early 2000s and that are embodied in the image of the ‘empowered, assertive, pleasure-seeking, ‘have it all’ woman of sexual and financial agency (Chen 2013:441)⁸ (Genz and Brabon "Introduction" 6-7)

Thus, in *Lost in Austen* we encounter the image of pessimism and hopelessness in Amanda’s character which directly correlates to the bust economy of the early twenty-first century. Furthermore, this pessimism also connects her psychological state to the yearning of domesticity as propagated by the conservative backlash in the late 1980s. This state of social pessimism undervalues her civic freedoms and legal equalities, and hence degrades the power of feminism or second-wave feminism in this contemporary society.

As the first episode of *Lost in Austen* opens, Amanda communicates and confesses two details of her life to the audience. In these two details we encounter the assumptions that Amanda has about Austen’s novel and also the rules and ways by which Amanda is living her life, providing the audience a full psychological snapshot of her thoughts and personality. Firstly,

⁸ Chen, Eva. “Neoliberalism and Popular Women’s Culture: Rethinking Choice, Freedom and Agency.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2013, pp. 440–452.

she confesses the remedy to her everyday difficulties, which is reading Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: "I've read it so many times now the words just say themselves in my head and it's like a window opening. It's like I'm actually there. It's become a place I know so intimately. I can see that world, I can touch it" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008).⁹ Amanda's first confession contains an assumption about Austen's novels. She claims that it has become a place she knows so "intimately". As audience members we see this assumption overturn as the events of the series unfold, and Amanda encounters the realities of the Georgian Era (as discussed further in the next chapters). Secondly, as her monologue continues she declares that, "I have no right to complain about my life" and unconsciously takes away the right of freedom of expression and speech from herself. Her manner and style of speech display passiveness, apathy, and dejection. As a bank clerk with an average salary of twenty-seven thousand pounds a year, her daily difficulties consist of dealing with annoying and ignorant customers and commuting on the bus, where she is constantly met with rudeness and brutish behavior of various members of the society (for instance, a man complaining about his joint account with his girlfriend, a mother yelling over her baby in the pram or an inconsiderate couple busy talking on their phones).

The opening sequence of the first episode specifically portrays the bad and rude behavior of men. During her evening commute on the bus she is almost crushed by a man carrying a large backpack as he enters the bus and makes his way without offering any words of apology. Also, she almost gets hit by another man on the sidewalk who is riding a bike without paying any attention to his surroundings. Though Amanda looks annoyed by all of these incidents, her reactions to all of these moments are quite passive. In the bank, she sits quietly and patiently and listens to the customers' requests and complaints. She does not complain or voice her

⁹ Also See: Andrews, Guy. "Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV.

disapproval against the man on the bus or on the bike. Her attitude displays a particular kind of apathy towards her daily life which she accurately conveys in these words:

I have no right to complain about my life... I mean, it's the same for everybody...And I do what we all do...I take it on the chin, and patch myself up with Jane Austen... I know I sound like this terrible loser...I mean, I do actually have a boyfriend. It's just sometimes I'd rather stay in with Elizabeth Bennet" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008).

In communicating her common difficulties, she has highlighted one important fact of her routine, which clearly differs from everyone else. She patches up her daily wounds and stress by reading Austen's novels. As the episode moves along, we see that Amanda's practice differentiates her from her other close relations like friends, boyfriend, and even her mother.

Amanda's attitude of acceptance of her current circumstances is reflective of the post-feminist elements which Angela McRobbie explains in her seminal essay, "Post-feminism and popular culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime". In this essay she provides an explicit analysis of the conditioning of single women by social and economic factors which force them into complicity and silence. She discusses the concept of "double entanglement" which refers to the "coexistence of neoconservative values in relation to gender, sexuality, and family life [...] with processes of liberalization in regards to choice and diversity in domestic, sexual, and kinship relations..." (McRobbie 28). She explains the repudiation of feminism by the contemporary culture and that it is "taken into account" until it allows for the existence of the dominant culture of commodification and objectification of the female subject and other elements of the society. She declares that, "The 'taken in accountness' permits all the more thorough dismantling of the feminist politics and the discrediting of the occasionally voiced need for its renewal" (McRobbie 28). When Amanda states that "I have no right to complain", it

reveals the invisible rules which govern her life despite her apparent freedom and independence. “Thus, the new female subject is, despite her freedom, called upon on to be silent, to withhold critique in order to count as a modern, sophisticated girl. Indeed, this withholding of her critique is a condition of her freedom” (McRobbie 34).

The psychological snapshot that the audience receives from Amanda relays the freedoms and limitations of her life. It provides full evidence of an individual displaying qualities and perceptions of a post-feminist society. Amanda is an independent woman who is destined to deal with her contemporary difficulties and anxieties, including dealing with her career/work hurdles and a demanding and inconsiderate boyfriend.

Part III

Post-feminist Gender Norms: A Contemporary Conversation between

Amanda and Piranha

In the introduction to the book, *Interrogating Post-feminism*, Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, outline defining characteristics of a post-feminism culture. When Amanda arrives at her apartment, the viewers also meet her roommate, Piranha, whose inquiries regarding Amanda’s boyfriend (Michael) represent the cultural practices and lifestyle of single young women of the twenty-first century. The qualities of the post-feminist culture are played out in the conversation of these two friends. Tasker and Negra state:

Post-feminist culture works in part to incorporate, assume, or naturalize aspects of feminism; crucially it also works to commodify feminism via the figure of a woman as an empowered consumer. Thus, post-feminist culture emphasizes educational and professional opportunities for women and girls; freedom of choice with respect to work,

domesticity and parenting; and physical and particularly sexual empowerment. (Tasker and Negra 2)

The following conversation between Amanda and Piranha is a representation of this freedom and choice, which has been achieved in the past two hundred years by the social and political developments in female education and legal rights. As Amanda enters her apartment, her cell phone rings. The cell phone screen flashes, “Michael calling”, which Amanda instantly chooses not to attend. As Piranha bursts into the room getting ready for a night out, their hurried conversation/ tête-à-tête embodies the contemporary societal norms:

Amanda: Piranha! I thought you weren't here.

Piranha: I'm not. Michael coming round tonight?

Amanda: No.

Piranha: Why isn't he coming round?

Amanda: Boys' night.

Piranha: He'll be round after that.

Amanda: No, he won't. I've told him not to. I have plans that involve nobody except me, i.e. not you either. So go away.

Piranha: How do I look?

Amanda: Like you have put your lipstick on by eating it.

Piranha: This is as good as it gets. (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

The above conversation conveys a clear disparity between Amanda's and Piranha's choices and preferences for life.

Piranha, who is a black, outgoing and energetic girl is quite surprised at Amanda's habit of spending the evenings alone, and preferring to read instead of desiring her boyfriend's

company. Piranha's query about "Michael coming around tonight" and "why isn't he coming round" not only relays her concern about the state of their relationship but is also suggestive of an implicit cultural demand on women/girls to be socially/sexually active within the contemporary society which ultimately leads them to be a part of a relationship (marriage, common law, etc.) It also indicates that both Amanda and Piranha are sexually liberated and empowered single women of the twenty-first century, who are free to make their own choices about their lives and enjoy them in whatever way they choose. Piranha's inquiry represents the accepted contemporary norms of female conduct from which Amanda seems to deviate.

As the series was created in 2008, both Amanda and Piranha can be said to be influenced by the post-feminist cultural ideologies such as "Girl Power" and "Power Feminism" which originated in the 1990s and construct women as free and empowered agents, unafraid to own their feminine identity and sexuality. In *Postfeminism*, Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon state:

[...] Girl Power's defining characteristic is a reappraisal of femininity – including the stereotypical symbols of feminine enculturation such as Barbie dolls, makeup and fashion magazines—as a means of female empowerment and agency. Girl power contains an implicit rejection of many tenets held by second wave feminists—who stressed the disempowering and oppressive aspects of femininity in a male-dominated society—and it is often considered in popular culture to be synonymous with "chick lit", a female oriented fiction that celebrates the pleasure of feminine adornment and heterosexual romance. (Genz and Brabon "Girl Power and Chick Lit" 119-138)

Then Amanda's choice, to not exercise or exhibit her sexual freedoms, comes off as strange and odd to Piranha. Similarly, it might also come across as uncommon and outlandish to the

contemporary/post-feminist viewers of the series. Amanda's behavior seems to deviate from the accepted social norms of her contemporary society. Amanda's response to Piranha depicts a certain preference for her "singleness" or just "being by herself" which Piranha seems to reject and criticize. Amanda's rejection of certain social rituals or cultural conformity is an expression of her freedom and displays her independence of thought.

Part IV

Georgian Era Gender Norms: A Conversation between Elizabeth and Charlotte

Amanda in her conduct and independence of thought parallels Elizabeth in the original novel. This parallel indicates that Elizabeth's behavior and pattern of thought serves as a guideline for Amanda to evaluate her relationship with Michael. Austen depicts Elizabeth's independence and deviation from social norms during an intimate conversation with her close friend Charlotte as they observe and comment on Jane's and Mr. Bingley's relationship. The difference of opinion between Elizabeth and Charlotte rests upon the necessity of "fixing" or securing a life partner. While Elizabeth emphasizes the importance of knowing your partner on a deeper emotional level, Charlotte highlights the necessity to secure a partner for financial and economic survival. For this reason, Charlotte prescribes that it is necessary for women to exhibit an outwardly expression of affection towards an eligible/potential partner even if the relationship has not reached any real emotional depth:

[...] a slight preference is natural enough, but there are a very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better shew more affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on" (Austen, *Pride*, 15)

During the conversation Charlotte criticizes Jane's uniformity of manner and her lack of overt expression and admiration towards Mr. Bingley: "Jane should therefore make the most of every half hour in which she can command his attention. When she is secure of him, there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chuses" (Austen, *Pride* 15). On the contrary, Elizabeth admires Jane's natural and pleasant manner which in her opinion guards her from idle gossip of their social circle, "[...] Jane united with great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner, which would guard her from the suspicions of the impertinent" (Austen 14). It gives Jane an opportunity to know Mr. Bingley's character. Elizabeth prefers that a longer time should be devoted to understanding ones' potential life partner rather than just securing someone for future economic security.

Elizabeth's response to Charlotte displays her preference for compatibility and emotional attachment between partners rather than just the prospect of financial security:

'Your plan is a good one', replied Elizabeth. 'where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married; and if I were determined to get a rich husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it. But these are not Jane's feeling; she is not acting by design. As yet, she cannot even be certain of the degree of her own regard, nor of its reasonableness. She has known him only a fortnight... [t]his is not quite enough to make her understand his character.' (Austen, *Pride*, 15)

Through Elizabeth's characterization Austen lays out a certain criteria for choosing a life partner based on affection and understanding which represents a shift in the social practices/customs regarding marriage during the eighteenth-century. As Lawrence Stone notes in his book, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, the eighteenth-century aristocracy and

squirarchy displayed hopelessly varying priorities and values in matrimonial projects, and no single or simple pattern can describe the complex social reality:

Choices varied from person to person; the pressures varied from parent to parent. The only certain facts which emerge are that the least free were the heirs and heiresses to great fortunes, unless their parents were dead and they had obtained full financial control; that even if they were free, young people might well opt for money rather than love or lust; that the loveless marriage was now generally regarded as a direct encouragement for adultery by both parties; that marriage at the free choice of bride and groom and based on solid emotional attachment was increasingly common by the end of the century; and that some noble and gentry parents were using the ties of affection that now bound their children to them in order to direct their choice. (Stone 212)

Elizabeth's opinion and views in relation to choosing a life partner are a representation of Austen's open and progressive social ideas. As Claudia Johnson comments about Austen and her female contemporaries (like Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, etc.), who as women writers were competing and surviving in a patriarchal and male dominated profession, "This procedure of using apparently conservative material¹⁰ in order to question rather than confirm it illuminates the artistic choices of authors who, like Austen, make no explicit announcement about engaging in social criticism in the first place" (Johnson, *Women, Politics and the Novel* 21).

Through the conversation of Elizabeth and Charlotte it is evident that each individual's personal choices and priorities vary depending on their social circumstances. In the novel, both Elizabeth and Charlotte are by no means wealthy. Marriage to a man with stable income and

¹⁰ Johnson here refers to the anti-Jacobin propagandists texts of Austen's time that depicted women as dismissive and retiring creatures.

property seems a wise choice for financial security as Charlotte states: “I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state” (Austen, *Pride* 96). The situation becomes complex when factors like compatibility and affection come into play. Charlotte ignores these factors in favor of economic stability and security when she accepts Mr. Collins’ proposal, considering her age and the fear of never finding another suitable match within her social circle.

Elizabeth’s and Charlotte’s conversation presents a social dilemma which relates to Amanda’s circumstances. The implied “individuality” and the social progression that Austen depicts in Elizabeth’s character becomes the appeal or a catalyst for Amanda’s personal transformation. Amanda, who has been in a relationship with Michael for about two years, is reluctant to marry him because of his infidelity and insensitivity for her feelings. In episode one of the series, Amanda’s remark, “I don’t trust him mum” (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008), is a direct evaluation of his character and incompatibility as a life partner. The main conflict then that the series highlights is Amanda’s inability to detach herself from Michael, even though she does not trust his character and does not want to marry him. The complex contemporary social structure becomes a major factor in Amanda’s dissatisfaction and unhappiness because as a working/professional individual, she does not need Michael for financial support or economic survival but rather for emotional support and companionship.

Part V

Post-feminist Masculinity

During the conversation with Piranha, Amanda specifically mentions that she has requested Michael to not visit her that night. But as the scene progresses, the audience witnesses Michael's disregard of Amanda's request as he barges in on her quiet evening. This fact brings to the forefront the reality of Amanda's circumstances. Amanda is independent and has economic freedom, but she is still governed and manipulated by some dominant social structures relating to the private levels of her life including her relationship with Michael. This relationship requires specific interrogation as Amanda is unable to maneuver her power and control over her privacy and needs. A closer look at the lives of Georgian era women assists her to recognize the real level of her control over her sexual and emotional freedoms.

