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Pride and Prejudice: A Modern, Queer Retelling for the Stage

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PRIDE and Prejudice: Austen, Adaptations, and Authorship

How can a writer use an old story to shine new light on modern issues? What kind of representation are bisexual women missing in theatre? What changes are made in *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, what elements remain the same, and why? These are just a few of the questions my Summer Fellows research endeavored to answer. In the course of studying LGBTQ topics at Ursinus, I noticed that there was a glaring omission in our readings: the "B." However, this lack of bisexual representation wasn't due to a poor syllabus, but to a dismaying lack of bisexual representation in theatre as a whole. Bisexual people—and bisexual women, in particular—do not get to see their stories told onstage as much as straight people do, or even gay men and lesbians. This observation motivated me to use my love of writing and theatre to fill the gaping hole. After performing in *Pride and Prejudice*, I knew Jane Austen's story was the key to me filling the void and bringing visibility to an underserved, misunderstood, and often forgotten community. Diving into this classic tale and its various adaptations allowed me to closely analyze its themes of feminism, romance, and the expectations of and for women, all of which were invaluable when it came to writing my own retelling.

My project resonated with me, as a bisexual woman, on a personal level as well as an academic and creative one. Studying sources on bisexuality confirmed on a larger scale what I had long felt on a personal level: bisexuality is deeply misunderstood and misrepresented in media (if represented at all). So much of the criticism bisexual people face could be eradicated if there were less misinformation about bisexuality and more visibility as a whole. In order to decrease biphobia, we must increase and promote bisexual representation, especially media

written/created by people who identify as bisexual. As a bisexual writer drafting a script with a bisexual protagonist, I knew I was taking a small step to amplify bi voices.

I spent the summer reading and analyzing various texts and films including, but not limited to, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen; a wide variety of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations; and scholarly texts on bisexuality, playwriting, and adaptation work. I wrote my own two-act play, tentatively titled *Pride and Prejudice at Pemberley College*. The story follows Austen's original novel, but recontextualizes it in a modern setting and makes many of the characters queer. My Lizzy Bennet is a bisexual protagonist, and Mr. Darcy became Darcy Williams, a lesbian. I also wrote a comprehensive annotated bibliography of all the readings I completed.

The *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations I consumed ranged from the brilliant (the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* film, *Fire Island*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Kate Hamill's stage adaptation, etc.), to the mediocre (*Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Pride and Prejudice: A Musical Adaptation*, the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice* film, etc.), to the ugly (*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, etc.). In some ways, determining what makes a good adaptation is subjective because the idea of remaining "true" to an original source is a vague concept. Every adapter ultimately chooses what aspects of a source material is most important to them to highlight while taking their own creative liberties. According to the texts I read on adaptation, a successful new work will pay homage to the original source (or criticize, parody, or comment on it in some other way) by capitalizing on its strengths, while also taking the material in new directions through the adapter's creative skills. For me, the themes of class, feminism, and sisterhood are crucial to the "truth" of *Pride and Prejudice* (and, of course, the romance).

To reduce the story to that of simply a fluffy romance (as many readers mistakenly assume *Pride and Prejudice* solely is) is to miss entire political subplots. The reason why *Fire Island* is a successful adaptation is because the original plot is reworked for an entirely new setting and time period, but the themes from Austen's work remain intact. Class discrimination is still a main focus, depictions of gay hookup culture and the unreasonably expectations placed upon gay men to be perfectly fit replace regency era social etiquette and fashion standards. Kate Hamill's *Pride and Prejudice* frames marriage as a game to be won by emphasizing the pressures for women to be beautiful, charming, and accomplished in order to gain a husband and, therefore, financial security. On the more lackluster side, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (the novel) felt lazy and redundant because, except for a few zombie-related changes, every part of the story remained identical to the original novel. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (the film) changed quite a bit of the original plot, but traded watered down characters for Hollywood action and bloodshed, ruining the heart of the story. *Bridget Jones's Diary* cherry-picked the main romantic plotlines from the source material, making the film more surface-level since one of the ways Austen gives her female characters three-dimensionality is through their bonds with each other.

When I reread *Pride and Prejudice*, I latched onto the brilliant commentary on women's lack of agency. In Austen's time, marriage determined everything about a woman: financial wealth, happiness, and social status. With whom a woman ended up quite literally decided her fate (and, one could argue, even erased their previous identity, since from then on that woman would be known as "Mrs. [husband's name]"). The way marriage defined who a woman was in the Regency Era is an excellent parallel to the modern-day bisexual experience; bisexual people are often (incorrectly) labeled based on whom they date. If a bisexual woman dates another

woman, she is then defined as a lesbian, completely erasing her true identity. Conversely, if she dates a man, she is then defined as straight. These thematic similarities made outlining my own adaptation relatively easy.

The way I prefer to work academically and creatively aligns perfectly with the structure of the Summer Fellows program. Whenever I am able to craft my own schedule and goals while still having some outside guidance and accountability for deadlines, I am most motivated and productive. As a result, I did not find it difficult whatsoever to complete my annotated bibliography or rough script draft by the end of eight weeks. The biggest challenge for me (aside from unexpectedly contracting COVID at the beginning of the second week of the program) was resisting the urge to think like a novelist (something which I am accustomed to doing) and instead think like a playwright. The texts I read on playwriting helped me consider how to pace my scenes, heighten the language of the dialogue to convey the intensity of emotions, creative options for showing the passage of time, and entertaining ways to give the audience necessary background information Another complicated aspect of the outlining and drafting process was determining the best strategy for adapting a work with which most audience members would be already familiar, if not with the novel then with one of its many adaptations. Thankfully, because of my modern setting and queer lens, much of the story felt brand new, even if it did closely follow the original plot. Finding the characters' unique voices was not as difficult as initially anticipated. Learning that Jane Austen wrote plays as a child, that *Pride and Prejudice* was praised for its witty dialogue, and that Jane would test her early drafts by reading them aloud to her family all proves how perfectly her writing translates to the stage. When it came to writing dialogue, it was easy to switch from "novelist" to "playwright." The adaptations I studied gave me ideas about what to do (or what *not* to do) within my own work. The 2005 *Pride and*

Prejudice film's Darcy inspired much of my own Darcy: I appreciated how his character was simultaneously the serious, brutally honest, stoic romantic lead everyone expects while also being endearingly clueless about certain social cues. One could argue that the way in which he interprets social interactions is evidence of neurodivergence: he often asks for clarification from others or for them to plainly state what they mean, he is frequently misunderstood by others because he does not behave in the same way they do, and he is not at all what he seems on the surface. I incorporated some of these same elements into my character. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* pushed me to think more deeply about Lydia's character arc and show how she is not just a naive younger sister, but a victim of manipulative men. Serendipitously, the order in which I watched or read most adaptations coincided perfectly with whatever part of the script I was working on at the time.

Because I finished drafting my script before the end of the program, I had the opportunity to host a private readthrough with fellow Ursinus actors. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to hear my writing spoken out loud for the first time. I was able to notice where actors stumbled over their lines (indicating that a sentence may have been awkwardly worded), where people laughed (or did not laugh), what scenes hit people the hardest emotionally, when actors seemed most connected to their characters, and so on. Some scenes that I had previously been unsure about came alive when it was performed out loud, while other moments I suspected did not quite work were confirmed as having something missing. After we read through the script, I solicited feedback from the actors to get advice about what I might want to change during revisions. It was fascinating how the criticism was nearly unanimous. If one person felt that something was off or confusing, almost everyone else chimed in to say they agreed. Similarly, when one actor praised an element of the script, the others supported that as well. Even though I

have lots to revise, it is encouraging that a diverse group of people responded positively to my work and felt the emotions I intended them to feel.

I am excited to keep studying bisexuality and theatrical adaptation as I pursue interdisciplinary English and Theater honors work during my senior year. I have fallen in love with playwriting and can already visualize this script being staged. It is my hope that, before I graduate, I can find a way to produce even a small portion of this work at Ursinus, perhaps as a concert reading. I have no doubt that I will continue playwriting and adapting different texts, whether it be in a graduate program or simply in my spare time. Summer Fellows has allowed me to become closely acquainted with the adaptation and playwriting process so that I can confidently do it on my own in the future.

Pride and Prejudice at Pemberley College

(working title)

A play by Kate Isabel Foley

Please email kateifoleyauthor@gmail.com if you wish to request a full copy of the script.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ELIZABETH “LIZZY” BENNET
DARCY WILLIAMS
JANE BENNET
CHARLIE BINGLEY*
LYDIA BENNET
GEORGE WICKHAM
CHARLOTTE LUCAS
COLLIN CHRISTIANSEN
CAROLINE BINGLEY
PROFESSOR BENNET
MRS. BENNET (V.O.)
DR. CATHERINE DE BOURGH
ANNE
JUDGES
ANNOUNCER

AUTHOR’S NOTES: Diverse and inclusive casting is strongly encouraged. Pride and Prejudice belongs to everyone.

**Charlie Bingley must be played by a non-cisgender actor.*

TIME

The present, Spring Semester

PLACE

Pemberley College, USA

SCENE BREAKDOWN

Act 1, Scene 1: *Research Lab*

Jane Bennet tries, unsuccessfully, to convince her sister Lizzy to attend Charlie Bingley's first party of the spring semester at Pemberley College. New transfer student Darcy Williams will be there. Lizzy wants to work on her research for the Fellowship Competition application.

Act 1, Scene 2: *Netherfield House*

Charlie Bingley throws a college party. He clearly has a crush on Jane, and vice versa. Jane has too much to drink and Lizzy has to come pick her up. Darcy, Charlie's best friend, and Caroline, Charlie's sister, are judgmental of Jane's behavior.

Act 1, Scene 3: *Bathroom*

Lizzy takes care of a drunk Jane. Lizzy doesn't understand Jane's preoccupation with dating in college. Jane tries to convince Lizzy to ask Darcy out (Lizzy is bisexual), but Lizzy wants to focus on her academic goals instead. Besides, Darcy is too rude.

Act 1, Scene 4: *Classroom*

Professor Bennet–the Bennet sisters' father–teaches "Ethical Problems." Insufferable mansplainer Collin Christiansen asks Lizzy out, but she is *not* interested. Darcy is impressed by Lizzy's wit and intelligence, which makes Caroline jealous.

Act 1, Scene 5: *Classroom*

Charlotte Lucas, Lizzy's best friend, believes Jane should go to another party with Charlie to make a better impression on him. Lizzy doesn't think this is a good idea–Jane should get to know him another way. Wickham, popular swimmer, flirts with Lizzy and invites her to a weekend swim meet. Lydia, Lizzy's younger sister, also has a crush on him. Jane convinces Lizzy to come with her and Charlie to an art museum in the city so she isn't as nervous around him.

Act 1, Scene 6: *City Street*

Jane, Lizzy, and Charlie leave the art museum. Having lost track of time, they miss their train back to campus.

Act 1, Scene 7: *The Williams' Apartment*

Darcy, with Caroline tagging along, picks the group up and takes them to her parents' penthouse for the night. Caroline makes snobby, classist comments, to which Darcy half heartedly agrees. Lizzy puts Caroline in her place. Darcy and Lizzy banter, but Darcy seems to be impressed with Lizzy.

Act 1, Scene 8: *Classroom*

Collin reveals he's also entering the Fellowship Competition, which was created by his previous faculty mentor, Dr. Catherine de Bourgh. He tries again to get together with Lizzy, but Wickham swoops in and he and Lizzy flirt instead. Jane tells Lizzy that she and Charlie talked for hours the night they were at Darcy's apartment. Jane is now set on going to Charlie's party so he'll hopefully ask her out.

