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### The Past Is Present.

How does one draw a visible line between an adaptation and a fanfiction? Some people may argue that a fanfiction is a form of interpretation that is equivalent to an adaptation. However, a fanfiction is built on the existing characters and the background story, which is either altered or further developed with the use of literary devices to engage the audience, introducing thrilling plot alterations in the narrative form. In an adaptation, the existing characters and the plot are adjusted to meet a certain time limit. The visual interpretation requires a written screenplay and actors that would appeal to its audience. An adaptation of any book might be either identical to the original text or modernized, conveying the predominant social, political or economic views in a different time period. Thus, an adaptation is not as closely related to the original source as a fanfiction, since it challenges one's mental images of the characters by their portrayal in a film.

*Pride and Prejudice* is a famous classic novel, known for its illustration of conventional views of Regency England from a feminine perspective. The author, Jane Austen, "provides clues to her dissatisfaction with the limitations imposed by society"(Chang 76) through the protagonist Elizabeth. The revolutionary progressive ideas of *Pride and Prejudice*, concerning gender roles, marriage and a notion of an accomplished woman, have led to its numerous adaptations. One of such adaptations is *Bridget Jones's Diary*, directed by Sharon Maguire, which portrays the social expectations and limitations of the twenty-first century through the

protagonist Bridget Jones. Compared to the social expectations, gender inequality and early feminism of the eighteenth century, depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* illustrates not only the corresponding social problems but also major transformations of the twenty-first century, related to gender roles and sexual identity.

The communal expectations and norms of *Pride and Prejudice* are reflected in the opening of the novel, “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife”(Austen 1) Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth’s mother, is troubled by her daughters’ single status, since none of them can inherit her husband’s wealth and possessions(Austen 18). The communal norms put pressure on Mrs. Bennet, who only desires to see one of her daughters happily settled at Netherfield and “all the others equally well married” (Austen 6). In order to be an “accomplished woman”, Elizabeth must be married to a wealthy gentleman, financially securing her future and elevating her family’s status. The communal expectations, activities and norms reflect eighteenth-century society, functioning as a primary figure in the novel since it is “the story of how a community thinks, talks, exerts influence” (Deresiewicz 509) that produces Elizabeth.

Since Elizabeth is greatly influenced by her community, she is not presented separately. “She assents to and helps propagate collective judgments; she takes her opinions for universal truths; witty as she is, she risks the same mental gridlock as those around her.”(Deresiewicz 509). When Elizabeth meets Mr. Darcy, “a tall person with handsome features” and in possession of wealth, she despises him as much as he finds her unattractive, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me”(Austen 7-8). They both have critical first impressions of each other that Elizabeth eagerly shares with her friends, seeking support and validation. Thus, it

is evident that Elizabeth is still affected by the moral habits of her community. “In a community that includes everyone by allowing each a slightly different role, the role it allows her-but it is only a role-is that of the person who is not fully included.” (Deresiewicz 514)

In twenty-first century society, Bridget Jones has to live up to the beauty standard as a skinny, perfect woman, who is in a relationship. As her New Year resolutions, Bridget decides to “lose twenty pounds”, “find nice sensible boyfriend to go out with and not continue to form romantic relationship with alcoholics, workaholics or commitment-phobics”(Maguire). Bridget’s concerns with her unhealthy habits, such as drinking and smoking, weight and single status that arise due to the social expectations make her start a diary, in which she will ‘tell the truth about Bridget Jones’ (Maguire).

“Bridget's diary reveals the external pressure she feels to be better than she is”, pressure to meet her mother’s expectations (Marsh 57). Bridget’s mother thinks about her daughter’s relationship status, just like Elizabeth’s mother, trying to find her a perfect match. She arranges a New Year party, inviting her target Mark Darcy, an educated rich man, and his family. Both Mr. Darcy and Bridget have negative first impressions of each other since they are forcibly introduced to one another by Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones reflects the beliefs of the twenty-first society, some of which have remained predominant since the eighteenth century, illustrating its huge impact, lasting for centuries.