Amanda's relationship and interaction with Michael relays a sense of disadvantage and inequality where her privacy and needs are dominated or overlooked by Michael's sexual desires and pleasure. Michael's attitude conveys insensitivity towards Amanda's feelings and requests which is evidence of residual patriarchy or patriarchal ideologies in the system. Michael is the product of post-feminist masculinity, which contains a certain reassertion of the old ideas with the mixture of the new. In *Postfeminism*, Genz and Brabon discuss the notion of failing masculinity in the face of the 2008 economic crisis/recession: "the narrative of failing men and resilient women also allowed for a reassertion of patriarchal gender hierarchies and capitalist social relations, albeit in a more 'responsible' guise in keeping with the austerity politics" (Genz and Brabon "Men and Postfeminism" 200). Amanda is also gauging Michael's behavior from this lens of failing masculinity. He enters Amanda's apartment and plants himself in front of the TV. The cheering in the background makes it obvious to the audience that he is watching

football. As he sits on the sofa, drinking his beer, he finds Amanda's copy of *Pride and Prejudice*. It seems that he gets the idea of proposing marriage to Amanda by looking at Austen's novel. This is his attempt of reasserting or imitating the historical masculine values. Michael's imitative process is symbolic of the popular perceptions and interpretation of Austen's novels based on their romantic/marriage plots.



Figure 5: Michael drinking beer (Episode One, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Michael is an image and symbol of post-feminist masculinity which like the contemporary era is an embodiment of contradiction. A brief explanation and analysis of post-feminist masculinity is essential because it assists us in understanding Amanda's frame of mind and the reason she finds Michael's behavior crass and unappealing. She prefers the gentility and mannerisms of Austen's time: "I love the manners and the language and the courtesy. It's become part of who I am and what I want. I'm saying, Mum, that I have standards" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). In the book, *Postfeminism*, Genz and Brabon explain the

vigorous transformation of modern male identity during the twentieth-century. They define the stages of transformation of male identity in relation to the various economic, political, and cultural shifts such as feminism, post-industrialism, capitalism and commercialism over the decades. They list these specific stages as the “new man”, “metrosexual”, “new lad” and finally the “post-feminist man”.

The term “new man” originated in the 1970s in response to feminism, was conceived as a “nurturing figure” (Genz and Brabon, “Men and Postfeminism 204) seemingly in tune with the demands of feminism and women in general. While relaying the views of John Beynon, Genz and Brabon state:

[the ‘new man’] is attempting to put his, ‘caring and sharing’ beliefs into practice in his daily life (Beynon 2002:164)¹¹. Contrastingly in the 1980s, the ‘new man’ developed a more hedonistic and narcissistic edge, embracing consumer culture [...]

(Genz and Brabon “Men and Postfeminism” 204)

This shift towards consumerism and fashion gave birth to the term “metrosexual” by the British journalist and broadcaster Mark Simpson, who defines it as “a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of the metropolis... He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference (qtd in Simpson 2003:1)¹²” (Genz and Brabon “Men and Postfeminism” 206). On the other hand, the term “new lad” comes about in mid 1990s in reaction to the past stages of “new man” and “metrosexual”. This late twentieth-century figure, “[...] embraced the ‘laddish’ behavior—reveling in naked images of ‘girls’, games, ‘footie’ and

¹¹ Beynon, John. *Masculinities and Culture*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002

¹² Simpson, Mark. ‘Metrosexual? That Rings a Bell...’ *Marksimpson.com* 22 July 2003.
http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html

booze. John Beynon considers “[this] new lad defensive about fashion and is ambivalent in his attitudes towards women (he has pornographic notions of them rather than relationships with them)” (Genz and Brabon “Men and Postfeminism” 209). Our first impression of Michael is more of a “new lad” rather than ‘new man’ as he interrupts Amanda’s evening, continues to drink beer and watches a football game.

Imelda Whelehan accurately describes the differences between these two significant stages of male identity in the late twentieth-century and parallels the “new lad” with the old patriarchy and states: “Whereas the ‘new man’ was pro-feminist, the ‘new lad’ is pre-feminist, displaying retro sexism in what can be described as ‘ a nostalgic revival of old patriarchy’, a direct challenge to feminism’s call for social transformation, by reaffirming—albeit ironically—the unchanging nature of gender relations and sexual roles (Whelehan 2000:5)¹³” (Genz and Brabon “Men and Postfeminism” 209). Thus this cultural transformation over the decades represents contradictory cultural identity and values for both men and women alike. Michael’s visit and the drunken proposal to Amanda seem to display characteristics of hegemonic masculinity as Genz and Brabon explain:

In many ways the post-feminist man could be described as the “new lad” grown up or a less sensitive “new man”, displaying a compound identity that reveals that multiple masculinities may coexist in new hybrid forms. In short, the post-feminist man is defined by his problematic relationship with the ghost of hegemonic masculinity as he tries to reconcile the threat he poses to himself and the social systems he tries to uphold.” (Genz and Brabon “Men and Postfeminism” 210-211)

These existing contradictions and ambiguities in post- feminist masculinity give birth to Amanda’s dissatisfaction and disappointment with the present world.

¹³ Whelehan, Imelda. *Overloaded: Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism*. London: The Women’s Press, 2000

Michael is a hybrid between the “new man” and the “new lad” as during the series his behavior towards Amanda switches between insensitivity and care for her feelings. For instance, in episode one, he drunkenly proposes to Amanda with no regard for her feelings. On the other hand, in episode four when Amanda returns to the present in search of Elizabeth, Michael attempts to be more sympathetic towards her indecisiveness about marriage and makes an effort to reconcile with her:

Amanda: I have to find her. Please, take me on your bike.

Michael: I sold it.

Amanda: You sold the Ducati? - Why?

Michael: To buy us a holiday in Barbados. The original idea was that it should be a honeymoon. Let's go anyway, yeah? Skip the getting married bit because that seems to be a problem. Have the honeymoon and see how we get on.

Amanda: Thank you.

Michael: Is that thank you, yes, or thank you, no?

(“Episode Four.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)¹⁴

The conversation shows Michael’s attempt to be sensitive and considerate towards Amanda’s feelings and needs. Amanda is still indecisive about her response towards his marriage proposal due to his past behavior/reputation.

Part VI

Georgian Era Masculinity

Michael’s behavior in the series can also be compared to Darcy’s in the novel and their (Michael and Darcy) dynamics with Amanda and Elizabeth, respectively, creates an interesting platform to observe the differences and similarities in gender roles of both eras. While Austen

¹⁴ Also See: Andrews, Guy. “Episode Four.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV.

transform's Darcy's mannerisms and establishes him as a companion for Elizabeth, the viewers of the series are unable to witness a similar kind of transformation or change in Michael.

Austen's transformation of men in her novels serves as further appeal for Amanda's attachment to this world is further discussed in Chapter three and chapter four of this thesis. As mentioned earlier, in episode four Michael attempts to be more sensitive towards Amanda's feelings, but when Amanda decides to take Elizabeth and Darcy back to the past through the magical door, Michael reverts back to his insensitive nature and gives Amanda an ultimatum. Even though Amanda was attempting to reunite Elizabeth and Darcy and finally put an end to the time travel between centuries:

Michael: Amanda, you go through that door even for ten seconds and I'll be gone. And I will not be coming back.

Amanda: Please don't do this macho thing now. I'm trying to send him home so he can get married to her. - I'm trying...

Michael: You go through there and I'm gone. This ends. One way or the other [...]

Amanda: I heard you Michael, but what else can I do? ("Episode Four." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Michael displays insensitivity and harshness towards Amanda's circumstances and instead of offering help or devising a solution for Amanda's circumstances, he makes the situation more difficult for her.

The opening interaction between Michael and Amanda parallels Elizabeth's and Darcy's interaction in the novel. Amanda is reading the crucial confrontation between Darcy and Elizabeth (Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth) when she is suddenly interrupted by the arrival of Michael at her flat, indicated by the loud buzzing of the doorbell. Michael's interruption is

unwelcome and disrupts Amanda's solitary reverie/leisure. This scene of the series coincides with Darcy's arrival at the Parsonage in the novel, adding frustration and anger to Elizabeth's already disturbed thoughts:

[...] she was suddenly roused by the sound of door bell, and her spirits were a little fluttered by the idea of its being Colonel Fitzwilliam himself, who had once before called late in the evening, and might now come to inquire particularly after her. But this idea was soon banished, and her spirits were differently affected, when, to her utter amazement, she saw Mr. Darcy walk into the room. (Austen, *Pride* 144)

Both instances deliver and exhibit the power dynamics, societal norms, and gender roles of each time period (early nineteenth- and twenty-first centuries) which seem to put the women in a state of powerlessness and silence. Differences exist in both scenarios. Elizabeth is first silenced into listening to Darcy and his declaration of love, but as the conversation progresses, the reader witnesses equality being achieved between the two characters, as they openly express their opinion about each other. The scene delivers a higher level of Elizabeth's assertiveness and power which displays her defense, and the recognition of her opinions and abilities. Elizabeth's response not only shows her strength of character but also her ability to affect Darcy's harsh and stern personality:

'You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner.' She saw him start at this, but he said nothing, and she continued, 'You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it.' Again his astonishment was

obvious; and he looked at her with an expression of mingled incredulity and mortification. (Austen, *Pride* 148)

When Michael comes into Amanda's apartment and settles himself on the sofa, where Amanda was previously reading, Amanda sighs and says, "I just want to read my book" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008), indicating the degree of her agitation, her desire to be alone, and the need to be absorbed in the solitary act of reading. When she responds to Michael's proposal and says, "You have no idea, do you, quite how unromantic that is?" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008), Michael remains unaffected and merely sighs at her disapproval and continues to drink from his bottle. The scene displays his rude and coarse attitude which leaves Amanda unhappy, bored, and dissatisfied. Michael pushes in on Amanda's privacy and burdens her with his drunken proposal while the audience sees her standing in the kitchen unhappy, bored, and dissatisfied. In contrast, in the novel both Elizabeth and Darcy end their face to face confrontation on equal footing:

'You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.'

And with these words he hastily left the room, and Elizabeth heard him the next moment open the front door and quit the house. (Austen, *Pride* 148)

Elizabeth clearly states her opinion of his character and her feelings upon this unexpected proposal. And in return Darcy acknowledges her feelings and leaves her with an appropriate apology.

Part VII

Post-feminist Femininity: Amanda and Piranha

Like Michael, both Amanda and Piranha display varying forms of femininity. Amanda looks towards emotional and psychological fulfillment from Michael and Piranha fully embraces her physical and sexual freedoms. While Piranha is quite happy and energetic about going out at night, Amanda is quite content and comfortable to stay inside and read her book. The series successfully depicts the differences that exist between Piranha's and Amanda's ideologies, but it also problematizes the representation of these women within an Austenian adaptation. It delivers certain stereotypes about women which once more create limitations for the adaptation and interpretation of Austen's text. These limitations exist in terms of the race and skin color of the women and how one is portrayed as active and the other as passive. First of all, Piranha is represented as a black, active and free agent of the post-feminist culture. On one hand this establishes her as an empowered individual. On the other hand she is presented as a victim of commodification. In a way, Amanda is attempting to escape from this culture of commodification as she stays home and reads *Pride and Prejudice*. On the contrary, Piranha's style and language convey confidence in her appearance, sexuality, and her explicit femininity like wearing a bold and glossy lipstick. These traits are part of the post-feminist ideologies like Girl Power and critics often condemn their hidden agendas of female objectification and subjugation upheld by forces like capitalism and consumerism:

Girl power has been dismissed by a number of critics as an objectifying and commoditising trap that makes women buy into patriarchal stereotypes of female appearance and neoliberal individualistic principles. Yet, Girl culture also has the potential to uproot femininity and make it available for alternative readings/meanings.

Recent critiques have discussed Girl Power as a complex, contradictory discourse that provides a new articulation of young femininity and represents ‘a feminist ideal of a new, robust, young woman with agency and a strong sense of self.’(Aapola et al. 2005: 39)¹⁵ (Genz and Brabon "Girl Power and Chick Lit" 119)

When Piranha asks Amanda, “How do I look?” (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008), – she is quite happy and content with Amanda’s description of “like you have put your lipstick on by eating it” (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Piranha’s happiness and contentment over Amanda’s remark is evidence of her confidence in appearing overtly sexual which implicitly supports and propagates the objectification of the female body. Instead of offending women, this often is met with their approval and acceptance as McRobbie states, “[...] we are witness to a hyperculture of commercial sexuality, one aspect of which is the repudiation of feminism invoked only to be summarily dismissed” (McRobbie 34).

Piranha who is a black woman is assigned a contentious first name in comparison to Amanda, who is a white woman. Piranha, which signifies or means a dangerous, meat-eating predator fish, creates negative connotations against a black woman. On the contrary, Amanda that means “one who must be loved” attaches notions of passivity and naivety to a white woman. This contradictory depiction of Piranha’s empowerment and Amanda’s passiveness is quite problematic. For instance, as a black woman she is given no space in an Austenian adaptation, and no opportunity to share Amanda’s interest and attachment to Austen as Amanda says in episode one:

I have this conversation with Piranha on a regular basis, and she never gets it. I'm not hung up about Darcy. I do not sit at home with the pause button and Colin Firth in clingy

¹⁵ Aapola, Sinnikka, Marnina Gonick and Anita Harris. *Young Femininity: Girlhood, Power and Social Change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

pants. I love the love story. I love Elizabeth. I love the manners and the language and the courtesy. It's become part of who I am and what I want. ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

This comment by Amanda in the series is problematic in two ways. First, it implies that Austen's novels/texts can only be applied and adapted for white women and their lives; moreover, Austen's social critique and ideologies can only be understood by white women and not others. Secondly, by presenting Amanda as passive and traditional in comparison to Piranha, it extends the notions of conventionality or passivity to Austen which enhances her image as a conservative writer, discouraging female independence and thought.

