



# Pride and Prejudice Adaptations: A Comparative Study

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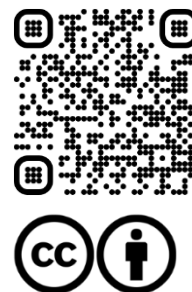
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**Abstract**— *The study delves into a carefully curated selection of adaptations, including prominent and lesser-known versions across different media platforms. By employing a multidimensional framework, encompassing narrative fidelity, character portrayals, visual aesthetics, and thematic interpretation, this research aims to illuminate the nuances and variations in each adaptation. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the key factors that influenced creative decisions, such as socio-cultural context, target audience, and prevailing cinematic trends.*

**Keywords**— *Pride and Prejudice, Adaptations, Zombies, Bride and Prejudice*



## I. INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen has been an important name in the history of feminist literature due to her unique way of portraying women. In an era where an ideal woman was expected to be quiet, kind, homely, modest and conservative, she allowed her protagonists to be flawed; making them human. Elizabeth has been portrayed as a smart, quick-witted, outspoken but tactful young lady who has her own opinions and biases in contrast to her older sister Jane who has been shown to have all the 'ideal' characteristics of that time. Instead of rivalling these characters, the book depicts beautiful harmony and sisterhood between them.

Using this research, we aim to analyze various adaptations of the book 'Pride and Prejudice' by Jane Austen. The scope of the research will be strictly limited to the following: cinematography, the interaction between characters, the portrayal of the protagonist, depiction of the major events in the plotline. The research includes various derivative and transformative adaptations of the aforementioned book.

Hypotheses

1. The adaptations which were released later will be more expressive with respect to the attraction of the characters towards each other since society and become progressively open-minded about courtship and the rules associated with it.

2. Newer adaptations will portray Mr. Darcy's character as more arrogant and taciturn in the older adaptations and show him as a shy person in the newer ones since the idea of acceptable demeanour from a gentleman has changed with time.

3. Irrespective of the time the work was made, the 'basic quality of a character such as Elizabeth's wit, Jane's naiveness and Mr. Bingley's amiability will remain the same.

4. The props and overall theme of the work will change to suit the taste of the audience of the given era; hence we can assume that the costumes and props will get less accurate with time.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research mainly relies on a review of literature as its basic methodology, the literature includes works like:

Pride and Prejudice (1940), Pride and Prejudice (1985), Pride and Prejudice- A latter-day comedy, Bride and Prejudice (2004), Pride and Prejudice (2005) and Pride and Prejudice and Zombies.

### III. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE 1940

*“How clever of you, Miss Bingley, to know something of which you are ignorant.”*

Pride and Prejudice (1940) is a splendid cinematic experience for someone looking for a black-and-white movie with relatively simple language. It starts on a scene where ladies, including the Bennett sisters, Mrs. Lucas and her daughter Charlotte are discussing the arrival of Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy. The rivalry between Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Lucas is evident to the extent that the movie includes a scene where the Bennett sisters and Mrs. Lucas are having a chariot race to their respective homes.

As the story progresses, Elizabeth’s sarcasm, sternness and straightforward attitude become more and more evident. A Mr. Darcy’s attempt to teach Miss Elizabeth about archery and the revelation that she is better than him at it. In this situation instead of indulging in a façade of modesty, she acknowledges the fact that she was, indeed underestimated by him.

Contrary to our hypothesis, we can see that all the characters are fairly open and expressive about their emotion, in fact, one can say that this movie has a flair for the dramatic. This is apparent in the way the props and the costumes have been set as well, although living in the countryside, all the characters wear clothing that would have been considered extravagant during that time. Although Miss Charlotte Lucas is supposed to be a woman of average beauty, the actress who plays the character would be considered very conventionally attractive to an extent where the audience might have trouble in understanding why she is considered “less beautiful”.

Mr. Darcy in most scenarios appears amiable and the only times he may seem arrogant is during his private dialogues with his best friend. He greets everyone with a smile and readily indulges in friendly banter with Miss. Elizabeth. In contrast to the actual book, Jane has been depicted naïve but not oblivious to her mother’s intentions and schemes, she not only knows about them, but also actively participates in an instance where she expresses her ill health to Mr. Bingley.

In general, we can see that this movie has been made with a comedic theme instead of the revolutionary touch Jane Austen intended in the book. We can also see that most milestones of the plotline have been non-confrontational, Mr. Collins proposal to Elizabeth, Elizabeth’s conversation with her father after the said proposal and later, the infamous conversation between Mrs. Catherine De Brough and Elizabeth are prime examples of this.

Although it is not mentioned in the actual plotline, the movie shows that Mrs. Catherine De Bourgh actually approved of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth’s relationship towards the end. We can also see that the movie tries to have a ‘happy ending for all’ by introducing a love interest for Mary who is portrayed as a shy bookworm with a passion for music.

