Universal truths, verisimilitude, and hyperreality: Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation in Pride and Prejudice and the Lizzie Bennet diaries.

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UNIVERSAL TRUTHS, VERSIMILITUDE, AND HYPERREALITY:
BAUDRILLARD’S SIMULACRA AND SIMULATION IN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
AND THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES

By

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ABSTRACT

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Kathryn M. Kohls

April 17, 2018

This project applies Jean Baudrillard’s Simulacra and Simulation (1981) to Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice (1813) and Hank Green and Bernie Su’s The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (2012). By applying Baudrillard’s theory, one can see that Austen’s marriage plot is a shrewd critique of how social simulacra, simulations of reality, dictate how society is structured and interacts. These manipulative simulations are able to be transgressed by the novel’s protagonists, Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy. Their ability to find an unsimulated real is appealing to contemporary audiences caught in the hyperreality of the internet age. This leads to a panicked production to try and simulate access to the real which helps to explain the Austenmania of the 1990s-2000s. This continual simulation helped lead to the transmedia adaptation, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, where Lizzie Bennet, a 24-year-old graduate student, simulates her life through vlogs and social media posts. This adaptation continues the novel’s simulation issues to the point of creating a hyperreal text that blurs the boundaries between fiction and the audience’s reality. The combination of Baudrillard’s theory with these texts illustrates the growing mediation of humanity’s reality and how Austen along with Green and Su recognize and warn against the potential damage of such simulated reality.
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INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen is an icon in the current cultural landscape. Since the mid-1990s, her texts have exploded in popularity. Austen’s texts have become prime texts to adapt, modify, and extend to become things that Austen could hardly have imagined. From Valley girls to zombies to vloggers, Austen’s characters have been morphed into drastically different incarnations that are somehow still recognizable as the characters from her beloved novels. As stated by adaptation scholar Linda Hutcheon and noted by numerous Austen scholars, these adaptations provide pleasure “from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise.”¹ Audiences seem drawn to Austen’s well-known plots and predictability, but still want some surprises like sea monsters or a setting in India.

All of Austen’s texts have been adapted in some way, but by far the most popular of her texts is the second published work, *Pride and Prejudice*. Since the famous scene of Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy exiting the pond in a soaking white shirt from BBC’s 1995 miniseries,² Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy’s love story has been rewritten for Hollywood, children’s television, Bollywood, zombies, YouTube, and more. There have also been dozens of formally published works building from this text, and potentially

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hundreds of pieces of unpublished *Pride and Prejudice* fanfiction circulating the internet on a multitude of platforms.

One adaptation that combines the beloved characters with surprising alterations along with some fanfiction influence is Hank Green and Bernie Su’s Emmy award-winning *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. This 2012 adaptation sets Elizabeth Bennet in modern-day California as a graduate student dealing with the stress of job hunting, student loans, and dating. Elizabeth, or Lizzie as the titular character prefers to be called, uploads video blogs (vlogs) twice a week for almost an entire year. She along with most of the cast of characters tweet, post, and share on multiple social media sites. Regency England is left behind as Lizzie Bennet and company inhabit the 21st century internet. This transmedia adaptation, that spans multiple platforms and creates a world as much as it tells a story, presents an Austen text for a new audience that may be more familiar with popular social media influencers than famous authors.

*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is the first transmedia adaptation of a piece of literature and its composition reflects issues of perception and reality.3 This adaptation uses social media platforms, expectations, and etiquette in ways that highly resemble actual millennial internet usage. The characters represent Austen’s beloved characters but are presented in ways that make them look like real millennials. That along with the multi-platform use of different social media posts that were planned to directly coincide with the plot, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* at times seems real and effectively blurs the boundaries between its story world and the world of its viewers. This questioning of perception and what is real does not just happen in this adaptation but stems from

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Austen’s text. This thesis will explore those issues of the simulation of reality and misperception by applying Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) to Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) along with *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012).

Baudrillard’s theory states that reality is being continually simulated, and these simulations, also termed simulacra, are presented to be real but are just controlled representations of reality. The simulacra compound to create simulations of simulations, until there is no longer any basis in reality but is a freestanding simulation, termed hyperreality. Hyperreality is when reality is so far removed that simulations cannot reference a real without interference and humans can no longer recognize what is or is not uninfluenced within the simulation. When humanity can no longer access a real not simulated, they still attempt to produce and reproduce in “panic-stricken production of the real and referential.” This creates more simulations of the real and furthers hyperreality instead of bringing humanity closer to an unmediated real. These systems of simulation and hyperreality can be manipulated and used by people to acquire and sustain power. This theory allows for a realization that all perceived reality is simulated and controlled.

The first chapter of this project will explore how *Pride and Prejudice* exhibits simulacra that dictate how society operates. Bernard Paris notes that in *Pride and Prejudice*, “civilization is based… upon the observance of proper forms of behavior. In a society of highly formal manners, such as that depicted in this novel, there is a prescribed

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5 Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 6-7.
way for each individual to behave in almost every situation of life.”6 The social structure was originally meant to reflect the real interactions of people but became perverted so that it no longer reflects reality but is used by manipulative people to mask their schemes for money and power. Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy force each other to realize their misperceptions of reality and together find a way to access an unsimulated real. Real, as it will be used in this piece, signifies a freedom of understanding and ability to make choices based on personal well-being, distinct from a simulated existence that conceals truth and expects submission to strict and impractical expectations. Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth find a common understanding based in reality, and they create a new community removed from the damaging simulations of manipulative communities. *Pride and Prejudice* exemplifies how to access the real which is highly appealing to contemporary audiences caught in the hyperreality of the internet age.

The second chapter will explore the “‘material’ production…of the hyperreal itself” with *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, or *LBD* as will be used throughout this text, as it amplifies the original text’s issues of perception and simulacra obscuring reality, and because of *LBD*’s reliance on media, fulfills Baudrillard’s last stages of simulation to create hyperreality.7 *LBD* illustrates how its protagonist, Lizzie Bennet, simulates her life though social media and faces the repercussions of that simulation and manipulation. But beyond just the characters dealing with simulations, *LBD*’s reliance on popular social media platforms fosters a blurring of the fictional story world with the digital world of the audience. It is a hyperreal experience where fiction and reality are overtly distorted to

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7 Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 23.
point to the indistinct simulations of the rest of the audience’s life. It has been argued that “adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places,” and that is just what LBD does to continue the legacy of Pride and Prejudice and extend its critique of societal simulacra.⁸

An “Afterword” will briefly look at how The Lizzie Bennet Diaries has changed and stayed the same in the five years since the main narrative concluded. The team behind LBD continued to expand the story world and furthered the hyperreality with new transmedia adaptations. While the same level of immersion is not possible as during the original uploads, there are still significant ways in which the narrative lives on and continues to illustrate problems with simulation and promote the hyperreal experience of LBD.

Pride and Prejudice and LBD demonstrate how Regency and contemporary audiences faced and continue to face simulations propagated by their societies and how those audiences can find ways to regain control of their own manipulation. This project will not only further bring to light Austen’s awareness of a cultivated misperception of the world and its dangers but will begin to give Green and Su’s The Lizzie Bennet Diaries the theoretical attention it deserves. The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is a prime example of Baudrillard’s theory, and its connection to a text and time where an unmediated reality was still available only further stresses the importance of this exploration of Pride and Prejudice and The Lizzie Bennet Diaries and what they exemplify about humanity’s growing mediation of reality.

⁸ Hutcheon, A Theory of Adaptation 176.
CHAPTER 1

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND “THE PANIC-STRICKEN PRODUCTION OF THE REAL”

Within the past twenty years or so, the popularity of Jane Austen and her works has expanded exponentially. Austen’s influence is primarily seen in the many reincarnations of her works; “Works of literature prosper not through simple reproduction but through reinterpretations, quotations and transformations” and Austen’s works have gone through it all. From the iconic image of Colin Firth exiting the pond in the BBC miniseries of Pride and Prejudice in 1995 to the YouTube vlog series Emma Approved in 2014, Austen has solidified her place as a major influence on popular culture through the multitude and variety of adaptations of her works. Besides films and television series, Austen’s works have been transformed into creative book adaptations like Pride and Prejudice and Zombies, fan fiction, and vlogs like the above-mentioned Emma Approved and The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (2012). It has become an art adapting Austen in the 21st century.

All of Austen’s works have been adapted numerous times, but it is Pride and Prejudice that continues to be the most adapted and most recognizable of Austen’s works. As stated by adaptation scholar Linda Hutcheon and noted by numerous Austen

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scholars, these adaptations provide pleasure “from repetition with variation, from the
comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise”. 10 The Jane Austen Society of
North America (JASNA) lists nine explicit filmic adaptations of Pride and Prejudice
since 1940 with seven of them being made since the BBC’s popular 1995 mini-series. 11
JASNA also includes “For Your Consideration…” that lists Bridget Jones’s Diary (2001)
and You’ve Got Mail (1998) among others that are Pride and Prejudice more radically
adapted. 12 Keeping in mind its issues of reliability, Wikipedia seems to have the most
extensive, numerically and internationally, list of adaptations both visual and textual,
with twenty-three film and television adaptations of Pride and Prejudice with fourteen of
those being since 1995. 13 It also lists “literary depictions of and related to the novel” with
forty-four adaptations, extensions, alternative perspectives, etc. of formally published
works. 14 These lists don’t account for the innumerable amount of fan fiction that
circulates on the internet but that has never been formally published. Pride and Prejudice
has become one of the most adapted works, and sits among highly recognizable texts by
Shakespeare, Dickens, and the Brontë’s. For many, especially in Western culture, Mr.
Darcy has become synonymous with Prince Charming, and Elizabeth Bennet is the
heroine many women want to become.

But why the intense adaptive focus on Jane Austen and why is Pride and
Prejudice favored over her other texts? The first question has been asked by fans and

11 JASNA: Jane Austen Society of North America. “Austen on Screen: Pride and Prejudice.” JASNA,
12 JASNA. “Austen on Screen: Pride and Prejudice.”
14 Wikipedia. “List of literary adaptations of Pride and Prejudice.” Wikipedia, 12 Dec 2017,
scholars consistently since the 1990s, and they have produced a variety of answers, but some of the most compelling arguments that are being echoed from many sides of the Austen discussion are summed up by Caryn James in her 2007 *New York Times* article, “Austen Powers: Making Jane Sexy”:

She [Austen] has entered pop culture more thoroughly than other writers because she is almost spookily contemporary. Her ironic take on society is delivered in a reassuring, sisterly voice, as if she were part Jon Stewart, part Oprah Winfrey. Beneath the period details, the typical Austen heroine offers something for almost any woman to identify with: She is not afraid to be the smartest person in the room, yet after a series of misunderstandings gets the man of her dreams anyway. It doesn't take a marketing genius to spot a potential movie audience for that have-it-all fantasy.  

Jane Austen, despite living at the turn of the 19th century, feels like a contemporary. Her thoughts and social criticisms reflect thoughts of the modern day, and her heroines represent a conservative liberalism that allows many to identify and escape. Most importantly, as Austen scholars have realized, Austen also presents a philosophical postmodern thought that doesn’t come into popularity until the late 20th century. Austen is not just modern, she is postmodern.

Scholars like William Deresiewicz, Felicia Bonaparte, Amanda Collins, and others have explored these ideas of a postmodern Austen, but few have explored how Austen’s postmodern content lends itself to alteration, adaptation, and remediation in the

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new millennium. Jane Austen covertly deals with issues of truth and reality in many of her novels, but she overtly notes these issues in *Pride and Prejudice*. In the novel, the community of Meryton and Longbourn often misreads reality and creates their own simulacrum, or simulation of reality, and most, if not all, members readily accept and base their lives on this simulation. For the members of this community, “civilization is based… upon the observance of proper forms of behavior. In a society of highly formal manners, such as that depicted in this novel, there is a prescribed way for each individual to behave in almost every situation of life.” This system that codes the world around them was intended to reflect reality so that an “individual learns his pace in the world and acquires the manners appropriate to it… he learns not only to behave, but also to feel as he ought, so that his manners communicate his true sentiments and reflect his character.” This system fails though and people’s presentation does not always coincide with their character like in the case of George Wickham, and the system is taken too far and obstructs free understanding and personal fulfillment as Lady Catherine exhibits in her efforts to control Elizabeth’s and Mr. Darcy’s lives. Throughout the novel, Austen critiques this faulty system and those that unquestionably abide by it; “her [Austen’s] satire is directed at those traits of personality, at those failures of education and judgment, and at those distortions of social customs and institutions which make daily life painful and ultimate fulfillment uncertain for good and sensitive people.” This unstated, yet pervasive code of conduct fails to adequately represent reality or individual’s intentions.

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16 Paris 106.
17 Paris 106.
18 Paris 15.
and *Pride and Prejudice* illustrates the failings of such a simulacrum and how its protagonists remove themselves from it.

This simulation is not manifested just by the community, but is informed by another, more pervasive societal simulacrum created and circulated by those with more power and prestige, like those at Rosings Estate. The aristocracy or highest social class makes the rules of society and determines social standards that the lower classes reproduce with varying results as can be seen at Meryton and Longbourn. The problem is not the simulation on its own, but that the simulation is faulty and taken to be unquestionably real. The community’s misperception of their perception and lack of realization that others perceive the world differently causes miscommunication and tension that propels Austen’s plot. Specifically, Elizabeth Bennet seems to be sure that the world is how she sees it and prides herself on that, but Fitzwilliam Darcy enters into her community and disrupts her simulacrum and forces her to reconsider her perception, and as a pair they disrupt the much larger societal simulacrum. Austen highlights and then adaptations further these issues of perception and reality when they adapt according to different perspectives and lenses.