The communal expectations of *Pride and Prejudice* arise from gender roles in Regency England. In the eighteenth century, “women were subservient to men in many ways, having nearly no property rights, legal rights, or control over their own destinies”(Chang 77). To financially support themselves, women had to either hold a high position in the patriarchal

society or marry into wealth. Moreover, young women, such as Elizabeth and her sisters, were often educated in the home, where they were also taught proper manners and prepared for marriage. It explains why Mrs. Bennet's only goal is "to get her daughters married"(Austen 4) since it is the only chance to financially secure her family and become a part of high society. Elizabeth's peer, Charlotte Lucas, represents stereotypes of traditional women of marriageable age who modify themselves in the pursuit of a husband(Chang 78). She says "in nine cases out of ten a woman had better show more affection than she feels"(Austen 13) in order to get a man's attention. Charlotte believes that a male's attention and attraction to a woman is of more importance than her feelings for him, thus illustrating how deeply ingrained a notion of female's submissiveness to men was in Regency-era woman's mind.

Compared to gender roles in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* portrays a huge transformation, cornering gender inequality and sexual preferences, in the twenty-first century. Bridget "owns an apartment in central London" and "holds jobs in publishing and television"(Marsh 78). Bridget has her own property and earns money from working without worrying about her financial stability, which serves as a means of survival in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Furthermore, Bridget's best friend, Tom, is a homosexual man who has a theory that he and Bridget have natural bonding since both of them disappoint their parents and are considered an oddity in society(Maguire). It is evident that in early the twenty-first society, same-sex behavior was still unnoticed in society. An individual, who felt attraction to a member of the same sex, felt the need to either hide his identity or neglect the public's reaction. However, in the eighteenth century, such sexual preferences were simply unheard of in the general population. Thus, *Bridget*

*Jones's Diary* depicts a broadened view on sexual orientations since homosexual people aren't fully denied by society. They have more opportunities to speak up and embrace themselves.

As previously mentioned, women had to perform a submissive role in the male-dominant society. However, Austen is known not only for the portrayal of social and economic inequality of her time but also for feminist views through Elizabeth. "Elizabeth's ability to exert positive influence over one of society's most affluent men, Mr. Darcy, offers evidence for a feminist ability to subvert the male-dominated society of Regency England"(Chang 76).

When Mr. Darcy claims that in order to be called accomplished, "a woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions"(Austen 25), Elizabeth is opposing his high expectations, while Caroline agrees with it. Elizabeth knows that a woman's sense of accomplishment is not defined by Mr. Darcy's opinion. Moreover, Elizabeth refuses Mr. Collins' proposal and Mr. Darcy's first proposal, "showing her lack of concern with the conventional goals of women in Regency England"(Chang 81). She chooses her happiness over financial security, representing early feminist views.

In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget represents the postfeminist views that haven't just granted women equal rights but made them ignorant of women's past achievements for equal justice. Even though women can control their own destiny, earning their own money and buying property, there's still a need to be in a relationship to feel valuable(Gamble 65). Bridget's friends give her advice on how to impress her boss, one of which is about her physical appearance. Bridget acts similar to Charlotte, who assures Elizabeth of the importance of giving as much

affection to a man as possible, even if she has no real feelings for him. It is evident that Bridget “has little real conception of feminism at all”(Gamble 64). While Elizabeth is struggling to step out of the community where women were denied rights and independence, Bridget desperately wants to find a boyfriend to meet her mother and friends’ expectations, having no sense of self-value and empowerment that females fought for in the past.

In conclusion, even though *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is a loose adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Bridget Jones’s Diary* illustrates how society is still affected by social expectations that existed two hundred years ago. In her thirties, Bridget is pressured by her mother to get married and mocked by her friends, asking “Hey, Bridge, how’s your love life?”(Maguire). Elizabeth is criticized for her refusal to marriage proposals that Mrs. Bennet Turned into the business of her life. *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is not only a comedy that has plot similarities with Austen’s novel, it contains an important message on social limitations, placed on women, and its destructive effects in society.

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