### IV. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE- A LATTER DAY COMEDY

*“Here we’ve just spent 20 minutes picking out the perfect array of romantic items, and what do we come back to find? Two kegs of ice cream, pills for cramping, pills for bloating, and six super-size boxes of Tampax? Why don’t we just put up a big neon sign that says, “Men, run for your lives! Menstruating monsters approaching!”*

Released in 2003, this adaptation is a rom-com that comes under the category of transformative work. In this story, the young girls are college roommates and only Kitty and Lydia are related to each other. Jane is an Argentinian exchange student which allows the story to parallel the original element of ‘rare beauty’ associated with her; a similar pattern is seen in Fitzwilliam Darcy’s character. Elizabeth’s character in the movie revolves around her ambition to become a novelist, she is a lot more emotional than practical. In contrast to its 1940’s version, she is a lot clumsier and more on the lines of a ‘girlish’ character. Fitzwilliam’s character has been portrayed as a lot less amiable and more arrogant in the beginning, this makes the first proposal very short and awkward. The movie takes a lot of liberties when it comes to the romantic inclination of characters; the character of Mary is motivated to court Collins, Lydia expresses her interest in wanting to be with Charles Bingley and we see a prominent diversion in Caroline Bingley’s character who deceives Elizabeth into believing that she is Fitzwilliam Darcy’s fiancée and ultimately marries a 78-year-old billionaire. Jack Wickham who parallels the character of George Wickam, is wanted for multiple cases of bigamy. He fails to elope with Lydia after Fitzwilliam Darcy and her friends expose him and have him arrested.

A major deviation can be seen in the movie’s depiction of Caroline Bingley, who graduates from a minor character in the original plotline to an antagonist in the 2003 version. The characters like Charlotte Lucas, Catherine De Bourgh and Mrs Bingley find little to no mention in the movie. In terms of the ending, the movie follows the suit of a ‘Happily Ever After’ like its precursor and with growth and a personal sense of achievement for every character.

## V. BRIDE AND PREJUDICE

*"There's nothing wrong with having standards, is there?*

*No, as long as you don't force them on others."*

An unexpected musical, *Bride and Prejudice* is set in Amritsar, India. With 7 songs, each between 2-3 mins, the movie seems to follow an early 2000's Bollywood-movie blueprint. The first scene starts with Will Darcy being invited to a friend's wedding in India, this sets the course for his meeting with Lalita Bakshi who mirrors Elizabeth Bennet. The character of Lalita has been given a bubbly yet opinionated tinge, her banter with Will Darcy seems to lack the lightheartedness which has been seen in the 1940's version and is more akin to 2003 comedy.

In many instances, one may notice that Elizabeth's prejudice has been depicted in the form of mild xenophobia, due to India's colonial past and Will's opinion of the country, although Will is from America and not of British origin. A very stark quality that we see in the beginning is that although the movie is loosely based on the book '*Pride and Prejudice*', the characters of Mr Chaman Bakshi and Mrs Manorama Bakshi seem to mimic Mr and Mrs Bennet almost entirely. Although Mrs Bennet is not the most loved character in the book, her fickle possessiveness has been cleverly harmonised with the character of a stereotypical Indian mother in the 90's.

Besides this, although the story follows a trope of forbidden love where Lady Catherine's role is taken over by Mrs Darcy, the characters' intentions and motivations don't seem to match those of the book. Similar to its comedic kin, the movie does not end with Wickham getting married to Lakhi. It is evident that the target audience of *Bride and Prejudice* are all over the globe, not only because it is entirely in English but also because the movie goes the extra mile to add an Indian flavour to a movie that is already set in India. This brings the cultural accuracy of the movie to question, to exemplify, the characters have an elaborate garba evening although the scene is set in Punjab, Mr. Kohli who parallels Mr. Collins, gets married in traditional Indian clothes but the wedding follows a Christian process although both the bride and the groom are from Hindu families.

## VI. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (2005)

*"You have bewitched me body and soul. And I love...I love...I love you. I never wish to be parted from you from this day on."*

Unlike the other movies, *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), directed by Joe Wright, starts with beautiful silence, it depicts the entire Bennett family engaged in their household chores and indulging in quick conversation

amongst family members. Although the character of Elizabeth still holds its intended uniqueness, her interaction with her sisters has not been shown as formal. The movie has been able to retain the beautiful relationship she shares with her sisters with a child-like affection to it. The fact that Elizabeth's character has a romantic quality to it, is clearly evident in this movie, this can be seen in how her affection for Mr. Wickham is a lot more apparent- "On the contrary Wickham is twice the man Darcy is". Elizabeth's body language is a lot, youthful, good humoured and charming and she seems to be a lot more diplomatic when compared to her portrayal in other movies, however, seems extremely fitting as the social etiquette of the time back then did not allow women of her social status to engage in confrontations very easily.