By viewing this text and these issues with Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation (1981)*, the beginning stages of simulacra can be seen and how those community simulacra are part of a much larger system that is controlled and perpetuated by those in power to sustain that power. The application of Baudrillard’s theory brings together two areas of Austen scholarship, the exploration of the postmodern along with critique of the social, and this illuminates how Austen is a postmodern contemporary because of how she critiques social expectations as a system that manipulates truth and
reality. Elizabeth and Darcy seem to be able to escape the simulacrum and find the real, a genuine understanding of life and others that is not completely controlled by outside forces. The real is a freedom of understanding and ability to make choices based on personal well-being, distinct from a simulated existence that conceals truth and expects submission to strict and impractical expectations. This signals a transition “from a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law and the older characters to a society controlled by youth and pragmatic freedom.”19 The novel’s end illustrates a breaking away from these faulty and harmful systems to create a new community that respects some tradition but recognizes the importance of personal happiness. This appeals to contemporary audiences who can no longer access a real not heavily influenced by higher powers and pressures. This realization helps to explain the proliferation of Austen adaptations, the “panic-stricken production of the real”, as a response to the perceived loss of the connection to reality that accompanied the rising popularity of postmodern thought.20 Contemporary audiences, firmly set in what Baudrillard terms hyperreality, are drawn to Pride and Prejudice because of this ability to access a real not controlled by other powers and people.

Baudrillard’s theory of simulation allows for a realization that not all someone sees/perceives is necessarily real or authentic; instead that perception is a carefully constructed simulation of the real that helps to reach some end, usually for people in places of power. He theorizes that reality is being continually displaced by images and signs, and these images/simulacra are presented to be real but are just controlled representations. The simulacra then multiply to become simulations of simulations until

19 Frye qtd. by Paris 16.
20 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 7.
an unsimulated reality is no longer available: “it is the generation by models of a real
without origin or reality: a hyperreal.”21 These simulacra of reality and subsequent
simulations of simulations have removed humans from reality to a point they no longer
recognize what is or is not influenced by higher social powers. At one point, the
simulacrum or imitation was exchanged for reality, but now, in a contemporary setting,
“it’s exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference.”22 The real is
inaccessible for the contemporary audiences, especially as new media continually
recreates and mediates existence. Baudrillard also theorizes that “when the real is no
longer what it used to be [i.e. reality not controlled], nostalgia assumes its full meaning”
and as people try to gain access to the real again, there is a “panic-stricken production of
the real and referential.”23 Contemporary audiences, who are trying to recreate some
semblance of the real they can no longer access, continually recreate and remediate in a
nostalgic panic to try and retrieve the real: “what society seeks through production, and
overproduction, is the restoration of the real which escapes it.”24 Reiterating this futile
surrogacy actually pushes audiences further into a free-standing simulation or
hyperreality instead of pulling them back to a place where reality was accessible, but they
do not realize this and continue to recreate in a desperate attempt to achieve access to the
uninfluenced real.

This reproduction due to nostalgic panic is in part why adaptations of *Pride and
Prejudice* are so prolific. In the novel, the social conventions are a simulation that was
originally intended to reflect real social interactions to help structure civilization, but it

has become a too pervasive simulacrum that the people think is absolute reality and does not allow for differences nor individual freedoms. Paris notes that importance and pitfalls of this kind of system: “The code of civility regulates our impulses, provides patterns of interaction, and permits us to come together without continually hurting each other’s feelings. At the same time, however, it inhibits self-expression, isolates us from each other, and makes knowledge and communication difficult.”²⁵ While this social simulation was originally intended to help make society run smoothly, it has been perverted by different individuals, represented by George Wickham and Lady Catherine in the novel, and has become an unyielding and untruthful representation of reality. Even though Austen published her text 168 years before Baudrillard published his theory, one can see that Austen’s text’s central conflict of miscommunication and the flawed perceptions allow for the first stages of Baudrillard’s simulation to take place: “1. It [the simulacrum] is the reflection of a basic reality. 2. It masks and perverts basic reality.”²⁶ Austen’s novel was written and set in a time where the real without interference is still available but can be masked by warped simulacra. The simulations of reality within the novel have not become hyperreal yet, so Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are able to learn to recognize the influences and work against the simulations when the simulations fail to work for them. The novel “recognizes the importance of social considerations; but it places a heavy stress upon the desirability of attaining personal fulfillment”²⁷; so, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy retain the social structures like marriage that compliments their relationship but

²⁵ Paris 107-8.
²⁶ Baudrillard, Simulations 11.
²⁷ Paris 97.
remove themselves from the communities where their personal fulfillment is not achievable.

*Pride and Prejudice* illustrates how its characters realize the harmful simulations influencing their lives and how to regain control from those simulations to achieve happiness. By the surrogacy of Elizabeth and Darcy, audiences living in hyperreality feel they can access reality that is not completely mediated by someone else. Thus, they feel compelled to “restore[e] the real which escapes [them]”28 so they reproduce, creating simulations of simulations, and Austen’s adaptations help to fulfill the final stages of hyperreality: “3. It [the simulacrum] masks the absence of a basic reality. 4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.”29 These finals stages will be explored more fully in the next chapter, but by focusing on the first stages and their intersection with *Pride and Prejudice*, one can see how Austen was ahead of her time being hyper aware of the serious influence society could have on an individual and how that clarifies contemporary media’s obsession with her texts.

The obsession with Austen that led to the mass reproduction of her texts has been termed “Austenmania”. This mania has solidified Austen’s influence on 21st century culture and many authors and scholars have theorized attempted to explain this phenomenon. One proposed reason is that Austen’s work is in the public domain, so adaptors or creators don’t need to pay to use her text, but as Steenkamp states, this doesn’t account for the widespread use and love of Austen. Beyond the financial aspects, Steenkamp explores in her article, “Janeites for a New Millennium: The Modernization of Jane Austen,” that many modern females, whether or not they have read Austen’s

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29 Baudrillard, *Simulations* 11.
original texts, are drawn to the female characters generally because her heroines are smart and sassy but still get the man in the end.\textsuperscript{30} Barker and McKinstry echo this appeal of balancing independence and submission in Austen’s heroines, calling it a “safe rebellion”\textsuperscript{31} and noting “the rules of gender have been broken, and, ironically, the result is marriage.”\textsuperscript{32} Steenkamp particularly notes that, “Austen heroines aspire to a certain degree of independence, but not so much as to be offensive to their male counterparts.”\textsuperscript{33} These Janeites “prefer their Elizabeth Bennets to be lively, fearless women who can do just as well without Mr. Darcy than with him.”\textsuperscript{34} The Austen adaptations magnify this feminine tension so that the heroines better reflect contemporary feminism, but still are firmly settled within their patriarchal context. According to these scholars, these adaptations present the best of both worlds where a woman can be self-sufficient and capable and get the rich man in the end, which appears to highly appeal to contemporary audiences.

It has also been noted that Austen’s texts allow an escapism to a perceived simpler time. Troost and Greenfield, Dickson, Ridout, and Raitt have all noted how Austen’s adaptations allow for a diversion from contemporary society. The film adaptation of \textit{Austenland}, based on Shannon Hale’s 2007 novel of the same name, states it well when Henry Nobley, the Darcy character, says to the Elizabeth character, Jane, “I enjoyed stepping into history, the idea of a simpler world where love is straightforward


\textsuperscript{33} Steenkamp 4.

\textsuperscript{34} Steenkamp 9.
and lasting. I believe we have that in common.”35 This film pokes fun at crazed Austen fans who would pay loads of money, dress up in Regency garb, and try to completely submerge themselves in all things Austen, but is very aware of Austen escapism and utopianism that drives Austenmania. Adaptations, by combining more feminist heroines, grander scenes and estates, and Austen’s gentility, are able to create a “difference, but a familiar difference” that contemporary audiences can escape to without feeling uncomfortable.36

There are more proposed reasons for Austenmania, but these seem to be the most prolific ones among scholars. Despite their rationality and obvious connections, these reasons alone do not justify culture’s obsession with Austen. Plenty of famous authors are in the public domain, quite a few have rebellious heroes and heroines that can and have been adapted for contemporary audiences, and most period pieces allow for an escape from reality, so while we have partial answers to the love for Austen, we are still left with the not completely answered questions: Why Jane Austen? Why, specifically, *Pride and Prejudice*? And why now? Austen scholars have noted a peculiarity in Austen that make her “spookily contemporary,”37 her postmodernism. It is her very postmodernist view of society and her realization of damaging social simulations of reality that can help explain why audiences rather recently feel pulled to Austen adaptations again and again.

While not postmodern explicitly, Bernard Paris’ *Character and Conflict in Jane Austen’s Novels: A Psychological Approach*, cited earlier, presents a study on how Austen’s heroines are “mimetic” of real people and that they “must be understood…in

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37 James.
motivational terms, in the same way that we understand real human beings.”38 When viewing *Pride and Prejudice*, his psychological approach presents a tension of individual versus society, particularly that “*Pride and Prejudice* tends to look at society from the point of view of the individual and to criticize those institutions, conventions, and values which hamper intercourse and obstruct happiness.”39 Paris’ text illustrates how the customs expected by society have well-intended purposes but that often go too far and “are subject to distortion and can stand in the way of happiness, sincerity, and truth.”40 While not acknowledged, these societal systems are simulacra that obstruct reality and understanding. The first stage of the simulation is that it is a “reflection of a basic reality” as the social systems were intended to be, but then the system refuses to allow alternatives so it “masks and perverts basic reality.”41 Paris argues that, “The masking effect of social forms combines with personal factors in both the actor and the observer to produce a wide range of misunderstandings,”42 and he also notes that “the desirable society is represented not only by Pemberley…but [by Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy’s] clear-sightedness and maturity… based upon a real understanding of themselves and each other and upon a proper combination of values.”43 Paris recognizes that social systems can mask what is really going on, and that the novel’s ending illustrates a compromise where the protagonists mostly remove themselves from those harmful simulations. This understanding of the tension between corrupted social systems versus individual

38 Paris 9.
39 Paris 97.
40 Paris 103.
41 Baudrillard, *Simulations* 11.
42 Paris 108.
43 Paris 100.
understanding and satisfaction is throughout this chapter to distinguish between 
simulation and what is real.

Less concerned with issues of reality, Favret, Collins, and White are some of the 
scholars who do explicitly note issues of the postmodern, specifically simulacrum, with 
Austen text recreations. Favret’s “Being True to Jane Austen” draws on Fredric 
Jameson’s simulacra and how the movie adaptations of some of Austen’s works either 
attempt to be faithful to her presentation or to contemporary fans’ expectations while 
exploring what that means for Austen’s works and rewriting history.44 Collins’s “Jane 
Austen, Film, and the Pitfalls of Postmodern Nostalgia” also grapples with fidelity and 
inaccurate simulacra issues in Austen adaptations, particularly within the context of these 
adaptations “fulfilling a societal need for nostalgia.”45 For Collins, these rewritings of 
Jane Austen that gloss over the more unsavory aspects of the early 19th century are to 
“fulfill a societal need for romanticism,” and if consumers continue to ignore the 
hyperreality created within these films, they will no longer be able to distinguish history 
from these simulacra. White culturally analyzes Helen Fielding’s novel, Bridget Jones’ 
Diary, and how it uses a “nostalgia which structures our understanding of the present 
through a yearning for that which is lost.”46 White notes this nostalgia is postmodern 
because it is a past that has been idealized, “an inauthentic copy.”47 These scholars all 
have perceived the adaptations produced from Austenmania as “inauthentic copies”

44 Favret, Mary A. “Being True to Jane Austen.” Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the 
45 Collins, Amanda. “Jane Austen, Film, and the Pitfalls of Postmodern Nostalgia.” Jane Austen in 
46 White, Laura Mooneyham. “Jane Austen's world as postmodern simulacrum in Fielding's narratives of 
47 White 261 and 263.
created to fulfill a nostalgia for a simpler time or a more straightforward romance, and because Austen’s world is more complicated than that, a simplified version is required. These ideas of a postmodern nostalgia help us to better understand the modern audience’s fascination with period adaptations in general, but as similar things could be (and have been) said about other adaptations of other texts, there is still the question of why Jane Austen and Pride and Prejudice? Favret’s, Collins’s, and White’s analyses about a culture’s yearning for nostalgia is not wrong, but they fail to pinpoint “that which is lost”\(^\text{48}\) that Austen’s texts represent that other texts do not. The lost thing that audiences yearn for is an unsimulated real, which is what makes the nostalgia for Jane Austen postmodern.

Some scholars are looking at the postmodern in Austen adaptations, while other scholars are enquiring as to how Austen’s original texts invoke a postmodern sentiment. Two of those scholars, who are looking exclusively at Pride and Prejudice, intersect in interesting ways that are worth exploring. Bonaparte in her essay, “Conjecturing Possibilities: Reading and Misreading Texts in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice,” argues “Austen foreshadows many issues central to modernism and postmodernism.”\(^\text{49}\) For her, Pride and Prejudice illustrates that “human existence requires some approximation of truth.”\(^\text{50}\) While Bonaparte does not explicitly name Baudrillard’s simulacra, she makes connections with the text and this theory. She states, “appearance is capable of being dissociated from reality,” and points out that “identical data may serve

\(^{48}\) White 258.
\(^{50}\) Bonaparte 143.
to construct quite different truths.” Bonaparte draws on numerous relationships and scenes from the novel to demonstrate how Austen is grappling with ideas of reality, truth, authority, and perception.

Bonaparte explicitly connects *Pride and Prejudice* to postmodern thought, but through Deresiewicz’s “Community and Cognition in *Pride and Prejudice*,” one can see the even greater connection between the simulation of reality and Austen’s text. Deresiewicz’s article demonstrates how the community of Longbourn and Meryton has created a collective consciousness that dictates how the world is seen, and while many readers champion Elizabeth Bennet for her individuality and her mockery of that community, Deresiewicz illustrates just how entrenched Elizabeth Bennet is in that communal consciousness. Mistaken conceptions of people and events become the truth of the community and its individuals, and this then causes the miscommunications and primary conflict of the novel. Nothing is mentioned to be explicitly postmodern, but this issue with perception and a collective sense of reality easily connects to postmodern issues of what is real and what is truth. Deresiewicz’s article presents the making of simulacra by communities, even though he never overtly names it that.