Act 1, Scene 9: *Campus*

Wickham and Lizzy hang out on an unofficial date after the swim meet. After an awkward run-in with Darcy, Wickham explains that Darcy screwed Wickham over in high school, ruining his chances at a scholarship. Lizzy definitely doesn't like Darcy now. She agrees to go to the Netherfield party with Wickham.

Act 1, Scene 10: *Netherfield House*

At Charlie's party, Wickham ditches Lizzy because of a tense encounter with Darcy. Lizzy's pissed at Darcy for how she treated Wickham. When Lizzy refuses Collin's advances, he moves on to Charlotte. Lizzy can't understand why Charlotte would go out with Collin. Charlotte comes out to Lizzy as gay, but Charlotte's parents are super conservative and homophobic, so she's hoping she can make herself like Collin instead. Lizzy gets into a fight with her, saying it's wrong to lie to both Collin and herself. Jane gets way too drunk again and gets mad when Lizzy "ruins the fun" by taking her home.

Act 1, Scene 11: *Research Lab*

Professor Bennet heard some of what happened at the party and checks on Lizzy. Lizzy is upset about losing Wickham, as well as Jane and Charlotte being mad at her. Professor Bennet gives her advice and comforts her.

Act 1, Scene 12: *Jane and Lizzy's Dorm Room*

Jane and Lizzy make up. Jane's mad at herself for acting recklessly, because now Charlie is ghosting her. Jane says she saw Wickham hanging out with another girl, which makes her think Darcy may not be totally wrong about not liking Wickham. Even if she's sad about Wickham, Lizzy is convinced Darcy's in the wrong. Lizzy finds out she's a finalist for the Fellowship Competition.

Act 1, Scene 13: *Dr. de Bourgh's House*

Dr. de Bourgh invites the finalists (Collin, Lizzy, etc.) to her house for dinner. Charlotte is there as Lizzy's plus-one. Darcy arrives, leading to Lizzy finding out that Dr. de Bourgh is Darcy's aunt. Darcy told her aunt about Lizzy's research, giving Lizzy a leg up in the competition as Dr. de Bourgh would not have paid much attention to Lizzy

otherwise because of prejudice against the Bennets as a whole. Lizzy is furious that she didn't become a finalist on her own merits since Darcy meddled.

Act 1, Scene 14: *Dr. de Bourgh's House*

In private, Charlotte and Lizzy make up. Charlotte admits it was wrong to date Collin. Lizzy learns from Collin that Darcy told Charlie that Jane "wasn't right for him." Lizzy assumes Darcy's usual snobbery is at play. Meanwhile, Darcy confesses that she likes Lizzy. Lizzy rejects Darcy and lays into her for rigging the Fellowship Competition, screwing over Wickham, and ruining Jane's chance at a happy relationship.

Intermission

Act 2, Scene 1: *Jane and Lizzy's Dorm Room*

Darcy sends Lizzy an email explaining her side of the story: she told Charlie to stay away from Jane because Jane's drunken behavior reminded Darcy of previous negative encounters Charlie had with girls who broke his heart. Darcy wanted to be extra protective of her friend because he's had bad experiences before, especially with girls rejecting him because he's trans. Darcy didn't help Wickham with his scholarship because he tried to take advantage of Darcy's underage sister at a high school party by drugging her drink. In order to keep her sister from having to relive the traumatic experience again, Darcy asks Lizzy not to spread that information around. As for the Fellowship Competition, Darcy apologizes for her actions, saying she was blinded by her feelings for Lizzy and her desire to do something nice.

Act 2, Scene 2: *Classroom*

Lizzy feels badly she was so harsh to Darcy, but is still mad about the Jane and Charlie situation. Lydia has plans to spend spring break with the sorority she's rushing, but Wickham will also be there. Lizzy tries to tell her parents this is a bad idea, but her parents think it's better to let Lydia go have fun than to fight her on it.

Act 2, Scene 3: *Lake House*

The Bennets (minus Lydia) take a spring break vacation to the lake, and the rental house happens to be a property Darcy's family owns. Lizzy and Darcy meet by chance, both clearly having feelings for the other. Lizzy tells Darcy it wasn't her place to "protect" Charlie like she did.

Act 2, Scene 4: *Jane and Lizzy's Dorm Room*

Thanks to a conversation with Darcy, Charlie returns to Jane and the two of them are reunited. Mrs. Bennet calls in a panic that Lydia's been arrested. Darcy drives Lizzy and Jane to the police station.

Act 2, Scene 5: *Police Station*

Darcy bails Lydia out of jail. Lydia had shoplifted alcohol but got caught, and is not facing a disciplinary hearing at Pemberley for criminal conduct. Professor Bennet regrets not taking Lizzy's concerns about Lydia's spring break plans seriously.

Act 2, Scene 6: *Lydia's Dorm Room*

Lizzy checks on Lydia, who has a breakdown. She only shoplifted to impress Wickham, who she thought liked her, but he bailed as soon as he realized Lydia got caught. Lydia feels stupid for doing what she did and for falling for him, but Lizzy points out that Wickham is manipulative and is just as much at fault. Lydia feels insecure and compares herself to her sisters, so she was excited that Wickham took notice of her instead. Lizzy comforts her.

Act 2, Scene 7: *Classroom*

Lydia reveals that Darcy put a good word into her father (who is on the Pemberley Board of Trustees), who spoke to the Dean, who agreed to go easy on Lydia and let her stay at school. Wickham, however, is expelled because of his many past misdeeds involving drugs and alcohol. Lizzy is overwhelmed by Darcy's kindness but, despite the opinions of others, does not believe Darcy could still like her after how badly Lizzy treated her.

Act 2, Scene 8: *Presentation Room*

Lizzy pitches her research project at the final presentation day for the Fellowship Competition. The judges rank her the highest of all the finalists, and Lizzy wins the competition and the opportunity to continue her research in the summer.

Act 2, Scene 9: *Research Lab*

Darcy visits Lizzy in the lab to congratulate her on her big win. She assures Lizzy that Dr. de Bourgh did not judge the final round, so Lizzy won on her own merits. Lizzy thanks Darcy for everything she did for Lydia. Darcy had kept her actions quiet, not knowing how Lizzy would take Darcy once again using her privilege to help. Lizzy says in this case, it was the right thing to do. Darcy confesses that she still has feelings for Lizzy, but if Lizzy doesn't reciprocate, she'll accept that. Lizzy apologizes for how she's acted and admits she also likes Darcy. The two kiss.

Act 2, Scene 10: *Pemberley Music Hall*

Lizzy, Darcy, Jane, and Charlie attend a student music concert together and discover that Mary Bennet won Pemberley's contest for an original piano composition. The two couples live happily ever after.

Annotated Bibliography

Ahn, Andrew. *Fire Island*. Searchlight Pictures, 2022, https://www.hulu.com/movie/fire-island-c2abb64a-bf06-48fa-8465-c0958e2b8ecd. Accessed 1 July 2022.

This film adapts the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in a modernized, queer version set on Fire Island.

For a movie about gay men on Fire Island, the sex culture there, and the race and class discriminations that exist within the community, the film follows the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* surprisingly closely. In this adaptation, the Bennet sisters are a group of gay men, friends who vacation to Fire Island together every year. "Mrs. Bennet" is an older lesbian woman who has befriended the five men and lets them stay at her house. While a few major *Pride and Prejudice* subplots are cut from the film (the characters of Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine, Mr. Bennet, and Charlotte do not exist in this version), the story feels complete without them. One of the reasons why this adaptation is so successful is because the original plot is completely reworked for an entirely new setting and time period (one would not have to be familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* at all to enjoy the movie), but the main themes from Austen's work remain intact. Class discrimination still exists on Fire Island: the "Bennet sisters" are looked down upon by the wealthier vacationers, are seen as "trashy" compared to the rich partygoers, etc. Noah and Howie (Lizzy and Jane, respectively) also face different kinds of discrimination and prejudice because they are Asian. Instead of regency era social etiquette and fashion standards, we get depictions of gay hookup culture and the unreasonable expectations placed upon gay

men to be perfectly fit. This film proves that *Pride and Prejudice* is timeless and the perfect source material for a modernized, queer love story because of the relatable main themes.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by Vivien Jones, Penguin Books, 2003.

Elizabeth Bennet is the second in a line of five unmarried daughters in the early 19th century. With so many girls and so little money to go around (none of the women will inherit the estate), Mrs. Bennet is determined to see her daughters married. With the arrival of Mr. Bingley, it seems that the eldest daughter, Jane, might be married sooner rather than later. Mr. Bingley is far more affable than his serious friend Mr. Darcy, with whom Lizzy has many quick-witted conversations. Lizzy's contentment with being unmarried is complicated by Mr. Collins, her intolerable cousin who is set to inherit Mr. Bennet's estate, when he proposes to her. Luckily, Lizzy declines the proposal, a decision which Mr. Bennet ultimately supports. Unluckily, her best friend Charlotte Lucas becomes engaged to him soon after, due to her lack of other prospects, which also means she is set to inherit the Bennets' estate alongside Mr. Collins. Meanwhile, Lizzy finds herself attracted to the charming military officer Mr. Wickham, who poisons her against Mr. Darcy by spinning a tale about how Darcy betrayed him. Later on, the Bingleys suddenly go back to London, leaving Jane heartbroken. When Elizabeth travels to visit the newly married Charlotte, she also runs into Mr. Darcy, and learns from his friend that Darcy was the one who stopped Mr. Bingley from proposing to Jane. This, alongside Wickham's story, makes Lizzy furious at Mr. Darcy. So, when

Darcy proposes out of the blue to Lizzy, she obviously fights with him and declines. Darcy gives Lizzy a letter to explain his actions, apologizing for his interfering with Bingley and Jane (he did not know how much Jane liked Bingley and thought he was helping a friend avoid a bad match) and giving the other side of the Wickham story (Mr. Wickham was actually a liar and terrible person, and tried to run off with Darcy's much younger sister). Very soon after learning this news, Lizzy also finds out that her younger sister Lydia has run away with Wickham, potentially ruining her and her family's reputation. The family tries to find the two of them to cover up the scandal and manage to convince Wickham to marry Lydia for a small fee. Lizzy is suspicious that that is all it took for Wickham to get married and pokes around for more information. Her aunt reveals to her that it was actually Mr. Darcy himself who paid Mr. Wickham the large sums of money necessary for Wickham to tie himself down to Lydia. This warms Lizzy to Mr. Darcy, and she realizes how much she judged him without knowing his full story. Mr. Bingley returns to the Bennets and proposes to Jane, and Darcy returns and proposes once more to Lizzy, who, this time, accepts.

On its surface, *Pride and Prejudice* might seem like a fluffy romance that would only appeal to the most Lydia-like, marriage-obsessed readers, but it is actually a *fantastic* romance that is *also* a brilliant commentary on women's lack of agency. Mrs. Bennet is not just driven to find her daughters matches because she is bored or wants a son-in-law; she works relentlessly because if Mr. Bennet were to die before any of the girls were married, Lizzy and her sisters would be left with next to nothing. In this time, marriage determines everything about a woman: financial wealth, happiness, and social status.

