Peripheral Phenomena: The Colliding Evolution of Darcy and Dracula

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Abstract
In this study, I examine aspects of Jane Austen, vampire fiction, and contemporary culture through the lens of vampire adaptations of Austen's work. Although a study of vampire fiction may seem peripheral to any serious study of Austen's novels, I contend that studying those adaptations is central to understanding Austen in modern culture, as her work is recycled and reapportioned. Vampire fiction's success in today's marketplace and the prevalence of modern vampire adaptions of Austen's work can reveal much about how the two disjointed parties have been united, and what it says about our culture, which so eagerly consumes them together.

Disciplines
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Peripheral Phenomena:  
The Colliding Evolution of Darcy and Dracula  

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In 2009, Harper Collins’ subsidiary, Harper Teen, re-released three classics, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Pride and Prejudice*, bound in covers unabashedly modeled on the iconic black, white, and red covers of Stephenie Meyer’s best selling *Twilight* series (above), overtly establishing a connection between these classics and the contemporary vampire stories. The relation between *Wuthering Heights* and *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Twilight* series is not so far fetched despite their different standing in the academy: all three of these stories are overtly about lovers who desperately pine, suffer, and die for their loves. And Meyer’s characters cite passages from both *Wuthering Heights* and *Romeo and Juliet* to justify their actions. Austen’s
polite comedy of manners, however, is not gothic, and does not involve elements of the supernatural. Her lovers do not engage in suicide death packs or lust over each other’s corpses. Thus, *Pride and Prejudice* intuitively seems the most out of place in this group. Perhaps even more surprisingly, Meyer has explicitly stated that *Pride and Prejudice* was her inspiration for *Twilight*.\(^1\) But how does Austen’s refined romance relate to a story of angst, blood lust, and teenage vampire love?

Various bloggers and Austen fans insist that Harper Teen manufactured the relationship in an attempt to connect *Pride and Prejudice* with the wildly popular vampire phenomenon and thus sell more books.\(^2\) And they are right to notice the current commercial viability of vampires. Not only is the vampire genre popular, it also enormously impacts contemporary culture and the market place from the publishing industry (*the Twilight* books have sold well over 125 million copies worldwide while Anne Rice’s vampire books have sold nearly 100 million copies); to television (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* enjoyed enormous popularity and *The Vampire Diaries* rakes in millions of viewers every week); to film (*the Twilight* movies alone have made over two billion dollars world-wide).

But these bloggers and Austen fans fail to recognize that *Pride and Prejudice* has inspired a phenomenon all its own, and would not necessarily need that connection to sell. Never out of print, Austen’s novels have always been popular, but the last two decades have seen an explosion of Austen adaptations. Like the vampire phenomenon,

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the *Pride and Prejudice* phenomenon has permeated contemporary culture, and every part of the market place ranging from films (such as, *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), the modernized *Bridget Jones Diary* (2001) and the re-contextualized *Bride and Prejudice* (2004)) to television (such as the BBC mini-series *Pride and Prejudice* (1995)) or to fashion (such as the Kate Spade *Pride and Prejudice* clutch) and indeed, back to literature. Countless recently published books extend the characters and world of *Pride and Prejudice* beyond Austen’s original pages; the incomplete list on the Austen fan site the “Republic of Pemberley” cites over 200 print adaptations and sequels. And interestingly, some of these print adaptations and sequels connect the Austen phenomenon directly with the vampire phenomenon; they are both Austen adaptations and vampire fiction. These vampire/Austen books include *Vampire Darcy’s Desire: A Pride and Prejudice Adaptation* (also known as *Darcy’s Hunger*); *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre*; *Mr. Darcy’s Bite; Pulse and Prejudice; Pride and Prejudice’s Vampires*; and *Mr. Darcy Bites Back*. The existence of these adaptions perhaps suggests a more substantial relationship between these two phenomena.

It is important to recognize that though both the *Pride and Prejudice* and the vampire phenomena are important to this cultural moment, neither is specific to it. Austen’s family members began publishing endings to her unfinished work by the mid-nineteenth century, and Rudyard Kipling’s 1924 WWI short story “The Janeites” invented the name for Jane Austen fans, and bears witness her intense cult following. Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel *Dracula* stoked a vampire craze all over the world—though vampires had existed in folklore for hundreds of years before that—and films, books, and later, television have explored the monster ever since.
However, the collision of these two phenomena is a product of this cultural moment. In this moment, both vampire fiction and *Pride and Prejudice* have come to be understood as primarily appealing to women, and are located under the umbrella of the “romance” genre. A sexual appeal has been attached to the suffering that both the noble vampire and Darcy undergo for their loves. The changing popular conceptions of the vampire figure and of Darcy have come to align, thus making the vampire a viable vehicle for Austen’s male heroes.

This evolution is not difficult to understand in the case of the vampire hero, who can be seen as evolving from an aggressive, sadistic character (or a kind of projection of the male psyche) to a romantic, masochistic figure (or the hero that fulfills a female fantasy). Vampires have cropped up in folklore and literature for hundreds of years and many scholars understand them to be more of an idea than a definitive character; Milly Williamson notes that critics often say, “we conjure the vampires that we want or need for the cultural and historical times that we find ourselves in.”³ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen likewise maintains that monsters in general are necessarily the product of the culture that produced them.⁴ However, Williamson notes “Dracula (both Bram Stoker’s novel and the many screen adaptations) has dominated critical interpretations of the vampire.”⁵ William Hughes agrees, calling *Dracula* the critical “arbitrary high point in the alleged evolution of vampirism in literature.”⁶ Williamson asserts that even critics who acknowledge Dracula was not the first vampire insist, “It is largely to Stoker that we owe

⁶ Ibid.
the popular image of the suave, opera-cloaked bloodsucker now so familiar in films and television."

