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### Comparison Essay: *Pride and Prejudice*

In 1813, Jane Austen publishes a romantic novel called *Pride and Prejudice* which later sparks many producers to transform the narrative into a cinematic movie. Seventeen films have been created since the original book's first publishing; the first adaptation released was in 1940 and produced by Hunt Stromberg, (Bromley). Multiple films and novels followed after that such as *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a novel in 1999, a film in 2001; *Bride and Prejudice*, a film in 2004, and *Pride and Prejudice Zombies*, a novel in 2009, a film in 2016 and so on and so forth, (Bromley). However, the most popular film to Americans is the one released in 2005 starring Keira Knightly as Elizabeth Bennet and her co-star Matthew Macfadyen as Mr. Darcy; produced by Tim Bevan, Paul Webster, and Eric Fellner, (Bromley). Despite these adaptations, Jane Austen's original book was trying to convey the idea that people shouldn't make cruel assumptions about others regardless of their social status, appearances, or society's expectations of them. Pride plays a significant role in Austen's narrative preventing the characters from fully experiencing life, love, and happiness. This concept is prevalent between the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, and the deuteragonist, Mr. Darcy, resulting in the pair experiencing a quite difficult relationship and chances of missing a potential marriage. Audiences can see the significance of this theme through the several different adaptations. It's a timeless concept signifying the importance of analyzing and understanding this particular story. The cinematic transformation director Joe Wright produced in 2005 emphasized the significance of Jane

Austen's message through visual effects and created the film to reach a younger audience by changing multiple aspects of the narrative including attire, dialogue, subplots, time period, and the portrayal of characters.

The 2005 film *Pride and Prejudice* is a new transformation from Jane Austen's original text. The idea is now in a visual format allowing audiences to stop imagining what life would be like in Elizabeth Bennet's shoes but to see it. Before there was any film adaptation of the book, the audience was limited to being readers only, and not everyone was willing to read.

Fortunately, when the films were created, a wider audience was formed. These producers did a phenomenal job of creating a new, modern, and exciting adaptation of the original book. Besides making the text come to life, producers were able to create a visually pleasing masterpiece.

However, the two mediums have multiple major differences, such as attire, dialogue, subplots, time period, how they portray the characters, and more. In Jane Austen's original 1813 novel, she writes a narrative about protagonist Elizabeth Bennet and her middle-class family consisting of her parents and four unmarried sisters. Their mother, Mrs. Bennet is trying to secure her daughter's rich husbands, without husbands, their financial situation would be a disaster, and left out for the streets. Their father's entailed property had no males to inherit it resulting in all the assets being lost. However, the story mainly focuses on Elizabeth Bennet's love life involving Mr. Darcy. Unfortunately, the two have quite a difficult relationship with each other due to their prejudices against each other's social statuses and pride in themselves. The book also has multiple subplots involving Elizabeths Bennet's sister's love life and connections to help advance the main plot of the protagonist. These subplots include Jane and Mr. Bingley; Lydia and Mr. Wickham, and Charolette Luckas, and Mr. Collins.

In the 2005 movie, the first noticeable difference between these adaptations is the time period. The original book is set in the 1800s, whereas the film is set in the 1790s during the Georgian Era. The sole reason this was done was so it made the scenes more attractive and appealing to a more younger and modern audience, and from watching the movie, seeing something aesthetically pleasing does make the movie more enjoyable. It also goes to show the different personalities each of the characters have; for instance, the main character, Elizabeth Bennet, is portrayed more as a tomboy with a muted, dark tone, plain dresses with no issues getting mud on them showcasing her personality as a tomboy in the film and this time period also allowed the Bennet family to be more likable, being portrayed as poorer in this adaptation than how Jane Austen showcased them in the novel. Their clothes are more worn down than the other characters and in some scenes, you can see the family drying their laundry on strings outside. This change in time and fashion choices allowed the audience to find them more attractive and relatable because of their humility. Both mediums are significant, however, the new transformation Joe Wright provides allows for a broader audience to receive the message.

Furthermore, audiences may also notice some dialogue similarities and differences between the two mediums. Now when watching the film, there are multiple lines taken directly from the book which is important and helps with the authenticity of the novel. It's what also helped this movie stay one of the most popular adaptations. For instance, famous lines include, "You have no compassion on my poor nerves," Mrs. Bennet expressed, (Austen 2); "Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do," Mr. Bennet stated, (Austen 137). Keeping these lines in the film kept the story to be a little more authentic and likable to the audience. The dialogue throughout the film is created in a more modern sense as well as showcasing the family's closeness, making them a more modern

family unit. The meaning of the theme Jane Austen was trying to portray is still here and reaching the audience, Joe Wright was just able to transform it into a new creative side. Although the movie lost some of the book's major points, it was still able to benefit from having those specific dialogue scenes.