With whom a woman ends up quite literally decides her fate (and, one could argue, even erases their previous identity, since from then on that woman would be known as "Mrs. [husband's name]"). The way marriage defines who a woman is in the Regency Era is an excellent parallel to the modern-day bisexual experience; bisexual people are often (incorrectly) labeled based on whom they date. If a bisexual woman dates another woman, she is then defined as a lesbian, completely erasing her true identity. Conversely, if she dates a man, she is then defined as straight. Rather than choosing to date whomever they please (and some bisexual people may not wish to date at all) and remaining their own person with their individuality and chosen bisexual label, bisexual people are sometimes forced into one of the more visible boxes (gay or straight) by societal stereotypes.

Babbage, Frances. *Adaptation in Contemporary Theatre: Performing Literature*. Methuen Drama, 2018. *EBSCOhost*, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1609259&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

"Introduction"

All kinds of adaptations exist within the world of theatre. Adaptation of prose fiction (in theatre and film) is often received poorly by audience members: critiques include that the motivation for the adaptation is too money-driven, that the creators of the adaptation lack originality, that the adaptation is superficial, and so on. Original theatrical works are typically seen as more "innovative" by critics. In some ways, adaptation requires more

innovation and ingenuity, because in order to be interesting, the work has to take a piece with which some are already familiar and make it feel brand new. The author uses the concept of "ekphrasis" ("the capacity and limits of one art form to convey the qualities of another") to consider dramatic adaptations. The author also examines adaptations "between" worlds: in other words, she tries to study adaptations from both the perspectives of the source material and the new version.

In a theatrical era in which Broadway is flooded with remakes, Disney movies-turned-musicals, revivals, and retellings, criticisms of adaptations are aplenty. Much of said criticism is valid, and reminds me as a writer to consider carefully the best way to bring my own originality to familiar source material. "Ekphrasis" was an interesting term for me to learn because it applies to my own dramatic adaptation; there are certain elements of novels that are much more difficult to portray onstage (characters' internal thoughts, for one). The other side of this concept is that there are elements of theatre that cannot be conveyed through written text alone (lights and sound, for example).

Barnette, Jane. *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg's Art and Theatrical Adaptation*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2018. *EBSCOhost*, https://search-ebscohost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1655729&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

"Introduction"

Adaptation has ruled the stage for a long time: *Fun Home, Hamilton, A Christmas Carol,* and many other theatrical hits are adaptations. Most family shows on Broadway are adaptations because it is easier to sell tickets for an already recognizable title. Adaptation and dramaturgy are two theatrical practices that, when put together ("adapturgy"), are even more powerful. The author describes adapturgy as "the cultivation of a reflective, textured research milieu within which adapted works for the stage will thrive." In order to have a successful adaptation, it is important to recognize what you do not know about a certain story as well as what you *do* know about the origins of the story itself–that is where dramaturgy comes in.

To me, adapturgy emphasizes the importance of doing extensive background research on your source material before attempting to create your own adaptation. A successful new work must pay homage to the original source (or criticize, parody, or comment on it in some other way), capitalizing on its strengths, while also taking the material in brand new directions through the adapter's creative skills. My research on the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen, bisexual representation, and other *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations has influenced my decisions in writing my own script. My ideas may have been very different had I not taken the time to gather such knowledge.

"Chapter 1"

"Comparative literature scholar Linda Hutcheon [...] concludes that [...] 'adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places.'" Adapting at its core means "rework[ing] something (usually a text) from one medium to another." When

adapting a work, there is much debate about whether or not "fidelity arguments" (how faithful an adaptation is to the original text) are valid; just because an adaptation is faithful to the original text does not mean that the adaptation is good. Some scholars suggest that adapters have no obligation to remain "true" to the original author's intentions; the adaptation needs to be responsible to the *text*, not to the author, whether the adapter decides that means remaining true to the tone, the theme, the exact words on the page, the plot, or whatever is deemed most important. What makes adaptation different from appropriation is that adaptation "openly acknowledges its source text," but appropriations do not. Additionally, an audience has to know that the play is an adaptation of an already existing work for it to be experienced as such.

The idea of remaining "true" to an original source is so vague, because what is "true" to one person may be "false" to another. Were I to decide that the motivations and personalities of the *Pride and Prejudice* characters were the most important aspects to keep intact in my adaptation, but not necessarily the details of the plot, some fans might scoff. But if I were to completely alter the makeup of the characters while following the plot exactly, other fans might criticize *that* decision. Every adapter will ultimately choose what is most important to them to highlight while taking their own creative liberties. For me, the themes of class, feminism, and sisterhood are crucial to the "truth" of *Pride and Prejudice* (and, of course, the romance).

"Chapter 3"

Barnette writes, "Whereas the guiding question for dramaturgy has been *why this play*

now?, for adapturgy I suggest a modification of the question, so that it becomes *why this source as theatre now?*" Adapturgy focuses on not just how to make an adaptation thrive, but how to make it thrive *onstage,* Barnette also makes a distinction between "source text" and "source," saying that by removing the word "text" from the question, it opens up far more possibilities for adaptation by reminding people that someone can adapt any work. By focusing on the "now," adapturgy discovers how a source functions not only on a global level, but at a local/micro level (i.e., how does adapting this source matter at this present time and place?). The dramaturg's role in theatrical adaptation will vary depending on the stage of the script (if the script is in progress, they will give more editorial feedback, whereas if the script is completed, they will be more useful answering questions from the cast). Successful adapturgy keeps the audience in mind as the main focus; it also considers that audiences will have varying degrees of experience with theatre as well as varying degrees of knowledge of the original source. With the example of the *Wizard of Oz* adaptation *The Wiz Live!*, we can see how Nielsen ratings were influenced by cultural knowledge (African American households had high ratings, and familiarity with the musical styles in the production—R&B, hip-hop, gospel, etc.—increased enjoyment). Barnette considers these questions crucial: "Whose point of view encapsulates the narrative of the story? How does that point of view—with regard to time, place, and action—relate to my own? How is it likely to relate to members of this particular audience? And how does it compare to other adaptations of this story?" Barnette also discusses the "specter" of the source: the original source will always "haunt" an adaptation. There is an "inescapable and highly charged relationship between the source and the adaptation." When audiences see an adaptation onstage, there is a loss

of "freedom" that is experienced by the reader of a novel, because "what has been seen cannot be unseen." Barnette describes adapting work for the stage as having a "numinous" (or spiritual) quality: "Translating such literature into the language of the stage allows for this to be a communal experience, magnifying the potential for emotional responses and/or numinous experiences to spread throughout the crowd."

When adapting *Pride and Prejudice* for the stage, I have to consider how various audiences will react to the story in this form: many people have strong attachments to the more popular visual adaptations (the 2005 film and the 1995 TV miniseries), so they may draw either conscious or subconscious comparisons between those versions and my own. I also have to keep in the mind that setting the story in a college campus will likely both bring in more audience members and alienate others (those who did not have an on-campus, four-year college experience, for example, or those who cannot stand the idea of a classic text being modernized).

Daly, Timothy. *21st Century Playwriting: A Manual of Contemporary Techniques*. Smith & Kraus, 2019.

"Chapter 6"

Writing a play does not just mean writing a good story, but also writing a good narrative for a *theatrical space*. In order to "fill the theatre space," a playwright must consider the five different options available to do so: "strong dramatic and acting intentions," "heightened language," "physicality," "the 'space-filling' power of image," and "sensory

impact." "Strong dramatic and acting intentions" means a character (or many characters, but ideally at least the main one) has a strong will/desire/emotion directed toward someone else or themself, and this emotion drives them to take action. For example, Romeo's great desire for Juliet motivates him to act in various ways. "Heightened language" refers to both the emotion of the characters and the words they use; if a character is furious, their language needs to reflect that. The theater is a physical space, so characters need to physically fill that space: this can be accomplished through a literal physical scene (a fight, a dance, etc.) or within the dialogue (lines that inherently suggest a character's physicality). "The 'space-filling' power of image" refers to a repeated mental image or metaphor rather than tangible elements; images or symbols important to the characters/story can "fill" a space emotionally as well as literal objects. Finally, a playwright must consider when to manipulate the senses for maximum emotional impact (making lights much brighter or dimmer, blasting sound or utilizing silence, crowding the stage with tons of people or leaving one character alone, and so on).

In my own script, these are some ways I can consider how to fill the theatrical space: revising my dialogue to use more "heightened language," depending on the situation (i.e., making sure the most emotionally intense scenes are written distinctly from more "normal" scenes) and reviewing my rough draft to find opportunities for space-filling image (is there a symbol or image I can attach to one of the main themes to draw it out more obviously in revisions?). I would also like to use my revisions to focus on the role music does/can play in the story, as it would have an effective emotional and sensory impact on the audience.

"Chapter 8"

A "story" is an ancient concept that can take on so many different forms; it's impossible to define. There are "six levels to narrative," according to J.L. Styan: "plot and narrative, psychological, morality, philosophical, poetic, and dramatic pattern." Daly adds levels such as "sensual," "social and political," "physical," and "metaphysical." There is a "classical story shape" that most plays use, though each section is not set in stone: "The Beginning, Disturbance, 1st Major Action/Problem/Dilemma Begun, Complications Occur; involving Surprises and Twists, Reversal, New Action/New Decisions/New Reactions (Change of direction), Turning Point (for good or ill), Narrative Climax, Emotional Climax/Climax of Meaning, and Ending." It is important for playwrights to remember "causality" ("Because A happened, then so will B, and C"). In other words, there are consequences for every action a character takes, whether positive or negative. Often times, great plot comes from the combination of "inner action" and "outer action" (e.g., two characters practicing for a dance competition—outer action—shows how they are falling in love—inner action). A good rule of thumb to keep in mind is that no scene should be repeated in another; if a couple is getting along in one scene, the next scene must show that their relationship has changed in some way to keep the action moving. With a good narrative climax comes a "catastrophe" of some kind that leads to "uncertainty"; the audience should be worried about which way the story will go from there. After the "action-filled climax," the "emotional climax" occurs, where characters realize truths about themselves or others, and relationships are changed in some way.

This chapter was useful in providing a basic blueprint of what a play's plot outline should look like. Having those key points to hit throughout the story will be helpful when deciding what parts of the *Pride and Prejudice* story should be entire scenes, and which parts might be able to be combined to keep the action moving. The idea of "inner action" versus "outer action" is also a good point to keep in mind as I consider what can be visually happening onstage to represent what is happening internally for the characters.

"Chapter 19"

According to a theater manager, "The job of a play's title is to get people into the theater." A title should pull audience members in by intriguing them. A title can reveal the "conceptual world" (some sort of poetic image, not necessarily a literal place), a "metaphysic" (a hint at a spiritual adventure), a "specific emotional world" (these are titles with words like "heart" or "heaven"), and so on. Titles that hint at the plot should do so in a dramatic way that announces the themes a play will take on. Fantasy, fear, the exotic, the sensual, etc. are all great aspects for a title. Other strategies could include using a main character's name, juxtaposing opposites, employing irony, using clever word play or double meaning, or just something that sounds good. Another thing to keep in mind is whether the title is one word, two, or something much longer. When brainstorming options, ask friends for their opinions ("Would you see a play called [title here]?").

Titling a *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation comes with a particular challenge, because the play should still be recognizable as a classic adaptation, but should also reveal its key

differences in a way that will entice audience members to come see it. When considering the title for my play, I may want to employ irony or word play so the *Pride and Prejudice* title is clearly familiar, but adds a modern twist and/or its queer elements.