While *Lost in Austen* reveals historical context and reawakens Amanda's assertiveness through Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* — in a few instances it also presents some limitations for women of color in relation to film adaptation of Austen's work. This specific depiction of Amanda and Piranha highlights how these stereotypes are propagated within the popular chick lit genre and other post-feminist cultural artifacts. By creating this dichotomy/binary between Amanda and Piranha, *Lost in Austen* falls prey to some of the chick lit tropes. As Anthea Taylor states in *Single Women in Popular Culture: The Limits of Postfeminism*, "In fact, the trope of the single woman miserable and unfulfilled, without a man, and consumed with how to remedy this situation, recurs throughout Hollywood films from the 2000s (Taylor 57). It is very interesting to explore and observe the connections that exist between Austen's novels and how they are adapted within the chick lit genre.

Chapter III

Gender Roles and Social Behaviour in Georgian Era

Elizabeth continued her walk alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity, and finding herself at last within view of the house, with weary ancles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise.

She was shewn into the breakfast parlour, where all but Jane were assembled, and where her appearance created a great deal of surprise.— That she should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by herself, was almost incredible to Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and Elizabeth was convinced that they held her in contempt for it.

— Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Volume I, Chapter VII



Figure 6: Amanda at Longbourn (Episode One, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

After her arrival into the novel, Amanda realizes the blurring of boundaries between her public sphere and private sphere. She realizes the level of accountability for individuals living in this age, when their actions (including language, mannerisms and attitude) are accounted for or against their character and social reputation. The level of this accountability varies for women and men as we will see through Amanda's experiences within the TV series, as well as Austen's original premise and events in the novel. Kathryn Sutherland remarks on the social behavior of Austen's time, commenting on this social surveillance:

Very little social behavior happens in private in this world. There are always lookers on. Jane Austen's novels show, both that women particularly have very little freedom but also that everybody has little freedom. Because we are all being watched by somebody, most of our activities are happening in a kind of a half way public private space and they are always subject to gossip, to conversation, to a kind of watchfulness, and to judgement of course. And these are things that she is really interested herself in exploring in the novels. (Sutherland, "Jane Austen: Public and Private Space", 0:00-0:53).

As Amanda moves through the events of the series, she becomes aware of this watchfulness. It is more severe towards her due to her abrupt and unpredictable reactions to various circumstances. This aspect of social accountability for individuals, specifically women creates an aura/ atmosphere of public scrutiny. This public scrutiny or the threat of scrutiny is experienced in the novel and *Lost in Austen* by various characters like Lydia, Jane, Mr. Darcy, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. For Amanda witnessing this aspect of public scrutiny within the Georgian Era assists her in understanding the condition of her private life, which includes her relationship with Michael.

Part I

Social Judgement for Women

Amanda's initial social excursions make her the victim of this social judgement. While travelling in the carriage with the Bennets for the first time to the assembly rooms, Amanda pulls out her lip gloss and casually applies it to her lips. When Mrs. Bennet and all the other girls look at her in shock and bewilderment, she comments: "last minute lippy, for luck. It's all the rage in Hammersmith" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). However, not everyone is quite shocked by her actions. Lydia is instantly influenced by Amanda's personality and behavior and attempts to imitate her actions. In the next episode, on the way to the Netherfield Ball, Lydia asks Amanda's permission to experiment with her lip gloss. She says, "I wonder Miss Price, if I could trifle with your cylinder" ("Episode Two." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Lydia's attraction towards Amanda's outward expressions, new mannerisms and fashion can be considered quite natural for a young girl as it indicates a desire towards feminine expression and adornment. In the series, when Lydia arrives at the Ball wearing lip gloss and eye liner, Mrs. Bennet's shocked expressions are proof of her disapproval of Lydia's appearance.

In the novel, the younger Bennet daughters, Mary, Kitty and Lydia are criticized for their improper behavior such as gaining attention of officers and their loud behavior at parties. At the Netherfield Ball, Elizabeth is mortified by Mary's poor singing, accompanied by Kitty's and Lydia's ridicule: "Mary's powers were by no means fitted for such a display; her voice was weak and her manners affected. — Elizabeth was in agonies [...] she looked at his [Bingley's] two sisters, and saw them making signs of derision at each other, and at Darcy, who continued however impenetrably grave (Austen, *Pride* 77). In the novel, the Bennet family is censured by the Bingley sisters and by Mr. Darcy in his first proposal to Elizabeth and the subsequent letter

after her refusal. Elizabeth's thoughts after reading his letter are evidence of the social judgement that their whole family is receiving from the society at large – and how this judgement is a cause of social degradation for her and Jane as it is affecting their overall reputation. This tarnishing of reputation is a hurdle in their social advancement, and restricts their opportunities for getting well-married. At the Netherfield ball, Elizabeth is not only embarrassed by her sisters but also by her mother's improper and loud behavior, which is indicated in her loud conversation with Lady Lucas about Jane and Mr. Bingley's attachment and their prospective marriage:

“For heaven's sake madam, speak lower. — What advantage can it be to you to offend Mr. Darcy? — You will never recommend yourself to his friend [Mr. Bingley] by doing so.”

Nothing that she could say, however, had any influence. Her mother would talk of her views in the same intelligible tone. Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation. She could not help frequently glancing her eye at Mr. Darcy, though every glance convinced her of what she dreaded; for though he was not always looking, she was convinced that his attention was invariably fixed by her. The expression of his face changed gradually from indignant contempt to a composed and steady gravity. (Austen, *Pride* 76)

Proper social conduct is of utmost importance in the Georgian society, and it is one the reasons why Mr. Darcy persuades and separates Mr. Bingley from Jane.

Austen shows how Darcy's opinion of the Bennet family in his letter to Elizabeth is a source of shame and mortification for her:

The causes must be stated, though briefly. The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so

almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father.— Pardon me.— It pains me to offend you. [...] I will only say farther, that from what passed that evening, my opinion of all parties was confirmed, and every inducement heightened, which could have led me before, to preserve my friend from what I esteemed a most unhappy connection.... (Austen, *Pride* 152)

Darcy's comment shows how individuals would have been under social judgement and evaluation of their peers, and most families tried their best to maintain their reputations in their social circles. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen delivers a major catastrophe for the Bennet family in the shape of Lydia's elopement, which soon becomes very public and common knowledge.

In the novel, Lydia's exuberant behavior comes under constant scrutiny before and after her elopement with Mr. Wickham. The criticism of her behavior conveys the level of social accountability implemented or exercised over women during eighteenth-and nineteenth- century. As Kathryn Sutherland states in her article, "Jane Austen and Social Judgement", "Jane Austen depicts a society which, for all its seeming privileges (pleasant houses, endless hours of leisure), closely monitors behavior. Her heroines in particular discover in the course of the novel that individual happiness cannot exist separately from our responsibilities to others" (Sutherland, par. 2). Lydia's improper behavior affects the Bennet household overall which is evident in Elizabeth's complaint to her father:

Our importance, our respectability in the world, must be affected by the wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark's Lydia's character. Excuse me — for I must speak plainly. If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, and of teaching her that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment... (Austen, *Pride* 176).

Elizabeth's complaint is put forward to her father before Lydia's elopement. The full extent of social accountability and harshness is revealed in Mr. Collins's letter to Mr. Bennet. This letter holds social significance because it reveals to the audience the intricate social structure through which the news of Lydia's elopement has been spread and how it is affecting the Bennet's family social reputation in various social circles. Through Mr. Collins' association to Lady Catherine as her patroness, it has also reached the Darcy and Bingley families. In the letter Mr. Collins suggests:

[...] The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison to this...you are grievously to be pitied, in which opinion I am not only joined by Mrs. Collins, but likewise by Lady Catherine and her daughter, to whom I have related the affair [...] Let me advise you then, my dear Sir, to console yourself as much as possible, to throw off your unworthy child from your affection forever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence. (Austen, *Pride* 225)

In the above quote, the last sentence of letter is a direct reference to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* as explained by Fiona Stafford in the explanatory notes of *Pride and Prejudice's* 2008 edition of Oxford University press. In the tragic novel, the heroine (Clarissa) is a victim of deception, and is being socially condemned and chided about her elopement. In the note, Stafford states, "[...] Mr. Collins's letter is reminiscent of the Revd Elias Brand's letter to Mr. Harlowe, which recommended that the fallen Miss Harlowe should be sent to one of the colonies to 'save not only her own credit and reputation, but the reputation and credit of all her family', Clarissa, letter 444¹⁶ (Stafford 331). Richardson's well-known text in Austen's times not only

¹⁶See Fiona Stafford's Explanatory notes of *Pride and Prejudice* on pg. 320 and pg. 331. Refer to note 47 and note 225 that contain a discussion of Samuel Richardson's epistolary novel *Clarissa* (1747).

portrays the virtues and morals dictated towards women during the eighteenth-century society but also exposes the cruel and harsh social injustices specifically faced by women.

Ironically, Elizabeth's complaint to her father echoes of Richardson's quote. Elizabeth is speaking out of concern and sincerity for her sister and family, while Revd Elias Brand's words reflect the cruelty and injustice towards innocent and naive young women, in this case, Clarissa, who was a victim of her family's hypocrisy and double standards. In contrast to this attitude, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth, along with her sister Jane, attempt to minimize the effects of Lydia's elopement and her subsequent marriage to Mr. Wickham, which in lady Catherine's words was a "patched-up business" (Austen, *Pride* 273), by rationalizing and persuading Mr. Bennet to accept and notice their union. When Mr. Bennet receives the news of Lydia's and Wickham's discovery from Mr. Gardiner, he is not only mortified over the whole business of elopement, but also by the assumption of various expenses that Mr. Gardiner must have had to endure. For instance, to bring them (Lydia and Wickham) out of hiding, discharge Mr. Wickham's debts, and arrange for their proper wedding in the church. His anger and resentment is reflected in the following words to Mrs. Bennet:

Mrs. Bennet, before you take any, or all of these houses, for your son and daughter, let us come to a right understanding. Into *one* house in this neighborhood, they shall never have admittance. I will not encourage the impudence of either, by receiving them at Longbourn. (Austen, *Pride* 235)

Elizabeth and Jane act as voices of reason and rationality in this matter and gently persuade their father to accept the couple into the house to shade the family from further disgrace and gossip in their immediate and larger social circle. Austen describes the role of Elizabeth and Jane in influencing their father in these words:

But Jane and Elizabeth, who agreed in wishing, for the sake of their sister's feelings and consequence, that she should be noticed on her marriage by her parents, urged him [Mr. Bennet] so earnestly, yet so rationally and so mildly, to receive her [Lydia] and her husband at Longbourn, as soon as they were married, that he [Mr. Bennet] was prevailed on to think as they [Elizabeth and Jane] thought, and act as they wished.

(Austen, *Pride* 238)

Through Jane's and Elizabeth's character Austen provides role models for female progression and empowerment in the late eighteenth-century society. They are working towards protecting their fellow women from further public interrogation rather than contributing towards their social destruction. Jane and Elizabeth are not only role models for the early nineteenth-century society but also for Amanda living in the contemporary society. The female sensitivity displayed by their characters is also needed in the post-feminist culture which is missing most prominently from Amanda's mother. This female sensitivity also becomes a reason for Amanda's attachment to Austen's text, as she is unable to find a similar kind of support in her mother and roommate.

In the novel, Austen not only invokes the language of conduct books through the characters of Mr. Collins and Mary Bennet, but also makes references to the literary works that are vastly read in her time. Her references/allusions to this literature are indicative of her intricate knowledge of the strict Regency/Georgian society and her deep understanding of the harshness of the social judgement women would receive in case of a misstep during their life.

Austen's references to conduct literature like Jane West's *Letters to a Young Lady* and James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* occur at various times in the novel. During Mr. Collins's first visit at Longbourn he chooses to read from Fordyce's *Sermons* to entertain Mr. Bennet and the ladies. This becomes unbearable and disagreeable to a young girl like Lydia and

when she interrupts his reading, he responds by saying: “I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; -- for certainly, there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction. But I will no longer importune my young cousin” (Austen, *Pride* 52). Austen’s allusions and references to the conduct literature in her comic or serious scenes of the narrative convey the strictness and limitations for women in this society.