Aside from the time period, attire, and dialogue, the most significant changes in this transformation were how much this film was condensed down and the results of that. The disadvantage of transforming a book into a cinematic masterpiece is time. Yes, time is of the essence. Audiences can read how much they want whenever or wherever they want but film directors cannot do that. Joe Wright did an amazing job with the little time he had for a film. *Pride and Prejudice* condensed Jane Austen's rough 400 pages into 127 minutes of screen time. While trying to keep the authenticity of Jane Austen's theme, there needed to be things altered such as toning down the subplots tremendously and cutting out multiple minor characters such as Mr. and Mrs. Hurst, Mr., and Mrs. Phillips, and Maria Lucas. Although these characters are part of the original novel, their absence doesn't affect the significance or overall meaning the film was trying to convey. Jane Austen's message of pride causing one to be blind to what's truly in front of someone still made it to the audience's interpretation. The subplots involving Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins, Lydia, and Mr. Wickham, and Jane and Mr. Bingley's screen time have been cut down significantly. Joe Wright wanted the film to focus mainly on Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's romance which the film director emphasized dramatically. However, not everything was cut out because these subplots are what help advance the main plot of the story but viewers can see a huge portion taken out. For instance, Lydia and Mr. Wickham's story seems to happen in only a few scenes, they meet, run away, and get married whereas in the book there are multiple pages filled with details. However, this condensed subplot doesn't dramatically change the

overall meaning of the story, it does, yes, lose some nicely added details, but the significance of this film and novel still remains strong. The experience of the audience does change because of the condensing in the film. Everything happens within a blink of an eye, however, readers can take their time with Jane Austen and go through the emotions of the characters in the text. Both mediums, however, still accomplish one of the greatest and most beautiful stories ever told.

The last major change that Jane Austen fans immediately noticed was the ending of the film is completely new and is nothing like the ending in the novel which caused a lot of turmoil for fans. However, director Joe Wright did create this film to focus on the main two characters and condense the subplots so this ending suited well with the film but did change the experience for the audience for those who've read the novel. In Jane Austen's version, she goes over the happily ever after of each character's lives after Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy get married. In the 2005 film, Joe Wright skips over all of that and instead shows the last scene of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy having a romantic evening together at Pemberley. Due to this change, audiences' perception of the other characters will be deemed as somewhat 'unimportant' or 'little significance' which is on the contrary. Without those subplots, the now Darcys would have yet to come together. Joe Wright's film should have the ending of all characters to show the audience the significance they play in the narrative just as Jane Austen portrayed it.

In addition, other writers who have become familiar with Jane Austen's original novel and new adaptations would agree that this new and exciting transformation plays a significant role in the audience's interpretation of the film and narrative. The strategies used are important on which specific audience to reach to make it enjoyable for all ages. In the article "Pride and Prejudice 2.0: Interpretations, Adaptations, and Transformations of Jane Austen's Classic," writers Hanne Birk, and Marion Gymnich explain how this particular adaptation was created to

appeal to a younger audience, which is ironic considering the fact that there were multiple adaptations more recent to today than the 2005 film. The writers explain,

“Making use of strategies that were meant to modernize the characters as well as the audiovisual style, the 2005 movie contributed to keeping the popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* alive, addressing a potentially younger target audience,” (Birk and Gymnich 20).

Director Joe Wright was very strategic in this film which allowed it to be so successful and it's being acknowledged by not only this essay but by other audiences as well such as Hanne Birk and Marion Gymnich as mentioned before. These scholarly writers had my exact thoughts on the 2005 film. These strategies as stated before were used to modernize the character which kept the popularity up and affected how the audience interpreted the story. The audience, however, still gets the same message of pride blinding one to what's truly in front of them, as in the novel just fewer details are missing in the cinematic adaptation. The strategies director Joe Wright used as mentioned before included the change in the time period, attire, condensing subplots to give the main characters more screen time, and romanticizing the film significantly. These writers, however, pointed out an intriguing detail that I have failed to see initially. Writers Birk and Gymnich point out that the actors chosen for the film play a significant role in how the audience interprets this narrative which could result in the meaning of the text changing because of this transformation, (Birk and Gymnich 21). Having actors could result in this novel gaining or losing its spark when adapted into a film changing the audience's experience. In a novel, there are no actors, only characters that remain the same which may be the reason why there are seventeen adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. It's important that the right actor is picked for the

role of all the characters but most importantly Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy; fortunately, in this 2005 film, they placed Kiera Knightly as Elizabeth Bennet which assisted the film to become so successful and the most popular. Knightly has performed in multiple films before such as *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (which has been nominated for multiple Academy Awards), *Star Wars: Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace* (1999), and *Love Actually* (2003), (Rena). In these films, she performed beautifully which helped gained her an outstanding reputation. The audience was already in love with *Pride and Prejudice* because of this actress. If this role were to be played by a different actress it may not have been so successful. People tend to not watch films with an unfavorable actor/actress. I would agree that this observation made by Hanne Birk and Marion Gymnich is one of the most important strategies because it changes the audience's whole experience as opposed to a written text. Furthermore, these strategies used will continue to exemplify Jane Austen's message to audiences across the board.

Joe Wright's version of Jane Austen's novel only emphasizes and severely focuses on her message of one being blind because of the pride they have for themselves and the prejudice one hold against on another hindering one from fully experiencing life, love, and happiness. Joe Wright uses strategies to emphasize her message in a new and creative way as well as focusing solely on one specific aspect of the novel. His version allowed a broader audience to receive this theme and interpret it in a more modern approach. This cinematic transformation emphasized the text's significance and kept the meaning overall even though the audience gained a new experience and new interpretation of the novel. Thanks to this original author, generations after us will be able to inherit and enjoy the great lesson offered to us as well as being offered multiple

different adaptations and new experiences this great novel has sparked in many directors and writers as it did with Joe Wright.

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