To the extent that Dracula has been designated as the “original” vampire in popular western culture, the original vampire can be seen as embodying a male fantasy. Williamson sums up the body of criticism on Dracula, saying “numerous interpretations of the novel explain that it raises male (heterosexual) fears in order to ease them.” This understanding came out of Freudian psychoanalysis, and was first voiced by Ernest Jones who insisted the vampire was a product of the “Oedipus Complex” and was the physical embodiment of raw, taboo desire. James B. Twitchell agrees with this reading and takes it a step further. He suggests that Dracula offers the male adolescent two type of aggressive and sadistic identificatory pleasures; the sexual gratification of watching “the older man defile the virgin” while simultaneously identifying with the “youthful throng” which seeks to kill the vampire. According to Williamson, Twitchell clearly articulates that, “the vampire is the projection of self for the male, while the victim is the projection of self for the female.” He, along with the other Freudian critics, thus insists that (via Dracula) the original form of the vampire personifies sadistic male fantasy, and the vampire originally became popular because male readers wanted to engage in this fantasy. Though in recent years, feminist critics have attempted to revise this view of Dracula, and suggest alternative understandings of the vampire/victim relationship, Nina

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid, 7.
11 Ibid.
Auerbach sums up critical opinion saying, “the best-known experts on American popular horror insist that it is and always has been a boy’s game.”

Thus if Dracula is understood as the original defining vampire in western popular culture, the male vampire had a long way to travel from a symbol of male sadism and sexual desire to a romantic hero, and an object of female lust. The vampire in romance novels and chick flics today is called the “sympathetic vampire,” and is defined as a vampire who views his vampirism as a curse, and desperately tries to regain his humanity. Critics disagree about when the sympathetic vampire first appeared in popular culture. Many critics consider Ann Rice’s Vampire Chronicles as beginning a sympathetic shift in the public understanding of the vampire. However, even before Ann Rice released the first book in her series, Alan Silver and James Ursini wrote on sympathetic male vampires whose roots are in Lord Ruthven from “The Vampyre” and Varney from “Varney the Vampire”—both of which significantly predate Dracula. Williamson maintains that the sympathetic vampire is not “a late twentieth century phenomenon, it is an incarnation of this figure that goes back two hundred years to Lord Byron.” Tim Kane dates the sympathetic vampire in its contemporary form to 1987, suggesting it became popularized with the release of The Lost Boys. Thus there is no critical consensus on where the sympathetic vampire originates, and how—or even if—the sympathetic vampire evolved from the sadistic male fantasy of Dracula.

14 Ibid.
there is no question that the sympathetic vampire is the dominant vampire in popular American culture, today.\textsuperscript{16}

This characterization of the sympathetic vampire has is viewed as deeply romantic by a female audience. Williamson interviewed a number of different women about their attraction to various sympathetic vampires, and all of them maintained that they found the soulful struggle very attractive. One woman, Daine said, “the vampire type that I like is the romantic type… you know, he was a soulful creature.”\textsuperscript{17} Another woman, Melinda, agreed, saying the sympathetic showed romance to be “something that stirs the passions of the soul.”\textsuperscript{18} These struggle as an indication of the vampire’s passion. One fan, Pam, explains that she loves the sympathetic vampire because he is conflicted; “He wasn’t just evil, he was so emotional he loved [his heroine] with such passion.”\textsuperscript{19} The fact that the vampire has to fight to be good makes his goodness all the more valuable. His inner battle indicates the depth of his soul, and thus his desirability.

As these women are attracted to the tortured sympathetic vampire, the sadistic, non-sympathetic vampire in the original Dracula repulses them. Melinda said simply, “he’s a monster.”\textsuperscript{20} Andrea built on that assertion, saying, “Dracula is just mean and nasty… I really don’t think that that’s a true portrait. That’s not really what a vampire is like.”\textsuperscript{21} Neither of these women like the inherent power, or the sadism, displayed by the original Dracula—they are interested in seeing their vampire nobly suffer not evilly dominate. Perhaps most interesting is Andea’s contention that Dracula is not a “real”

\textsuperscript{17} Milly Williamson, \textit{The Lure of the Vampire}, 57.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 58.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 61.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 59.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
vampire, when scholars have predominately used Dracula to define vampires. This further suggests that the vampire is a cultural construct, not a definitive character; the definition of the “true” vampire has changed—Dracula does not follow the conventions of the vampires pervasively portrayed in current media, so to her, Dracula is not a true vampire. Thus the vampire’s movement into the “romance” genre is a result of its changing into a brooding, tortured figure.

Perhaps nothing has more clearly defines vampires in this cultural moment than Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* book series, and the films it has inspired. As mentioned earlier, the series has sold over 125 million copies and the five-movie series has grossed over two billion dollars worldwide. Silver and Ursini insist it is imperative that one not “underestimate the influence” of Meyer’s books; for they have defined vampires for “a new younger generation… in a way unequaled in the past.”22 *Twilight*’s unparalleled commercial success spawned a phenomenon and has accrued millions of rabid fans, who call themselves “twihards.” *Twilight* has become so culturally dominant it even inspired the feature film “Vampires Suck,” a movie essentially entirely devoted to satirizing *Twilight*. *Twilight*’s hero, Edward Cullen, is a sympathetic vampire who takes noble suffering to new levels.