For instance, Mary Bennet’s comic yet philosophical comment over Lydia’s elopement alludes to the above mentioned conduct texts as succinctly explained by Stafford. Mary says, “Unhappy as the event may be for Lydia, we may draw from it useful lesson; that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable – that one false step involves in her endless ruin – that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful – and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behavior towards the undeserving of the other sex” (Austen, *Pride* 219). Stafford highlights in her notes that this dialogue from Mary is reminiscent of three texts simultaneously including Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women*, Jane West’s *Letters to a Young Lady* and Frances Burney’s *Evelina*. Important to consider in Stafford’s note is Jane West’s quote from *Letters to a Young Lady* which discusses the differences between tarnishing of social reputation between men and women in those times. West states:

A false step here is irretrievable. Man can triumph not only over slander but in some instances over shame; but if a breath of calumny blows upon the tender foliage of female fame, it is blasted *forever*” iii. 224¹⁷. (Stafford 330)

A woman’s reputation is considered more delicate and vulnerable than a man’s. Therefore, in this era, it is crucial for families to protect young girls from the potential of social disgrace. This

¹⁷ See Fiona Stafford’s Explanatory Notes of *Pride and Prejudice* on pg.330 (Refer to note 219 which contains discussion of Jane West’s *Letters to a Young Lady*).

quote accurately relates to Mr. Darcy's acute concern for her sister's reputation when he relays the sensitive information of her elopement with Mr. Wickham in his letter to Elizabeth. Mr. Darcy trusts Elizabeth to maintain full secrecy on the subject so as to guard Georgiana from social slander: "I must now mention a circumstance which I would wish to forget myself, and which no obligation less than the present should induce me to unfold to any human being. Having said thus much, I feel no doubt of your secrecy". (Austen, *Pride* 154)

This concern for Georgiana's social disgrace, puts her and others innocent girls at risk (in this case Lydia and the whole Bennet family) because Mr. Wickham has not been properly held accountable for his wrongdoings by Mr. Darcy. Austen shows Mr. Darcy's acknowledgement of this in Mrs. Gardiner's letter to Elizabeth:

The motive professed, was his conviction of its being owing to himself that Wickham's worthlessness had not been so well known, as to make it impossible for any young woman of character, to love or confide in him. He generously imputed the whole to his mistaken pride, and confessed that he had before thought it beneath him, to lay his private actions open to the world. His character was to speak for itself. He called it, therefore, his duty to step forward, and endeavor to remedy an evil, which had been brought on by himself. (Austen, *Pride* 244)

This reveals a loop hole in the society, where to give personal protection to one individual, in this case a young girl, leaves the perpetrator unharmed and unaccountable.

Part II

Amanda's Realization of Public versus Private Space

In *Lost in Austen*, Amanda begins to encounter the social barriers and expectations of Georgian society as soon as she enters the novel, and her initial interference puts Jane's

reputation on the line. Learning the social rules and proper interaction is essential within Georgian society. Sutherland suggests that the reason this world is so attractive to a contemporary individual is because of its strict rules which creates a sense of accountability for everyone's behavior, "One of the reasons Austen's world charms us is because it appears to follow stricter rules than our own, setting limits on behaviour [...] Above all, relations between young men and women are carefully monitored. (Sutherland, "Jane Austen and Social Judgement", Par. 3) In *Pride and Prejudice*, when Mr. Wickham's elopement with Lydia becomes public, his character instantly transforms from good to evil: "All Meryton seemed striving to blacken the man, who, but three months before, had been almost an angel of light" (Austen, *Pride* 223). Similarly, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen shows harsh consequences for men in relation to their social misconduct. For example, John Willoughby is disinherited by his aunt—when his scandal of seducing the fifteen year old Eliza is revealed to the public. Edward Ferrars also faces harsh consequences and loses his status and inheritance as the eldest son when his secret engagement to Lucy Steele becomes public. In Austen's narratives this aura of accountability for everyone, especially for men, also becomes an appeal for Amanda. Despite these harsh consequences both of these Austen men manage to procure money and means of living by the end of the novel. Willoughby by marrying the rich Miss Grey – and Edward Ferrars due to the kind and generous Colonel Brandon who offers him a parish on his estate.

In spite of misconduct, men are able to survive in this strict society. In comparison, a woman's reputation would be ruined and her means of survival would be minimal. In *Sense and Sensibility*, this is indicated through the miserable condition and poverty of Eliza's mother, which was due to her husband's cruelty and her abandonment to a poorhouse, and in *Mansfield Park*, through Maria Rushworth, who gets herself involved into an affair with Mr. Crawford after

her marriage to Mr. Rushworth, resulting in public scandal. Bailey remarks on the delicate situation of Georgian women who get involved in social misconduct such as elopements and affairs:

Pre-marital sex was a risky activity for women in Regency England. The reputation of women, though not of men, was lost among respectable society if their sexual activity outside of marriage became known. Yet some women, tempted by love or lust, or in hopes of marriage, took the chance. Austen brings home the precarious position of women who engaged in pre-marital sex in her portrayals of unmarried cohabitation. Lydia Bennet lives with George Wickham, Penelope Clay with William Elliot, and Maria Rushworth with Henry Crawford. Only Lydia triumphs by marrying her lover and only after Wickham is ‘worked on’ and bribed by Mr. Darcy (*PP* 306). Mrs. Clay remains hopeful at the end of *Persuasion* that her lover will be ‘wheedled and caressed’ into marriage (273). But the conclusion of Maria’s elopement is dismal indeed.” (Bailey, “The Marriage Law” par. 10)

Significant disparity existed in the social and economic conditions of women and men during the Georgian era, which could even be more negatively affected if an incidence of sexual misconduct occurred, specifically for women. In contrast in the post-feminist society, women would not be victims of such severe social and economic circumstances as they have gained social, legal and economic independence.

Amanda is forced to break the social codes of Georgian society when she realizes that her entrance into the plot has blocked the natural course of events within the narrative. For instance, she sends Jane to Netherfield without a real or proper invitation from Miss Bingley, and thus Jane’s arrival there is considered incredibly rude and offensive. Sutherland states:

There are precise forms of introduction and address, conventions for ‘coming out’ into society (meaning a young girl’s official entry into society and therefore her marriageability), for paying and returning social visits, even for mixing with different social ranks. (Sutherland, “Jane Austen and Social Judgement”, par. 3)

In the series, Jane’s sudden departure to Netherfield on Amanda’s instructions is a source of panic and distress to Mrs. Bennet. The scene delivers contradicting reactions from both parents. Mrs. Bennet’s dialogue in the series conveys the seriousness of Jane’s arrival at Netherfield and her ensuing concern for Jane’s reputation and marriageability:

Mrs. Bennet: Jane has gone to Netherfield Park in this weather and Miss Price pursues her! Are you so obtuse, Mr. Bennet, that you do not see what is the matter here? She has gone to queer Jane's pitch!

Mr. Bennet: It is exciting when you bring the language of the theatre into this house but might this room be returned to the purpose for which it was created? For me to sleep in undisturbed. (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

It is very interesting to note the contrast that *Lost in Austen* presents here to the original novel. While Amanda is being criticized for putting Jane in a socially vulnerable position, in the novel, Mrs. Bennet is criticized for doing the same by Mr. Bennet and Elizabeth. Mrs. Bennet also devises a plan for Jane to visit Netherfield: “No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night” (Austen, *Pride* 22). In the novel, Jane is responding to a proper/legitimate dinner invitation from Miss Bingley, but Mrs. Bennet’s extension of the plan is what is considered a little improper by her family. When next morning, Jane’s letter informs them of her illness due to a cold and sore throat, Mr. Bennet’s witty and comic remark delivers the subtle reproach/disapproval of Mrs. Bennet actions: “Well

my dear,' said Mr. Bennet, when Elizabeth had read the note aloud, 'if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders'" (Austen, *Pride* 23).

In *Lost in Austen*, Amanda closely witnesses the reiteration of these social rules and regulations, when Mr. Collins arrives at Longbourn. With Elizabeth absent, Mrs. Bennet puts her other four daughters forward as potential partners for Mr. Collins and is seen scolding their behavior, while Amanda stands back and listens to her advice. The scene is captivating because Amanda feels completely helpless in this moment. She is unable to dominate the social and cultural rules of the time which accurately conveys the uneasy feelings girls might feel in certain similar situations. Mrs. Bennet's instructions to her daughters, and Lydia's disapproval of them, show the tensions and conflict that might exist between parents and children, especially daughters, who might be persuaded to marry a seemingly eligible man:

Mrs. Bennet: Mary, your spectacles are filthy. Lydia, do you have St. Vitus Dance? I never beheld such a fidget. Kitty, the drawing-up of phlegm through the nose is not the action of a lady. Jane, you lent Miss Price your silken scarf. Get it back. For what is now afoot in this household is neither for her benefit nor her entertainment. I cannot impress upon you all that sufficient sufficiency, Mr. Collins must be given cause to bind himself to us, to love us, to love one of us in particular.

Lydia: Lord, let it be Kitty.

Mrs. Bennet: Lydia!

Lydia: But Mama, he is not comely.

Mrs. Bennet: Do you think I jest? I do not jest. The woman Mr. Collins marries will be mistress of this house when your father is dead. Now think on that and go about your business. (“Episode Two.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Mrs. Bennet’s efforts to marry one of her daughters to Mr. Collins display the level of parental control that could have been exercised over children during the eighteenth-century. As Lawrence Stone states;

In terms of power to make a match, four basic options are available in a society. The first is that the choice is made entirely by parents, kin, and family ‘friends’, without the advice or consent of the bride or groom. The second option is that the choice is made as before, but the children are granted a right of veto, to be exercised on the basis of one or two formal interviews which take place after the two sets of parents and kin have agreed on the match. It is a right which can only be exercised once or twice, and tends to be more readily conceded to the groom than to the bride. (Stone 181-182).

The third and fourth options provide children more freedom of choice. “The third option, made necessary by the rise of individualism” (Stone 182), enables children to choose their own partners on the understanding that they belonged to more or less the same economic and financial position with parents having the right to veto. The fourth option, which emerged during the twentieth-century, is that children made their own choice and only inform their parents of what they have decided (Stone 182). Mrs. Bennet’s influence over her daughters does not take the form of absolute control, but it can be considered as very prominent domination over her daughters. If in the novel, Mr. Bennet had not been caring and sensitive enough towards his daughters’ personalities, Elizabeth or Jane could have been persuaded to marry Mr. Collins. It is

only because of Mr. Bennet's understanding and support that Elizabeth is able to ward off Mr. Collins's proposal and Mrs. Bennet's constant insistence and pressure.

We see a complicated scenario emerge in *Lost in Austen*, as Jane ends up marrying Mr. Collins and is destined to a life of emotional misery. In the series, Amanda requests that Mr. Bennet not allow any of his daughters to marry Mr. Collins. His conversation with Amanda in regards to Mr. Collins's visit also displays a sense of hopelessness due to his weak economic status and complex social structure:

Mr. Bennet: Lizzie has told you, then, of our wretched condition pertaining to our present guest. Mrs. Bennet prescribes plenty of advantageous marriage. It is a very sensible remedy and it makes me feel like a whoremonger.

Amanda: It's not whore mongering to bring together people who are in love.

Mr. Bennet: To marry for money is merely despicable. To marry for beauty, that is a great foolishness. But my wife was a great beauty.

Amanda: Let your daughters marry for love and everything else come right. Everything. Just please don't allow any of them to marry Mr. Collins.

Mr. Bennet: In as much as it is in my power to allow anything in this family, I shall strive to that end. Not even the silliest of my daughters deserves the Promethean misery of marriage to Collins. ("Episode Two." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Nonetheless, both Amanda's and Mr. Bennet's fears are realized when Jane does marry Mr. Collins, moves to Kent and comes not only under his power but also by extension to the rules and regulations of Lady Catherine. In episode three, Amanda visits Jane and attempts to compliment her house and furniture, to which Jane replies, "The furnishings and decoration are under the personal jurisdiction of Lady Catherine" ("Episode Three." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008),

indicating the level of domestic control landowner or estate owners might have over their parishioners or renters. This fact is a clear indication of the scarceness of privacy in people's lives and how their daily interactions are monitored within their social circles and communities.

Part III

Gender Codes of the Georgian Era

Physical appearance and beauty also played an immense role in securing women's happiness and financial future during the eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century. Austen emphasizes this fact in the novel through Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet's marriage and their incompatibility of personalities as life partners. Austen delivers this fact to her readers through Elizabeth's views and commentary upon her parent's situation as a couple:

[...] Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished forever, and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. (Austen, *Pride* 180).

Physical beauty and appearance become an important tool for women to progress in the society. And during these times, women used it to their full advantage in comparison to any other traits of their personality. Austen conveys this effectively in *Pride and Prejudice*, as she constructs her female characters of varying levels of beauty. In comparison to Elizabeth and Charlotte, Jane possesses more attractive and beautiful physical features and has a far better chance to attract men. This fact is articulated by Mrs. Bennet at the beginning of the novel as she criticizes Mr. Bennet for preferring Elizabeth's "quickness": "[...] Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humored as Lydia. But you are

always giving *her* the preference” (Austen, *Pride* 2). Right from the beginning of the novel Austen conveys to her readers the various Georgian standards and requirements according to which women are evaluated.

In the novel, Mr. Bingley instantly becomes attracted to Jane’s beauty and gentle manners. The conversation between him and Mr. Darcy in Volume I, Chapter III of the novel presents their individual evaluation of the Bennet sisters. Mr. Bingley adores Jane but also considers Elizabeth pretty and agreeable as he exclaims to Mr. Darcy: “Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I have ever beheld. But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say, very agreeable” (Austen, *Pride* 7). On the other hand, Mr. Darcy’s assessment of Elizabeth is harsh and impertinent when he refuses to dance with her: “[...] she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men...” (Austen, *Pride* 7). Austen openly portrays the way women experience discrimination or disadvantage within the society due to standards of physical beauty. Similarly, in *Lost in Austen* when Amanda enters the fictional world of *Pride and Prejudice*, she becomes the target of these Georgian beauty standards.

Amanda’s arrival into the novel’s plot is right at the beginning of the story. Mr. Bingley has not yet been introduced to Jane and rest of the Bennet family. Amanda’s arrival becomes the cause of catastrophic events as the series moves forward. Mr. Bingley becomes instantly attracted to Amanda instead of Jane due to her different physical appearance. When he visits Longbourn to pay a courtesy visit to his new neighbours, Amanda is dressed in her modern leather pants and a casual purple blouse. According to the Georgian standards, Amanda’s clothes

are considered provocative and unsuitable. Her dress is considered highly inappropriate by Mrs. Bennet, and it becomes a topic of conversation between Kitty and Lydia.