Bonaparte and Deresiewicz take different approaches to explore epistemological issues within *Pride and Prejudice*, but they do agree on quite a few things. The most obvious is that Austen’s text gives examples of approximations of truth or reality. They also agree that it is the relationships with the surrounding community and people that

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51 Bonaparte 148.
53 Bonaparte 143 and Deresiewicz 122.
heavily influence the construction of those approximations. Finally, one of their big commonalities is that Elizabeth Bennet, far from being the independent thinker and just perceiver, is “a passive recipient of whatever accidental intelligence was directed her way” and “a typical member of her community... [and] assents to and helps propagate collective judgments.” For these scholars, Austen’s Pride and Prejudice summons questions of if social systems and expectations are representative of reality. Other authors and scholars beyond Bonaparte and Deresiewicz have also explored the postmodern Austen, but it is these two that most explicitly engage with constructed realities and characters struggling with the question, “what is true?” Through these scholars’ analyses of Pride and Prejudice we can see an Austen that is dealing with very similar conundrums as a postmodern audience. But unlike contemporary audiences, as Bonaparte and Deresiewicz show, Elizabeth and Darcy find some way to access a truth and a reality free from outside influence that grounds them and makes them compatible.

What Bonaparte and Deresiewicz don’t acknowledge, though, is that the Longbourn community is regurgitating norms and expectations that are handed to them from the upper class and that are held by most of England. These expectations and their role within the novel have been explored by Austen scholars, but the connections between Bonaparte and Deresiewicz’s work has not yet been connected to McKinstry and Steenkamp’s work, noted earlier, on gender roles and the rebellion against them. By considering both arguments, one can see that those societal expectations are actually a complicated simulacrum that assumes how interrelationships work and how everyone

54 Bonaparte 151 and Deresiewicz 117.
55 Bonaparte 155.
56 Deresiewicz 119.
should act within proper society, and importantly that the simulacrum also reaffirms existing power structures and keeps the elites in their place of supremacy. Baudrillard notes how the powerful use the simulacrum to their advantage in his discussion of how scandals and other simulacrum are created to reaffirm an idea of morality and principle, “tending to regenerate through scandal a moral and political principle, through the imaginary, a sinking reality principle.” Baudrillard notes how the powerful use the simulacrum to their advantage in his discussion of how scandals and other simulacrum are created to reaffirm an idea of morality and principle, “tending to regenerate through scandal a moral and political principle, through the imaginary, a sinking reality principle.” When an idea or concept is in jeopardy, especially when it supports a system of capital, a simulated scandal will occur to reiterate its “importance” and “need.” These overarching societal expectations/simulacra is what reproduces and maintains racisms, gender roles, and other feelings and ways of being that are supposed to be connected to some sort of overarching reality, biology, inherency, etc. but are actually misrepresentations of the world. And while the Longbourn community and Elizabeth don’t abide by this “ideal” exclusively, their awareness of it shapes their simulacrum and they regurgitate similar social expectations because they desire the same sort of life of prosperity and power as those that primarily depend upon these structures, i.e. Lady Catherine de Bourgh. McKinstry and Steenkamp among others have written about gender norms and expectations within Pride and Prejudice and how Elizabeth’s refusal to abide by those rules is attractive to modern audiences. The application of Baudrillard’s theory brings together two lines of Austen scholarship and allows a more nuanced understanding of Austen’s postmodern critique of the society around her.

57 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 14.
58 i.e. the Bennet family’s exposures in volume one, chapter eighteen.
As noted earlier, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy realize the harmful simulations of their communities and find ways to remove themselves from that influence to have a life where understanding and happiness are possible. Together they “combin[e] the requirements of social life with legitimate aspirations for personal integrity and satisfaction” as the social system of marriage corresponds with their own desires and relationship built on mutual understanding and respect.59 Austen illustrates a way against and through the simulations to find a real where they are not at the mercy of the influences of the powers that be, and this is what is so appealing about *Pride and Prejudice*. It is Austen’s content, the ability to recover an unmediated real despite gender and class expectations, that drives the nostalgic recreation of her texts; and exploring this connection helps us to better understand the complexity of Jane Austen and her prevalent presence within the late 20th and early 21st centuries. By intersecting these branches of scholarship that Bonaparte and Deresiewicz along with Steenkamp and McKinstry represent, we become more aware of the complexity of Austen. She critiques the society around her, but it is not just a realization that it is unfair and unrealistic, she highlights that it is a cultivated misperception of the world to encourage and continue inequalities. This realization and critique is identifiable for all audiences whether or not they realize the manipulation of their own lives, but is highly identifiable for postmodern audiences, who after theories like Baudrillard, can better articulate their misgivings about power and their own manipulation.

59 Paris 103.
Combining Deresiewicz’s and Paris’s arguments on the role and expectations of the community, one can see that the “communal consciousness” as “the code of civility that regulates [the community’s] impulses, provides patterns of interaction, and permits [them] to come together.” This system of understanding projects acceptable societal roles and responsibilities and is “subject to distortion” and those distortions “once accepted harden in to universal truths.” This societal system is a simulation of reality intended to help order society by reflecting it but becomes a false reality that is taken to be completely true. The simulacrum is indicated from the beginning of the novel, “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” This famous statement isn’t put forth by a named character but seems to be the consensus of the community. The initial pages present the community making “observation and judgment that set the course of the rest of the narrative.” This “universal truth”/simulacrum does not come from the community alone, though; it reflects a much larger conception of reality and how gender operates: “Jane Austen’s famous *Pride and Prejudice* begins with the sentence that sums up the literary– and literal– plot of gender.” The theory of simulation shows how the communal mindset noted by Paris and Deresiewicz and “the plot of gender” are actually intertwined. This “truth universally acknowledged” not only dictates the Longbourn community, but, more importantly, represents a widespread notion, that includes the larger powers of influence.

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60 Deresiewicz 114.
61 Paris 107.
62 Paris 103.
63 Deresiewicz 115.
65 Deresiewicz 114.
66 McKinstry 32 emphasis mine.
67 McKinstry 32.
within the novel and the world of the readers of the time of publication, of how gender is supposed to be performed and how society operates. This social simulacrum is presented as an unmanipulated reality, but it is actually a carefully constructed system. For example, the novel’s first line presents an expectation of marriage based on economics but fails to consider alternative motivations nor personal feelings. Those limitations are ignored to continue the simulation that benefits those in power like Lady Catherine de Bourgh and to keep an idealized notion of order and continuity. This simulacrum is not actually a “universal truth,” but to Longbourn and the extended community, it is the truth for their lives on which they operate.

The famous first line is intended to be funny and readers are supposed to chuckle at the antics of Mrs. Bennet trying to marry off her daughters, but this humor masks a serious system that punishes people for failing to abide. Some scholars point out how Mrs. Bennet, while ridiculous, is also trying to find husbands for her daughters so they don’t end up poor spinsters. It is a ridiculousness that reflects the absurdity of the larger system, and how blindly following it seems illogical but can also have devastating consequences. As McKinstry pointed out, these ideas of marriage and proper actions are not isolated to the Longbourn community, but stem from much larger social structures, and those simulacra actually support those in power. The opening line, an example of the simulation, establishes a far-reaching expectation that not only are women up for the taking by wealthy men, but “males are also ‘property,’ and are ‘rightful’ objects of desire by families” with daughters in need of marrying.68 Austen, well aware of the power of this simulation and its limitations, notes early on, “However little known the feelings or

68 McKinstry 33.
views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.”69 Austen realizes that this simulacrum is faulty and quickly questions the integrity of the community’s “universal truth”. The rest of the novel then revolves around the conflict of this simulacrum by those who control it, those who submit to it, and those who question it. *Pride and Prejudice* is a marriage plot, but within it Austen illustrates a more nuanced understanding of the simulation of reality and its consequences.

Austen shows that this simulacrum is not just isolated to the social spheres, but it also bleeds into the law, laws like the entailment rule that keep the Bennet daughters from inheriting their home or their father’s fortune. The entailment law was created “to keep property within the family and restrict the ability of one member of the family to sell it” and causes a “particular reason to favor economics over emotion” when it comes to marriage.70 The entailment law directly responds to an arbitrarily socialized notion and simulacrum that a family’s prestige stems primarily from their estate. Unlike more pragmatic laws that make stealing and murder illegal to protect everyone, entailment is a “law…largely established by the ruling elite to protect the ruling elite and entrench its values at the expense of the downtrodden, including the poor, women, and racial minorities.”71 The entailment law keeps the money to one son who, according to this constructed simulacrum, will marry a woman for a handsome dowry from his class, and they will produce a male heir who will repeat the process. Money stays within the same

69 Austen 3.
71 Appel 635.
families and the same social circles. The simulacrum and the “rules” help to keep those of the highest social class wealthy and powerful.

Austen uses Lady Catherine de Bourgh to show this benefit from and manipulation of the societal simulacrum. As part of the highest social class, she is in a unique position to dictate and alter social customs and the simulacrum to benefit her. She plans for Mr. Darcy to marry her daughter as she tells Elizabeth, “From their infancy, they have been intended for each other… Have you not heard me say, that from his earliest hours he was destined for his cousin?”72 This marriage would further unite the family fortunes and increase her position of power as the matriarch of an even more wealthy and powerful family. Lady Catherine is not just following the simulacrum, she is creating and shaping it. She is one of the few in that position of power that can follow or not the simulacrum as it fits her. She may expect Mr. Darcy to marry her daughter as the simulacrum dictates, but Lady Catherine can also manipulate the system and not have to face entailment that could have harmed her and her daughter, “I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line.—It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family.”73 Families like the Bennets do not have that power and the women of that family must face gentile poverty if they do not follow the ruling class’s other rule of marrying for support. Lady Catherine is in the privileged position to shape the simulacrum, and she along with the rest of her rank are the main benefactors.

This manipulation of the systems of society and law gives a lot of power to the aristocracy and it is not often questioned. But when someone attempts to challenge the simulacrum, they threaten it and the system of inequality it supports. The simulation is

72 Austen 242.
73 Austen 115.
only successful if it is accepted and followed by society. This is why Lady Catherine becomes so indignant and rude when she confronts Elizabeth about being engaged to Mr. Darcy. When Elizabeth refuses to give her a satisfactory answer that she will not marry Mr. Darcy, Lady Catherine threatens her, “if you willfully act against the inclinations of all [Mr. Darcy’s family and friends]. You will be censured, slighted, and despised, by every one connected with him.”74 Lady Catherine does not have physical, financial, or legal power over Elizabeth, but she wields social power through the simulacrum, so she threatens Elizabeth with social isolation. Like Baudrillard states, “The only weapon of power, its only strategy against [ ] defection, is to reinject the real…to persuade us of the reality of the social.”75 The social simulacrum may not be supported by any inherent system, but by having consequences that affect the individual, it seems powerful and valid. Lady Catherine, fearing that the social expectations that support the simulacrum are failing, forces her physical presence on Elizabeth and attempts this persuasion. She threatens the “worst” thing the simulacrum can threaten, exile from the community(ies). Social ostracization is a major consequence for many as society is where one derives power and agency, and it is this that Lady Catherine pulls as her last defense. If Elizabeth can transgress the simulacrum, especially against someone as powerful as Lady Catherine, it points to the lack of substance of the simulacrum and its inability to fully control. Through the inclusion of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and the power she wields, Austen illustrates the power of the simulacrum but also its fragility. She is much more than just another obstacle Elizabeth must face to get married as stands for the entire ruling class and their dependence on the simulacrum they have created. Baudrillard’s

74 Austen 243.
75 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 22.
theory further reveals how Lady Catherine is a personification of the higher meddling powers.

While Lady Catherine’s and the aristocracy’s simulations are critiqued, Austen also does not seem to indicate that marrying for economic reasons is a problem in itself: “Austen feels that one should marry for love, for personal satisfaction, and out of a regard for the human qualities of one’s partner. At the same time, one cannot ignore the socioeconomic position of the other person.”76 Austen has Charlotte who unfortunately feels compelled to marry Mr. Collins for support but is able to make a suitably happy home for herself. Elizabeth also realizes the positives in this and recognizes the intelligence of her friend even though Elizabeth would never make the same choice.77

The problem is when social powers, like Lady Catherine, manipulate the simulacrum to make it seem like economic marriage is the only option and other feelings and considerations must be ignored. Austen illustrates that while consideration of money and status should be considered as is shown when Elizabeth and Colonel Fitzwilliam refuse to take their relationship further due to their mutual need for money, it is also shown that “choice of a marriage partner should not be governed primarily by concerns for money or status.”78 Those of the lower classes, who accept the warped social simulacrum as truth, become little more than players in the aristocracy’s game of power. The lives and privilege of the aristocracy are built and continued by manipulation and exploitation of those below them, but what Austen and Baudrillard reveal is that the manipulation is by a

76 Paris 103.
77 Austen 149.
78 Paris 103.
constructed reality and the precariousness of that simulation should those below question it.

The Meryton and Longbourn community overall accepts and follows the simulacrum that those of Lady Catherine’s class have created. As mentioned earlier, *Pride and Prejudice* exhibits the first two stages of Baudrillard’s hyperreality: “1. It [the simulacrum] is the reflection of a basic reality. 2. It masks and perverts basic reality.”79

As Paris states, “civilization is based, in part, upon the observance of proper forms of behavior… so that [] manners communicate [] true sentiments and reflect [] character” but that this system is “subject to distortion and can stand in the way of happiness, sincerity, and truth.”80 In the novel, the social system at times represents reality, but often it does not, and this ambiguity of what is real or fake leads to confusion as the community has a difficult time discerning who is what they do or don’t appear to be: “[Austen’s] point is… that truth is hard to detect and falsehood hard to distinguish from it.”81 The ambiguity of what is real and the misleading simulacrum that makes absolute ideals that must be met (e.g. all rich men must be looking for a wife), leads to the Longbourn community making blanket judgments on people’s characters. Baudrillard notes that appearance of being something creates that reality: “If he is this good at acting crazy, it’s because he is.”82 The simulation “threatens the difference between true and false” and the distinction becomes unclear.83 The community perceives certain actions and manners and they assume those reflect reality, and they have little reason to question those beliefs.

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79 Baudrillard, *Simulations* 11.
80 Paris 106 and 103.
81 Bonaparte 151.
83 Baudrillard *Simulacra and Simulation* 3.
Their community, with its strong, central simulacrum, is a “reproduction without variation” where Mrs. Bennets reproduce Lydias and Mr. Bennets reproduce Elizabeths.  