Edward bitterly struggles with his vampirism, and will avoid taking human life at all costs—he sates himself on animal blood. He falls madly in love with his heroine, Bella, but also finds himself incredibly attracted to her blood. He cannot be around Bella without experiencing physical pain. He wars with his love, his reason, and his bloodlust and ultimate gives in to his emotional love, while attempting to keep his animalistic

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22 Alan Silver and James Ursini, *The Vampire Film* (Milwaukee: Hap Leonard Cooperation, 2010), 302.
vampirism in check. All the while, he desperately wishes he could become human for Bella, and tries to be as human for her as he can; insisting on taking her to the prom and marrying her in a proper human wedding.

Throughout the series, Edward suffers passionately for Bella. Despite the dangerous nature of their relationship, Edward says he is completely dependent on Bella, repeatedly telling her, “you are my life,” and “I couldn’t live with myself if I ever hurt you. You don’t know how it’s tortured me.” Edward goes into dramatic emotional fits whenever his love is in danger; he theatrically attempts to commit suicide when he mistakenly believes Bella to be dead. He also must surrender to his emotions, and abandon his reason in order to be with Bella; he tells Bella it is not “prudent” for him to be around her, yet he confesses, “I’m tired of trying to stay away from you, Bella.”

Edward’s full body responds every time he touches Bella; the contact makes him all the more tempted by her blood, and thus he must doubly prove his love for with every touch, as his struggle to save her from himself intensifies. Edward’s vampirism—much like the vampirism in all sympathetic vampires—affords him the opportunity to fight for his love, and therefore allows him to prove it more thoroughly.

Despite Edward’s constant suffering, many critics see Edward as aggressive and powerful, while classifying Bella as weak and helpless. Jeffrey Weinstok paints Edward as “hyper-masculine,” and the epitome of the man who woos, protects, and has dominion over his woman. Anna Silver maintains that “Edward makes important decisions, and

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Bella… almost inevitably submits.”\textsuperscript{26} Frann Michel agrees, seeing Bella as the submissive, masochistic partner while classifying Edward as the dominant, sadistic partner.\textsuperscript{27} Thus many critics see the power dynamic in \textit{Twilight} as mirroring the power dynamic in \textit{Dracula}; the active man dominating the submissive woman, yet only now they suggest this is a female fantasy.

But these critics ignore Edward’s status as a sympathetic vampire, which alters that power dynamic; though he does dominate Bella physically in some ways, Edward is still the one that undergoes pain on a regular basis; just to touch Bella burns him, and Bella often notes Edward’s “agonized eyes.”\textsuperscript{28} Edward notes this odd reversal, saying of himself and Bella, “and so the lion fell in love with the lamb… what a masochistic lion.”\textsuperscript{29} Here Edward notes his inherent physical power and natural domination of the situation, but suggests that his love has inverted that power. Edward sees himself as at the mercy of his love more than she is at the mercy of his physical reality. Thus Edward believes he is primarily vulnerable to Bella, and the pain he must undergo to be with her. And the fact that Edward uses this masochism to prove his love to Bella signals Bella’s sadistic impulses. If proof of love involves pain, then one that hungeres for that love must hunger for pain. Thus Bella craves Edward’s pain, as it is inextricably connected to his love. Therefore, we can see the vampire hero evolving from a sadistic character that gives vicarious pleasure to men, to a masochistic projected fantasy that satisfies sadistic female impulses.

\textsuperscript{28} Stephenie Meyer, \textit{Twilight}, 273.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 274.
As the popular conception has shifted the vampire into a figure amenable to the romance genre, so too has it re-classified *Pride and Prejudice* a romance novel, and Darcy as a romance hero. Some scholars argue that the original text of *Pride and Prejudice* can be seen as a romance novel in the modern sense, and thus contend Darcy was always compatible with romance novel heroes, vampiric or otherwise. They project backwards from our cultural moment, maintaining that Austen’s novel in some way anticipated the romance novels we have now. Sarah S. G. Frantz sees Austen as “the fountainhead of all romance novels,” contending “Austen’s novels epitomize the structure and conventions of the romance genre and Austen’s characters are ideal heroes and heroines of popular romance fiction.”\(^3\)\(^0\) E. J. Clery agrees, likewise asserting, “Austen is the founder of the modern romance narrative.”\(^3\)\(^1\) The Romance Writer’s of America define a “romance novel” as adhering to two central conventions; “the main plot centers around individuals falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work… the love story is the main focus of the novel,” and, the lovers who risk and struggle for each other and their relationship are rewarded with emotional justice and unconditional love.”\(^3\)\(^2\) To understand *Pride and Prejudice* as a romance in this narrow way, we must consider it to be, first and foremost the story of Elizabeth and Darcy, and their tale must be seen as one of risk and struggle.