Amanda instantly becomes the target of uninvited attention and criticism. Her whole being (self) is an anachronism, and her clothes and language transform her into an object not just for the male gaze but for the females of the society as well. Her arrival in Longbourn in leather pants, jacket and boots produces reaction of confusion from Mr. Bennet as he asks, “So you are not a local person, Miss Price? It creates hilarity and amazement for Kitty, Lydia and Marry, as they inquire after the peculiarity of Amanda’s outfit at the breakfast table, “Your tunic Miss Price, is this what is worn in town this season? I think it very fine” to which Amanda cleverly replies, “This is otter- hunting kit [...] my proper clothes, you know, are coming” (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008) Mrs. Bennet is shocked and mortified when she sees Amanda for the first time in the drawing room as Mr. Bingley arrives. While Amanda’s appearance manages to raise alarm at every instant, her manner of speaking which includes frank and common British expressions, invokes even more curiosity. When Mr. Bennets introduces himself to her as Claude Bennet and reveals his first name, she laughs and exclaims in excitement, “You are kidding”. When she explains her unplanned visit to Longbourn and Elizabeth being in Hammersmith to Mrs. Bennet and others, she uses words like “swap” and phrases like “she should dig in there for a day or two”. Her casual manner of speaking indicates her unawareness of the formality and delicacy required and preferred in Georgian society. When Mr. Bingley specifically urges the family to attend the assembly rooms, he displays a special interest in Amanda about which Mrs. Bennet conveys to Jane: “It is a pity that Miss Price's portmanteau has failed to appear. We must endeavour to furnish her with clothes that are a little less provoking of attention” (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). As Glen Creeber comments upon

Amanda's contemporary and seemingly provocative appearance in the world of *Pride and Prejudice*:

[...] her 'black leather jacket, red high-heeled boots, low-cut purple blouson top, low-slung green belt, and tight jeans (Kaplan 2012)' suggest a dangerous new form of sexual freedom. However, by introducing Austen's heroines to lipstick, modern fashions, and pubic grooming, Amanda may well be helping to bring an end to the world she once so desperately coveted. (Creeber 569)

Amanda's post-feminist appearance and mannerisms become the focus of physical objectification by late eighteenth-century men. This is one the reasons why Mr. Bingley instantly becomes attracted towards Amanda instead of Jane.

Part IV

Amanda's Violation of Georgian Gender Codes

Amanda arrives at the assembly rooms wearing Elizabeth's gown for dancing. Her appearance again overshadows Jane's presence and beauty. Mr. Bingley overlooks Jane and instead asks Amanda for a dance. Amanda, however, refuses to dance with him, and her refusal is considered a disgrace and humiliation of Mr. Bingley. She tries to save his reputation by inventing a rather shocking excuse. She exclaims that Mr. Darcy has already approached her, and she is unable to accept Mr. Bingley's offer. At this moment Mr. Darcy appears on the screen for the viewers, and to save his friend from humiliation he agrees to dance with Amanda. Amanda who is in awe of Mr. Darcy is rather happy at her triumph, but is immediately hurt by his rude and stern character. Their conversation reveals that Mr. Darcy's first impression of Amanda is negative. He immediately points out her improper behaviour:

Amanda: Why did you say yes?

Darcy: To spare my friend the humiliation you contrived for him.

Amanda: I didn't seek to humiliate Mr. Bingley.

Darcy: Then your refusal to dance with him was most ill-adapted to its purpose.

(“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Amanda’s first social outing at the assembly rooms and the disappointing meeting with Mr. Darcy leave her dejected. She instantly wishes to return to her flat in Hammersmith in modern-day London. She says, “Everything I do is wrong. Everything. Please, God, I want to go home” (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). She immediately realizes that her contemporary mannerisms make her a misfit in this highly strict social structure. Throughout the series, her actions and decisions mostly offend other characters, and she ends up feeling ashamed and confused.

After the first confrontation with Mr. Darcy her feeling of disappointment is in contrast with Elizabeth in the novel. When Mr. Darcy slights Elizabeth on the basis of her beauty, it is he who displays improper and proud behaviour according to the Georgian social decorum and propriety. Elizabeth’s feelings after the first confrontation with Darcy are quite different and amusing. She is not disappointed by his behaviour, but rather laughs and ridicules his conduct while discussing it with her friends and family. Austen displays Elizabeth’s playful character in these words: “Elizabeth remained with no cordial feelings towards him. She told the story however with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous” (Austen, *Pride* 8).

Amanda’s dejection leads her into further displays of improper behaviour and conduct. She consumes a large amount of punch at the dancing and becomes intoxicated. To relieve her stress she escapes to an outside terrace to smoke one of her last cigarettes. Mr. Bingley follows

her out to the terrace, and she shocks and embarrasses him by kissing him in this intoxicated state. Her words of apology and shame display her conflicted psychological state, which underlines the major themes and premise of this complicated series:

You and I, we come from very different worlds, more different than you could possibly imagine. In my world, Mr. Bingley, all I ever do is dream about the loveliness of your world...the stately, elegant rituals and pace of courtship, of lovemaking, as you call it, under the gaze of chaperones, of happiness against all odds, and marriage. Here I am, I talk to you for two minutes, I kiss you... So I'm a little disappointed in myself, Mr. Bingley. I feel like those guys who discovered that Stone Age tribe, then gave them the common cold, wiped them out ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Amanda's words indicate that contemporary life has led to her imagine and prefer the beauty and peace of the early nineteenth-century life. She comments upon the Georgian courtship rituals and norms and compares them to her contemporary behavior. In this scene, she condemns her thoughtless and abrupt action of kissing Mr. Bingley.

To highlight the cause of Amanda's discontent, Creeber explains in his analysis that traditional romance is now increasingly untenable because gendered identities have become confused. In a contemporary culture where women often appear as confident and active as men (in both social and sexual sphere), "the traditional manners, rituals, and rhythms of courtship are inevitably destabilised" (Creeber 568). He comments on the social progress of women and how it has affected society at large. Amanda's remark "we come from very different worlds, more different than you can possibly imagine", ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*) point towards this progression. Her shameful confession to Mr. Bingley is a signal of her psychological conflicts. She evaluates her own post- feminist ideals, and, as Creeber goes on to say about the series,

“While clearly not wanting to return women to their historical status as ‘female eunuchs’, it implicitly asks if all these changes are quite as liberating as they might first appear” (Creeber 568).

Amanda receives stark opposition from Mrs. Bennet due to her improper behaviour. Mrs. Bennet notices Mr. Bingley’s instant attraction to Amanda, and considers her as an adversary to Jane. When she observes Mr. Bingley and Amanda re-entering the assembly rooms from the terrace, she threatens Amanda with a strong warning:

According to the laws of Christian hospitality, Miss Price, I may not turn you out of my house. Instead, I shall favour you with a warning. I do not know how a person like you comes to be so friend-like with Lizzy. I fear your influence on her. But as to my other daughters who remain in my care, hear this — Do not obstruct them...Do not obstruct any one of them in her quest for a propitious marriage. If you do and my estate is lost because of it, something may come over you, Miss Price, like a thief in the night, which may not be quite so agreeable. (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

These lines from Mrs. Bennet constitute the main conflict of the novel as well as the TV series. In early nineteenth-century the survival of women is closely related to the financial wealth, stability and status of men. Pursuing men becomes an intense social competition and rivalry, the women’s pursuit of a potential match for them, or their daughters is essential because it would guarantee financial security. These facts indicate that the value and consideration for personal happiness was very low in comparison to the prospect of wealth and social status.

While the Bennets and the Lucases pursue Mr. Bingley; Miss Bingley, Lady Catherine, and Elizabeth compete over Mr. Darcy. In *Lost in Austen*, though Amanda is trying to protect the Bennet girls from Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet considers her a rival and an enemy. Mrs. Bennet’s

feelings are triggered against Amanda not only because of Mr. Bingley's attraction towards her, but also because of her increasing attachment with her daughters. Amanda's contemporary manners expose the Bennet family to improper remarks, and tarnish their general reputation in country society. This fact makes Amanda's behaviour and appearance equivalent to the vulgarity and impropriety of Lydia and Kitty in the original novel. In the novel, Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy comment upon Kitty and Lydia's impropriety, and in the series, Miss Bingley comments upon Amanda's social conduct. The conversation between Miss Bingley and Mrs. Bennet reveals Amanda's damage and impact on the Bennet daughters:

Mrs. Bennet: No doubt, Miss Bingley, you and your brother find these young provincial gentlemen lacking in metropolitan refinement?

Miss Bingley: Oh, the young gentlemen we find the acme of particularity and taste. It is the ladies of the country whose crassness is unparalleled. As the mother of many daughters you must find it wearying to have to lead by example.

Mrs. Bennet: I do, Miss Bingley. I do! ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Initially Mrs. Bennet considered Amanda's presence in her household a burden. Amanda's appearance, manners, and language are deemed uncouth by Mrs. Bennet and her feelings are expressed when she complains to Mr. Bennet about her prolonged stay at Longbourn: "She does not materially contribute to the running of this household. She is unkempt and indelicate and not at all couth! She is upsetting the servants with all manner of improper remarks!" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). After Miss Bingley's criticism, Mrs. Bennet's resistance and dislike of Amanda increases. She tries her best to remove Amanda from Longbourn and to decrease Amanda's influence on her daughters.

Amanda's desire for a simpler life and her demand of honesty and morality in contemporary culture are all valid. But living in the early nineteenth-century gives her a chance to experience the harsh social realities and limitations for women of that time. In the series, after Jane's wedding to Mr. Collins, Amanda is preparing to leave Longbourn. The parting words between Mrs. Bennet and Amanda clearly relay the views of both sides:

Mrs. Bennet: On your departure, my daughters may seek to engage you in conversation. I would prefer it if they weren't successful. Your parting words of wisdom are treasures my girls can live without.

Amanda: You really do think I'm some sort of disease, don't you?

(“Episode Three.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

As Mrs. Bennet disapproves of her manners, behavior, language and fashion, Amanda recognizes that her own liberal and post-feminist ideals can have immense effects on the restricted and strict social environment of the early nineteenth-century. As Creeber points out:

[...] Amanda begins to realize that her own sexually liberated ideas and behavior may well have grave consequences on the romantic allure of Austen's world, forcing its audience to question just how 'liberating' these new sexual freedoms might actually be. Although active female sexuality is often equated with issues of post-feminist empowerment [...] some critics argue that the overly-sexualized culture it tends to promote may not always be entirely progressive. (Creeber 569)

Amanda's presence in the novel serves varying purposes. On the one hand she is able to evaluate her own ideologies about independence, freedom and choice. On the other hand, she functions as a disruptive yet empowering force for various women in the narrative. As the series reaches its

climax and conclusion, the audience observes a transformation in the characters of Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet, Jane, and Lydia.

Part V

Amanda under the Georgian Lens

Amanda comes under direct social judgement and interrogation as her romantic relationship develops with Mr. Darcy. In episode three of the series, Amanda fully assumes her place in the plot as there is no hope/sign of Elizabeth returning from the future. After many arguments and conflicts between Amanda and Mr. Darcy in the first two episodes, Mr. Darcy finally declares her love and attachment for Amanda in episode three. Initially Amanda is incredibly happy and delirious over this fantasy like circumstance, however the whole scenario overturns when her social status and lifestyle are brought into question by people like Mrs. Bennet and Miss. Bingley. Mr. Darcy is warned by Miss. Bingley about Amanda's character in these words, "I think your Miss Price leads you a merry dance. If I were you, I would seek to know Miss Price a little better before presuming to know her better" ("Episode Three." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Miss Bingley's words comment on Amanda's contentious social status in the series as nobody is able to confirm her family background and connections. Due to this apparent ambiguity, Miss Bingley attempts to cast negative light on Amanda's character, and destroy her social and sexual reputation within the strict eighteenth-century society. In the book, *Family and Kinship in England 1450-1800*, Will Coster discusses the role of gossip and power women could have in a restricted society to control an individual's image and reputation:

The most significant factors limiting sexual activity were the ability of local elites to report offenders to the church courts and the informal power of gossip. Contemporaries certainly believed gossip was an activity largely undertaken by women and as such it

could provide them with a form of social power as they were often able to define and destroy reputations. (Coster 67)

In episode three of the TV series when Mr. Darcy declares his love for Amanda, Miss Bingley urges him to investigate Amanda's family background and social reputation. For this reason, Darcy asks Amanda about her past life and she gives him complete disclosure of her life.

This disclosure results in disappointing results for Amanda, as Mr. Darcy honestly conveys his late eighteenth-century views and opinions. Their conversation depicts the harsh disparity between social and cultural norms of two societies, existing two hundred years apart, and hence it shatters Amanda's fantasy view of the past:

Mr. Darcy: Miss Price, my life is a pretty drear thing but it is conducted for the greater part in public. It is a rare moment that I am not closely observed by servants. If one wished to know the truth about Fitzwilliam Darcy, one need merely ask.

Amanda: You're worried that I have a past that you don't know about.

Mr. Darcy: I am braced for the truth. Pray tell it me.

Amanda: OK, what I should do, what my mother would certainly say I should do if she were here and thank God she isn't, is keep my mouth shut. But given that I've never been able to do that, and given that Caroline has almost certainly put it about that that I am the great whore of Hammersmith. But you would never listen to gossip, would you? I love you for that [...] but it is clear to me now that I have always loved you. Every time I've fallen for a man, I've closed my eyes and it's been you. Even Michael and I pretty much lived with him for a year. So, yes, I have a past but every instant in it contains you.

Everything I am belongs to you.

Mr. Darcy: I cannot marry you. I am sorry for it, but a man like me cannot possibly marry a woman like you.

Amanda: A woman like me?

Mr. Darcy: You are not a maid. I am sorry.

Amanda: I've been incredibly stupid.

Mr. Darcy: You told me the truth and I asked for it - for that courage I shall admire you always.

Amanda: But it has cost me everything. ("Episode Three." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Through this conversation, Amanda is thrown back into the realization and acceptance of her twenty-first century freedoms and liberation as a woman. This realization is accompanied by grief and disappointment as she is rejected by a person and a society which she been admiring all her life.