This movie has emphasised on the relationship between Elizabeth and Jane, Jane's role as an older sister is much more visible in her conversations with Lizzie and the others. In the scene of the Meryton ball, the bustle and crowd in a ball is well portrayed and not romanticised like in other movies, Darcy appears a lot more taciturn in this scene because, when he is introduced to the Bennett family he did not bow which was a major faux pas in those times. We also see that Darcy rejects Elizabeth's attempts to initiate a conversation in the same ball. This movie has paid attention to the other characters as well, Mary's character has been given a lot more personality, she is more rational and stern and not just portrayed as a bookworm as in all the other movies, Charlotte Lucas's humour and her bond with Elizabeth has been given an apt portrayal in this movie; which makes her confrontation with Elizabeth all the more important and Kitty and Lydia have been played by actors their age, this not only helps with the accuracy of the movie but also projects the gravity of Lydia's elopement with Mr Wickham and how Mr. Darcy tried to save her from falling prey to a terrible fate.

The movie overall follows a more serious theme but finds space for light-hearted innocent humour. The director has taken dramatic liberties when it comes to important scenes like; Mr Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth which has been set up in the middle of a gazebo amid pouring rain and Lady Catherine's confrontation with Elizabeth, does not have an interrogative approach, rather a grim and derogatory one, Lady Catherine does not attempt to test Elizabeth but is actually disgusted by the distance in their social standing.

Apart from this, the romantic intentions of the characters are a lot more subtle, they do not engage in longing gazes nor do they express physical affection before marriage, instead they exchange quick glances to convey their emotions. As far as the visual theme is concerned, attention to detail is the order of the day. The clothing is in

simple muted colours which is apt, provided that back in the day dyed, colourful clothing was a luxury, even how the clothing is cut shadows the actual fashions of the era, the appearance of the characters are as they were envisioned in the book, the contrary was pointed out for the 1940s adaptation in this paper.

## VII. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES (2016)

*“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains.”*

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies is an action movie based on Seth Grahame-Smith's 2009 novel, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Since the book on which the movie is based, is itself a parody of the original *Pride and Prejudice*, it seems fitting to give this movie a place in our research, however, for the sake of simplicity, we will be following how this movie follows the ‘Pride and Prejudice’ plotline.

Set in an Alternate Universe, where England is under attack by zombies, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* starts with an explanation of events of the past decades. After England was attacked by Zombies, all children were raised and trained in combat outside England, those who could afford it, were trained in Japan and the others were trained in China. The first scene shows Colonel Darcy, who enters a gathering and kills an undercover Zombie in a rather gruesome manner. The Bennet sisters are introduced in a scene where they are having a conversation about the new owners of Netherfield whilst cleaning their muskets and rifles.

This movie shows Elizabeth in a more fierce light to match the character of a warrior, she is less lighthearted and more regal, and she gives her opinion, not only decidedly but without care for the consequences. We see that every major event in the storyline, be it Mr. Darcy’s first proposal to Elizabeth, Lady Catherine’s confrontation with Elizabeth or Lydia’s eloping with Wickham, has been turned into a fight scene. The book shows the Bennet sisters’ harmony during their sparring sessions and puts an emphasis on how well-trained they are by showing their agility and unison while fighting Zombies at the Meryton ball. The sisters were given training in China which was funded by their father who moves from a warm farmer in the original plotline to a tough veteran in this movie.

When we see the other characters, it is noticeable that they have retained their original traits but adapted to this storyline, all characters follow the social etiquette expected in that era, and although they carry their weapons with them at all times, Jane is brave and bubbly, yet she has also retained the kindness endowed upon her by Jane Austen, and Mr Wickham, who later dies in the movie,

uses reason and logic to put his point across but also uses sympathy as intended in the first book.

As far as the aesthetic of the movie is concerned, it seems to follow the precedent set by *Pride and Prejudice* 2005 as far as the costumes are concerned. The language in the movie is a lot more casual and very close to the modern speaking style which makes it extremely easy to understand, this also gives us a modern equivalent of what the characters were feeling at that point. Although a parody, this book has retained the idea of the story and the relationship between the characters fairly well and managed to make it entertaining.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Here we will be discussing the stated hypotheses point-wise and see whether they apply to the given movies.

1. The hypothesis that newer movies would have more expressive characters had been proven to be a stereotypical assumption, in fact, the 1940s version of the movie, when we compare the derivative works, had the most expressive characters. However, the term ‘expressive’ does not mean that they have a limited range of expression, the intensity of emotions is what varies which becomes dimmer chronologically.

2. The portrayal of Darcy forms a straight line as far as the progression of his character in subsequent adaptations is concerned. The 1940 version of the story shows him in a much warmer light when compared to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Hence, we can say that the hypothesis based on this has a strong foundation to it.

3. The only ‘basic quality’ of the protagonist that seems to be stagnant is her perceived intelligence. Some movies like *Pride and Prejudice: An untethered comedy* (2003) and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, portray her as a fierce woman who does not look for love, the others follow the actual book and bring out her romantic bent of mind. As far as the other characters are concerned, their ‘basic qualities’ almost stay the same in each movie.

4. The props and overall theme of the work did change, but not according to the taste of the audience of the given era, instead it was according to the historical details available to the directors; contrary to the hypothesis, the props and setting actually became more accurate the later derivative works.

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I’d like to acknowledge myself for being awesome.

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