Critics who classify *Pride and Prejudice* as a romance novel examine the tension between Elizabeth and Darcy’s perspectives. Clery points out that romance novels are

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usually told from the female perspective, and insists the correlation between the romance novel and *Pride and Prejudice* has to do with the power accrued by “keeping the hero’s point of view in reserve.” Harriet Margolis also thinks the female character’s perspective—and the lack of the male character’s perspective—is important in both romance novels and *Pride and Prejudice*, she argues the association between the two has to do with “gender, power, relations, all perceived from a female point of view.” Frantz sees the connection in that both Austen’s heroes and romance novel heroes most overcome their “hyper-masculinity” to admit their feelings for the heroine. She particularly focuses on the emotional outpourings which both Darcy and romance novel heroes display in order to prove that they are worthy of their heroines. She argues, “the proof of the power and appeal of the hero’s confession, and of Austen’s genius in creating it in the first place, can be found in the modern romance reader’s continued desire for similar masculine confession and emotion in modern romance heroes.” Thus both Clery and Frantz suggest that the tension in a romance novel and *Pride and Prejudice* comes from the emotions of the male hero, and the resolution involves those feelings finally bursting from him. According to Frantz’s, Clery’s, and Margolis’ reading of *Pride and Prejudice* as aligning with the modern romance novel romance Darcy is understood as a highly passionate, tortured soul, and his emotional struggle as the central thrust of the book.

Though these critics are right that much of the tension in *Pride and Prejudice*—insofar as it is viewed as a modern romance novel—comes out of Darcy’s perceived

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34 Ibid.  
36 Ibid.
emotional struggle, it must be acknowledged that there are many other aspects to *Pride and Prejudice* besides Darcy’s emotions and his relationship with Elizabeth. These discussions, perhaps, put too much of an emphasis on the main characters and the plot line as it pertains to them. They ignore the novel’s descriptive language, the rhythms of its dialogue, its political satire and social commentary, the importance of so called “minor” characters, and other major features of Austen’s work which don’t align well with “romance.” For this reason, other critics find the notion that Austen’s work inspired—or is in any way compatible with—the romance novel laughable. As Deborah Kaplan puts it, “Jane Austen as one of the mothers of the Harlequin or Silhouette novel? This genealogy should amuse many of Austen’s admirers who know her novels to be much more culturally and linguistically complex than mass market romance.”

Kaplan, and critics like her, see many elements in Austen’s work and reject the idea that the idealized eros of romance novels is an important one. Thus these scholars bemoan what Kaplan calls the recent “harlequinization” of Austen in modern adaptations, where sexual desire becomes the driving engine of the work, because they claim these adaptations constitute a fundamental misunderstanding of Austen. They contend the novel is not about Darcy’s pent up desire and ultimate satisfaction, so much as it is a societal critique, a comedy of manners, and a fundamental exploration of human nature.

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38 Ibid.
Harriet Margolis suggests critics can only admonish this “harlequinization” if “the adaptations have in some way betrayed Austen’s intentions.”\textsuperscript{39} Margolis further suggest that scholars who quickly dismiss any relation between romance novels and Austen’s novels do so to protect their ideas about high and low culture. But Austen’s intentions do seem to be somewhat at odds with the intention of the romance novel. Margolis’ connection of “gender, power, relations all perceived from the female point of view” is not limited enough in its scope. Many books exist that confront gender, power, and relations from a woman’s point of view; most books from a woman’s point of view deal with those issues. Romance novels are defined, rather, as pertaining primarily to a couples struggle for love, and Margolis’ association seems only tangentially related to that definition.

Clery’s claim that the romance novel keeps the perspective of the hero in reserve—and that this constitutes Austen’s contribution to the genre—proves to be false. The narrator relates Darcy’s thoughts—especially on Elizabeth—with some regularly. Long before Elizabeth is aware of Darcy’s feelings, we are told that, “Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by [Elizabeth]. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger.”\textsuperscript{40} We also hear Darcy’s thoughts when he is informed that Elizabeth will be leaving Netherfield soon; “To Mr. Darcy it was welcome intelligence—Elizabeth had been at Netherfield long enough, she attracted him more than he liked.”\textsuperscript{41} Later in the book, when Darcy when Darcy is at Pemberley and Miss Bingley mocks Elizabeth’s reputation as a beauty we are


\textsuperscript{40} Jane Austen, \textit{Pride and Prejudice} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 44.
told that Darcy lashes back at her because he “could contain himself no longer.”42 Though it is true that Austen withholds Darcy’s thoughts at certain, tantalizing moments—such as the first time Elizabeth sees him after she angrily rejected his proposal—we get as much of a glimpse of Darcy’s thoughts as we do for any of character’s besides Elizabeth, herself. Finally, Frantz’s notion that Austen’s heroes must prove their love with emotional outpourings, as romance heroes do, is particularly problematic given the context of *Pride and Prejudice*’s release.

In the mid eighteenth-century there was a movement called the “cult of sensibility,” which constructed a very emotional character who seems in many ways analogous to both the romance heroes Frantz describes and imagines Darcy to be and the modern vampire hero. Mary Wollstonecraft suggested sensibility was “the result of acute senses, finely-fashioned nerves, which vibrate at the slightest touch, and convey such clear intelligence to the brain, that it does not require to be arranged by the judgment.”43 This quality is exemplified in the sympathetic vampire, as Edward cannot touch Bella without experiencing acute pain and longing. The “man of feeling” (a phrase popularized by Henry Mackenzie’s quintessentially “sensible” novel, *Man of Feeling*), would ultimately follow his heart instead of his head and would enact his passions surprisingly strongly at moments when they were tested. Again, the sympathetic vampire displays this quality as Edward chooses to be with Bella even though he knows it’s wrong. Marvin Mudrick writes, “At moments of crisis, a character [of sensibility] exhibits the proper degree of sensibility by weeping, or swooning, or going off into fainting-fits, or

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42 Ibid, 204.
running mad, or even dying.” Edward shows this aspect of the man of feeling, too when he attempts to commit suicide upon hearing of Bella’s alleged death. Thus the emotional temperament of the man of feeling seems to align both with the contemporary vampire hero and the Darcy which Frantz claims to see in the original text.