"Chapter 21"

Daly advises writers to keep their work as short as possible—the longer a play is, the harder it is to "succeed artistically and theatrically." He claims that audiences are more impatient nowadays, and that plays are more likely to be produced if they are "brief and powerful." While plays are made up of scenes, scenes are made up of "phases." Therefore, each scene has its own mini narrative arc. The shape of a scene (generally) is made up of different phases: a brief set up, rising action, a scene climax, a momentary relaxation of tension, and a "next step" (the question "what's going to happen next?" is either hinted at, partially answered, or kept in suspense). The brief set up of a scene should happen in less than a page. Scene climaxes can take different shapes, but one of the best ways to lead to that moment is to have rising action filled with subtext, until the climax becomes overt. Daly recommends that writers vary their scenes in terms of tone (if a couple scenes are "noisy," the following should be "quiet," and so on) and length. Scenes should also be as short as possible and should begin close to the climax. When considering what scenes to write, authors should make sure that each one includes plot advancement, character growth, and/or relationship growth.

I appreciate the reminders to keep scenes short, as well as the strategy of thinking of scenes as being comprised of phases. I tend to overwrite first drafts, but by considering

the mini narrative arc of a scene, I can begin closer to the climax and follow each phase. Daly's comments about subtext contributing to rising tension particularly struck me; so much can be said without hitting the audience over the head with the message.

Dolan, Jill. *Theatre & Sexuality*. London Macmillan Education UK, 2010.

"Gay and Lesbian Ideas in the 20th Century"

Dolan details queer history, theory, and theatrical representation throughout the 20th century and early 21st century. Obscenity laws in the late 19th and early 20th centuries allowed authorities to shut down theaters for anything they deemed "indecent." It was an "open secret" that many people involved in theatre were lesbians or gay men, but theatre at that time still often portrayed conservative values. Characters with even the slightest bit ambiguous sexuality were often doomed or were villains themselves. The Stonewall Riot in 1969 is cited as one of the pinnacle events of the LGBTQ liberation movement, leading to numerous protests and demonstrations throughout the 1980s and 1990s by organizations such as ACT UP and Queer Nation. By the early 2000s, more and more popular actors and entertainers (Ellen DeGeneres, T.R. Knight, Neil Patrick Harris, Wanda Sykes, Jane Lynch, etc.) were coming out as gay, making queerness visible in performance spaces. From the 1980s through today, LGBTQ studies have exploded with scholarship debating whether gender and sexual identities are innate or constructed (i.e., are people "born this way" or does society shape who they become?). The '80s was also the time when queer theorists began to dismantle the binary system. Along with these discussions, scholars began to consider how theatre and performance influenced LGBTQ

studies. Were representations of LGBTQ characters onstage replications of people within the community, images of what people should be, or problematic stereotypes? Many theorists argued that even with representations of LGBTQ characters onstage, these images would not promote social change because the characters were still bound by the constraints of realist theatre. Audiences still viewed the characters through conservative ideology, and the "fourth wall" separated spectators from the characters themselves. Queer characters were often immoral and did not survive by the end of the story. Queer performance theorists responded to these ideas by pushing for more post-modern productions, breaking the fourth wall and experimenting with the avant-garde. Another example of how queer performance has been politicized is when the "NEA Four" had their grants rescinded because of the queer "depravity" of their work.

The history of gay and lesbian characters being portrayed as "immoral" and/or meeting unfortunate ends (usually involving death/suicide) made me consider the current representation of bisexual characters in visual media. In particular, bisexual women still have very little unproblematic representation: Rosa Diaz from *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and Petra Solano in *Jane the Virgin* are two of the very few (and more recent) examples of bisexual women in TV that have been embraced by the bi community as the positive representation it craved. In theatre, positive female bisexual representation is even more scarce. When it comes to negative representation of bisexual women, the list is much longer: Maureen from *RENT* is criticized by bi spectators as perpetuating the stereotype that bisexuals are incpabale of monogamy, as well as Annaliese Keating in *How to Get Away with Murder*, who frequently cheats on her partners. Piper Chapman in

Orange is the New Black is one of the worst representations of bisexual women in modern day media as her character is consistently referred to as going through a "lesbian phase" and being "part gay." The biphobia and bi-erasure she faces throughout is never challenged by any of the other characters. Eleanor Shellstrop in *The Good Place* was only confirmed to be bisexual (never labeled as such in the series) by show writers and Kristen Bell, but the character's attraction for women is only ever a source of comedy.

Garber, Marjorie B. *Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life*. Routledge, 2000.

There are many misconceptions about bisexuality, from queer and straight people alike: some see bisexuality as a way to "resist categorization" or as a temporary label people use before "truly" defining themselves. Some gays and lesbians see coming out as bi as "easier" because a bisexual person is still "part straight" and therefore has "heterosexual privilege." Then there are those who see bisexuality as less of an identity and more as a "chic" trend, thanks to many pop stars and celebrities labeling themselves as bi. In the '70s, bisexuality was viewed as a part of the sexual liberation movement, a "lifestyle" one could follow to experiment sexually and to break down boundaries. Psychiatric experts have been divided on their opinions in decades past; one even said that bisexuals "generally do not have the capacity to fall in love with one person" (19). Sigmund Freud believed bisexuality was something inherent in all humans, but that it was also the root cause of many neuroses. With all of these wildly different beliefs, it is no wonder why most bisexual people want to be more visible–they are tired of being seen as straight (or

"part straight") by the queer community. Bisexual people do not even have "bi fashion" or recognizable symbols as gays and lesbians do (such as the reclaimed pink triangle, to give one of Garber's examples). Many bisexual figures and texts are usurped, becoming simply "gay" or "lesbian" icons, once again decreasing bisexual visibility.

What I have taken away from this chapter is that so much of the criticism bisexual people face could be eradicated if there were less misinformation about bisexuality and more visibility as a whole. Most people simply do not understand bisexuality at its most basic level. In order to decrease biphobia, we must increase and promote bisexual representation. There must be more bisexual media written/created by people who identify as bisexual. By amplifying bisexual voices, correct information and positive representation can overtake the harmful stereotypes and false assumptions of bisexual people. This is the best way to ensure that there is more understanding both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community. I am hopeful that as a bisexual writer, my own script with a bisexual protagonist can be a small step in that direction.

Grahame-Smith, Seth, et al. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Quirk Books, 2009.

This novel tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* . . . but with zombies. And ninjas. And illustrations of said zombies and ninjas.

Zombies are mentioned from the very first sentence of the book: “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains.” However, for a novel with “zombies” in the title, the zombie additions were underwhelming. Most of the book consisted of word-for-word original *Pride and Prejudice* narration and dialogue, just with the occasional mention of a zombie or ninja mixed in with Austen’s words. Though the tone of the additions seemed satirical, rather than bringing brilliant humor and a new take on the classic story to the table, the changes were lackluster. The biggest departure from the original novel involved Charlotte’s unfortunate fate: before marrying Mr. Collins, Charlotte is “stricken” (meaning she suffered a zombie bite and was doomed to a slow, painful transformation into a zombie herself). Mr. Collins fails to notice that his wife is an “unmentionable”; instead, Lady Catherine informs him of this, and Mr. Collins kills Charlotte (as it is his “husbandly duty” to do put her out of her misery), then hangs himself due to his grief. Another interesting detail is that Mr. Bennet had his daughters get warrior training in China (Mrs. Bennet is preoccupied with her daughters getting married, but Mr. Bennet is most concerned with his daughters knowing how to fight), but this is looked down upon by Lady Catherine, who claims that Japanese training is superior. This division highlights the themes of wealth and class already present in *Pride and Prejudice*. Despite her supposed inferior battle training, Lizzy is an excellent killer of unmentionables (something that impresses Darcy during the first ball when it is overrun by zombies). Maybe it is because of her skills that she jumps straight to violent solutions at every opportunity: when she overhears Darcy insulting her at the first ball, Lizzy immediately decides she should kill him as retribution; when Caroline writes to say she and Mr.

Bingley are leaving Netherfield, Lizzy suggests killing Caroline too; Lizzy even fantasizes about decapitating Lydia when Lydia will not stop jabbering on. While these violent thoughts may seem over-the-top (and many are), Lizzy is not the only one to think such things. The novel emphasizes themes of honor, oaths, revenge, and so on. When Wickham runs off with Lydia, Darcy strikes a deal with him: Darcy will pay all of Wickham's debts if Wickham both promises to marry Lydia and allow Darcy to paralyze him (as retribution for Wickham's betrayal of the Darcys). Except for these few mentioned changes, every other part of the story remained identical to *Pride and Prejudice*, which felt lazy and redundant. I expected lots more bloodshed and plot twists (maybe even the death of a Bennet sister).

Gunderson, Lauren, and Margot Melcon. *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*. Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 2017.

This play is an unofficial sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*, taking place two years after the end of the original novel, that allows Mary Bennet to take the spotlight. Jane (seven months pregnant), Mr. Bingley, Mary, and Lydia all visit Lizzy and Mr. Darcy at Pemberley for Christmas. All of the characters are surprised to find how much Mary has matured and come into her own since they last saw her. Mary is tired of being overlooked and feels that something is missing in her life. As if on cue, Arthur de Bourgh (a distant relative of Lady Catherine's) arrives at Pemberley. Lady Catherine has recently died, and while her fortune passed to her daughter Anne, the estate has gone to Arthur as the closest male relative. Mary and Arthur get along right away, both of them bonding over

their intellect and love of books. Lydia, stuck in her unhappy marriage to Wickham, decides to entertain herself by flirting with Arthur. Unfortunately, when she leaves a note intended for him to find, Mary finds it instead and assumes it is from Arthur to *her*. This starts a whole series of farce-style misunderstandings involving letters delivered to the wrong people. Before Mary and Arthur can confess their feelings to each other, Anne de Bourgh turns up at Pemberley in search of Arthur and announces that she and Arthur are engaged. This devastates Mary, but Arthur was completely unaware of the fact that he and Anne were engaged in the first place. Mary is too upset to talk to Arthur, let alone listen to him explain that this was all arranged by Lady Catherine before her death, without Arthur's knowledge. Darcy, Bingley, and the other Bennet sisters help to matchmake by convincing Arthur not to leave Pemberley with Anne. Eventually, Arthur stands up to Anne and decides not to go through with the arranged marriage, promising that she can still live at Rosings as long as she wishes. He and Mary declare their love for each other and look forward to a happy Christmas together as fiances.

One of the reasons why this play succeeds as a Christmas rom-com is because of how self-aware it is. The meta humor present throughout the story adds so much humor for Austen fans, such as the iconic opening line turned on its head by Mr. Darcy when referring to Anne: "it is universally acknowledged that a single woman in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a husband" (70). One of the more comedic moments is in the first act of the play, when Darcy says, "We are gentlemen, Bingley. We sit. And we wait for the excitement to come to us" (38), which could be a subtle reference to regency gender roles, or perhaps just a nod toward Mr. Bennet, who was often bombarded with

excitement from his wife and daughters. This also did not feature one of the Bennet sisters–Kitty–but rather than brush over that fact, the playwrights managed to sneak a joke in with Jane exclaiming at the end of the second act, "And Kitty! She has been left out of this entire story!" (73). Even the continual jokes about the Christmas tree made the story feel more modern than it actually is.