How the community rejects and accepts Mr. Darcy and George Wickham, respectively, illustrates how the community incorrectly perceives reality. Mr. Darcy is shy and aloof and does not try to interact warmly and gentlemanly with the Longbourn and Meryton community, so he is seen as an outsider and pushed away. No one, except in some instances, Jane, questions this assumption after it is decided upon during and after the initial ball. Darcy’s inability to live up to their idea of a gentleman pushes him out of public favor. The community goes through the same process with George Wickham, but he is quickly deemed acceptable because of his appearance. Mr. Wickham, unlike Mr. Darcy, appears to be a gentleman, he is friendly, talkative, and able to converse with people he does not know. Because the community is relying on an imperfect simulacrum, how an individual’s character is overshadowed by their presentation. Master manipulators like Wickham can use expectations put forth by the simulacrum to his advantage. He is not in the place of power that Lady Catherine is, but he is clever enough to work around the systems already in place and use the simulation to his benefit. Darcy does not try to fulfill the role of a gentleman to this community of a lower class and thus seems to have an ungentlemanly character. Like Baudrillard explained, something that seems to be real is taken to be real, “if he acts so crazy, he must be mad,” and Wickham appeared to be a gentleman to Elizabeth and the Longbourn community, so he was

84 Deresiewicz 134.
85 Austen 8.
86 Austen 52.
87 Baudrillard, Simulations 7.
assumed to be one, and the opposite applies to Mr. Darcy; even though the contrary is true.

Austen presents a community that willingly submits and regurgitates a simulacrum that does not always benefit them, but within that community, she does include one character that, from the beginning, does realize the issues of perception and simulations that dictate society even though she is not typically thought of as a heroine. Charlotte Lucas understands how others may misread and misperceive Jane’s true thoughts and feelings concerning Mr. Bingley; she states, “If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him.”

Charlotte understands better than Elizabeth how those outside of their immediate circle will most likely fail to perceive what is real to her and Elizabeth. Charlotte even mentions creating Baudrillard’s second stage of hyperreality where the real is perverted: “In nine cases out of ten a woman had better shew more affection than she feels.” This exaggeration is still connected to the real because some initial affection is present, but the beginning of perversion of reality to meet needs and expectations is exemplified.

Charlotte, aware of the structures of society and how they don’t always benefit her class, encourages her friend to take the creation and manipulation into their own hands. It is a minor influence, but it is a way to regain some control. She is aware of and tries to warn Elizabeth of how others perceive the world differently. Charlotte, much more so than Elizabeth, can see or at least guess at the simulacrum and how others perceive it. She realizes they may not perceive the world the same way nor do they perceive her positively. Charlotte Lucas, like Wickham, realizes and plays the simulacrum stacked

\[88\] Austen 16.
\[89\] Austen 16.
against her so that she can find some comfort even if marital happiness is out of her reach.

Charlotte submits to the broken system because she cannot foresee another option that allows for economic support and personal happiness. The simulation promotes socioeconomic justifications for marriage at the expense of all other considerations, so Charlotte is left with the choices to either marry the man that is her intellectual and moral inferior or be a burden on her family. This choice is contrasted with Elizabeth Bennet, who according to the entail should marry Mr. Collins, but refuses his proposal because she cannot ignore her lack of happiness just to support the social system that commands her to. With Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth and he force the other to confront their misperceptions created by simulations in their own lives to come to a mutual understanding. This understanding, free from the meddling simulations that do not support their marriage based on money, status, and disposition, allows them to partially remove themselves from the manipulative communities to form a new community of moral equals. Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth’s tensions and eventual marriage illustrate the “possibilit[y] of combining the requirements of social life with legitimate aspirations for personal integrity and satisfaction.” They are able to ignore the simulations to find a real with each other, while retaining the social structure of marriage that does compliment their relationship and removes them from the communities where their personal fulfillment is not achievable.

Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy may end up in a similar place regarding the simulacra, but initially they inhabit very different social positions. Mr. Darcy has some control to

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90 Deresiewicz 138.
91 Paris 103.
resist the simulacrum due to his wealth and rank, but he generally complies with it, until
Elizabeth’s version of reality clashes with his own. For example, he does not initially
obey the “universal truth” that he should be looking for a wife. He’s independently
wealthy, so finding a wife is not on the forefront of his mind, though for those around
him like his aunt and Caroline Bingley it very much is. He is disinterested in finding a
wife, but when he finds one woman he is interested in, the simulacrum that supports
economic marriage is adopted. He assumes that Elizabeth, obviously in need of economic
support, will accept his proposal: “[he] express[ed] his hope that it would now be
rewarded by her acceptance of his hand. As he said this, she could easily see that he had
no doubt of a favourable answer.”92 While his place of privilege allows him to ignore her
and her family’s “inferiority” that should keep him from proposing, he is blind to the
potential that she could reject him because the simulacrum does not allow for that kind of
deviation.93 Mr. Darcy “trusts the rules of gender and assumes his position as ‘a single
man in possession of a good fortune’” so naturally Elizabeth will accept because he
believes she conforms to the rule too.94 Austen notes that Elizabeth recognizes “the
compliment of such a man’s affection” but turns him down because while she realizes the
expectations for her, she refuses to comply with society while ignoring her own
feelings.95 Darcy’s distorted simulacrum, created by his class and supported by society,
leaves no room for Elizabeth’s refusal, and he cannot function in a dignified manner to
respond when his simulated reality has been so disrupted. The perverted simulacra

92 Austen 132.
93 Austen 131-132.
94 McKinstry 36.
95 Austen 131.
separate the individuals and causes “evil” that breeds misunderstanding and heartbreak. Mr. Darcy, misled by a simulacrum of class and propriety that refuses to consider personal preference above financial motivations, proposed to Elizabeth feeling sure of her acceptance. Elizabeth, operating under her own misled perception of reality, turns him down and upsets his entire understanding of reality.

It is Elizabeth’s refusal to submit that breaks through Darcy’s simulacrum and allows him to understand there are numerous perceptions of reality as well as the limitations of the simulacrum. His expectations were not met, and he demands to know why. Elizabeth speaks freely and lays out what she believes to be his crimes against her, her sister, and Mr. Wickham. Her simulacrum is still incorrect, so her accusations are unfounded, but her frankness and transparency allow for Mr. Darcy to realize that other perceptions of reality do exist. In his letter to Elizabeth, he more calmly explains “his account of the real” and the motives for his actions. He better understands where they have both misperceived reality and the trouble it has caused. A letter, a highly personal and intimate form of communication, is used to convey his thoughts and feelings to Elizabeth. This letter illustrates how Elizabeth has deconstructed his simulacrum, and in turn, this letter will cause her to question her constructed reality.

Elizabeth is firmly situated in her community’s simulacrum despite her small acts of mockery and rebellion within it. From the beginning, she is noted as different and quickly becomes the reader’s heroine who refuses to completely subject her will to society’s expectations. She defies some expectations while still abiding by many others.

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96 Baudrillard, *Simulations* 11.
97 Austen 141.
that keep her acceptable to the community. This position of rebellion within the system reflects her position in society. She, as a woman, is completely dependent on men and social customs to allow her agency. To be able to make more decisions and move more freely, she needs to abide by and complement others within the social structure. If she were a spinster without family and without any means, she would have never met Mr. Darcy, and she also would not have that little bit of power she wields so effectively. It is only through the system, with its perverted simulacrum, that Elizabeth can exercise any agency or power to reaffirm or disrupt that same social simulacrum.

Even with her small disobediences within her community and Charlotte Lucas acknowledging the construction of perception with the odds stacked against their class, Elizabeth’s point of realization that gives her the ability to recognize the simulacrum and work around it comes from Mr. Darcy. After her rejection of his proposal, Mr. Darcy, who Mr. Bingley claims “does not write with ease. He studies too much for words of four syllables,” delivers a letter to Elizabeth. For someone who writes slowly and cares deeply how most others perceive and read him, it is safe to assume that Mr. Darcy has most likely written this letter with painstaking reflection to clarify his position, and most importantly, his perception of reality. Elizabeth is so secure in her simulacrum that she immediately rejects his account of the real, importantly it is not termed the real or what is real, but Darcy’s “account of the real.” The letter reveals that Elizabeth and Darcy’s memories and perspectives are compromised by their positions and communities. After intense reflection, Elizabeth realizes the perverted simulacrum and the unmanipulated

98 Deresiewicz 119.
99 Austen 35 emphasis original.
100 Austen 141.
reality for the first time: “She was now struck with the impropriety… and the 
inconsistencies of [Wickham’s] professions of his conduct.” ¹⁰¹ By Mr. Darcy revealing 
his mistaken simulacrum and where he does have knowledge of the real not influenced by 
others, Elizabeth can see the inconsistencies in her own simulacrum and begin to discern 
reality for herself. She scolds herself, “Had I been in love, I could not have been more 
wretchedly blind!...Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the 
other…I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away.” ¹⁰² She 
realizes that she ignored reason and reality, and her simulacrum has been demolished so 
she must resituate her view of the world. Elizabeth may have disrupted Mr. Darcy’s 
simulacrum of gender expectations, but Mr. Darcy also disturbs Elizabeth’s assumptions 
and forces her to not only realize the manipulations of her own perceptions but of her 
own part in continuing these defective simulacra.

Elizabeth, now aware of the simulacrum at play around her, is faced with the issue 
of her community’s still perverted simulacrum and whether she can change it: “if I 
endeavor to undeceive people as to the rest of [Wickham’s] conduct, who will believe 
me?” ¹⁰³ Elizabeth, seeing an uninfluenced reality, can realize how strongly that 
simulacrum is clung to and how difficult it would be to break it. The community’s 
steadfastness and inability to easily amend their views becomes an issue for Elizabeth 
again when she tries to convince them of her care for Mr. Darcy and their engagement. 
Because she is much more socially and self-aware, “she anticipated what would be felt in 
the family when her situation became known… even feared that with the others it was a

¹⁰¹ Austen 143.  
¹⁰² Austen 144.  
¹⁰³ Austen 156.
dislike which not all his fortune and consequence might do away.”104 The community and its simulacrum hold an enormous amount of power and its approval is crucial for societal acceptance. Elizabeth, as much as she can now perceive and discern for herself as she is distanced from her community, is still committed to it because it is her family and the reason for her social position. Elizabeth cares for them, but that doesn’t mean she will willingly submit any longer to a manipulative simulation. She also cannot remove the simulacrum fully; it’s too embedded in her community and larger society. She cannot overthrow the social system, nor can she submit to it, so, along with Darcy, she creates a new place, distanced but not cut off from her old community, where an uninfluenced real is available.

Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth have helped the other to realize the manipulation and misperception of their own lives, and together they mostly remove themselves from these communities that heavily rely on the simulacrum.105 The simulacrum cannot be done away with completely as it is too strong and society as they know it would be dismantled if it was. Instead of complete rebellion, Elizabeth and Darcy create a bubble where an unmediated reality is privileged at Pemberley, where they can be selective about who is admitted and how much influence those visitors have. Pemberley becomes “the desirable society represented…[by] their clear-sightedness and maturity… [and] based upon a real understanding of themselves and each other and upon a proper combination of values.”106 It is at this place where the simulacra created by higher powers do not have influence to control completely, and the real is accessible again. Elizabeth’s initial visit to Pemberley

104 Austen 255.
105 I.e. like Lady Catherine’s and Longbourn’s.
106 Paris 100.
sparks her love for Darcy because it is there is where she is able to see its master without the misleading perceptions and influences of a corrupted community. The estate continues this with Elizabeth and Darcy’s marriage; “A new society is established at the end in which rational and deserving people can be happy.”107 They create a new community around sense and communication and awareness.

Elizabeth and Darcy can still find access to an unmediated real and are not confined by hyperreality; unlike contemporary audiences who are within hyperreality where everything is “no longer real but belong[s] to the hyperreal order.”108 By adopting specifically Elizabeth Bennet as their heroine and surrogate, contemporary audiences have someone who uses the simulated reality and the limited power she has within it to escape that societal simulacrum. Paris argues that, “Jane Austen clearly appreciates the values of civilization; but she is aware, too, of the pitfalls and limitations of the established order.”109 The audience’s heroine finds happiness not by busting through a wall and refusing to comply at all with the simulacrum, because one young woman cannot dismantle the entire system, but Elizabeth finds ways around and through the simulation to achieve a place where a reality not dictated by someone else can be found. Through Elizabeth, those audiences can momentarily fill that nostalgia for an unmediated real. Trapped in a never-ending cycle of simulations and the control of hyperreality, audiences continually recreate Elizabeth Bennet and her story to intercede some way to an unmediated real as the “characteristic hysteria of our times: that of the production and reproduction of the real…to restore the real that escapes [them].”110 Like previously

107 Paris 16.
108 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 12.
109 Paris 107.
110 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 23.
stated, this recreation of adaptations furthers the simulations and pushes audiences into hyperreality instead of pulling them back to a place where reality is accessible. Elizabeth and Darcy may be able to find a way to an unmediated real, but the contemporary audiences who desperately recreate their story cannot.

Conclusion

Jane Austen anticipated a late 20th century postmodern theory in her 1813 novel that on the surface seems to be little more than “chick lit” and a “happily ever after”. *Pride and Prejudice* is those things though, which is partially why it is so brilliant. It is directed towards women and there is a happily ever after because it illustrates to women, who lacked a lot of agency and faced daunting social expectations, that there are small yet significant ways to resist the simulacrum and power structures that control their lives. The women were expected to act, dress, and marry a certain way that disregarded their personal context or feelings. Austen illustrates agency and power. She gives Elizabeth’s arc as the ideal, but even Charlotte shows agency in using the system to benefit her in some ways. By using ideas and concepts that don’t become widely popular until over 150 years later, Austen shows that not only is she a thinker before her time, but she is acutely aware of the limitations of human perception, the manipulative influence of those in power, and the consequences of living a life without questioning of the society one takes part in.