However, from her earliest juvenilia to her last work, Austen showed what Inger Sigrun Brodey called a “satirical contempt for sensibility's decadent excesses.” When she was young, Austen wrote both Love and Friendship and Laura and Augustus, which were ostensibly parodies that mocked the cult of sensibility. She pokes fun at the narcissism that comes out of an over absorption with one's passions and feelings. In Love and Friendship, Laura hilariously claims, “A sensibility too tremblingly alive to every affliction of my Friends, my Acquaintance and particularly to every affliction of my own, was my only fault, if a fault it could be called.” Laura’s obsession with her own sensitivity has caused her to ironically become completely insensitive. And characters’ passions for their lovers, too, come off as ridiculous. Mudrick notes, “In Laura and Augustus, every character, at the mere mention of ill-fated love, is ready with tears; and, confronted by his own misfortunes, with the more drastic responses.” And scholars agree that Austen’s disdain for the cult of sensibility is equally apparent in her major works. Essaka Joshua insists, “Jane Austen, of course, with her customary

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45 Inger Sigrun Brodey, “Adventures of a Female Werther: Jane Austen's Revision of Sensibility.”
47 Mudrick, Jane Austen.
astrinency, pokes serious fun at sensibility in Sense and Sensibility.”\textsuperscript{48} Thus construing Darcy as a “man of feeling” who climactically chooses his emotions over reason in an excessive emotional display removes Pride and Prejudice from its context and seems to discount Austen’s intentions.

However, regardless of Pride and Prejudice’s original circumstances and Austen’s mindset, Darcy does connect with modern women in the same way that heroes in the romance genre seek to; he is an object of adoration whom women obsess over and lust after. In the 2008 mini series Lost in Austen, the protagonist is a rabid Austen fan who spends her days and nights dreaming about Austen’s Mr. Darcy. Her desire for Darcy becomes so consuming that she resents her boyfriend for not being Mr. Darcy. Finally, Austen’s world swallows her up and she gets to experience her ultimate fantasy—switching places with Elizabeth Bennett. Shannon Hale’s Austenland and Alexandra Potter’s Me and Mr. Darcy—both books that came out in 2007—similarly depict their Austen-obsessed protagonists as desperately in love with Mr. Darcy. All of these adaptations have experienced success, and Austenland is slated to become a major motion picture movie—interestingly produced by Twilight’s Stephenie Meyer. Furthermore, in 2007, TIME called Pride and Prejudice the most romantic book of all time.\textsuperscript{49} A recent Telegraph poll ranked Mr. Darcy as the third most romantic literary

\textsuperscript{48} Essaka Joshua, Mary Shelley Frankenstein (Humanities ebooks LLP) Accessed March 8, 2013. http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2g7KOI9bOtsC&oi=fnd&pg=PA4&dq=bram+stoker+%22the+cult+of+sensibility%22&ots=W6GV6Nd1l&sig=5W9uGG46k5jFshHUTNivc9fzJ4#v=onepage&q=the%20cult%20of%20sensibility&f=false
http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2g7KOI9bOtsC&oi=fnd&pg=PA4&dq=bram+stoker+%22the+cult+of+sensibility%22&ots=W6GV6Nd1l&sig=5W9uGG46k5jFshHUTNivc9fzJ4#v=onepage&q=the%20cult%20of%20sensibility&f=false.
character of all time, and Mark Darcy—from *Bridget Jones’ Dairy*—as the sixth. Thus Darcy undeniably serves the escapist function for modern women in the way that romance heroes attempt to.

Despite Austen’s intentions and *Pride and Prejudice*’s context there is some grounding in text to read Darcy as a conflicted, wildly emotional man in line with the heroes of romance novels or the sympathetic vampire. Though Darcy smiles and laughs and seems content on many occasions in the text, there are moments when he claims to be tortured. Most notably, the climactic scene when Darcy first proposes to Elizabeth is filled with emotional, painful language. Darcy begins, “In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.”

He insists that his emotions have triumphed over his reason—the repression he imposed on himself. He focuses on his pain, and his “ardent” love. Though he does also dryly add that his struggle “will not do,” which seems like a kind of rational risk/reward evaluation of ending his pain, the majority of his proposal focuses on his struggle.

Modern adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* have capitalized on this language, and further tried to paint Darcy as a man exposing his inner self to Elizabeth when he can no longer contain it. Though the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice* mini-series is famous for its fidelity to Austen’s book, it tweaks small things in order to present Darcy in this brooding, emotional way. It drastically changes the context under which Darcy and Elizabeth meet at Darcy’s estate, Pemberley. In the book, they run into each other on a garden path and Elizabeth is embarrassed because she just rejected Darcy’s proposal and now he has caught her exploring his home. In the mini-series Darcy (Colin Firth)  

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overheats on his ride to Pemberley, then, attempts to get relief by stripping off nearly all his clothes, and jumping into a pond, when Elizabeth (Jennifer Ehle) finds him. The literal heat Darcy feels compels him to strip off the physical manifestations of society and reason and forces him into a more natural state. Thus his body can be analogous for his inner, emotional self. Cheryl L. Nixon also notes Darcy’s dive can be read this way, saying “Darcy’s body is obviously not just a body, but a means of emotional expression.” Darcy’s body is constrained and covered by clothing, and social expectations demand he keep it so. Likewise, social expectations demand he keep his emotional self—his passion for Elizabeth—in reserve. His emotion conquers his reason as his physical need conquer societal demands. The dramatic release of tension here obviously has sexual connotations as well—he’s presenting himself to her physically as he previously did emotionally. This action follows through to the next scene where Darcy straightens a stiff collar after hastily dressing himself in at least two different jackets as he attempts to address Elizabeth in a more proper and courtly manner.