Amanda recognizes and identifies the sources of oppression for women in Georgian society as well as her own post-feminist culture. In Georgian era, the civic and legal inequalities for women are also accompanied by the public and social scrutiny prescribed by the strict social and religious rules of the culture. The intensity and level of social judgement, criticism, and injustice is higher for women than men as evident by the prevalence of conduct books and literature. Amanda's witnessing and experiencing of these difficulties first-hand, reveals the importance of the achievements of first-wave and second-wave feminism not just for her but also for the viewers of the series. *Lost in Austen* cleverly and gently pushes its audience to revisit and study the historical past and learn from its mistakes.

Chapter IV

Real versus Imaginary: *Pride and Prejudice* through Amanda's Eyes

Amanda: Miss Bennet. I think I may be having a nervous breakdown. You see, I am a real person and you are a pretend person. You are the creation of Jane Austen.

Elizabeth: I am not acquainted with this person.

Amanda: You are a character in a book. This one, written by her 200 years ago.

Elizabeth: It grieves me, Miss Price, that I must presume to dispute with you. I have my fleshy envelope, as you yours.

Amanda: Tell me something I couldn't possibly know. Please. A piece of information that simply doesn't exist in my brain. Just do it.

Elizabeth: Netherfield Park is let.

Amanda: No, no, I know that.

— (“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

From the moment Amanda meets Elizabeth in her bathroom, she tries to break her suspension of disbelief. Due to Elizabeth's invitation and her own curiosity she steps into the world of *Pride and Prejudice*, through the secret opening in her bathroom wall. From this point onwards, Amanda and the readers of Jane Austen think that they are stepping into a very familiar world. This whole notion is turned upside down just by the mere presence of Amanda in Longbourn and Elizabeth's disappearance into the modern world.

This chapter focuses on the narrative structure of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Lost in Austen*. It specifically looks at the ways, *Lost in Austen* transforms the plotline, characters and dialogues of the original novel, which help to illuminate the historical context as well as juxtapose the cultural differences in the Georgian society and contemporary society. For this purpose, this chapter's analysis includes references to narrative theory and adaptation theory from various

theorists and scholars such as Seymour Chatman, Linda Hutcheon, Thomas Leitch and Gordon Slethaug. The references to narrative and adaptation theory help to create a foundation for comparing the complex transformation process of the TV series.



Figure 7: *Pride and Prejudice* in Fountain (Episode Three, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Part I

Lost in Austen's Adaptation Process

Lost in Austen's alteration and deconstruction of *Pride and Prejudice's* original story (events, characters and plot) is the key element which reveals the underlying themes and the historical context of the novel. Through time travel, Amanda is transported two hundred years back into the Georgian Era, while Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of our beloved novel gladly chooses to stay in present day London, and adapts to the contemporary ways of life. This substitution of characters is a major complication in the story of the novel as well as in the imagination of readers of *Pride and Prejudice* who until now have been used to the usual form of

screen adaptation in which the film or the TV series (historical adaptation or contemporary adaptation such as *Bride and Prejudice*) displays fidelity to the original plotline and characters of the novel. The element of time travel and fantasy brings uniqueness to the adaptation practices of *Lost in Austen* and introduces a deviation in the narrative structure of the novel, which renders the TV series unpredictable, chaotic, and funny to most viewers. On the other hand, this element might prove unnerving and frustrating to some viewers as they might not consider *Lost in Austen* faithful to the original text. Although the element of fantasy and time travel is unrealistic, it is one of the ways through which the writer and director could efficiently juxtapose two different historical eras. The beginning of episode one shows Amanda declaring, “we are longing to escape” (“Episode 1.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Like any reader Amanda’s imaginative escape is much simpler than her actual physical entrance into Austen’s world. Her upcoming difficulties and frustrations which are related to the unsuccessful attempts to keep the novel’s original plot on track are foreshadowed in episode one of the series by Mr. Bennet’s these words, “So Lizzy has gone to Hammersmith to see you, but you have come to Longbourn to see her. You will forgive me for observing that the arrangement seems to have a flaw” (“Episode 1.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008).

As Amanda is introduced to the Bennet family in episode one, she finds that the story of the novel is just where it should be. Mrs. Bennet is eager to introduce her five young daughters to the new eligible neighbor Mr. Bingley, while Mr. Bennet endures her agitated nerves. The next morning Mr. Bingley’s arrival at Longbourn is a delight to everyone, including Amanda, however, the whole story of the novel gets mismanaged. *Lost in Austen*’s adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* happens at a very minute level. While it keeps the portrayal of the characters true to their nature as created by Austen, it changes the events and interactions of the participants. In

“Twelve Fallacies of Contemporary Adaptation Theory”, Leitch states: “Fidelity to its source text—whether it is conceived as success in re-creating specific textual details or the effect of a whole—is a hopelessly fallacious measure of a given adaptation’s value because it is unattainable, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense (Leitch 161). Not only is *Lost in Austen’s* adaptation of the novel in a different medium (discourse), but the narrative structure (story) has also been changed. Seymour Chatman describes the difference between the concept of story and narrative discourse as:

Structuralist theory argues that each narrative has two parts: a story (*histoire*), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of settings); and a discourse (*discours*), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*. (Chatman 19)

As viewers, what we encounter is a four-part TV series (narrative discourse) of the novel, in which the story (events, plots and characters) have been somewhat transformed. Amanda is unable to foresee the effects of her own character and personality on Austen’s intricate Georgian environment. Her unusual and somewhat provocative appearance, judging by Georgian standards, instantly overshadows Jane’s beauty and delicacy. Amanda instantly becomes the object of attraction for Mr. Bingley instead of Jane and this creates major disruptions in Austen’s original sequence of events and plot of the story. Amanda’s attempts to imitate Austen’s original plot are highly unsuccessful.

Amanda is unable to replicate the reality of the novel, and this fact complicates the sequence of subsequent events. In *Story and Discourse*, Chatman, relays O.B. Hardison’s views on the importance of a narrative’s plot:

The author ‘can arrange the incidents in a story in great many ways. He can treat some in detail and barely mention or even omit others, as Sophocles omits everything that happened to Oedipus before the plague in Thebes. He can observe chronological sequence, he can distort it, he can use messengers or flashbacks, and so forth. Each arrangement produces a different plot, and a great many plots can be made from the same story’¹⁸. (Chatman, *Story and Discourse* 43)

When Amanda enters the fictional world of the “*Pride and Prejudice*”, her role becomes manifold. While she instantly becomes one of the participants of the story, her role is also divided into part-author and part-narrator. She puts her best foot forward in imitating the original plot of the novel but still everything goes into disarray due to Elizabeth’s absence. The story is transmitted through Amanda’s eyes, and instead of staying in Austen’s third-person narrative and free indirect discourse, it mostly transforms into a first-person narrative. Amanda’s actions and presence determine the action and happenings within the space of the series.

Amanda’s insertion into the original narrative is the central technique through which the series demonstrates its adaptation processes. First of all, the series delves into deconstruction of the plot which allows for an open interpretation of the original text. In going against the binary relationship of original/copy, the series resists the process of normative evaluation in adaptation theory where an adapted work is considered inferior to the original. Gordon Slethaug traces the origins of this view of adaptation, explaining that the concept of fidelity to the source text is rooted in modernist thought and cultural conceptions of morality. While conveying the views of James Naremore, a scholar of adaptation theory, Slethaug notes:

In keeping with these modernist perspectives, many others who write about adaptation, says Naremore, tend ‘to be narrow in range, inherently respectful of the ‘precursor text’,

¹⁸ O. B. Hardison, Jr., “A Commentary on Aristotle’s Poetics”, *Aristotle’s Poetics* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968), p.123.

and constitutive of a series of binary oppositions that post-structuralist theory has taught us to deconstruct: literature versus cinema, high culture versus mass culture, original versus copy'¹⁹. (Slethaug 18)

Lost in Austen differs from many other adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* because it moves away from the issue of fidelity by deconstructing the plot of the novel, transforming characters, and inventing new dialogues. On the flipside, its relationship with the source text is as true and real as it can be. The series' truthfulness and fidelity to the novel are connected to its revealing of the historical context and re-establishing of Austen's worth in contemporary culture. As Linda Hutcheon declares in *A Theory of Adaptation*: "An adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source text and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise (Hutcheon 176). The status of an adaptation exists as a creative and separate entity from the original work.

Hutcheon describes three functions of the adaptation process. Firstly, as a "*formal entity or a product*, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works (Hutcheon 7). This transposition involves a shift of medium and perspective. *Lost in Austen's* transposition of *Pride and Prejudice* not only involves a shift of medium (novel to screen), but changes the point of view and perspective of the original narrative through the aspect of time travel and character substitution of Elizabeth with Amanda. Secondly, "*as a process of creation*, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-) creation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective" (Hutcheon 8). Thirdly, "seen from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of

¹⁹ Naremore, James. 2000a. "Introduction." In *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. London: The Athlone Press. 1-16.

intertextuality; we experience adaptation (*as adaptations*) as palimpsest through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation (Hutcheon 8). As a recreation of *Pride and Prejudice*, the series offers multiple vantage points to interpret and imagine the original text. At the same time it also makes strong connections to past adaptations of the novel, specifically BBC's 1995 television series, written by Andrew Davies, and Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones books and their subsequent movies. As Amanda enters Austen's world her language, behaviour, and ideals become anachronisms. At crucial moments of the narrative her actions and expressions become a source of shock and discomfort to other characters.

Part II

Character Development

What do you see when you see a character in the novel or a short story? Given our current knowledge of the way we imagine things, there is much about this question that is impossible to answer. But it is clear that in some ways we draw upon pre-existing *types* that we have absorbed from our culture and out of which, guided by the narrative, we mentally synthesize, if not the character, something that stands for the character, what we synthesize is to a greater or lesser extent unique, yet as a rule sufficiently flexible to accommodate new information.

— H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative Second Edition*, pg. 116

In Jane Austen's novels the emotional and psychological development and transformation of a character are often dependent upon his/her new encounters and interactions with people and environment. In *Pride and Prejudice*, we observe Elizabeth Bennet's character transforming as she travels to various places and encounters a variety of people who assist her in overcoming the weaknesses and shortcomings of her personality. Likewise, in *Lost in Austen*, Amanda's twenty-first century anxieties and her confused state of mind are in need of transformation.

Amanda's Apathy and Passivity

Amanda experiences the sudden time travel at a crucial moment in her life. Her boyfriend Michael proposes to her while drunk and offers her the metal ring of the beer bottle's lid as the engagement ring. Michael's proposal is a turning point in Amanda's life because she is forced to evaluate her emotional state and preferences in life. The advice she receives from her mother in the next scene is like Mrs. Bennet's reaction when Elizabeth refuses Mr. Collins in the novel. Amanda's mother's rationale for accepting Michael is as simple as this, "he doesn't take drugs...he doesn't knock you about" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)²⁰. When Amanda reminds her mother of Michael's infidelity, she offhandedly replies, "but he is a man...he has appetites" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). As Amanda declares her preference for early nineteenth-century manners and standards, her mother reproaches her, saying, "Well, you have standards, pet. I hope they help you on with your coat when you're seventy" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Her mother's style of conversation and criticism parallel Mrs. Bennet's and thereby imply that Amanda's emotional and psychological condition is similar to Elizabeth's. In the novel Mrs. Bennet says to Elizabeth:

But I tell you what, Miss Lizzy, if you take it in your head to go on refusing every offer of marriage in this way, you will never get a husband at all—and I am sure I do not know who is to maintain you when your father is dead—I shall not be able to keep you....

(Austen, *Pride* 87)

The two conversations indicate that both Elizabeth and Amanda are trapped within expected social standards. The main difference is related to the need for Elizabeth's financial security and

²⁰ Also See: Andrews, Guy. "Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV.

Amanda's need for a sensitive partner. In each case the mothers are a persuasive force in implementing the social standards.

In Elizabeth's case, Mrs. Bennet requires her to marry Mr. Collins to secure a stable financial future and completely ignores Elizabeth's compatibility with him. In Amanda's case, her mother is favoring Michael's proposal just to fulfill an apparent need for a partner, to secure her future social and emotional support, despite Michael's careless behaviour. In both scenarios, the mother are ignoring the need and demand for a sensitive and understanding partner for their daughters, in face of economic and social needs.

Considering these two conversations that occur in two different time periods reveals certain parallels in the social attitudes towards marriage and the pressures females face and resist. As a twenty-first century woman, Amanda has social and financial freedoms yet still experiences societal pressures to marry a man whom she does not trust and had been openly unfaithful to her. The series highlights the display of social leniency from Amanda's mother towards Michael's infidelity and the push she is receiving towards an invisible societal injustice or oppression. This issue connects with the reality of women in the late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-centuries when they had limited social or financial independence, and their happiness and survival were dependent upon their husbands, fathers or brothers. Furthermore, it connects with the issue of divorce and adultery in the late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-centuries. Husbands were sometimes (albeit rarely) granted divorce from Parliament or Ecclesiastical Courts due to a wife's adultery. Wives did not have the power to obtain a divorce on the basis of their husband's infidelity. Bailey's essay provides a detailed discussion of the marriage laws of Austen's society. While outlining the various Parliamentary laws of Great Britain, Bailey highlights specifically the one relating to wives' inability to assert their independence:

Wives could not bring an action for criminal conversation. The law reflected the deeply-held belief that adultery by husbands should be forgiven but adultery by wives required serious sanction because it ‘necessarily breaks asunder all family ties, and may introduce into the family circle a spurious offspring’(Great Britain, Parliament 1857, 880).²¹

(Bailey, “The Marriage Law”, par. 32).

It seems that the leniency that Amanda’s mother is displaying towards Michael’s infidelity is unconsciously rooted in the laws and legislation of the past where women were the victims of unequal and unjust rights. Instead of warning Amanda against Michael’s disloyal behaviour which he could easily repeat after their marriage, her mother insists upon Amanda marrying him.