The fact that this play is a "sequel" allows for many interesting creative liberties, Mary being the protagonist of her own story being one of them. Mary herself says, "I find I still suffer from lack of definition" (19), but through this play, she is able to become more defined as a character. Even Lydia becomes more sympathetic by the end of the second act; no longer is she a naive, foolhardy child, but a deeply lonely woman stuck in a marriage she is all but forced to agree to in order to save her reputation. Her actions are redeemed when her sisters realize the depths of her unhappiness, and they forgive her. A sequel story with a different sister as the focus also means that new character dynamics can be explored, such as Mr. Darcy and Mary bonding in ways we have never seen before. Arthur is the only character completely invented for this play. In order to find an appropriate love interest for Mary, it makes sense that the playwrights chose to create the perfect match for her as no other existing character would have quite worked, and he did not feel too out of place among the other Austen characters (considering the overall tone of the play was already comedic and updated). While this sequel has its own voice and tone distinct from the original novel, it still manages to capitalize on Austen's feminist ideas: Mary's intellect is not sacrificed simply because she is interested in marrying Arthur, and Anne's independence and power is highlighted at the end of the play when

the other characters point out that she has the freedom to make her own choices now that she is not bound to an engagement arranged by her mother.

Hamill, Kate, and Jane Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*. Dramatists Play Services, Inc, 2018.

This play tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

This adaptation highlights Jane Austen's wit through slapstick comedy, caricatures of the different characters, bawdy humor, and the chaotic overlapping of dialogue. A few notable character omissions in this version include the aunt and uncle, Colonel Forster, and Kitty Bennet. Cutting Kitty from the play was a smart decision, in my opinion, because it gave the other four daughters the opportunity to have more clearly defined character arcs. Mary and Lydia, for example, feel like they have bigger roles and motivations in the story. They are also each great examples of some of the parodic styles of the characters: Mary is a sort of ominous specter throughout the story, Lydia is a chronic drunk, Mr. Bingley is all but literally a dog, Mr. Collins is an insufferably gross predator, Anne de Bourgh is elevated from a background character to a ridiculous joke, and Mrs. Bennet is a drill sergeant who will stop at nothing to arrange her daughters' marriages.

Mrs. Bennet's hands-on, serious approach to her daughters' love lives is just one way Kate Hamill's adaptation portrays romance and marriage as a game. Many of Mrs. Bennet's lines involve "winning" and "conquering," and the bells used throughout the

play signal some sort of important chance in the game of love, or the beginning of a "round." When a round of this matchmaking sport begins, anyone can win or lose. Framing marriage as a game to be won only adds to the pressures of the characters: Lydia's desperation to get married, for example, becomes a competitive act to win approval from her family ("I thought you would be happy! I have won the game; I have married, as I ought; and soon I will make you lovely maiden aunts! I thought that's what you wanted!" (86)). Meanwhile, Lizzy is extra anti-marriage in this adaptation versus the original novel. While there is a strong focus on how marriage will "save the family," Lizzy relies on her sisters (particularly Jane) to be the ones to get married. Not only does the Hamill adaptation highlight the theme of women having limited financial opportunities, but there is also commentary about the pressures for women to be beautiful, charming, accomplished, and otherwise perfect in order to get married, even if that means marrying without love. When Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley comment on what makes a woman truly accomplished, Lizzy replies in astonishment, "I never saw such a lady: uniting capacity, taste, and elegance–with, I almost forgot!–moral invincibility (31-32). Not only is there an expectation that women be accomplished, but they must also never falter. Mary's Act Two speech states that perfection is, "an ideal that we must fulfill. For one false step condemns a person–a female person–to ruin; one slip pollutes her forever" (82). All of this goes along with the idea that appearances are incredibly important; Lizzy and Mr. Darcy recognize that they are more "flawed" than others in society, which results in them not fitting in. Even at the end of the play, Lizzy is concerned that Darcy could be the "laughingstock of the world," but the two of them reject societal appearances, and Darcy simply says, "Let them laugh" (96).

Jenkins, Linda Walsh. *The 90-Day Play*. The 90-Day Novel Press, 2017.

"Day 8: Showing the Action"

This chapter emphasizes the importance of non-verbal story techniques, with Jenkins stating that, "Vivid drama often occurs without words" and that, "Silence can be a part of theatricality, as can physical gestures" (33). "Theatrical elements" enhance an audience member's experience and invite them to "play" with the actors. A playwright should make associations between the story and set pieces, props, costumes, etc. so the theatrical elements evoke emotions, along with the dialogue. This chapter gives examples of props, physical gestures, and other theatrical elements that symbolize greater meaning within their stories.

I used the first exercise listed in this chapter to assist with my outlining. Coming up with possible non-verbal theatrical elements to associate with each character helped me to flesh out the modernized world of my adaptation and create new aspects of an old story.

"Day 14: Beginning Dialogue"

Dialogue is what propels action forward. It also reveals characters' relationships to each other (how one character speaks to another character is different from how they speak to someone else). All characters have to have distinct speech/language patterns so everybody is unique. Dialogue also has to be consistent (even if a character adjusts how they speak depending on to whom they talk, it should still be consistent with their personality).

This is a solid, succinct overview of points to keep in mind when writing a script. Dialogue should always progress the plot or reveal something important about the characters; it cannot just be "filler." It is easy to fall into the trap of making every character sound similar to the playwright, so one should be extra mindful when creating each character's "voice."

"Day 20: Begin at the End"

Plays are like mysteries: the conclusion (and/or the road to the conclusion) is unknown to the audience until the very end. The way the plot develops provides new clues and information about what the ending might be, similar to how one might consider the suspects of a murder mystery. The options for the conclusion become narrowed down as the plot progresses. The beginning of the play should foreshadow what the ending will be. If you come up with the ending first, it will be easier to write the events leading up to it. That does not mean you are stuck with that one ending though; sometimes a new one will become clearer to you as you write. Jenkins writes, "If you're adapting from a familiar story, everyone expects the familiar ending. The focus is on how you get to the end and/or how you'll handle it" (61). In other words, the challenge with adaptation work is figuring out how to make the journey to the conclusion "fresh" using "poetic license" (61).

The challenge with adapting *Pride and Prejudice* is that most audience members are already familiar with the work, and probably with at least one, if not several, of its adaptations. By using "poetic license," I can modernize the characters and give them slightly different goals and endings within that modern context, while still harkening back to the intentions of the original work.

"Day 22: Beginning the Scenario"

Outlining involves arranging plot points from the beginning to the conclusion, as well as deciding how that plot will unfold (where are the scene breaks? Is there an intermission? Are there set changes? Will the story be told linearly? and so on). No matter how many scenes or acts the play has, it will always have a beginning, a middle, and an end, so plot points should be arranged in this manner. The middle is usually a little longer than the beginning and ending. The beginning should set up the main points of the play ("action, characters, style, and intrigue of the play" (69)) quickly to pull the audience in. "Conflict and revelations" take the audience through the middle of the play, and after the "crisis," the "climax" and following falling action lead the audience to the conclusion (69).

This chapter provides a thorough overview of what the outline of a play should look like, as well as elements to consider about flow and continuity. These details are important parts of a story outline, especially when it comes to the aspects unique to theatre (set changes, act breaks, etc.).

"Day 23: Setting up the Game"

At the very beginning of the play, a playwright should set up the "rules" of the world in which the story is set (i.e., a taste of what the audience can expect to continue throughout the entire production: "style, setting, characters, theatricality, and language" (71)). The play should start right away, pulling the audience into intriguing action that will lay the foundation for the rules and trigger the following plot points. The author suggests that eight to ten minutes is about when an audience might start to lose focus in a full-length play if they do not have a good grasp on the world and what is going on. Possible techniques for opening a play include using a "MacGuffin" (something that is introduced that appears to be the most important focus but is not), breaking the "fourth wall" (e.g.., having characters introduce themselves to the audience), employing a Narrator, using "framing devices" (a prologue and epilogue, an event that bookends the play but takes a different shape at the end versus the beginning, etc.), and so on (72-73).

Deciding how to open a play is arguably one of the most crucial decisions because it will determine the audience's first impressions of the story. The opening of a *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation is challenging, because one has to consider how the novel begins while also putting a unique twist on it. How does a playwright take the words of Jane Austen's first chapter and transform them into a brand new opening?

"Day 26: Constructing the Beginning"

An inciting incident of some sort should occur at the beginning of the play that sets the rest of the action in motion. The beginning is where a dilemma (or many dilemmas) is introduced to show the promise of the plot to the audience. This chapter talks about the idea of "intensity" and how an intense scene doesn't have to be big or action-packed, as long as it is suspenseful and filled with emotional depth. The scenes toward the end of the

beginning section should be extra intense to move the story to the middle. All of the actions leading up to that intense scene must build the conflict until we reach that first climax.

The description of "intensity" is useful when considering what scenes will comprise the beginning of my play. Measuring the level of intensity in each of the beginning scenes can help me to build up rising action that will lead to the climactic moment right before the "middle" of the play begins.

"Day 27: Writing Cricket Bats—Beat by Beat"

A "beat" is the smallest unit of measure in a play; it is a moment within a scene, and each scene should be built "beat by beat." This means that plays are carefully constructed, and that no minute goes to waste. If one thinks of a play musically, "beats" determine the pace of the story. It is up to the playwright to determine what kind of beats they will use for each scene, if some moments are faster or slower than others, and so on. Beats might be made up of action, dialogue, silence, and/or stillness.

One of the exercises at the end of the chapter involved breaking down a scene from my play into its various beats in order to see how a scene is structurally made. While it is not possible to do this until part of the play has been written, it is an interesting concept to keep in mind even as I write the early scenes. Thinking of each scene as being made up of other "tiny scenes" is a good way to consider what moments are serving their purpose and which ones may be slowing the pace.

"Day 30: Dramatic Time"

There are many ways to convey the passage of time in a play, and considerations about how much time should pass within the story. While the play is maybe a couple hours of "real time," its "dramatic time" is different. Flashbacks and jumping around within a timeline are options for some stories, but they do not fit every plot. Moving linearly might be the best choice, but two hours of real time do not have to be two hours of dramatic time—two hours can cover a much longer period of time, if necessary.

Because my play takes place over the course of an entire college semester (potentially even longer), I have to consider how to condense dramatic time into real time. There are also many instances of jumps in time, so I will have to figure out the best way to convey that (whether through projections, a mention in the dialogue, a change in the characters' clothing, or something else).

"Day 31: Exposition"

"Show, don't tell" important background information to the audience. Rather than have a character narrate information the audience needs to be aware of, let it be revealed through natural conversations, how they greet someone else, the way they talk, etc. Even if the play has a narrator or other device that speaks directly to the audience, the information should be delivered in an entertaining way. Some exposition might be important for the playwright to know to write realistic characters, but it may not be necessary for the audience to know it too. The most difficult knowledge to convey is that which the

characters already know as it has to fit into the dialogue without feeling forced. Resist the temptation to put *all* exposition in the beginning, or it will drag the play down. Finally, when in doubt, exposition can always be worked into the play during revisions.

With my previous experience as a novelist, I have always been able to rely on narration and characters' inner monologues to convey information to the reader. With playwriting, I have to physically show everything, which is a much greater challenge. Balancing what needs to be known about the characters at the beginning of the play versus later on will likely be something that gets revised during edits once I get a clearer picture of the story.

"Day 44: The Gobi Desert"

The middle of a play is often what writers struggle to get through the most. Characters face a variety of decisions, subplots come to the forefront, the theme becomes more apparent, and relationships change (for better or for worse). There is a beginning, middle, and end to the middle of a play. A play's middle ends once characters reach the climax of the plot (in which all the action and tension comes to a head and characters face the most difficult or complicated decision).

Writing the middle of any creative work is always the most tedious for me, simply because the start of a story feels the most exciting, and the conclusion is usually fueled by the momentum I have already built. It helps to think of the middle as an exciting playground to experiment with characters' personalities and relationships; this part of the play can be just as exciting as the beginning, because even though it may not feel as new

to the writer, the audience is still learning about these characters' lives.