By analyzing how Austen’s text evokes Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, one can see that the oppressive system that manipulates the simulacra to meet their own selfish needs is personified in Lady Catherine de Bourgh. She represents the aristocratic
class that initially created their rules and reality as those reflections of society: many people of a certain class behaved in certain ways, these rules of propriety helped to keep some order in an ever-expanding world, and most wealthy men were probably looking for a wife to produce an heir to the wealth, etc. But to keep their power and prestige, they perverted the simulacrum and created social expectations and rules that harmed others to help themselves. As was previously stated, “the code of civility… permits us to come together without continually hurting each other’s feelings... but it inhibits self-expression, isolates us from each other, and makes knowledge and communication difficult.”\textsuperscript{111} This perversion of the real into unrealistic absolutes that must always be met leads to the ideas and all-encompassing statements like, “a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife,”\textsuperscript{112} ignoring the reality that some men might not be, and some women may not want such a man. This simulacrum that perverts reality exploits individuals to sustain a system that supports those in power.

Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy, through serious mishaps and misunderstandings, can help each other realize the limitations and negative effects of unquestioningly adopting such troubled simulations of reality and allowing them to control lives. They frustrate, challenge, and force one another to grow, which leads to their friendship and eventual marriage. Together they can access a real that was covered up to keep them, two people who fell in love despite class and financial differences, apart. Their feelings toward one another do not come from façades that society generates but come from their personalities and genuine desires for something real as can be seen when Darcy painstakingly writes her the letter that attempts to explain his understanding.

\textsuperscript{111} Paris 107-8.
\textsuperscript{112} Austen 3.
and when Elizabeth sincerely reflects and scrutinizes herself and her community for willfully believing deceptiveness. Because of their deconstruction of multiple simulacra and their “happily ever after”, readers can see that “fiction does not merely mirror the socially prescribed gender roles but creates artfully described alternatives.” At Pemberley, Elizabeth and Darcy can create a space that is free from the influences of simulations where they can find understanding and self-fulfillment.

This ability to transgress the simulacrum and resist the power structures at play to find a real without interference is what is most alluring to contemporary audiences. As mentioned earlier, White argues that Austen adaptations get at a “nostalgia which structures our understanding of the present through a yearning for that which is lost.” In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, media has compounded simulation upon simulation to the point that Baudrillard’s hyperreality is the norm and its stages have been completed: “1. It [the simulacrum] is the reflection of a basic reality. 2. It masks and perverts basic reality 3. It masks the absence of a basic reality. 4. It has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum.” Because Austen, especially in *Pride and Prejudice*, exemplifies ways in which her characters can still subvert the simulacrum and find an unmediated real, her text becomes the subject of numerous revisions and recreations. Adaptations allow a “repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual

113 McKinstry 33.
114 White 258.
combined with the piquancy of surprise,”¹¹⁷ so audiences can continually pretend to access the uninfluenced real like the characters do. This demand for more ways/adaptations to simulate access to the real leads to “the production and reproduction of the real…to restore the real that escapes it.”¹¹⁸ Austen shows the first two stages of hyperreality with in her novel, and the final two stages are completed with adaptations. Favret, Collins, and White have all noted how Austen adaptations are driven by a postmodern nostalgia for what has been lost and a fetishizing of the past. The thing that has been lost and is being fetishized is this reality free from influence and the ability to escape, even partially, the simulacrum that Austen explores.

Jane Austen scholars like Deresiewicz and Bonaparte among others have already noted and shown how *Pride and Prejudice* exhibits postmodern sentiments, and others like Steenkamp and McKinstry explored how she has her heroines rebel against social structures and the contemporary appeal of that rebellion. It is the combination of those lines of scholarship that allow for a greater understanding of how Austen is a postmodern contemporary because of how she exhibits social control as a system that manipulates truth and reality which also gives greater influence to her characters’ rebellions. By specifically looking at how her text intersects with *Simulacra and Simulation*, we can better understand her work and how perceptive she was of society. Lady Catherine is not just a plot device to hinder Elizabeth and Darcy’s eventual marriage, but stands for a much broader and more sinister structure of power that operates within the novel but also in the lives of readers of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries: powerful people that will disregard lesser people’s happiness for their own gain, and who will manipulate systems

¹¹⁷ Hutcheon 4.
¹¹⁸ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 23.
to achieve their own goals. The desire to resist that power, even if one cannot overthrow it, is appealing to all audiences, especially ones who in a postmodern age feel disempowered and can no longer effectively resist and obtain a reality not shaped by others.

As it has been stated by many before, Austen is a contemporary. She explores topics and philosophical questions that people today are still grappling with and with which they may continue to struggle. She forces her characters and readers to question and evaluate their worlds to come to a better understanding of themselves and those around them. By viewing *Pride and Prejudice* through the lens of Jean Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, one can see how Austen, through an approachable and initially unassuming love story, actually subverts a complex simulacrum that dictates and limits life and gives those who may feel unempowered a way to vicariously resist and find an unmediated reality where they have control.
When Baudrillard published *Simulacra and Simulation* in 1981, the media simulations he noted were billboards, television, and Disneyland among others. With the 1990s, came the rising use and popularity of the internet and new forms of media simulation or mediation. On the internet, information, images, and texts need no physical counterpart unlike before when pictures and videos needed a physical substance that they would portray. With the internet, that physicality is no longer necessary; on the internet everything is hyperreal, “produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.”¹¹⁹ That lack of substance and the inability to access an unsimulated reality lead to a “panic-stricken production of the real and of the referential, parallel to and greater than the panic of material production.”¹²⁰ The first chapter theorized that a large part of the appeal of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations that led to Austenmania was the original text’s content of being able to avoid manipulative simulations to access a real, a freedom of understanding and ability to make choices based on personal well-being, distinct from a simulated existence that conceals truth and expects submission to strict and impractical expectations. Living in a highly simulated,

¹¹⁹ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 2.
hyperreal state of the internet age, people desire to access that unmediated real again, thus Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy’s avoidance of their own manipulation by the societal simulacra becomes an alluring text to simulate an access to an unmediated real for the audience. The appeal of Austen’s text leads to that “panic-stricken production of the real” through adaptations that simulate access to an unsimulated real which produced Austenmania, particularly of *Pride and Prejudice*, in the mid-1990s to the 2000s.

These reproductions of Austen’s texts are the, “‘material’ production is that of the hyperreal itself. It retains all the features [of the real] …but it is no longer anything but a scaled-down refraction.” Adaptations mimic the original text but cannot completely simulate the same experience of reading that text nor can any of the texts allow for the audience to access and unreplicated real. The Austen adaptations attempt to provide “pleasure… [through] repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual with the piquancy of surprise” as they recreate that simulation of accessing an unmediated reality while making minor changes to allow for a slightly different experience each time. The reproductions of Austen’s text are simulations of the original intended to continue the audience’s ability to simulate access to an unmediated real, but they also continue the hyperreality of the audience.

Adaptation theorist, Linda Hutcheon, theorizes a process of reception where adaptations create an intertextual network among them and the source text. The network creates a conceptual idea of the text that integrates parts of the source text but also parts of the adaptations. This resembles the blurring of simulations and reality to

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123 Hutcheon 4.
124 Hutcheon 8.
create hyperreality. Fans of the novel may be able to distinguish the 1813 text from the adaptations’ additions, but Steenkamp notes that there are fans who “consider themselves admirers of Jane Austen, but do not necessarily read Austen.”\textsuperscript{125} This sentiment is echoed by Svensson who notes, “one consequence of remaking the story is that \textit{Pride and Prejudice} enthusiasts may come into contact with Austen and her literary productions through remakes rather than through the novel.”\textsuperscript{126} The numerous \textit{Pride and Prejudice} adaptations create a network that causes these adaptations to be “directly and openly connected to recognizable other works, and that connection is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity.”\textsuperscript{127} This intertextual network blurs the lines between texts, so, at times, they become almost indiscernible from one another and the original. The idea of \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, in some ways, has become hyperreal as its adaptations have become blurred with the original. This blurring of the adaptations with the source text and the novel’s exploration of simulacra issues allows \textit{Pride and Prejudice} to fit well into the hyper-mediation of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. The appeal of the content and the hyperreality of the process of reception of \textit{Pride and Prejudice} has led to an elusion of boundaries and even the blurring of its category as fiction in some instances.

This blurring of boundaries at multiple levels is illustrated in the 2012 transmedia adaptation of \textit{Pride and Prejudice, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (LBD)}. Co-produced and created by Hank Green, a digital content creator and producer, one of part of the Vlogbrothers-duo, and author, along with Bernie Su, a web series creator, writer, director

\textsuperscript{125} Steenkamp 1.  
\textsuperscript{126} Svensson 209.  
\textsuperscript{127} Hutcheon 21.
and producer, *LBD* is the first transmedia adaptation of a work of literature. *LBD* completely transforms Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* into a 21st century transmedia narrative. Transmedia storytelling, as defined by media scholar Henry Jenkins, is a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.¹²⁸

*LBD* is a transmedia story because of its intentional use of multiple platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, Linked In, Ok Cupid, Facebook, and the Pemberley Digital business website to portray and enhance the story. The creation team also added two novels to supplement the story after the original uploads, *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet: A Novel* and *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet: A Novel*. The main medium of presentation is YouTube, where Lizzie’s vlogs were serially uploaded. This serialization and social media staging allowed and still allows for much closer audience participation than traditional film and television adaptations. In some ways, the characters occupy the same reality as the audience and vice-versa. By blurring the line between textual reality and the audience’s reality, *LBD* further reveals that reality is constructed, dependent on perspective, and can be manipulated by circumstance that Austen’s original text exhibits. Beyond it exemplifying hyperreality with its audience interactions, *LBD* also continues and amplifies *Pride and Prejudice* text’s problems of perception and simulacra obscuring reality, and because of its reliance on media fulfills Baudrillard’s

final stages of hyperreality: 3. It [the simulacrum] masks the absence of a basic reality. 4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum. “129 The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is able to illustrate the issues of simulation and reality within the story, but also trouble the reality of its viewers.

*LBD* uses various types of social media and texts to convey the stories of Lizzie Bennet, a 24-year-old Mass Communications graduate student, along with her friends and family. Throughout a year that spanned from April 2012 to March 2013, Lizzie narrates the happenings in her life through vlogs on YouTube as part of a class project. It should be noted that the story is continued after that point by the two additional vlogs uploaded in May and June of 2014 along with various social media posting and the novels, but the main plot adaptation was serially published within that year. Due to a combination of limited funds and a desire for character authenticity by the creators, the vlogs are shot confessional-style with Lizzie in her room talking straight to the camera with Charlotte, Lydia, or Jane occasionally joining the shot in the early vlogs. As Lizzie travels to VidCon, Netherfield, Collins and Collins, Pemberley Digital, and back home again, so does her camera and thus her vlogs allowing for an array of characters to be seen on screen. Other characters also have vlogs, though far fewer, and these are used to supplement the story and give audiences an insight into what other characters are doing when not with Lizzie. The additional vlogs are not vital to the central plot but do allow for character depth and a realism that other characters’ lives are “continuing” even when audiences cannot see them in Lizzie’s vlogs. Beyond the supplemental vlogs, most of the characters have Twitter and some have Tumblr accounts, most of which seem to be still

129 Baudrillard, *Simulations* 11.
accessible in 2018. Mr. Collins is on Linked In, and Wickham even had a profile on the dating website, OkCupid. No longer are the Bennet sisters and those around them stuck in the pages of a novel but are now on fans’ social media timelines.

Lizzie Bennet and company are representative of the Millennial generation. These characters, hypothetically born between 1981 and 1996, represent different aspects of young adults who came of age in the new millennium. This age group is significant because not only are the characters young adults like their novel counterparts but the reliance on social media directly relates to a younger audience. Growing up with the advent of the internet, millennials are statistically more likely to use social media than older generations.\(^{130}\) The main platform that \textit{LBD} utilizes is YouTube and 91% of 18-29-year-olds in the United States use that website alone in 2018.\(^{131}\) A significant portion of the intended audience of \textit{LBD} was this young digital audience who uses social media regularly and could identify with the stereotypes and attitudes of these updated characters. This identification added to the breaking of the fourth wall and allowing fans to see themselves and people they know within the \textit{LBD} story world.

Lizzie is presented to be a typical millennial who vlogs to an audience whom are expected to think and feel similarly to her. This doesn’t come across as a know-it-all mentality, but more that she reflects common ideals held by most millennials. While more traditional Austen fans may have sought out \textit{LBD}, the multi-platforms that the adaptation uses are focused towards an internet community that is well-versed in digital expectations and etiquette. The characterization of Lizzie Bennet mimics other real


\(^{131}\) PEW.
YouTube vloggers and a more general millennial mindset: a bit cynical, sarcastic, career-oriented over marriage-oriented, and a bit dramatic. In the first episode, Lizzie who is conjecturing about who is Bing Lee, says “What if he’s gay? What if he’s a serial killer? What if he’s a gay serial killer?” This is dramatic and a potential nod to another contemporary adaptation of a famous text, BBC’s *Sherlock*, where the first-time audiences see Sherlock Holmes’s archenemies, Moriarty is pretending to be a gay man. Lizzie’s characterization represents the nerdy, outspoken feminist that is common on Twitter and Tumblr. She’s a child of the internet and her degree of Mass Communications adds to this. She feels connected with her digital audience as fellow millennials facing similar life experiences. Her audience, along with the larger digital community of the internet, is her community that she feels allied to and whose expectations she attempts uphold.

Lydia Bennet represents another common, millennial stereotype: a basic white girl. A basic, white girl is characterized in contemporary culture as shallow, materialistic, unoriginal, and vapid. While Lizzie is sarcastic and scholarly, Lydia is an extrovert who doesn’t take life too seriously and loves boys and parties. Lizzie even refers to Lydia as a “stupid, whorey-slut” and overall seems to dismiss her sister as a shallow, party-girl. Lydia seems to fulfill most if not all negative millennial female stereotypes; she’s loud, uses slang like “adorbs” and combination couple names (Jane and Bing become Jing),

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makes social media accounts for her cat, “Kitty” (@TheKittyBennet), etc. Stein argues that the character of Lydia is the personification of “millennial feels”, the perceived new celebration of emotion in millennial culture. Lydia’s “exuberance comes from an honest place: a desire for connection and acceptance in the world” and that she is “representing aspects of femininity that millennial young women have been taught to repress.” Lydia presents herself as an excessive “basic white girl” to cover her vulnerabilities. For most of the series, Lizzie takes that simulacrum to be Lydia’s entire existence. Lizzie and Lydia’s characterizations are identifiable for many millennials as they see themselves and people they know represented and dealing with similar difficulties of adulthood and fulfilling others’ expectations.