Amanda has financial power and independence, but she behaves as though she does not. The beginning scene of the series does not show Amanda refusing Michael, thereby implying her confused state of mind. She is in need of guidance, and Austen in the shape of Elizabeth Bennet magically appears in her time of need. Elizabeth, who is eager to explore the twenty-first century, tricks Amanda into entering Longbourn, thus sending her on a journey of self-discovery and education.

Elizabeth’s Strength and Independence

In comparison to Amanda, Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet, living in the late eighteenth-century, displays a far stronger and more determined personality. Elizabeth’s refusal of both Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy is assertive and shows strength of character. Even though Elizabeth has no real prospect for financial survival and independence, she chooses to refuse both gentlemen on the basis of principle, choice and love. Elizabeth’s conversations with Charlotte Lucas (friend) and Jane (sister) reveal her perspective about marriage in general. When Mr. Bingley

²¹ Great Britain, Parliament. *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol.167. London: Hansard, 1857.

leaves Netherfield with no indication of ever returning to the county, Jane is hurt and miserable, and as a result Elizabeth advises her sister accordingly: “And if upon mature deliberation, you find that the misery of disobliging his two sisters is more than equivalent to the happiness of being his wife, I advise you by all means to refuse him” (Austen, *Pride* 92). Elizabeth’s advice demonstrates her unconventional thinking which would be considered modern or radical for her time. As Claudia Johnson notes: “Standing where we do, we tend either to overlook or to underestimate Elizabeth’s outrageous unconventionality which, judged by the standards set in conduct books and in conservative fiction, constantly verges on not merely impertinence but on impropriety” (Johnson 75). By choosing to refuse an offer of marriage in this era, a woman could become a victim of criticism and censure by her relations and friends for willingly risking her financial security and future. Additionally, a marriage proposal refused could also put restrictions on younger sisters, if any, to be out in society. It would also not relieve the parents or their guardians (like brothers, uncles) of their financial obligations towards daughters/sisters. Austen depicts this accurately through Charlotte’s character. Noting the announcement of her marriage to Mr. Collins Austen declares the sentiments of Charlotte’s immediate family: “the whole family were properly overjoyed on the occasion. The younger girls formed hopes of *coming out* a year or two sooner than they might otherwise have done; and the boys were relieved from their apprehension of Charlotte’s dying an old maid” (Austen, *Pride* 94). Through the characters of Elizabeth and Charlotte, Austen manages to depict the stark circumstances and choices women had to make for their survival. Elizabeth is shown to give preference to her personal happiness in contrast to her financial needs as she refuses Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy; In contrast, Charlotte chooses Mr. Collins for financial security.

Elizabeth's assertiveness and independence of thought are communicated to the reader by the choices she makes. It is evident in her refusals of both Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy. In the first refusal she not only has to face the conceited opinion of Mr. Collins but also the disapproval of her mother. Posner also comments upon Austen's depiction of strong females who have an understanding of their self-worth while considering spousal options: "The novels depict, with obvious approval—indeed with relish—intelligent, educated women who talk back to men at the risk of jeopardizing their martial prospects" (Posner 89). Furthermore, Austen conveys a dominant social norm of her time: men expected to have their marriage offer accepted. Austen expresses this condition of shock and denial in men through Mr. Collins' and Mr. Darcy's reaction. Both men display their state of disbelief in different ways. Mr. Darcy's arrogant attitude towards Elizabeth stems from his social rank and wealth. When he declares his love for her despite the differences in their social standings, he perceives Elizabeth's refusal as not only shocking but insulting:

And this is all the reply which I am to have the honor of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavour at *civility*, I am thus rejected. But it is of small importance. (Austen, *Pride* 146)

In comparison to Mr. Darcy, Mr. Collins' behaviour is more vain and self-important as he considers himself the financial saviour of the Bennet sisters. Unable to accept Elizabeth's refusal, Mr. Collins says:

[...] and you should take into farther consideration that in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made to you. Your portion is unhappily so small that it will be in all likelihood undo the effects of

your loveliness and amiable qualifications. As I must therefore conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me.... (Austen, *Pride* 83)

As Mr. Bennet does not have a son, his modest estate and income is entailed away to his distant cousin Mr. Collins. Posner outlines the process of entailment in his essay, which helps to explain the reasons for Mrs. Bennet's civility towards Mr. Collins and his vain attitude: "[...] there was a strong preference for vesting ownership in a male member of the family. This was commonly done by the 'fee tail male', a form of legal instrument known as the entail [...]" whereby the landowner specified by will that his land would descend only through the male line" (Posner 87). Posner clarifies that landowners had the choice of bequeathing their land or inheritance to the daughters. Preference to men was a tool through which the family wealth remained in the male line: "But what if a landowner had no son when he died? Women could own land..." (Posner 87), Austen has clearly depicted this in the case of Lady Catherine. When Lady Catherine meets Elizabeth at Rosings, she openly expresses her disapproval of the entailment laws: "Your father's estate is entailed on Mr. Collins, I think. For your sake,' turning to Charlotte, 'I am glad of it; but otherwise I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line.— It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family.—" (Austen, *Pride* 126). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen has depicted the dominated cultural norms and psychology of certain members of the society who will favor to keeping the inheritance in the male line as well as the unfairness and inequality of the entailment laws. Austen describes this unfairness of the laws in Mrs. Bennet's inability to understand the nature of the entailment:

Jane and Elizabeth attempted to explain to her the nature of an entail. They had often attempted it before, but it was a subject on which Mrs. Bennet was beyond the reach of reason, and she continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away

from a family of daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about.

(Austen, *Pride* 46)

Though Austen's depiction of Mrs. Bennet often leans towards insensibility, hilarity and vulgarity, in certain instances, Austen uses her character to deliver hard facts and truth about the Georgian society such as the unfairness of the entailment laws.

In rejecting both men, Elizabeth shows that she has an innate power to express her independence and rationality and hence goes against the accepted social norms of her time. Her response to Mr. Collins is quite clear and firm:

I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart. (Austen, *Pride* 83)

In contrast, in the series, Amanda is not shown to refuse Michael face to face. In the beginning of episode one, when Michael proposes to her in his drunken state, Amanda only comments on his "unromantic" proposal and declaration:

Amanda: What are you doing? - Is this you proposing to me?

Michael: Yeah. [Michael holding up the metal ring of the bottle as an engagement ring.]

Amanda: You're drunk.

Michael: Marry me, babes. Make an honest woman of me.

Amanda: You have no idea, do you, quite how unromantic that is?

("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Similarly, in episode four, when Amanda abruptly returns to London to find Elizabeth, she once more chooses to dodge Michael's query in regards to his proposal:

Amanda: Thank you!

Michael: Is that thank you, yes, or thank you, no?

Amanda: Thank you, but right now, can you lend me 20 quid for a taxi to find this girl so I can tell her something terrible? (“Episode Four.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)²²



Figure 8: Michael with engagement ring (Episode One, *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Overall, Amanda’s responses display indecisiveness in her character. She wants to refuse Michael but in both instances she is unable to express her thoughts and feelings to him. How is the audience aware of this fact? Amanda openly expresses her opinion to Kitty, Mary and Lydia in episode one of *Lost in Austen*. While walking back from church, Lydia inquires of Amanda:

Lydia: Do you expect to receive an offer of marriage, Miss Price?

Amanda: Matter of fact, I just had one.

Lydia: No! - What reply did you make?

²² Also See: Andrews, Guy. “Episode Four.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV.

Amanda: I turned him down. Well, I didn't believe he loved me.

(“Episode One.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Here the series presents a contradiction in Amanda’s behavior. It seems that she is freely able to communicate her opinions while she is inside the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* rather than when back in her own reality.

The contradiction in Amanda’s behavior is of significance to the series, because it shows the transformation in Amanda’s personality as she time travels from present to the past. The transformation represents Amanda’s understanding of her independence and empowerment as she travels to the past. But as soon as she returns to the present, she seems to lose her power and strength within the complexities of contemporary society. This disparity and opposition of behavior in Amanda’s character signifies the gap which exists between feminism and post-feminism. The series implies that there needs to be reconciliation between the past and the present. The series communicates that Amanda’s post-feminist “self” needs to learn ways to be more assertive and direct in her behavior.

Female Power and Agency: Georgian Era vs Contemporary Era

In her novels, Austen displays the scarcity of opportunities available for women to exercise their power and agency within their social environment. Her female characters exert their power and opinion in their limited realm of action. In *Pride and Prejudice*, we see active females striving to implement their agencies, whether they are mothers or daughters. Mrs. Bennet’s preoccupation with finding eligible men for her daughters, and Charlotte’s acceptance of Mr. Collins’ proposal, display the level and amount of control they have over their social circumstances. Elizabeth’s refusal of both gentlemen (Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy) is to secure her personal happiness and preference. In contrast, viewers of *Lost in Austen* observe a lack of

agency in Amanda's behavior and thoughts. Amanda's lack of assertiveness is more in line with Charlotte in the novel. As episode one begins, Amanda relays to the viewers her current state of life. She says:

I have no right to complain about my life, I mean, it is the same for everybody; I take it on the chin and patch myself up with Jane Austen... I know I sound like this terrible loser. I mean, I do actually have a boyfriend. It's just that sometimes I'd rather stay in with Elizabeth Bennet. ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Amanda's style of speech and thought expresses a sense of dissatisfaction with her life but she is prepared to go on with it without making any changes. Her manner conveys a sense of acceptance of her current situation, just as Charlotte Lucas accepts her fate in marriage to Mr. Collins for financial security considering her age and social status. Charlotte's emotions are described by Austen in these words:

I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state. (Austen, *Pride* 96)

The above lines show Charlotte's practicality of thinking and a very careful survey of the circumstances of her own life. Considering her age and social status while living within a strict Georgian era, she skillfully grabs the opportunity of attaining a comfortable house and financial security for the future, regardless of love and her personal preferences in regards to a life partner. At the age of twenty-seven, Charlotte knows that it will be very difficult for her to attract marriage proposals as the time moves forward, considering she has no substantial inheritance or dowry to offer. This is the reason why she instantly accepts Mr. Collins' proposal. In contrast to

this, Amanda is living in the twenty-first century, where she has legal freedom to work and earn an income. Furthermore, she has cultural and social freedom to be or not be in a relationship without any fears of being financially destitute. Thus, considering these options Amanda has far better means to change her circumstances. For instance, she can consider applying for a new job, or she can consider ending her relationship with her boyfriend due to his insensitive attitude and infidelity. The issue and conflict lies in Amanda's inability to change her circumstances and the lack of display in her power and control over her interactions unlike Elizabeth and Charlotte.

Elizabeth's Elimination

Elizabeth's disappearance for the majority of the series serves the exploration of many historic, cultural, and thematic issues of the novel. The breakdown of the plot results in the disruption of the narrative arc of the original novel, and causes major changes in the development of many characters. In the novel, Elizabeth is a source of guidance and empowerment to sensitive characters like Jane, and even on occasion to both her parents. Her elimination from the story creates a dual effect: Firstly, some characters gain power and agency and others simultaneously lose it. The characters most affected by this in the series are Jane and Charlotte. Secondly, Amanda's insertion in the story is quite chaotic. She is unable to achieve equilibrium in the family. In the novel, Elizabeth's character acts as a voice of reason or moderation for the family. Amanda has the opposite effect. Speaking to Amanda, Jane communicates Elizabeth's importance to the family in the first episode: "Without Lizzy, the equilibrium of this house is fragile. It is fruitless to pretend otherwise. However, your presence among us affords a certain reassurance" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Amanda's presence brings a different kind of change in the novel's environment—one that is more radical and disruptive, rather than calm and reasoned.

Amanda's quest to bring the novel's plot back on track and her efforts to save the characters from unfortunate destinies are completely unsuccessful. One of her desperate attempts is when she interrupts Mr. Collins' proposal to Jane, and presents to him Miss Charlotte Lucas as an alternative. The awkward scene yields totally unprecedented results. Mr. Collins perceives Amanda's forwardness as an indication of her personal interest in him. He proposes to Amanda instead. Recognizing the complicated situation, Amanda accepts his offer of marriage, and considers this as the only solution to stop Mr. Collins' advances towards Jane. However, her attempts are unsuccessful, and Jane still ends up marrying Mr. Collins in the series. The readers of Austen's novel dread the possibility of Elizabeth or Jane marrying Mr. Collins. But the series turns this fear into a reality and successfully shatters the audience's perception of Austen's novels as romantic fantasies or escapes. The TV series makes Amanda realize the advantages and freedoms of her modern life and lets her witness the emotional misery many women had to endure in the past.

Jane's marriage to Mr. Collins causes Charlotte's character to lose its importance and purpose. The series' director and writer eliminate her character from the story at the end of episode two. Her elimination from the series might come as shock to some viewers. It identifies the attitude of the late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century society towards single women. At the end of episode two, Charlotte declares to Amanda:

Charlotte: On the whole, Miss Price, I find myself decided as to my future. I am for Africa.

Amanda: Africa? That be safe?

Charlotte: I doubt it, but I mean to devote myself there as a missionary. I cannot say Lizzie has behaved well. Jane smiles and laughs but she is wounded that her sister is not come to see her wed.

(“Episode Two.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)²³

As Charlotte’s potential match is snagged by Jane, the series manifests or echoes women’s fears and anxieties about being single in the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth century. These anxieties are represented by Austen in Charlotte’s readiness of accepting Mr. Collins’ proposal in the novel:

Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honorable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. This preservative she has now obtained, and at the age of twenty-seven without having ever been handsome, she felt all the good luck of it. (Austen, *Pride* 94)

In these lines Austen accurately discloses the psychological and emotional struggles of a young woman who is uncertain and scared about her economic survival. Charlotte’s decision in the novel to marry Mr. Collins can be considered as a quality of perseverance and power. She has used her intellect and agency wisely within her limited social, economic, and physical realm, and successfully procured for herself financial stability. She has completely detached the notions of love and personal happiness from marriage. Thus in a sense, she is treating “marriage” like a means to an end, like a job. Thus Austen highlights marriage as the “only honorable provision for well-educated young women”.