"Day 64: Experimenting in the Middle"

Once a playwright gets past the beginning of the play and all the necessary setup of the story, there is room to explore the characters' motivations, emotions, ideas, and behaviors. This can be where interesting snippets of dialogue add "texture" to the world (though it is important to make sure you do not stray too far from dialogue that moves the plot forward). Jenkins encourages writers to have fun examining their plays from different angles, not getting too tied down to one idea before trying others.

Even though I have a detailed outline for my play, I am open to tweaking it as I go. Writing the first several scenes have already shown me how easily ideas can change for the better. Dialogue I assumed would be incorporated in one scene has ended up in another spot altogether. Characters I thought would be absent at certain points became crucial elements to the plot in those locations. Being flexible with an outline is another way to add excitement and discovery to the writing process.

"Day 72: Glimpsing the End"

As a playwright approaches the end of their script, they should remind themselves why they care about the story and the characters in order to stay motivated and craft the best ending for the plot and themes. "A resolution should be aesthetically and logically satisfying." In other words, the writer must keep genre conventions in mind, as well as their characters' arcs so the ending makes sense on a literal and emotional level. Even if

the writer knows what their ending will be, they can still be flexible and tweak ideas as they go.

The ending I have in mind for my play logically makes sense as a similar ending to the original *Pride and Prejudice* while keeping my unique adaptive choices in mind. As far as making sure the ending fits on an aesthetic and emotional level, I think this is the part I will have to keep the most flexible. I find that the most prevalent themes in my writing only appear after a draft is completed. If I try to force certain themes to come through, they will come across as preachy instead of natural.

Kelley, Robert. *Pride and Prejudice: A New Musical*. Streaming Musicals, 2020, https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B08C1SWL7Q/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_d_asin_title_o00?ie=UTF8&psc=1. Accessed 10 June 2022.

This musical tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

This musical adaptation basically sticks to the exact plot of the novel while bringing out the comedic aspects in every possible situation. The music and lyrics help to

do this, such as when Caroline sings her letters to Jane in as monotone a voice as possible to convey how snobby and ingenuine she is, or when Jane and Bingley are too shy to share how smitten they are with each other in their songs. The use of narration also prompts laughter from the audience, not only because of Lizzy as the main narrator at the beginning, but because of Mary's stoic announcements of every scene change. Darcy is less serious than one might expect from his character, but in a self-aware way: his rock solos border on parody and set him apart from the others by adding elements of melodrama. The teasing flirtation between him and Lizzy is heavily emphasized; whenever Lizzy challenges him, it only makes his attraction toward her more apparent. The social commentary is obvious from the opening number, which gives a tongue-in-cheek view of marriage and pessimistically muses about whether happiness in marriage is possible. This sentiment is restated later when Lizzy chastises Mr. Collins for thinking only of how women are there to serve his own happiness, and when Mr. Bennet advises Lizzy to choose a match carefully (implying that she should not end up in an unhappy marriage like his own). The message of the opening number comes back around at the end, but with a slightly different twist, showing that marriage can take many forms and that finding love along with it *is* possible.

Kelly, Helena. *Jane Austen, the Secret Radical*. Vintage Books, 2018.

"Chapter 1"

Jane Austen (one of eight Austen children) was born on December 6, 1775 and died on July 18, 1817 of a mystery illness (she was dosed with tons of opiates because of her

pain, so it is unclear if the illness killed her or if a drug overdose did). She published four novels between 1811 and 1815: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma* (*Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published right after she died). Despite most of her novels being centered around love and marriage, Austen never married. Instead, she spent most of her adult life living with her sister Cassandra and caring for Cassandra's children. Austen's life is "elusive" and often told incorrectly. There is not a lot of firsthand information about her life available: there are many stories about her romances and broken engagements, but very little actually known about them. One *secondhand* account comes from her brother Henry, who wrote a biography about Austen. However, he lied about his sister's desire to be published, phrasing it as if she did not believe in her own work and was surprised at its success. He did all this to protect the family reputation: women were judged not just for their writing, but for their character and morals. Had Austen been thought to be ambitious about her writing, she would have been judged more harshly than if she were self-effacing. Writers publishing anything that could be viewed as a critique of England could be seen as "disloyal" (Britain was at war for almost all of Austen's life). Austen included many social and political critiques in her writing, but she had to be subtle about it. Viewing Austen's work as "just romantic" is incorrect: "If we want to be the best readers of Jane's novels that we can be, the readers that she hoped for, then we have to take her seriously" (33). In *Pride and Prejudice*, the clergyman character (Mr. Collins) is laughable, the militia is flirtatious, and Lady Catherine could be a commentary on aristocrats.

"Chapter 4"

It is unclear when Austen began or finished writing *Pride and Prejudice*: *First Impressions* may have been an early version of it, though we do not know for sure. *Pride and Prejudice* is often mistaken as a light and "fluffy" book without much substance, but it actually contains much social and political commentary. Set during wartime, the novel heavily features soldiers, who are seen as flirtatious and glamorous. This might be a commentary on government repression (Kelly argues that if Wickham turned out to be economically and sexually dangerous, it is implied that the whole militia is). Early critics complained that Austen's novels were about "commonplace people" (when many popular novels at the time were about Lords and Ladies), but part of what makes *Pride and Prejudice* revolutionary is the commonplace and radical heroine, Elizabeth. She speaks her mind, criticizes her parents, and vows to act in accordance with her happiness rather than societal expectations. In a conservative novel, Lizzy would eventually be proven wrong about Lady Catherine, but *Pride and Prejudice* portrays Lady Catherine as cold and unlikeable to the very end. Similarly, in a conservative novel, Mr. Darcy would not have to explain himself for his actions, but he does in Austen's novel: he admits his wrongdoings, listens to Lizzy (a lower-class woman), learns from her, and marries her.

Kelly's claims about Austen are mostly conjecture: she draws many conclusions about Austen's personal life and beliefs from the novels Austen wrote, making assumptions without real evidence. While I do agree that Jane Austen's work can be analyzed through progressive lenses and that *Pride and Prejudice* comments on marriage and women's autonomy, we cannot truly know what Austen herself believed. For example, when discussing *Sense and Sensibility*, Kelly argued that the novel's focus on women's helplessness in regard to family inheritance revealed that Austen had a negative relationship with her own father. An author's work of fiction is not and cannot be evidence of their personal life. What Kelly does do well is provide a historical framework through which to view *Pride and Prejudice*. Knowing the political happenings and tension of the time helps to know how readers may have interpreted the text and what criticisms the novel faced.

Langton, Simon. *Pride and Prejudice*. BBC, 1995, www.hulu.com/watch/368763f9-57a2-469d-bed3-6fde5b3b2eab. Accessed 16 June 2022.

This miniseries tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

It is difficult to point out differences of plot or character interpretation within this version, because it is so "faithful" to its source (a fact which would likely make Jane Barnette scoff!). The adaptation follows the novel closely, including just about every scene (probably thanks to the fact that a miniseries *does* give more room for minor details). Darcy is surly and aloof: throughout the entire series, he keeps a straight

face, appears to be lording over everyone else, and never smiles (until the final episode after his marriage to Lizzy). Despite his intensity, we see that it masks genuine kindness and loyalty underneath: he vehemently defends Lizzy when Caroline mocks her in the fifth episode, and he willingly admits to Bingley that he was "utterly and completely" wrong for keeping him and Jane apart. Colin Firth's portrayal of Darcy is as close to the novel's version as I have seen. Lizzy is also as witty and quietly amused as she is in the original source ("impish" is the best word I can think of to describe her). She laughs often with Charlotte and Jane about Mr. Darcy and his "intolerable" nature rather than taking great offense to his comments (until she believes that he ruined Jane's chance at marrying Mr. Bingley). Lydia frequently snorts when she laughs, reminding viewers of how young she is in comparison to her sisters. The series includes more scenes of Wickham and Lydia hiding out together, giving the opportunity to see how Wickham is clearly taking advantage of her and does not have the same feelings as she has for him; he is quick to anger with her, contrasting with Lydia's childish naivete. In this version, Mary obviously admires Mr. Collins, listening intently whenever he speaks, her body language signaling that she eagerly hopes he will pay attention to her instead of Lizzy. In fact, this adaptation does a particularly excellent job of using body language to convey the chemistry between characters: the loving smiles between Jane and Bingley, the intense eye contact between Darcy and Lizzy, and the sisterly affection of Lizzy and Jane. Other effective techniques include the use of montage to go along with Darcy's narration of his later explaining Wickham's crooked past, uncomfortably close-up shots of Lady Catherine to highlight her austerity (and ridiculousness), and frequent quips from various characters about how Mr. Darcy's wealth and luxurious estate makes him more appealing in spite of his

rudeness (matching Jane Austen's commentary about class). While all of these adaptive choices deserve praise, I still believe *Pride and Prejudice* is much more suited to a single movie, stage production, or novel versus a series. Even though this was a very detailed adaptation that took care to incorporate just about every plot point from the original source, I prefer adaptations that make conscious decisions to highlight certain aspects while ignoring others; this way, an adapter can create a version that focuses on something specific (a theme, certain characters, etc.) depending on their interpretation of what is most "important" or relevant. Watching this series felt exactly like reading the book; I did not necessarily feel that the adapters were committed to having their "own take" on the story, but wanted to perfectly replicate it instead. If replication is the goal, then this series succeeded, but to me, the most interesting adaptations are those that closely engage with source material by letting it inspire them to have new ideas.

Leonard, Robert Z. *Pride and Prejudice*. Warner Bros., 1940. *Amazon Prime Video*, https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001T9E0FW/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_d_asin_title_o00?ie=UTF8&psc=1.

This film tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

There are several plot, tone, and character differences within this adaptation that are worth mentioning. First, the time period in which the story is set is not in the regency era. The fashion looks much different, though an exact year is never stated. Wickham is

introduced from the very first ball, starting his conflict with Darcy earlier on. There is an archery scene with Darcy and Lizzy that allows for some flirtation and friendly competition, though this never happens in the book. And when Darcy tells Lizzy the truth about Wickham and his past, he does so in person (not via letter) and only does so *after* Lydia has already run away with Wickham. Beyond these plot variances, there is also a distinct comedic tone that feels lighter and fluffier from the original wit of the novel. For example, Mrs. Bennet and her daughters engage in a carriage race at the beginning of the movie, Jane and Lizzy play harps to impress Mr. Collins, Lydia calls Mr. Wickham "Wicky" after they are married, and many of the scenes end with some sort of punchline. Even Mr. Bennet has more lines that convey his obvious disdain of his daughters' "silliness" that takes away from his usual dry wit and transforms him into an exasperated sitcom father instead. All of these tonal differences removed the bulk of the social commentary and made the women seem more ridiculous. Mary was often used as a bumbling comedic device, Lady Catherine felt less intimidating and more humorous, and Lizzy had a penchant for becoming annoyed or even bursting into tears (a departure from her good-natured amusement). Darcy, on the other hand, was much more charming than most versions of his character. He was reminiscent of a classic Hollywood romantic hero (which makes sense, given that this movie was released in 1940) rather than the serious and unsociable man he was supposed to be. Overall, this is one of the more "surface level" adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Maguire, Sharon. *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Miramax, 2001, https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYQTzHgM3_4yhwgEAAAAD:type:featur

e. Accessed 8 July 2022.

This film (loosely) tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in a modernized, rom-com style.