Beyond Lizzie and Lydia’s stereotypical millennial update, the cast and plot points are also modernized to reflect the diversity and technology. Mary is now a cousin, Kitty is Lydia’s cat (who has her own Twitter), Charles Bingley is now Bing Lee an Asian-American, Charlotte Lucas is now Charlotte Lu (also Asian-American), Colonel Fitzwilliam is Fitz Williams and is African-American and gay, Georgiana Darcy is Gigi, and more. With the transmedia element, viewers get more developed characters. Supporting characters are now tweeting and posting, allowing audiences to see their presentation of events. For example, Lydia’s character grows significantly in her own vlogs. Viewers see her downward spiral from happy and silly to depressed and in an emotionally abusive relationship. Audiences also get to see and understand Gigi better as

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137 Stein 163 and 164.
she must relive George Wickham’s betrayal to her when the scandal breaks of George and Lydia’s sex tape. In the 21st century, eloping or having sex out of wedlock isn’t a faux pas so instead, LBD has Wickham selling a sex tape of Lydia and him to a company wanting to capitalize on Lydia’s internet stardom. Besides seeing the relationships between the characters and their social drama, viewers also get to witness Lizzie’s stress with graduate school, planning for life out of college, and, of course, the pressure, mainly from her mother, to find a man. Austen’s original work is used as a baseline, but almost every aspect of the novel has been at least tweaked to fit and represent the 21st century and identify with a postmodern audience.

The rise of the internet brought about an even greater hyperreality that caused Austenmania as fans tried to simulate a connection to an unmediated real again, but it also helped to create a generation that uses that technology consistently and even lives out a large portion of their lives online. Both trends contributed to the creation of LBD, as it exhibits Hutcheon’s process of reception for Pride and Prejudice adaptations while exemplifying conventional millennial stereotypes and attitudes. LBD presents realistic millennial characters dealing with the troubles of simulation and manipulation like what its audience is dealing with, and it also shows how those characters eventually partially remove themselves from that simulation to retain some control of their own manipulation. LBD retains one of the major appeals of the source text, the access of the unmediated real, by illustrating how even in a highly mediated world, one can exert some control over the simulations that work upon them. By presenting characters that resemble its millennial audience and conventicle problems of that generation, LBD blurs that fourth wall as a realistic representation while also retaining its status as an adaptation.
The creators were very intentional about the ways they transformed Austen’s text to fit into the 21st century, but also how they could integrate the story world with the digital lives of their audience. While they probably did not consider Baudrillard or hyperreality in their creation of LBD, they do show awareness of adaptations issues and media to confuse boundaries of time and fiction. Su and Green published blogs throughout the first six months of LBD that answered fan questions from a behind the scenes’ perspective. Su’s first blog about LBD gives his intentions about adapting Austen:

To be clear, it’s important to me that I honor the characters and their journeys while telling a compelling and entertaining story… We [the LBD team] made a choice to have our Lizzie do what she does, and she (and we) will live with those choices. I will say that Jane Austen’s Lizzy didn’t grow up in a world with Tumblr, Facebook, cell phones, cars, electricity, or woman’s rights. These are inherently different women because of the worlds they grew up in.138 Realizing the potential forthcoming backlash over adaptation and its fidelity, Su attempts to clarify his perspective and intention. They’re not trying to create a period piece that recreates every scene and interaction from Pride and Prejudice, but to “tell the story almost entirely from Lizzie’s perspective by her telling the story to us.”139 This transition requires changes and radical revisions that the creative team were deliberate about. They also intentionally chose Pride and Prejudice as their source text partially due to it being

“very dialogue based and character based so [they] could do it not as a big production with lots sets and scenes and everything, but just as person talking to a camera.”\textsuperscript{140} They realized that to utilize the transmedia components and tell the story in a believable and affordable manner, they had to use a story based almost exclusively on character interactions and perspective. As was analyzed in the previous chapter, Austen’s text is perfect for this type of adaptation because of the troubles of perception that drive the book’s plot. The misrepresentations of reality and characters, the simulacra, that are present in the original text are what make \textit{LBD} possible and successful in this format.

Some may argue that Green and Su made a typical, smart economic choice in choosing Austen’s \textit{Pride and Prejudice} to adapt instead of the text being chosen due to its content and conflicts; they did choose a text whose copyright was up and one that has proven to be highly popular in recent years.\textsuperscript{141} But, as can be seen from the blogs and the vlogs, the \textit{LBD} creators were very concerned with issues of perspective and how that changes in this 21st century context. Su points out that Lizzie is a vlogger and that even professional vloggers only “choose to tell/show us they are comfortable sharing (consciously or subconsciously).”\textsuperscript{142} What the audience sees is what Lizzie, or other characters, want their audience to see because the story is intentionally told from a first-person perspective that severely limits what knowledge audiences are given. In a sense, Lizzie and the other on-screen characters give simulations of their lives. It’s a reflection of reality that is cultivated, edited, and retold for a specific audience. Not far into the

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\textsuperscript{141} Hutcheon 29.
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vlogs, Charlotte and Jane use a video to more fully explain events that they felt Lizzie had not accurately represented: “We feel that Lizzie isn't being particularly comprehensive with her commentary regarding recent events” and “Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees.”\textsuperscript{143} While Su and Green obviously did fulfill expectations on what type of text to adapt according to the precedent set by former adaptations, it wasn’t just because the chances for a lucrative outcome were high; they realized and capitalized on the same issues of perception of reality in \textit{Pride and Prejudice} that were explored in the previous chapter. And like Baudrillard’s simulations compound leading to hyperreality, Green and Su’s use of social media exacerbate the issues of reality even further as the social media used brings the story world of Lizzie Bennet into the “real” digital lives of fans: “thus everywhere the hyperrealism of simulation is translated by the hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself.”\textsuperscript{144} The characters of \textit{LBD} post and interact on social media sites in ways that resemble actual people interacting within those digital spaces. While the characters are fictional, they start to seem like real people and create a hyperreal story world.

This troubling of the boundaries of digital space is an intentional aspect of transmedia storytelling according to media scholar and one of the leading transmedia theorists, Henry Jenkins. For Jenkins, world building and that world being immersive or extractible is key to a transmedia narrative.\textsuperscript{145} By building the narrative’s world across multiple platforms, the world expands beyond one medium and can contain a larger
variety of content that fans can access. Immersion along with world building are important intentions of transmedia productions; together these concepts attempt to “represent ways for consumers to engage more directly with the worlds represented in the narratives, treating them as real spaces which intersect in some way with our own lived realities.” This immersive quality is a simulation of sorts, creating a sort of alternative world to the supposedly unmediated world that the fan physically lives in.

This story world becomes like a theme park of the internet, a liminal space where one can escape and be something unlike your physical reality. Like one would play into the fantasy of a theme park like Disneyland, fans of the story world play into the transmedia elements for that simulation of a reality. For Baudrillard, “Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation.” Disneyland overtly presents itself as a simulation of reality that consumers intentionally buy into. Jenkins’s discussions of transmedia do not explicitly talk about hyperreality, but it is easy to see the connection as fans choose to ignore their physical reality to immerse themselves in a different fictional world that becomes an overt simulation of reality. The immersion of the story world and its representation as a potential “real space” starts to blur where the physical reality of the consumer ends and the fictional world begins.

An important addition that Baudrillard notes is that instead of leaving the unmediated real behind when one enters the transmedia story world/theme park/Disneyland, these overt simulations actually point to the more subliminal mediations

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147 Jenkins “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling.”
148 The fan’s physical reality still highly mediated due to contemporary society’s reliance on technology but seems less so when compared to the complete mediation of a fictional story world.
149 Jenkins, “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling.”
150 Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 12.
that happen in the supposed unmediated reality of “real life”. Baudrillard explains, “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation.”\textsuperscript{151} For Baudrillard, Disneyland is an overt example of simulation to hide the veiled simulations that have power over everyday life. Some transmedia story worlds act similarly and create distinct spaces from consumers’ typical media and physical life. For example, when director Peter Jackson and Electronic Arts were collaborating on adapting and expanding J.R.R. Tolkien’s \textit{Lord of the Rings} novels into a franchise, their main mediums for the transmedia world creation was through films and a video game.\textsuperscript{152} Both the films and video games present \textit{Lord of the Rings’} Middle Earth as a distinct other world that consumers can immerse themselves in, but its extractability is severely limited in how it can come into the physical, modern reality as Orcs, Hobbits, and Elves are not widely found in downtown LA or even New Zealand. Like Disneyland, Middle Earth is a distinct fictional reality that consumers are aware is fictitious and its boundaries help with that; Disneyland has borders one must enter and one must actively engage with either the books, films, or videogames to become immersed in Tolkien and Jackson’s story world. While there are parts of this transmedia set up that do blur fiction from reality, there are distinct boundaries that can still be found. With \textit{Pride and Prejudice} and \textit{LBD}, those boundaries between physical reality and fictional space become even more blurred as the platforms that \textit{LBD} utilizes are ones that millennial fans use in their regular lives, so fans do not have to enter a

\textsuperscript{151} Baudrillard, \textit{Simulacra and Simulation} 12-13.

\textsuperscript{152} Jenkins, \textit{Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide} 109.
separate story world through film or video games because the story is right there on their personal social media feed.

Jenkins does point out in his transmedia discussion how *The Matrix* alludes to Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* when the main character pulls a copy off a shelf. While *The Matrix* seems aware of its connections to Baudrillard, Jenkins doesn’t delve further with his theory of simulation except to point to the film’s allusion to it. It seems that the allusion and mention of Baudrillard is not a connection about the immersibility of transmedia storytelling, but a reference to the characters within the Matrix whose lives and consciousness are literally simulations of reality. While Jenkins nor other scholars thus far have seemed to explicitly connect transmedia storytelling to hyperreality, it is not hard to see how these concepts overlap.

While transmedia and hyperreality have not been explicitly connected, transmedia adaptation has received scholarly attention. In the “Epilogue” of Linda Hutcheon’s *Theory of Adaptation*, the 2nd edition, O’Flynn theorizes how transmedia adaptations are evolving the conceptualization of adaptation. She reflects on how the transmedia design strategy “supports Hutcheon’s argument that adaptation can be thought of as a ‘system of relations among works.’” Like adaptations are a “process of reception” where each new adaptation bears traces of not only the original text but also previous adaptations to create an intertextual network, so do transmedia narratives rely on an intertextual network to tell their story. O’Flynn also covers various parts of transmedia storytelling and its influence on adaptation, including a critique that having various adaptations does

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155 Hutcheon 8.
not make a text transmedia. The intentionality of the transmedia aspect from the beginning is necessary for transmedia to be an apt descriptor.\textsuperscript{156} Despite this caution, \textit{LBD}, as an adaptation and an intentional transmedia story, seems to be aptly termed a transmedia adaptation. Its use of multiple mediums creates the transmedia aspect, and \textit{LBD} also fulfills Hutcheon’s “process of reception” and the “repetition with variation.”\textsuperscript{157} \textit{LBD} is drastically different enough to have its own story world expanded by transmedia elements while remaining recognizable as a \textit{Pride and Prejudice} adaptation. By being a transmedia adaptation, it fulfills another of Hutcheon’s theories about adaptations: “adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places.”\textsuperscript{158} \textit{LBD} is a transmedia adaptation of \textit{Pride and Prejudice} to better reflect contemporary issues and society.

Scholars Tepper, Jandl, Seymour et. al., and Zeiser have begun to explore how \textit{LBD}, as a transmedia adaptation, blurs overt fiction and digital reality despite not explicitly using the term hyperreal or applying Baudrillard’s theory. They particularly look at how the different social media usage allows and constrains fan interaction and immersion with the story world. Notably, Jandl states early on how \textit{Pride and Prejudice}’s “realism and plausibility…give the novel an air of authenticity which has been attractive for readers these past two centuries” and that this realism translates to \textit{LBD}.\textsuperscript{159} Tepper, Jandl, Seymour et. al., and Zeiser, despite not acknowledging the hyperreality of \textit{LBD} nor

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{156} O’Flynn 195-6.  \\
\textsuperscript{157} Hutcheon 8 and 4.  \\
\textsuperscript{158} Hutcheon 176.  \\
\end{flushright}
viewing reality in the same way as this argument, explore how *Pride and Prejudice* is adapted and that “air of authenticity” is continued in new ways.\(^{160}\)

The three articles and Zieser’s case study present in various ways how *LBD* was cultivated to give an “illusion of reality.”\(^{161}\) While not attempting to hide that Lizzie and friends are actually an adaptation, the *LBD* team does intentionally cultivate “a degree of authenticity…thus creat[ing] a vacuum of ambivalence between reality and fiction.”\(^{162}\) Through this “inauthentic authenticity,”\(^{163}\) these scholars note that *LBD* “blurs the line between [fans’] everyday reality and the *LBD* narrative”\(^ {164}\) which Green and Su intended it to do.\(^{165}\) Lizzie and the other characters occupy the same digital spaces as the viewers, so the text “does not ask viewers to imagine or even navigate in an alternate reality” like they may need to with a fantasy land like Middle Earth or The Matrix. On the contrary, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* “strives to bring the characters of *Pride and Prejudice* further into the real world than ever before.”\(^ {166}\) There is no fictional audience that interacts with the characters and gives the videos fictional views and social media posts likes and responses. The audiences of the fictional and fan are collapsed into one, allowing the creation of “character personas who occupy the same virtual world as fans and who engage with the fans online, thus providing fans with the ability to become characters in the *LBD* universe as textual bodies.”\(^ {167}\) Now Seymour et. al. and Jandl’s quotes seem to

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\(^{160}\) Jandl 171.

\(^{161}\) Tepper, Allegra. "Lizzie In Real Life: Social And Narrative Immersion Through Transmedia In The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." *Film Matters*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, 47.

\(^{162}\) Jandl 181.

\(^{163}\) Burgess and Green qtd by Jandl 175.

\(^{164}\) Tepper 47.