²³ Also See: Andrews, Guy. “Episode Two.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV.

This choice to eliminate Charlotte from the second half of the series also relates to women's survival in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. In the series, as Charlotte's story is unable to end with a marriage, she is automatically deleted from the script. For the audience of the series, this detail makes one think about the original novel and how Austen chooses to depict the status of single women in her stories. As Austen's novels revolve around the marriage plot, it is difficult to comprehend the lives of her heroines if they remained unmarried. In all of her novels, the heroines get married at the conclusion of the novel, and unmarried women depicted are usually widows. One exception does exist in her novel *Emma* with the character of Miss Bates. Miss Bates' personality is portrayed in a comic yet desperate style considering her poverty and limited living conditions. Therefore, when *Lost in Austen* transforms the original story, it uncovers historical and social facts about the situation of women who remained unmarried who had no other alternative for financial security. This point also sheds lights on Austen's own life and circumstances. She and her sister Cassandra remained single throughout their lives and were later financially supported by their brother.

Part III

Dialogues

Pride and Prejudice versus Lost in Austen

The interaction and conversations between Mr. Darcy and Amanda give the audience ample opportunity to compare their relationship with Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy in the novel. Just like Elizabeth, Amanda's relationship with Mr. Darcy has been overshadowed by contradictions and oppositions. In *Pride and Prejudice*, while attempting to understand her emotions about Mr. Darcy, the narrator states of Elizabeth: " she threw a retrospective glance over the whole of their acquaintance, so full of contradictions and varieties, sighed at the perverseness of those feelings

which would now have promoted its continuance, and would have formerly rejoiced in its termination” (Austen, *Pride* 211). Equally, Amanda’s encounters with Mr. Darcy have been contradictory and problematic. Amanda’s first encounter with Mr. Darcy at the assembly rooms proved to be negative. Their interaction remains tense until Mr. Darcy accepts his role in breaking up Jane and Mr. Bingley, and requests Amanda’s forgiveness in episode three of the series: “I am decided I was wrong — about Charles and Miss Bennet. I should never have obstructed them. It was a shameful cruelty against your blameless friend, and I beg your propitiation for it” (“Episode Three.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). Similarly in the novel, the relationship of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth remains strained, until Darcy provides an explanation of his actions and the past history of Mr. Wickham in his letter to Elizabeth. In both works we see a gradual transformation of characters based on mutual understanding and communication. The relationship of Elizabeth and Amanda with Mr. Darcy are quite similar in nature as both convey a sense of transformation, progression and understanding among the future partners though effective communication. In contrast, Amanda is unable to achieve this communication and compatibility with Michael within post-feminist culture.

Over the course of the series, Amanda’s relationship with Mr. Darcy displays a multitude of complications and contradictions. Mr. Darcy begins to mistrust and severely judge Amanda’s actions and personality as he perceives her tricks and strategies. While dining together at Netherfield, he rebukes Amanda for lying about Jane’s unplanned visit. His accusation displays the sternness of his character and his unforgiving nature:

Mr. Darcy: About Miss Bennet, you lied. Why?

Amanda: I know you're supposed to be abrupt but that's a bit stark.

Mr. Darcy: I'm always stark with liars. (“Episode Two.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

This interaction and conversation reveals Mr. Darcy's unyielding and proud character. In the novel, Austen also reveals Mr. Darcy's personality traits through his interaction and friction with Elizabeth. Their contradictory personalities and social status create the major conflicts in the story. At Netherfield while having a casual conversation, Elizabeth attempts to understand the cold and stoic attitude of Mr. Darcy. Darcy explains his weaknesses and strength to Elizabeth in these words:

I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope of understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for.—, it is I believe too little yielding [...] I cannot forget the follies and vices of others so soon as I ought, nor their offenses against myself [...] My temper would perhaps be called resentful.— My good opinion once lost is lost forever. (Austen, *Pride* 43)

In *Lost in Austen* Mr. Darcy continuously questions Amanda's motives and her reasons for visiting Netherfield. He imagines her either to be scheming or conspiring against himself or Mr. Bingley. He considers Amanda's situation suspicious. He evaluates her as someone who is solely in pursuit of acquiring wealth by marrying rich men of fortune. In the series, Mr. Darcy gives Amanda this striking warning: "In the meantime you must content yourself with a warning. If you wound Bingley, you will find my displeasure baleful and entirely unrelenting. - For my Good opinion once lost is lost forever" ("Episode Two." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). He becomes even more confused about Amanda's motives when he discovers from Miss Bingley that Amanda possesses a fortune of twenty-seven thousand pounds.

At the Netherfield Ball, to prove her superiority over Mr. Darcy, Amanda makes the mistake of admitting to him her knowledge about Mr. Wickham's elopement with Georgiana Darcy. Amanda's disclosure and Mr. Bingley's increasing admiration for Jane puts Mr. Darcy on

his guard. During the Netherfield Ball, he warns Mr. Bingley to check his emotions towards Jane. Mr. Darcy concludes that Amanda and the whole Bennet family are tainted, and it would be best to stay away from them:

Miss Bennet is the instrument of Miss Price. Miss Price is quite possibly the instrument of Satan [...] the Bennets have not a farthing. This is all a plot to gull you [...] If you refuse to connect your actions to their inevitable consequences, you are a child.

Charles...

(“Episode Three.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

Mr. Darcy’s crucial and harsh warning thus easily detaches Mr. Bingley’s from Jane and causes a tumultuous event in the series as the climax.

The climax of *Lost in Austen* occurs when Jane marries Mr. Collins. This results in various disastrous events including Amanda’s major confrontation with Darcy. This confrontation equates to Elizabeth’s and Mr. Darcy’s first proposal scene in the novel. The scene holds significance for the series because it shatters Amanda’s idealistic and benevolent image of Mr. Darcy. The scene is effective because it juxtaposes Amanda’s perception and imagination of the novel with the realities of the early nineteenth-century society. Moreover, the scene indirectly comments upon Austen’s relevance and the value of *Pride and Prejudice* for contemporary female readers. Amanda displays her disappointment in Mr. Darcy’s obstinate and harsh personality in the following dialogue:

Amanda: You are such a disappointment; I can hardly bear to look at you.

Darcy: A deprivation I shall endure as stoically as I can.

Amanda: You're so relentlessly unpleasant. - I just can't get at the real you.”

(“Episode Two.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

In the novel, the climax occurs when Darcy proposes to Elizabeth and is over-confident in getting his offer of marriage accepted. Like Amanda, Elizabeth also does not hesitate to spell out his faults and her displeasure and resentment of his character is relayed in these lines:

From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feeling of others, were such as to form that ground-work of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed upon to marry. (Austen, *Pride* 148)

Elizabeth's perception of Darcy's character is indeed very different from Amanda.

Amanda is shown to be in awe and admiration of Mr. Darcy's character because of the overall romantic and positive effect of the novel. This point uncovers a fact about the readers and fans of Austen and specifically *Pride and Prejudice*. Because of its witty and comic atmosphere and a seemingly "fairy-tale" ending, readers often overlook Mr. Darcy's initial insulting and cruel behavior. This rigid behavior is related to his status in society as a landowner and social ill-breeding. Mr. Darcy's principles and morality are strong, but his weak social interaction with everyone overshadows all his good qualities. At the conclusion of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen presents a detailed explanation of Darcy's personality in which he acknowledges to Elizabeth: "I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was *right*, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit" (Austen, *Pride* 282). Thus, when Amanda confronts Mr. Darcy at the climax of the series, she begins by stating her strong attachment and admiration for his character, which has changed into shock and disillusionment:

You're better than this. I know you are, because I've had you in my head, Fitzwilliam Darcy, since I was 12 years old. So why are you behaving like such a total git? [...] I have been in love with your life for 14 years. Cut my heart out, Darcy, it's your name written on it with Elizabeth's. God almighty, here you are. One half of the greatest love story ever told. You. And do you know what? You don't deserve her.

(“Episode Two.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

The response Amanda receives after the above remark is equally harsh and insulting. Mr. Darcy in return comments upon her contemporary manners, which he finds repulsive and improper. He regards her whole existence as an abomination as he angrily replies to her accusations:

Madam Behold, Fitzwilliam Darcy. I am what I am. If you find yourself unable "to get at" an alternative version, I must own to being glad. I despise the intrusions of a woman so singularly dedicated to mendacity, disorder and lewdness. They repel me. You repel me. You are an abomination, madam. (“Episode Two.” *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008)

At this instant, Amanda begins to understand her contradictory situation in this highly demanding society. According to Darcy’s words, Amanda demonstrates the same kind of improper social conduct as Lydia and Kitty in the novel. But his criticism of Amanda is worse than them as in the novel they are considered loud, exuberant and in want of propriety. The words that Darcy uses for Amanda are even more demeaning and insulting for a woman.

Darcy’s words about Amanda are an example of the constant social scrutiny that individuals could receive based on their behaviors and actions within late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century society. Amanda’s actual experience of this prevalent social judgement and her understanding of the sense of accountability for both men and women become apparent as she slowly moves through the events of the series.

Conclusion

The purpose of the stark contradictions provided by *Lost in Austen* between the modern world and the early nineteenth-century is to evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of both time periods. Most critics and scholars consider the TV series as presenting a desire to return to the pre-feminist world. They make this assertion based on Amanda's decision to stay with Mr. Darcy in the Georgian Era. However, they disregard the series' resolution of other characters. Yes, Amanda does choose to stay in the past, which indicates her personal preference. Her choice also symbolizes her demand for alteration of manner and conduct in both men and women in the post-feminist world. In contrast, the resolution of other characters in the narrative is very different and progressive. First of all, Mr. Bingley and Jane are shown to reconcile through an annulment of marriage between Mr. Collins and Jane. Elizabeth requests her father, Mr. Bennet, to consider her return to Hammersmith, thus modern London. Lydia is saved from marrying Mr. Wickham and to the relief of the audience stays home with her family. Therefore, the series attempts to deal with the history of feminism and the present state of post-feminism. It reminds Amanda and the viewers of the struggle and hardship women have faced to achieve their independence and rights for the past two hundred years. Inversely it also presents the shortcoming of the modern world and the reasons why women still feel restricted or trapped in their lives. These weaknesses however relate more to the social conduct and morality of men and women rather than to financial or legal independence. Hence, the series is very effective in portraying the inverse relationship between independence (financial/legal) and emotional dissatisfaction existing in women of the contemporary culture.

Amanda's historical survey in *Lost in Austen* gives her a chance to closely examine the gender roles of both societies. In doing so, she identifies the failings of both patriarchal

masculinity and post-feminist masculinity. However, for her the source of oppression and disappointment emerges when she recognizes the similarities between them. While Austen delivers a change and transformation in her male characters by the end of the novel, Amanda is desperately searching for this change in her boyfriend, Michael.

Therefore, *Lost in Austen* highlights the fundamental issue/problem of Michael's refusal to change into a better and sensitive partner for Amanda, and Amanda's inability to voice her disapproval of his misconduct. Thus, this is the reason of her attachment to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Most interestingly, *Lost in Austen* translates or imitates Austen's transformation of men by showing a change/shift in Darcy rather than Michael. The last scene of the series which shows the reconciliation of Amanda and Darcy, is representative of Darcy's acceptance and approval of a contemporary women who has had both and legal and social liberation. The ending of the series presents a very complex scenario to its audience, which requires and demands a transformation in post-feminist masculinity, rather than conveying a desire for pre-feminism. This complex scenario traps *Lost in Austen* in the usual tropes of the Chick Lit genre, where Amanda by entering the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* is seemingly adhering to domesticity and a common romantic escape of a woman's imagination. However, in reality, experiencing the restricted life of Georgian era helps her to regain her empowerment and re-evaluate the contemporary gender norms and culture

Finally, Austen's marriage plots are not merely to provide happy, romantic fantasy like endings for her heroines, but rather they are a tool and technique to provide them with financial independence, social power and increased economic agency which are otherwise unavailable to them. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen raises the social status of Elizabeth, Jane and Charlotte by

marrying them to wealthy and settled men compared to their fathers, which will provide them with prosperous and comfortable lives.

Amanda gains strong insight into both the weaknesses and strengths of her personality by acting as a substitute for Elizabeth. Moreover, she acquires a heightened self-awareness about the contemporary world. Richard A. Posner identifies the qualities of Austen's novels and establishes her as an intellectual resource for leading better and well-informed lives:

[...] the romantic comedy of Jane Austen [...] stimulates the imagination; increases one's expressive resource; provides psychological insight; creates a sense of how social norms and institutions (though they are not our norms and institutions) influence behavior and make the reader a better, a more careful, responsive reader; increases the reader sensitivity to irony, incongruity, and folly, and, like philosophy and history and the social sciences, broadens one's intellectual horizons. (Posner 96)

In episode one of the TV series, Jane Bennet and Amanda have a conversation after the Ball at Meryton. In this conversation, Jane expresses her appreciation of Amanda's friendship. While listening to Jane, Amanda looks towards her copy of *Pride and Prejudice* with gratitude, symbolizing Austen's value and meaning in her life. Amanda says, "I am glad that I could be of service to you Miss Bennet" and Jane replies to her, "It is not service Miss Price, it is friendship" ("Episode One." *Lost in Austen*. ITV. 2008). The conversation between Amanda and Jane highlights the fact that Austen's novels are a source of comfort and companionship to Amanda's life. The process of fixing *Pride and Prejudice*'s plot in turn establishes it as a guide or handbook for her to solve her own personal issues.

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