As the BBC *Pride and Prejudice* begins to envision Darcy as a more passionate, brooding character than he is in the original Austen, the 2005 Joe Wright adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* fully realizes Darcy as a man fighting with his inner “sensibilities.” Darcy’s emotional struggle, and the general theme of tension and release pervade the movie. This is particularly clear when Darcy first proposes to Elizabeth—a scene for which Austen has already provided some grounding for this interpretation of Darcy. In the film, Darcy (Matthew Macfadyen) professes his feelings for Elizabeth (Keira Knightley) in the midst of a raging storm—a natural release of pressure—in a

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peaceful parlor, as he does in the book. He also finds Elizabeth after she has run some distance—exerting herself until she is exhausted—to find shelter from the rain—a kind of respite from a torment. He begins speaking to her as the music builds to a climax and then breaks. The music itself is intense and deep—the product of a full chamber orchestra—conveying an almost gothic dramatic intensity. As Macfadyen’s Darcy speaks he focuses on his emotions and his personal struggle more than Austen’s Darcy does:

I have struggled in vain and can bear it no longer. These past few months have been a torment. I came to Rosings with the single object of seeing you—I had to see you. I have fought against my better judgment, my family’s expectation, the inferiority of your birth, my rank and circumstances—all these things, I’m willing to put them aside and ask you to end my agony.  

There is such a focus on his “struggle,” “torment,” and “agony.” This version omits the original dry calculation that the struggle, “won’t do.” In this adaptation, Darcy also interrupts himself twice—to say he had to see her, and to end his list of grievances against her—as if his feelings cannot even be contained even by the restraint of linear speech. According to Brodey, heroes from the cult of sensibility “share a great difficulty in expressing their deep, naturally virtuous feelings in the conventional language of society. In fact, their difficulty speaking becomes a measure of their sensibility.”  

This certainly seems to be the case with Darcy, here; Wright further notes that when Darcy finally says, “I love you” he does so because, “he can’t help but tell her.” Even after he

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52 Deborah Moggach, Pride and Prejudice, DVD, Directed by Joe Wright, Focus Features, 2005.
53 Inger Sigrun Brodey, “Adventures of a Female Werther: Jane Austen’s Revision of Sensibility.”
has said, “I love you,” Darcy interrupts himself again, to say “most ardently,” as if his emotional outburst has no end. Thus Wright interprets and presents Darcy as a man who is completely tormented by the restraints—both external and internal—that keep him from expressing his feelings until he can “bear it no longer.” The scene itself was filmed with handheld cameras, making the whole scene appear unstable, further plunging the viewer into the emotional feeling of the scene. In this adaptation, Darcy suffers to suppress his tempestuous emotions until they ultimately overcome him. Thus Darcy character—which exists at the mercy of his passions—is presented more akin to the hero of sensibility, and the hero of the romance novel.

As with the vampire hero, the necessity that Darcy painfully bare his soul in order to prove his love, implicitly suggests a kind of sadistic desire in the object of his affection. The desire for love is inextricably tied to the desire for pain. And as these roles seem specifically gendered in the context of the romance novel, the woman must want her male suitor to suffer. This, too, is something that Austen seems to intentionally combat in the text. When Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth—in a loveless ridiculous manner—Elizabeth attempts to turn him down, but Collins will not take her rejection. Instead, he suggests that women enjoy watching the man they love struggle with rejection and continue his pursuit—out of a seemingly sadistic desire for their suitor to prove his love:

I am far from accusing you of cruelty at present, because I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application, and perhaps
you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be consistent with the true delicacy of the female character.\textsuperscript{55}

After a lengthy, increasingly heated, back and forth Elizabeth angrily insists:

\begin{quote}
I have no pretension whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man… Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

Thus as Collins attempts to classify Elizabeth as this romance heroine—this woman of sensibility—she quickly denies him. She claims to get no pleasure from “tormenting a respectable man;” Austen’s Elizabeth would affirmatively not enjoy the “torment” Macfayden’s Darcy undergoes at Elizabeth’s hands. She also explicitly classifies herself as a “rational creature,” not a woman of feeling longing for her man’s passionate suffering. Furthermore, Austen tells us that Elizabeth derives no pleasure from rejecting Darcy; as Elizabeth prepares to turn down his first proposal we are told that she was “sorry for the pain he was to receive.”\textsuperscript{57}

Nevertheless, the commercial success of the Austen adaptations, which focus on this emotional suffering of the hero and the implied sadistic desire of the heroine, suggests that contemporary audiences have no problem seeing \textit{Pride and Prejudice} this way. The Joe Wright film, in particular, can be seen as a kind of benchmark of \textit{Pride and Prejudice} in popular conception. Its domestic gross of just under 40 million dollars\textsuperscript{58} suggests its success, but does not fully indicate how influential the film has been. Since its run in theaters the movie has been consistently and steadily consumed. Four different

\textsuperscript{55} Jane Austen, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 83.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 83.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 145.
editions of the DVD have been released—including the delayed release of a two-disc special edition version and a seventy-eight dollar special edition box set—connoting a steady, and even expanding demand for the DVD as well as a passionate cult following. Joe Wright has seen much of his subsequent work and success as a “reaction to Pride and Prejudice.” Wright’s adaptation of Anna Karenina, which came out late last year, sold itself as by “the director of Pride and Prejudice.” It included many of the same cast members from Pride and Prejudice, including Macfayden and Knightley. Thus Wright’s Pride and Prejudice is still very present in the popular consciousness, and still referred to as the Pride and Prejudice film adaptation.