\(^{166}\) Jandl 182.

contradict each other. Jandl views *LBD* as integrating itself with the real world of the fans while Seymour et. al. talks about bringing fans into the story world. But they don’t contradict one another if *LBD* is recognized as a hyperreal text. The hyperreal of *LBD*, or the lack of “distinction between the real and the imaginary,” is seen overwhelmingly in its audience interactions as these scholars have noted. They do not explicitly use the term hyperreality, but these scholars’ explorations into how *LBD* interacts and immerses fans illustrates the concept clearly.

Jandl, Tepper, Seymour et. al., and Zeiser all study how *LBD* engages their fans and immerses them within the *LBD* story world, but despite the four sources all noting this aspect of the adaptation, there has not been a lot of scholarship surrounding *LBD*. While there has been near a dozen master’s theses that have explored various concepts of *LBD*, formally published works have been scarcer, especially considering the widespread scholarly attention that Austenmania and its adaptations have received. Thus far published scholarship on *LBD* has also included Zerne’s “Ideology in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*” and Baeva’s “Adaptation and Metareference in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*” that both explore how the conflicts in Austen’s text get redone for a digitally integrated world: “they [the creators] have tried to preserve the emotional impact as well as the social and cultural relevance of the different problems.” These two articles, along with most of the theses, are primarily concerned with how *LBD* brings Austen’s story into contemporary culture, but overall scholarship on *LBD* is lacking.

169 Baeva, Elena. “’My name is Lizzie Bennet and this is my [vlog]’—Adaptation and Metareference in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.*” *Pride and Prejudice 2.0: Interpretations, Adaptations and Transformations of Jane Austen’s Classic.* Bonn UP, 2015, 135.
Beyond *LBD* scholarship, there is an abundance of work on *Pride and Prejudice* and the adaptations of Austenmania, some of which has been noted in the previous chapter. But in context of this chapter’s analysis, two pieces of scholarship about Austen adaptations should be explicitly noted. Mulvey-Roberts explores the implications of drastic adaptation in her piece focusing on *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (*P&P&Z*), while Hudelet explores a little of the hyperreality of *Lost in Austen*, a television series where a contemporary fan of *Pride and Prejudice* literally switches lives with Elizabeth Bennet. Both articles provide important insights when looking at radical adaptations of Austen’s most famous text. For Mulvey-Roberts, radical adaptations are able to highlight other aspects and issues that may be overlooked in more faithful adaptations. Radical adaptations reveal “the horrors lurking in the margins of Austen’s novels” to create an “ironic self-distancing and self-reflexivity through dialogue with another text.”

Mulvey-Roberts argues that part of the appeal of the drastic Austen adaptation that is *P&P&Z* is the usurpation of gender roles: “women in the novel not only break the bounds of traditional femininity, but actually reverse gender roles by protecting men from attack.” *Lost in Austen* also shows this as Elizabeth Bennet chooses to remain in 21st century London rather than return to her regency plot. Beyond challenging gender roles, zombies in *Pride and Prejudice* also allow readers to better see how people prey on one another and the class warfare within the text. While *Lost in Austen* helps to realize

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171 Mulvey-Roberts 28.
the “increasing invasion of the fictional into our daily life.” While Hudelet does explicitly reference Baudrillard and hyperreality, it’s only in her initial discussion of how new technology starts to blur boundaries of the audience. Overall, Mulvey-Roberts’ piece points to similar issues of class tension that were explored in the previous chapter, and Hudelet’s analysis highlights similar problems of technology and the immersibility of the adaptation. As well, both emphasize how many Austen adaptations approach gender roles. These texts don’t explore the radical adaptation of *LBD*, but they do illustrate how radical adaptations, like *LBD*, can reveal often overlooked tensions within the source text and reveal connections to contemporary culture.

While the scholarship surrounding *LBD* hasn’t discussed its connections to hyperreality explicitly, there has been some conversation about the hyperreal media of other story worlds and how the audiences of those occupy the space of the fictional and real audiences. Gagnon’s “Media and Hyperreality in the Film Adaptations of Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* Trilogy” notes multiple ways that the *Hunger Games* films exemplify simulacra and hyperreality with the media within the story, but also in how it engages fans and can complicate their world view. *The Hunger Games* and its sequels depict a post-apocalyptic North America, now called Panem, where, due to a failed rebellion, each of twelve districts must present a male and female child/young adult to compete to the death. This competition is broadcasted for all of Panem where the districts watch in distress as their children kill and are killed, while the Capitol citizens view it as a game and cheer as their favorites slaughter other children. While the books have a first-person narrator in the protagonist Katniss that leads the rebellion against the Capitol; the

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174 Hudelet 264.
175 Hudelet 258.
films give a third person perspective, so they can alternate and view happenings from the
Capitol and District sides. Gagnon argues that because of this medium change, film
audiences can occupy three different perspectives: “our own (film audience), as a district
citizen (district audience), and as a Capitol citizen (Capitol audience).”176 She also
connects this confusion of perspective to how one views reality television and human
suffering in the real world.177 Beyond the movies, there are many other mediums used
within the franchise and to expand the story, but Gagnon focuses particularly on the film.
Like in LBD, this female led story world complicates audience perspective. They are the
text’s audience, but they in some ways become part of the story and it overlaps with their
world. Gagnon concludes her argument that while the initial books exhibited issues of
hyperreality and media, but that it is the film adaptations that really allow audiences to
realize the slippery subjectivity of perspective in media and the hyperreality of The
Hunger Games Trilogy.

LaTouche’s analysis of iCarly and its creation of hyperreality through multiple
media connects to many of the same modes of connection that LBD uses to interact
with its fans. iCarly was originally a sitcom that focused on Carly, Sam, and Freddy who
create and produce a webshow, similar to YouTube videos like Lizzie’s vlog, where they
do silly challenges and talk to their audience. The television show depicts them filming
the webshow along with other life events like school, work, and relationships. Beyond
those episodes, iCarly also had a website where the webshow was uploaded after the
episode aired. This website and webshows called for fan interactions and videos where,

176 Gagnon, Mollie. “Media and Hyperreality in the Film Adaptations of the Suzanne Collins’ Hunger Game
Trilogy.” The Fantastic Made Visible: Essays on the Adaptation of Science Fiction and Fantasy from Page to
177 Gagnon 142.
like in *LBD* and *The Hunger Games*, the audience inhabits multiple perspectives simultaneously. For LaTouche, “this technique lends the website a greater authenticity as the production of these "extra" materials beyond the television series points to the fact that the website is run by real teens making a real webshow and website.”\(^{178}\) The audience is at one level a traditional audience where their world is distinctly separate and the inhabit the same plane of reality as the actors, but with the multiple media, which seems to be transmedia, though the term is not used, the audience also becomes part of the story world as they interact with the fictional website that is now in their digital space. Like Jenkins stated how the world building aspect of transmedia is to “engage more directly with the worlds represented in the narratives, treating them as real spaces which intersect in some way with our own lived realities.”\(^{179}\) *iCarly* exhibits a story world that overlaps with fans’ internet spaces instead of just the television interaction. This story world prioritizes and cultivates fan immersion which leads to a hyperreality that blurs the boundaries between fiction and audience’s lives.

Gagnon and LaTouche both notice how the female led story worlds of *The Hunger Games* and *iCarly* both exhibited hyperreality with their use of media and their manipulation of perspective. In both texts, audiences occupy multiple roles where they are simultaneously a conventional audience who occupies a physical space distinct from the fictional world of the narrative, and a fictional audience who has a role within the narrative as Capitol/District citizen or webshow viewer. This troubling of what role an audience is fulfilling leads to a hyperreal state that eludes boundaries and troubles the


\(^{179}\) Jenkins “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling.”
space of the consumer. Despite LaTouche and Gagnon not explicitly discussing transmedia, these sources still allow for a recognition of how other story worlds exhibit hyperreality in their fan interactions. While LBD is almost exclusively conveyed through social media and iCarly and The Hunger Games are based mainly in more traditional mediums of television and film, the franchises’ uses of multiple mediums to convey the story world and the subsequent hyperreality produced from that multiple media usage allows one to better understand how LBD produces hyperreality. By having fans inhabit multiple perspectives and overlapping the fictional world with the fans’ reality, boundaries become hard to distinguish and hyperreality is produced.

Before hyperreality can be produced though, issues of simulations and misperception must be present initially. In the previous chapter, Baudrillard’s theory of simulation was applied to Austen’s source text to illustrate how the core conflicts of the book revolve around perverted simulations and misled perceptions of reality. Baudrillard’s first two stages of hyperreality could be seen in in how societal expectations operated: “1. It [the simulacrum] is the reflection of a basic reality. 2. It masks and perverts basic reality.”180 Jane Austen anticipated a late 20th century postmodern theory with her social commentary, which is clear in her focus on perception and how what is seen as real can be manipulated. As stated earlier, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries amplifies these issues of perception and simulacra obscuring reality, and because of its reliance on media, fulfills Baudrillard’s last stages of hyperreality: “3. It [the simulacrum] masks the absence of a basic reality. 4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.”181 LBD, through its use of popular social

180 Baudrillard, Simulations 11.
181 Baudrillard, Simulations 11.
media, adapts the problems of simulation for the characters and creates similar issues of reality for its viewers. Before looking at the hyperreality that LBD creates with its audience, it is first important to acknowledge how this transmedia adaptation updates the simulation crises from *Pride and Prejudice* and how that still attracts fans to the text.

**Simulacra within *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries***

As has been noted, Green and Su revealed that the limitations of perspective and bias were something they were consciously aware of as they created this adaptation. Lizzie’s vlogs gave her perspective, which, like with all humans, comes with bias and a proclivity to present events in a light that favors them. Su recognizes their decision to characterize Lizzie as “incredibly flawed. re: PREJUDICE – Our Lizzie is a vlogger, she’s got a ton of opinions and she’s stubborn about them.”182 They also don’t shy away from presenting Lizzie as an unreliable narrator within the vlogs either. Within the first fifteen episodes, it is shown that Lizzie’s perception is very biased. After Lizzie gives her version of how the party went where she first met Bing Lee and William Darcy, Charlotte and Jane take over one of Lizzie’s vlogs and give an alternative perspective of the night’s events. Charlotte and Jane both agree that Lizzie’s account of the night needs amending: “We feel that Lizzie isn't being particularly comprehensive with her commentary regarding recent events”. They also point out that “Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees.”183 Charlotte and Jane allow for fans to realize that Lizzie’s presentation of events, the simulation she gives fans of her life, is at best a perverted version or at worst doesn’t

183 Su “Lizzie Bennet is in Denial - Ep: 15.”
reflect what has really happened at all. Lizzie’s motives aren’t intentionally to mislead, but when she’s viewing the world based on imperfect simulations like her book counterpart, her presentation is also going to also be flawed. She obviously isn’t perfect, and her reliability as a narrator is questioned early on. Like the novel, perception of reality is fickle and slippery. One person’s perspective is limited and easily misled by perverted simulacrum and people who understand how to manipulate that simulation.

As has been discussed, Lizzie, is representational of her online community. She references popular culture, is skeptical of traditional social structures, and is quick to pass judgment without all the information. As part of that online community, Lizzie also feels compelled to meet the expectations of her viewers and sometimes she struggles with that. Instead of a societal simulacrum, there is a kind of social media simulacrum with its own expectations of etiquette and authenticity. Lizzie, at least initially, tries to follow it and part of her struggles stem from trying to uphold that simulacrum of expectations. In one instance earlier in the vlogs, she shows Bing Lee on camera, but he thinks she’s sending a video to Charlotte; Lizzie then grapples with meeting fan desires and showing Bing without his permission.184 Whereas Lizzie gives in and keeps the Bing vlogs despite ethics concerns, Lizzie also struggles with Darcy’s letter and fans wanting to know what’s in the letter. Lizzie refuses to divulge the letter’s contents and tells her fans, “I know this goes against all previously established principles of these videos, where I tell you guys every embarrassing little thing. But, the problem is, the contents of the letter are

not mine to share.” Lizzie shows growth and a transition to not being completely indebted to her community and that simulacrum. Like Elizabeth Bennet changes after Mr. Darcy’s letter in the novel, so does Lizzie change after reading the letter. She starts her transition from relying primarily on the mediated community that make up her fans to focusing more on her friends and family around her as well as herself. In a progression similar to the novel, Lizzie is misled by her perceived responsibility to her digital community and makes mistakes based on what she feels compelled to share with them and what their expectations for her are.

With the internet fans being the new community in *LBD*, they also face the same manipulation that the Longbourn and Meryton community dealt with in the novel. In *LBD*, George Wickham, a swim coach and a cookie-cutter pretty boy, presents himself as a gentleman. He meets Lizzie at a bar, and while the other swimmers there are rude and obnoxious, George Wickham seems courteous and gentlemanly by comparison. Lizzie’s response to his actions are, “I didn't know that happened except in period films.” The first time he is seen on camera he even says, “A gentleman would never tell.” The adaptation aware audience, or the “knowing audience,” knows he’s a sleazy jerk, but initially he seems funny, charming, and very flirty. Lizzie obviously finds him attractive, and even being aware that he is the villain, the audience is easily taken by Wickham according to comments like “But but but I hate Wickham! Why do I love Wickham so much?”

188 Hutcheon 122.
much!??”189 and “‘THIS is Wickham?!?!!? ... Why are you trying to kill me?!? And did we have to make him this attractive? I am suppose [sic] to hate him.”190 Wickham flashes his abs and winks at the camera showing a charisma that charms the internet community. LBD’s Wickham, like the novel’s, knows how to best present himself, and charm people into liking him. Baudrillard’s theory about how the appearance of reality leads one to believe it is real is seen in the character of George Wickham in both texts, but with the technology of LBD, his manipulation is even more pronounced as he gets the audience community to like him along with Lizzie.