Bridget Jones's Diary essentially takes the Wickham-Lizzy-Darcy love triangle and magnifies it to be the basis of a fun, fluffy, British rom-com. Daniel, Bridget's boss at "Pemberley Press" (a publishing company), is the George Wickham character. Mark Darcy, the only person who retains the same last name as that from the original novel, is a seemingly dull lawyer, and is yet another Darcy character played by Colin Firth. Bridget is a rough-around-the-edges, "spinster," Lizzy character: she's funny, speaks her mind, and has a habit of drinking and smoking too much. Bridget's mother and father are in a similarly unhappy marriage as Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, and when Bridget's mother tries to set her up with Darcy at a Christmas party, it ends poorly–Bridget overhears Darcy insult her, just like at the first ball in Austen's novel. This is where the movie makes a major thematic departure from the novel: Bridget vows to change the things about herself that Darcy had criticized. She tracks her progress in a diary, trying to cut back on smoking and drinking, and attempting to lose weight (revealing the absurd weight standards placed upon women in the late '90s and early 2000s as Bridget was only 136 pounds and still felt she had to lose 15-20 pounds). The plot then follows Bridget's brief romance with Daniel, who tells Bridget a lie about Darcy cheating with Daniel's fiancee (the true story is Daniel cheated with Darcy's *wife*). The relationship ends when Bridget catches Daniel cheating on her. When Darcy eventually confesses his feelings for

Bridget, she takes his speech much better than Lizzy does in the novel, mostly because he says that he likes Bridget, "just the way [she is]." Knowing that Darcy likes her as she is, "flaws" and all, is arguably the only progressive/feminist theme present in the film.

Part of why this movie feels more surface-level compared to the book is because most of the novel's subplots are cut: Jane and Bingley do not exist, nor does the plotline with Lydia and Wickham, nor Charlotte and Collins. The bond between Lizzy and Jane is one of the many ways Austen gives three-dimensionality in her female characters, showing that Lizzy prioritizes her love for her sisters over the expectations of men. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget has a group of friends that occasionally appear to offer sympathy or advice, but they do not resemble the Bennet sisters at all. By taking only the obvious romantic plotlines from *Pride and Prejudice* and updating it, the rest of the novel's depth disappears.

Nawaz, Amna, narrator. "Putting the B in LGBTQ." *1A*, NPR, 16 June 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/06/16/1007261357/putting-the-b-in-lgbtq.

More and more adults identify as LGBT, and adults identifying as bisexual are the largest LGBT population (more than half of LBGT adults consider themselves bisexual). Despite being the largest group, bisexual people often have to deal with stigma and discrimination from both within and outside the LGBT community. Numbers are not growing because more people are bisexual, necessarily: this is more so because we have new language, more people feel comfortable coming out, and the internet and social media help people to discover their identity and find community. Bisexuality means being attracted to more than one gender (both the one you identify as and others). It is *not* an exclusionary or binary label despite common misconceptions; it encompasses all gender identities. The bisexual and pansexual labels have very few, subtle differences, and most come down to personal preference or generational cultures (with older generations leaning toward "bisexual" and younger generations claiming "pansexual"). Bisexual people do not have to be attracted to all genders equally: it is not a "50-50" label, but a spectrum. There is not a lot of bisexual visibility because bisexuality is often seen as a "stepping stone" to being gay or straight. Bisexual people might simply call themselves "gay" or "queer" to avoid stigma from those in the community, or "straight" to avoid stigma from heterosexuals. There are also stereotypes that bisexual people are illegitimate, ingenuine/inauthentic, indecisive, liars, and other negative ideas. Race also impacts this conversation: black populations face even more discrimination than white ones when it comes to bisexual identity. The complexity of navigating a black identity along with a bisexual one comes with all sorts of intersectional marginalization that white bisexuals do not have to worry about. "Bisexual erasure" can occur when people dismiss bisexual identity as a way to "figure things out" on one's way to ultimately discovering they are

gay or straight. However, most people do not even assume that someone is bisexual when looking at who one dates: if a bisexual woman is with another woman, one might assume they are both lesbians, and so on. Gay and lesbian adults are far more likely to be out to most people in their lives (75%) compared to bisexual adults (19%). Bisexuals are much more afraid of not being accepted due to social stigma; they often feel that they don't quite fit in gay or straight spaces, resulting in a total lack of community and belonging. This greatly impacts mental, emotional, and even physical health. Bisexual people can struggle with "internalized biphobia"; some may be hesitant to come out or have a lot of self-doubt/hatred because of the bisexual discrimination that permates so deep within oneself. Even though bisexual visibility is insufficient, the bi community is growing fast, so there is a chance to make change.

Knowing just how much misinformation and stigma exist around bisexual identities informs my desire to enhance bi visibility through my own writing. To combat bisexual erasure, I want my bi characters to be clearly labeled as such in my play. My bisexual characters will be fully accepted without question in order to normalize this identity and show audiences that bisexuality is valid and does not have to be "proven" in any way. The need for positive representation is essential if any change is to be made within (and outside) the LGBTQ community.

Steers, Burr. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. SONY, 2016. *Amazon Prime Video,* 2 July 2022.

This film tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* . . . but with zombies.

The zombie subplots were drastically different from *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* the novel, yet, in my opinion, that only made the film worse in quality. While the novel of the same name had a tone that suggested its sci-fi twist was not intended to be taken too seriously, this film removed all elements of parody and instead turned the zombie plotlines into glorified Hollywood action. Characters wore anachronistic leather accents on their costumes, battles were extra dramatic and warlike (especially during the scene where the bridge blows up), and the female badassery was glamorized and sexy (the Bennet sisters concealed weapons beneath their dresses in a sensual montage, Lizzy's dress rips open near her breast—clearly distracting Mr. Darcy—during a duel, etc.). In this film, Charlotte is never "stricken" and turned into a zombie, which is obviously the most interesting part of Grahame-Smith's novel. The most disappointing change to the film is Darcy's character: instead of being stoic-yet-kind, he is a bloodthirsty killer. He does not just kill zombies to protect others—he strategically seeks them out and hunts them down. He kills every zombie without thought, which leads him to almost kill Bingley when Darcy mistakenly believes Bingley has been bitten. Worst of all, Darcy purposefully force feeds human brains to a group of pacifist zombies (who had been surviving off animal brains) to turn them into the murderous monsters he always suspected they were. Finally, the chemistry between Lizzy and Darcy was nonexistent. Before discovering that Wickham was secretly a zombie the entire time and had been orchestrating most of the recent attacks, Darcy seems like more of a villain. In fact, by the end of the film, Mr. Collins appears to be more endearing than either Wickham *or* Darcy. Most of the Bennets are bland and forgettable: Jane and the parents are milquetoast, Lydia lacks a personality and is used merely as a plot device, and Mary and

Kitty might as well have not been present at all for as much as they contributed to the film. While there is an increase in action and bloodshed, the characters suffered as a result. This film is an example of how a high concept adaptation can ruin the deep themes and heart of a classic novel.

Su, Bernie and Margaret Dunlap. "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." *Youtube*, 2012, www.youtube.com/user/LizzieBennet. Accessed 8 July 2022.

This web series tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in a modernized "vlog" style.

Surprisingly accurate to the original novel's plot, the YouTube vlog format provides a personal window into the characters' inner thoughts and feelings, especially Lizzie's. The premise for the video diaries is that it is one of Lizzie's class projects (she is a mass communications grad student), assisted by best friend and filmmaker Charlotte. The captions, title cards, post-production narration and effects, meta references (such as Charlotte and Lizzie's mothers becoming friends during a *Sense and Sensibility* book club) and "costume theater" (Lizzie and/or others using costume pieces and props to act out events that happened offscreen) give a heavy dose of humor alongside the heart. Occasionally, Charlotte pops out from behind the camera to provide words of wisdom or correct info, especially when she believes that Lizzie is giving a biased account of the story. While sarcastic, kind, and generally good-natured, Lizzie herself admits that she may be a little too involved in other people's business (especially when it comes to her

sisters). The series also includes racial diversity, turning Bingley into "Bing Lee," an Asian-American, rich, Harvard medical student and new neighbor to the Bennets. This wealth and status is topped only by William Darcy, heir to entertainment empire "Pemberley Digital." Other clever character adaptations worth mentioning are Mary (the Bennet sisters' cousin who appears in one episode when she, dressed in all black, hides from Lydia's rager of a twenty-first birthday party), Kitty (Lydia's cat, actually named Kitty), Ricky Collins (an annoying childhood friend of Lizzie and Charlotte's who works for venture capitalist Catherine de Bourgh), Anne (Catherine de Bourgh's strange and spoiled dog), Gigi (aka Georgiana, Darcy's sister and a graphic designer at Pemberley Digital), and Wickham (a swimmer instead of a soldier, total flirt, and a show-off in front of the camera). However, it is the way the sisters' relationships are depicted onscreen that makes this series as successful as it is.

At first glance, Lydia is portrayed exactly as you would expect her to be: boy-crazy, constantly in trouble, bursting with typical youngest sister energy, and a huge fan of the camera (so much so that she starts her own vlog series since Lizzie's is too "boring"). Lizzie finds Lydia (and having to keep an eye on her) exhausting and does not understand her. When Wickham posts a countdown online for the release of his sex tape with Lydia, Lizzie assumes it is a publicity stunt that Lydia naively agreed to. In fact, Lydia was blindsided by Wickham's actions, and we see her for what she is: a victim desperate to be loved. Constantly overshadowed by her older, responsible, talented sisters, Lydia is eager to latch on to Wickham as someone who seemingly cares about her. Episode 87 is one of the most heartfelt and gut-wrenching episodes of the series because of the brilliant way it

shows how easy it is for women to blame themselves for the bad things men do to them. Lydia believes it is her fault for getting into this mess because Wickham claimed that she did not love him as much as he loved her, so she needed to prove her love by letting him film them having sex–so she agreed. Lizzie reassures her that she did not deserve what happened to her and that what happened was on Wickham and Wickham alone. Lydia breaks down in her sister's arms, crying, "I thought I was good enough for somebody" and, "Why didn't he love me, Lizzie?" This heartbreaking moment reveals a deeper, more wounded side of Lydia that we rarely see in *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations, but it fits perfectly in this modernized context. Not only do Lydia and Lizzie end up having a healed and more mature relationship, but the story comments on the complexities and tragedies of how men take advantage of women while still convincing others that the *women* were the ones at fault.

Taylor, Bernard J. *Pride and Prejudice: A Musical Adaptation*. Stagescripts Ltd, 1994, issuu.com/stagescripts/docs/sa-0152_pride_and_prejudice_a4__rev_c_. Accessed 9 June 2022.

This musical tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

While I wish I had recordings of the music to get a better sense of the tone, the way lyrics

were used within the adaptation was interesting to analyze. For example, Wickham's solo ("I Long to Know You") is full of flattery, Darcy's ("Isn't It Strange") is more serious (with lyrics like "It's not a proper situation, / For one who disapproves, of such absurdity"), and Caroline's ("They're All So Common") shows off her snobbery with words like "disabusing" and "frivolity." Some of the songs helped to reveal what we could already suspect about the characters from the novel, but the lyrics just confirmed it, such as the fact that Mr. Bennet's favorite daughter is Lizzy (as seen in his song "How I Miss Her"). It is also telling that Wickham sings a reprise to Lydia of the exact same song he sung to Lizzy, which proves just how fickle and conniving he is when it comes to wooing women. The use of an ensemble lets background characters have a voice for the first time, like the servants in "At the Ball Tonight" and "Mr. Darcy," or the upper and lower classes in "An Hour in Church." One thing I found strange was the fact that Jane had three solos in the first act alone, clearly establishing her as one of the main characters, while Lizzy only had one. Lizzy did sing in other songs, but only having one solo is atypical of most musical protagonists. Because the majority of the story *is* focused on Lizzy as the main character, the song ratio does not line up with the rest of the script.