Therefore the relationship established between Darcy and Elizabeth according to the Joe Wight adaptation of Pride and Prejudice is reminiscent of the relationship between Edward and Bella—as an example of the sympathetic vampire and his heroine. To the extent that Twilight can be seen as showing the modern conception of the vampire and the Wright Pride and Prejudice is seen as the current definitive adaptation of Pride and Prejudice, then Darcy and the vampire hero can be seen as evolving to the same place. Both Darcy and his vampiric counterpart have morphed since their inception, but they have both come to represent a hero of the cult of sensibility. Thus, the conflation of Darcy with a vampire hero is not “a travesty” as some scholars have suggested, but rather a natural product of the continually unfolding vampire and Austen phenomena.

Many fans of both Pride and Prejudice and vampires eagerly greeted the vampire Pride and Prejudice adaptations on Amazon reviews and blogs. One blogger expressed

her delight at the “Twilight for Janeites.” Interestingly, she does not classify the books as “Jane Austen for Twilight fans”; she sees these adaptations as existing as a sub genre for Austen fans, not a sub genre of vampire fiction. Other readers of these books seem to echo the sentiment that the adaptations are primarily directed at Austen fans, and merely use conventions of the vampire genre. One of the Amazon reviewers of *Vampire Darcy’s Desire* declares “for those of us who are Darcy addicts, this book is a great fix.” Another reviewer classifies herself first as “an avid Austen fan” and second as “a person who have [sic] loved vampire stories for around 15 years.” A reviewer of *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* similarly insists, “Pride and Prejudice is my favorite story of all time. I am a huge fan of Jane Austen, and of many of the variations of Darcy & Elizabeth that have followed the masterpiece of P&P,” before secondarily adding “I am also a big fan of the Twilight series.” Many reviewers claim to be connoisseurs of other *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations; one reviewer says she bought *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* because another *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation by the same author was her “favorite adaptation of P&P so far.” Thus the readers of the vampire Austen adaptations seem to be primarily readers of Austen adaptations, and see these books as first and foremost Austen adaptations, and secondarily as vampire novels.

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63 Ibid.
64 “Mr. Darcy, Vampyre,” Amazon, Accessed March 9, 2013, [http://www.amazon.com/Mr-Darcy-Vampyre-Amanda-Grange/dp/1402236972/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=mr+darcy+vampyre&ie=UTF8&qid=1363042629&sr=1-1&keywords=mr.+darcy+vampyre](http://www.amazon.com/Mr-Darcy-Vampyre-Amanda-Grange/dp/1402236972/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=mr+darcy+vampyre&ie=UTF8&qid=1363042629&sr=1-1&keywords=mr.+darcy+vampyre).
65 Ibid.
It is interesting how the adaptations themselves attempt to simultaneously construct an adaptation of Austen and a vampire novel. By in large, the novels attempt to stay as close as possible to Austen, while bringing in vampire elements. This seems to be wise, as the audience for these books primarily wants Austen, but it has its pitfalls as well. For example, Ann Hassell’s *Pride and Prejudice’s Vampires* experienced little success because it is, in fact, mainly the original text of *Pride and Prejudice*. The book describes itself as, “featuring much of the original text with updated editing for easier reading plus paranormal additions throughout.” The “updated editing” essentially consists of removing Austen’s subtly; in the original when Elizabeth overhears Darcy insult her she merely smiles and continues walking, but in Hassell’s version she “bite the inside of her cheek so that she might refrain from giving an indignant gasp.” And the “paranormal additions” are few and far between and in no way change the plot—all the character’s motivations stay the same. This book probably sold itself only off the association between *Pride and Prejudice* and vampires; one of the reviewers notes that she has also read *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* and *Vampire Darcy’s Desire*. But this connection alone could not carry the book; it has a two star rating on amazon, and only two costumer reviews.

All of the other adaptations take more liberty with Austen’s text, while still attempting to stay close to it. For example both Colette L. Saucier’s *Pulse and Prejudice* and Regina Jeffers’ *Vampire Darcy’s Desire* attempt to tell the original story in a

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68 “Pride and Prejudice's Vampires: Vampire Adaptation for Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice Regency Historical Romance/Satire.”
different way. Both these books start at the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*, only
Darcy is a vampire—actually a half-vampire in *Vampire Darcy’s Desire*—who has
vowed to stay forever alone because of his condition. Though these books use dialogue
from the original, they also change the narrative in significant ways—they do not merely
reproduce *Pride and Prejudice*. *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* starts at the end of *Pride and
Prejudice*, and its plot is entirely its own though it carries over all the characters and
relationships from the Austen. With these adaptations, the element of the vampirism
affects the plot of the story.

The important addition to Austen that these books present is Mr. Darcy’s role as a
vampire. Because of his vampirism, Darcy is forced to dramatically pit his reason against
his love; he knows he should keep Elizabeth out of danger and stay away from her, but he
longs for her so desperately. This sentiment pervades all the novels, but it is perhaps best
encapsulated in a moment of free indirect discourse in *Pulse and Prejudice*; “Against
his better judgment, against all reason, almost against his will, Darcy desired to know
more of Miss Elizabeth Bennett. Her face, her figure, her throat invaded his thoughts
and diverted his attention.”69 Thus, with the added element of vampirism, Darcy’s
dilemma between his heart and his head—present to some extent in the original—is
heightened and dramatized. He’s in the same position as Edward Cullen, and he can be
seen as an even more realized hero of the cult of sensibility. Also in the vein of the
sympathetic vampire and man of feeling Darcy finds his love humanizes him and his
passions make him a more full being; as Darcy thinks of Elizabeth, he realizes, “he not

only felt something for her; she made him want to feel.” Therefore through his love Darcy is humanized and realizes everything that he lacked. And, most importantly, throughout these books, Darcy suffers bitterly for his love. He aches physically every time he touches Elizabeth and his emotional tumult towards her causes him to “reach the pinnacle of self-loathing.” Therefore vampire Darcy fully realizes the emotional, brooding Darcy painted by Joe Wright’s *Pride and Prejudice*.

This element of passion and pain is what the fans of these adaptations sadistically crave. One reviewer of *Pulse and Prejudice* professes to love, “Darcy’s tortured POV.” Another reviewer of *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* says, “Grange’s Darcy was perfectly tortured.” A different reviewer of *Vampire Darcy’s Desire* also enjoys Darcy’s pain, saying, “I could really see Darcy as a vampire, brooding, sulky, irresistible, and curst.” Another fan writes “the brooding, dark, vampire Darcy fits very well with the cannon.” Thus all fans derive the same type of pleasure from vampire Darcy than they do from the original Darcy—they see the overwrought emotional Darcy the vampire as a fair manifestation of their conception of Darcy. And these fans consider themselves *Pride and Prejudice* and Austen fans above all else, thus they are looking for fidelity to their idea of *Pride and Prejudice* and Austen.

But to some extent, the work of *Pride and Prejudice* has escaped from Jane Austen—the characters and the story can be seen as in some ways disconnected from Austen’s context and Austen’s book. The cultural significance of the Wright movie, for

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
73 “Mr. Darcy Vampyre.”
74 Ibid.
example, has embedded its conception of Darcy in popular conscience. One of the “avid Austen fans” on Amazon says she is up for “watching the movie or reading the book anytime.” She sees those two activities as interchangeable, involving consuming the same *Pride and Prejudice*, the same Darcy. Perhaps even more tellingly, in *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* Elizabeth goes on and on about how excited she is for Darcy to wear his blue coat, but Darcy does not wear a blue coat in the book (both Bingley and Wickham are described as wearing blue coats, but never Darcy), he only does so in the movie. Therefore the image of Darcy the book deals with is, perhaps more the one presented by the movie than by the book. Thus the book *Pride and Prejudice* is no longer the sole or definitive constructor of Darcy’s character.

Be that as it may, Austen original text is still very present in popular culture. The original *Pride and Prejudice* sold 110,00 copies in 2002, allegedly outside of academic sales. The continued popularity of the original text cannot solely be credited to its continued inclusion in school curriculums. Curriculums also include many other authors like Homer, Charles Dickens, and Nathaniel Hawthorne whose books do not sell nearly as many copies. In fact, despite being the last selection of the Opera Book Club, *Great Expectations* and *A Tale of Two Cities* had disappointing sales figures. And these books are not often published with edgy new covers and placed in the teen section of bookstores, while it was the original text of *Pride and Prejudice* that Harper Teen repackaged in a *Twilight*-like cover. Thus *Pride and Prejudice* has a significant number

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75 Ibid.
of readers, who read for pleasure and view the original text as corresponding to this romance novel framework. Despite the book’s original context, Austen’s intentions, and even passages in the book, readers see Darcy—as Austen wrote him—to be wildly emotional, and tortured.

Perhaps the same forces that molded Darcy anew, have also kept the original Darcy in play. There is a kind of self-fueling aspect to the numerous *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations; at first the adaptations appealed to fans of the book, but—as those adaptations became more conspicuous and popular—the book began to appeal to fans of the adaptations, which, in turn, begot more adaptations, and so forth. Therefore, many current first time readers of the book have already been exposed to a *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation, and are thus primed to see it as a romance, and Darcy as a romantic hero. Furthermore, Stephenie Meyer’s repeated contentions that *Pride and Prejudice* inspired *Twilight* serve as a high profile endorsement for her readers. Some portion of her hundred million plus fans then read *Pride and Prejudice* aiming to see the connections between Darcy and Edward, and hoping to derive the same pleasure they derived from *Twilight*. And all of these readers perhaps are able to focus on the moments in the text when Darcy says he is in emotional pain and ignore passages where he smiles and seems completely content. They are able to project their sadistic longings on to Elizabeth despite how she seems to intentionally cast them off in the text. Thus, Darcy is in some way as malleable as the figure of the vampire, changing to accommodate the desires of the time, regardless of the fact that Darcy has a definitive source text and the vampire does not. And somehow, the morphing understanding of Darcy does not marginalize his source text, but popularize it further.
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