Tomalin, Claire. *Jane Austen: A Life*. Vintage Books, 1999.

It is hard to know many details about Jane Austen's life: most of her letters were destroyed, very little is written about her, and most people who knew her claimed her life was "uneventful." Tomalin's biography is made up of lots of stories about Jane's relatives, close and distant, but stories about Jane herself only fill about half the book. Research about Jane's history has to be pieced together since most of Jane's own letters were destroyed by her sister Cassandra after Jane's death. This means that information about things like Jane's personal beliefs and politics are unknown. There are even contrasting views about what Jane looked like, especially since she never had a formal portrait of herself done, though we do know that Jane did not concern herself much with hair or fashion. Jane is one of eight children and many, many cousins. She grew up in an all boys' school her parents ran, which may have been why she is described as a "tough and unsentimental child, drawn to rude, anarchic imaginings and black jokes" (33). From a young age, Jane liked to write plays and stories of "farce, burlesque and self-mockery, [and] moral anarchy, bursting with [...] life and energy" to that of bland, sentimental morals (48). This hobby was probably encouraged by the fact that Mr. Austen always let Jane read whatever she pleased. Jane's ability to write engaging stories and plays were enjoyed by her family (she always tested her dialogue and early drafts by reading them out loud to her family), but it was not a skill seen as a conventional "young ladies' accomplishment." Jane was also not as "socially refined" as most people of her day would expect her to be (she was often described as being "too clever") and was generally unimpressed with those of the wealthy upper class. Most firsthand accounts of Jane's life come from her letters to Cassandra that did survive. Despite being compared as not as pretty or "sensible" as Cassandra, Jane was close with her older sister. It was in these

letters to Cassandra that Jane frequently mentioned her Irishman friend, Tom Lefroy, who was perhaps the only man Jane ever truly loved. Tom and Jane went to many balls together, flirted, and talked candidly about socially "improper" topics, such as books they both enjoyed that contained sexual content. Jane was in love with Tom for years, but he eventually had to return to Ireland to provide for his family, so nothing serious ever happened between them, let alone an engagement. After Tom moved away, people tried to matchmake on Jane's behalf, but none of the men ever charmed her. When Jane and Cassandra visited old childhood friends, they reconnected with said friends' brother, Harris Bigg. Whether or not Harris was in love with Jane, he still thought her to be a good option for a wife, so he proposed. Jane accepted that night, but the next morning she broke off the engagement, telling him she had made a mistake as "esteem and respect" were not enough to make a good marriage–it would not be fair to either of them. From then on, Jane showed no signs of ever marrying, and after Cassandra's fiance died, Cassandra joined her sister in spinsterhood, despite the women's relatively young ages and their mother's wish that they both marry. When Jane's father died, the Austen women were left almost penniless, as well as completely dependent on Jane's brothers. Jane spent much of her time caring for nieces and nephews, and she and Cassandra relied on each other for companionship, even sharing a room as adults in the family home.

One remarkable aspect of Jane's writing career is that there were huge gaps of time between Jane drafting her novels and actually publishing them. In fact, when Jane was twenty-five, she began a ten-year period of not writing anything; no evidence exists as to why. The same year when Cassandra's fiance died and Jane was attempting to push aside

her feelings for Tom Lefroy, Jane turned to writing as an escape. Her writing was appreciated by her family, especially her father, who loved *First Impressions* (the early draft of *Pride and Prejudice*). He tried himself to get it published, keeping Jane's identity as the author a secret, but it was rejected. Jane's secret author identity continued when *Sense and Sensibility* was published; as thrilled as she was, she was also scared at what the public response would be, and only her closest friends and family knew that she was the author. However, *Sense and Sensibility* was a huge success: she sold out the first round of printing and made a significant profit, especially for an unmarried woman of that time. Jane's publisher bought the copyright to *Pride and Prejudice* soon after and widely advertised it as being by the same author of *Sense and Sensibility*. *Pride and Prejudice* was even more popular with the public as people loved Lizzy Bennet and the witty dialogue. One literary critic remarked that the novel was "much too clever to be the work of a woman" (221). When Jane found out the prince of England was a fan of her work, she had an audience with him and dedicated *Emma* to him. While working on *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*, Jane began to feel ill, but didn't complain or think much of it. She got really sick in 1817 and died at the age of forty-one in Cassandra's arms. *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published posthumously and did well, providing Cassandra with a little money. Jane's legacy lives on today, especially as one of the few great classic writers acclaimed both within academia and outside of academic culture.

What is known about Jane's life is fascinating, but I still have so many questions about the mysterious gaps we will never be able to fill. It is interesting that a woman who never

married (even though she was engaged for one night) wrote books that are so well-known for their themes and commentary on marriage. Considering how progressive her books were for the time, it makes me wonder how strong her political values were. It is incredible that woman who did not rely on a marriage to support her was able to be so successful as a writer and make a good sum of money for herself. I am also curious how much of Jane's own life inspired her stories and whether any of her characters were based on her family members. Jane's close relationship with Cassandra (an older sister described as being prettier and more sensible than Jane) could be seen as a parallel to Elizabeth and Jane in *Pride and Prejudice*. Not having more writing from Jane Austen herself, we will likely never know. Finally, I was intrigued by the fact that Jane wrote plays as a child, and that *Pride and Prejudice* was initially praised for its witty dialogue. This, alongside the fact that Jane would test early drafts by reading them aloud to her family, proves how perfectly Jane's writing translates to the stage. It is no wonder why so many film and theatrical adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* exist.

Weiss, George, et al. *First Impressions: A Musical Comedy*. New York, S. French, 1962.

This musical tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

In terms of plot differences, this adaptation reminded me of the 1940 film.
In fact, there were moments of dialogue that were word-for-word the same as that film (such as Mrs. Bennet's dialogue in Act 1, scene 3: "Kitty, your dress is too decollete. Pull it up a little. Lydia, there is perspiration on your nose. Don't get so hot. It's very

unladylike. And Jane–[...]of course, you're quite perfect my dear." etc.), even though that dialogue never appeared in the original novel. There is even a scene in which Lizzy runs away from Mr. Collins at a party and joins Darcy in a game of archery, just as in the 1940 Film. Other plot differences unique to this adaptation include Mr. Collins' arrival at the Bennets' house occurring at the same time Jane leaves for Netherfield, Mr. Collins proposing *twice* to Elizabeth before her mother intervenes in an attempt to get her to accept, an additional scene that shows Mr. Wickham and Lydia clearly together and planning to run away, and Lady Catherine revealing that Mr. Darcy was the one responsible for Wickham and Lydia marrying. Despite all of these changes, the difference that stood out to me the most was how much the story centered Mrs. Bennet and her dreams in comparison to her daughters. In this adaptation, Mrs. Bennet appears to be elevated to the same level of importance as Jane and Elizabeth: Mrs. Bennet has several songs to herself, including the opening number ("Five Daughters") in which she laments the fact that she never had a son, and the song "As Long as There's a Mother," which sets her up as an orchestrator of events (the song is revisited as a reprise at the end of Act 1, which makes Mrs. Bennet the main focus before intermission). Her solo in Act 2 –"A House in Town"–could be considered an "I want" song, a type of song usually only given to musical protagonists. Mrs. Bennet is also present in more scenes in which she is typically absent in most adaptations–she joins Lizzy when traveling to meet Lady Catherine for the first time, and Mrs. Bennet is ultimately the one who convinces Lizzy to go back to Mr. Darcy and accept his proposal. The story ends with the main couples reuniting, but the last lines are not about them, but rather about Mrs. Bennet's dream finally coming true thanks to Mr. Darcy gifting her her "house in town." All of these

details solidify Mrs. Bennet's main role. On a smaller note, despite this adaptation being a musical, much of the songs are barely sung–instead, the actors "talk sing," or speak in rhythm, which causes the music to fall flat, in my opinion, and negates the purpose of inserting songs into the story at all.

Wright, Joe. *Pride and Prejudice*. Universal Pictures, 2005. *YouTube*, 5 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk0S31vfcd4.

This film tells the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

This adaptation has a strong focus on romance (both in terms of the literal love between the characters and in general tone). Jane and Bingley represent a "love at first sight" sort of fairytale couple, characterized by innocence and affection. Darcy and Lizzy are more of an "enemies-to-lovers" trope, with their relationship built upon witty banter, smart quips, and deeply intelligent conversations. Neither relationship is more "right" than the other, rather it shows the many forms love can take, and how the "perfect" person for one may not be the perfect match for another. Lizzy and Darcy's many discussions together show how the two of them are attracted to each other's minds in addition to each other's beauty. Even in her speech to Mr. Bennet at the end when she divulges that she loves Mr. Darcy, Lizzy expands on this by saying, "He and I are so similar. We're both so stubborn." Apart from romantic attraction, there are also lots of romantic effects throughout the film, such as the soft golden lighting that appears throughout, the whimsical piano music that scores the more introspective scenes, and the cinematically passionate ending when Darcy and Lizzy finally share their on-screen kiss. The ball scenes in particular are upbeat, full of life and laughter, revealed character dynamics, and is almost always the setting for which new love is sparked. There is a lot of movement (shown with long, fluid camera shots to exhibit the whirling action and confusion), though movement is not quite as lively as the Bennet house (which is shown to be more noisy in a "commoner" way, with farm animals highlighting the chaos and their class). Even Lizzy agrees that balls are romantic; when Mr. Darcy asks her the genuine question, "So what do you recommend to encourage affection?" Lizzy responds teasingly, "Dancing. Even if one's partner is 'barely tolerable'" (revealing that she overheard his disparaging remarks about her, though her character is mostly amused and unbothered by

such comments, unless the insults are truly egregious). This blunder from Darcy is the first time we get the sense that his character does not understand common manners in the same way others in that society do. In fact, the way Darcy is portrayed in this film is particularly interesting because while he is the dark and serious, brutally honest, stoic romantic lead everyone comes to expect, there is something more clueless and endearing about him. One could argue that the way in which he interprets social cues is evidence of neurodivergence: he often asks for clarification from others or for them to plainly state what they mean, he is frequently misunderstood by others because he does not behave in the same way they do, and he is not at all what he seems on the surface. He is sincere, kind, and loyal (to Bingley, to his sister, to Lizzy), he just does not always know how to navigate social waters without explaining himself clearly. But by the end of the film, Darcy's inability to conform to social norms is not what is criticized, but the other characters' assumptions about him. Lizzy tells Mr. Bennet, "We misjudged him, Papa, me more than anyone, in every way."

Another important observation about this adaptation is the way the camera angles enhance some of the main themes of the story. Throughout the film, there are many shots from wide-open spaces into enclosed ones or vice versa. For example, the opening shot is of an expansive landscape where Lizzy is reading a book, but the next shot switches into one of a narrow, constricting hallway leading into the Bennet house. At Rosings, Lizzy looks through a birdcage. When the Bingleys leave Netherfield, we see the doors close up close. There are many shots of people through window grids. All of these angles, and more, could symbolize how trapped the women are in this time because of their dependance on marriage (and marriage to the right person) in order to have opportunities in life. We see this desperation for the women to get married with Mrs. Bennet's overeager demeanor, which is mostly seen as comedic and over-the-top, but there is a genuine fear for her daughters' well-being. When Lizzy asks, "Is [marriage] all you think about?" Mrs. Bennet responds, "When you have five daughters, Lizzy, tell me what else will occupy your thoughts and then perhaps you will understand."