While in Austen’s text readers do not get to see how Wickham convinces Lydia to run away with him, but in LBD, audiences can see that relationship in Lydia’s tweets and vlogs. George goes from flirty and playful in Lizzie’s vlogs to emotionally manipulative and abusive in Lydia’s. George knows how the social media simulacra and perception work and uses it to his advantage. In one of Lydia’s videos, he comes clean about recklessly spending the money from Darcy’s father after Lizzie’s vlogs have revealed Darcy’s side of the story, but Wickham frames his side to be more sympathetic and says, “neither of us were lying. We just saw things from two completely different points of view. Only Darcy doesn’t care to understand mine.”191 This Wickham is still acutely aware of the importance of perception and how to manipulate the simulacrum to his advantage. Book Wickham appeared to be a gentleman, LBD’s Wickham still does that,

but using the visual medium, he also plays up his looks and body to the characters and viewers and overtly points to different perspectives. Wickham plays a part through his social media interactions, but as the audience and other characters become aware, there’s no substance behind it. His simulated, digital self “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.”\textsuperscript{192} \textit{LBD} Wickham is a master manipulator, and the social media posts illustrate a morally bankrupt character who is acutely aware of how he is perceived and how to manipulate that simulacrum to his advantage.

Wickham is not the only character who shows awareness of the social media simulacrum and how to manipulate it for their own ends. Caroline Lee\textsuperscript{193} is the mean girl pulling the strings to get her way but putting on a friendly face to avoid condemnation. Caroline is still rich, in love with Darcy, and does not want her brother ending up with Jane Bennet. But instead of the thinly veiled distaste for the Bennet’s seen in the novel, \textit{LBD}’s Caroline Lee is manipulative and controlling, similar to Lady Catherine’s role, and very similar to Wickham. She pretends to be Lizzie’s “friend”\textsuperscript{194} and encourages her complaints against Darcy to drive Lizzie further against him.\textsuperscript{195} Su notes, “listen to Caroline’s words to Lizzie, and what she encourages Lizzie to think and feel... her manipulations naturally drive Lizzie to this ‘ranty, unlikeable’ place... Lizzie is vulnerable and Caroline exploits it.”\textsuperscript{196} Caroline keeps the vlogs from Darcy and Bing to

\textsuperscript{192} Baudrillard, \textit{Simulacra and Simulation} 6.
\textsuperscript{193} Caroline Bingley
make sure they don’t realize that Jane truly loves Bing.\footnote{The Lizzie Bennet Diaries. “C vs C - Ep: 64.” YouTube, 15 Nov. 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdw1EvRyl6c&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcDyyzeR5NxjyEELIsqYzn1&index=98.} She even gifts a handbag to Lizzie to give to one of the viewers.\footnote{The Lizzie Bennet Diaries. “Question and Answers #3 (ft. Caroline Lee).” YouTube, 28 July 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwMsBxm4PJ4&index=41&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcDyyzeR5NxjyEELIsqYzn1.} Throughout the series, Caroline manipulates the perceptions of those around her to get what she wants. She also upholds class distinctions as she wants to keep the status quo and mocks Lizzie for her family’s financial straits and embarrassing antics.\footnote{The Lizzie Bennet Diaries “C vs C - Ep: 64.”} For her, like the novel’s Lady Catherine, keeping class distinctions is important, more important that uninhibited communication and understanding. Caroline is aware that their money and socioeconomic status is not enough to make other characters, along with Lizzie’s viewers, like her, so using she uses the societal simulacrum established within the social media to charm Lizzie and the fans.

For the \textit{LBD} team, it was intentional that Caroline be the character to pull those strings and be that antagonist: “The Caroline in this version is manipulative, covert, and deceptive and she’s really good at it. So good that Lizzie can’t see it and that even members of Lizzie’s audience can’t see it.”\footnote{Su “BTS: Netherfield Questions.”} Caroline’s simulation works initially as even the audience expressed how Caroline’s act fooled them: “I remember when I first saw this video and thought, ‘Wow! Caroline here is WAY nicer than her book counterpart. Maybe they made her a cool, genuinely chill person, like how they made Lydia more likable. I bet she turns out to be great!’…. Ahahahaha.”\footnote{Mesler-Evans, Susan. “Welcome to Netherfield - Ep: 27.” The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nabp4vu_kv0&index=30&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcDyyzeR5NxjyEELIsqYzn1. Accessed 31 Mar 2018.} She charms the
audience, but Caroline also polices customs and class distinctions similarly to Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Her particular strength is manipulation of perception and making sure the conflicting realities of Darcy and Lizzie aren’t realized by the other. Caroline inserts herself in specific ways to come across as favorable and friendly to hide her more sinister operations. Like Wickham, Caroline realizes the rhetoric of online presentation and the art of manipulation. She is a simulation without substance with little care for anyone beyond herself and her status, and thus attempts to continue the same class structures that Lady Catherine did in the novel. By applying Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, one can see that Wickham and Caroline’s manipulations stem from the systems of mediation. In the book, they rely on societal simulacrum that assumes the actions of a gentleman and a lady to give them importance and power. In LBD, they utilize the social media systems to get what they want as they charm Lizzie’s audience/community and in turn further charm Lizzie.

An exception to Lizzie and her digital community believing and perpetuating imperfect simulation is with Darcy. From the beginning, the audience was defensive of Darcy and gave him the benefit of the doubt. In “The Most Awkward Dance Ever - Ep: 7”, Lizzie defends her characterization of Darcy after fans criticized her, “In my last video some of you thought I went a little... dramatic on William Darcy. And though it may have seemed a bit harsh, in this video I'm going to tell you a story.”²⁰² In this instance, fans are aware of the Elizabeth Bennet character’s misjudgment of Mr. Darcy, and try early on, to no avail, to get Lizzie to realize her mistakes. While this digital community is the one Lizzie belongs to, the character is also not going to change in any

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way that will negate the rest of the story. Also in this way, one can see that Lizzie is still a headstrong character that refuses to bend her will completely to the community she resides in. In this instance, the audience is aware of the dramatic irony and can perceive that Lizzie’s description of Darcy is unreliable. The adaptation status allows for this knowledge, but in any other circumstance, Lizzie’s simulation of events and people is taken as reliable and even true.

While the audience was apt to give Darcy the benefit of the doubt, the Lizzie character still is quite harsh with the simulation she builds for her fans until they get to see actual Darcy on screen in the 60th vlog. For all of the other characters’ updates, Darcy’s is surprisingly minimal; he is still a much more traditional individual when compared to the more drastic changes undergone by other characters, Su claims their “Darcy is a proud, quiet, entitled, soft-spoken guy, with a high sense of social elitism.” He is the CEO of Pemberley Digital, a media company, so he retains his upper-class status and his perceived pretentiousness. LBD’s Darcy also misreads the situation and does not realize that Lizzie’s perception of events and him are drastically different from his own. It is not until Lizzie loses her temper and reveals the existence of her vlogs when he asks her on a date that Darcy realizes anything is amiss. Darcy has his faults, but he is also removed from the hyper-simulations of most social media. He has Twitter exchanges with some characters but is notably absent from most social media. Darcy, while less knowledgeable about the perceptions of others, is also safer from manipulation by that social media simulacrum. His lack of clarity on the perceptions of others has its

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repercussions, but not as severe as Lizzie and others whose lives are highly mediated and influenced by that digital community.

Like novel Mr. Darcy, *LBD*’s Darcy gives Lizzie a letter with his perspective after watching her videos and realizing his misperceptions of reality.\(^{204}\) The letter is important in contrast to the media of their jobs and life. The letter is private, cannot be easily disseminated, and is removed from the hyper mediation of the internet. It has a physicality that is notably lacking in most of *LBD*. As novel Elizabeth is removed from her community and must contemplate the letter alone, so must Lizzie keep this communication more private and cannot rely on her opinionated audience or her friends to influence her. This letter is frustrating for audiences who want to know exactly what it says, but it is better for clarity and avoiding more layers of simulation and potential misrepresentation.

While Lizzie doesn’t share the letter with her digital audience, the accompanying novel, *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet*, has the letter “taped” in it as if it were Lizzie’s actual private diary. The separate transmedia platform, that fans must go out of their way to purchase or borrow instead of just clicking, keeps the “secret” while allowing fans who seek out that medium to read it. In the letter, Darcy gives his perspective on Jane and Bing’s relationship and reveals George Wickham’s simulation. He also writes, “As you allowed me to be privy to the truth of your perspective through your videos, I hope you will be accepting of mine.”\(^{205}\) Again, perspective of truth and reality is highlighted. The letter exemplifies an alternative to the highly mediated lives of Lizzie and Lydia. It is


tangible and cannot easily be copy and pasted to share with the entire digital community. It also is a representation of painstaking reflection and effort to avoid a misreading and the influences of manipulative forces.

*LBD’s* Darcy is far from perfect, but while he runs a media company, he keeps his personal life much more private. This is something that Lizzie replicates at the end of the vlogs. Darcy’s pretentiousness has kept his true self and feelings from being observed, but Lizzie’s overt presentation of her life through the vlogs has also negatively affected her. They find a balance between sharing with the people close to them while staying more private with the digital community. In a way similar to how Darcy and Elizabeth remove themselves to Pemberley, Darcy and Lizzie, once they realize their own manipulation and faults, keep their relationship mostly private. The two extra vlogs that were uploaded in 2014 give an update on their lives and relationship, but like the novel’s Pemberley allowed for selective influence, so do those vlogs allow for Lizzie and Darcy to share what they feel comfortable with. 206 Lizzie even states, “One of the reasons I stopped making my videos was that I realized up to that point my relationship with Darcy had been lived out on camera, and if I wanted to give it a chance to thrive I had to let it do so in private.” 207 Their relationship was public and a simulation that could be influenced by the digital community. Making their personal lives private, Lizzie attempts to gain some authenticity and control over the simulacrum of her life. Unlike their novel counterparts, Lizzie and Darcy cannot remove themselves completely from simulations of the communities nor of the internet, they are heads of media companies by the end, but

207 The Lizzie Bennet Diaries. “Dr. Gardiner’s Seminar - Bonus 1.”
they still can represent to the audience maneuvers to avoid letting mediation by simulacra control or completely damage their lives. There is a distance from media spaces and a privatization that happens to not only end the narrative, but also to illustrate a limiting their own manipulation by simulacra.

While Darcy’s letter and subsequent interactions are important for Lizzie in her realization of her own manipulation and how she perpetuates damaging simulations, the relationship that undergoes the most crucial revision is Lizzie and Lydia’s. This, more than even Lizzie’s issues with Darcy, leads to Lizzie removing herself from such a highly mediated position. Lydia’s scandal is still what really brings Lizzie and Darcy together, but it more importantly allows for the sisters to better understand each other and find a relationship built on honesty and not simulations of themselves: a snooty academic versus a basic white girl. Like the novel’s Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth help the other to realize the manipulation and misperception of their own lives, Lizzie and Lydia go through a similar transformation that, in *LBD*, means more than Lizzie and Darcy dating at the end.

As stated earlier, Lizzie and Lydia represent common millennial stereotypes that clash. They have tension from the very first episode throughout most of the series. While Lizzie is sarcastic and scholarly, Lydia is an extrovert who seems materialistic and ignorant. As Stein argues and Lydia’s personal vlogs reveal, audiences can see that this over-enthusiastic, basic white girl portrayal is masking a Lydia who desires emotional connection and who feels insecure that she isn’t as smart or as driven as her sisters. If one watches closely, they can see in both sets of vlogs how Lydia seems to want to connect with her sisters but is consistently pushed away as Jane and Lizzie prefer each other.  

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Similarly to Wickham and Caroline, Lydia presents a simulation to gain followers and “friends” because that’s what she thinks they expect and want from her; but Lydia’s manipulative simulation is also to protect herself. She uses the social media simulacrum not as a way to manipulate others into doing what she wants, but so that the community, directly around her and the digital one, will accept her.

Lydia struggles to let anyone past her simulation of pep to see what’s really going on with her self-doubt and insecurities. Lydia uses the simulation of a happy, care-free vlogger to hide those insecurities, and Lizzie, who audiences know is prejudicial, fails to see the hurt and depth of Lydia’s struggles until it’s too late: “Yeah, but if I had just watched her videos or talked to her.” The unsaid assumption here is that if Lizzie had paid closer attention to her little sister, she might have understood the trouble Lydia was in or how much Lizzie was missing by relying on an incomplete simulation. George Wickham, the master manipulator that he is, understands Lydia’s simulated self-confidence and capitalizes on that to emotionally abuse her and then sell the sex tape he convinced her to make with him. The LBD team, through their understanding of the novel and its issues of perception, are able to use those problems of perception to expand the character of Lydia. Her presentation as a silly, boy-crazy girl is a simulation that covers much deeper concerns of inferiority.

Unlike the book Elizabeth’s realization of her own prejudices coming from Mr. Darcy’s letter, LBD Lizzie’s realization stems primarily from Lydia’s trauma and the

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potential consequences of the sex tape. Darcy’s letter is still an important part of the narrative and he ends up buying the company planning to release the sex tape to still save the day, but it is mainly Lizzie and Lydia’s misperceptions and then understanding of each other that gives the most important lessons and social critique. Lizzie, angry at herself for failing to really see her sister, states,

Sometimes, I feel so clever, and rational and appropriately analytical about the world around me. I'm a grad student! It’s what I do, what I'm supposed to be skilled at doing. Communicating and relating and acknowledging that people do not fit into neat little boxes all wrapped and tied up with string. But here we are.  

It seems to resemble novel Elizabeth’s exclamation, “Till this moment I never knew myself” after realizing how she misperceived Mr. Darcy’s perspective of events. This revelation in both texts allows for Lizzie to realize her own faults of perception and how she has let herself be manipulated to the point of blindness to the truth of what is going on. In her final video, Lizzie states, “I mean there has been a lot of drama around here, and It's all been either indirectly or directly related to these videos”. She also notes, “There's growing, and then there's growing in front of tens of thousands of people.” Lizzie realizes how her excessive sharing of her life with and reliance on the digital community has led to a lot of troubles and realizations. She missed so much going on around her because she was too invested and dependent on the simulations of the internet.

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212 The Lizzie Bennet Diaries. “An Understanding- Ep: 87.”
213 Austen 144.
By ending the vlogs and the adaptation, Lizzie regains some control over her own manipulation.

Within the fictional world, Lizzie is still invested in media as it has become her livelihood, but characters’ accounts don’t regularly update. New videos are not posted, beyond the two uploaded in 2014, and the once active world of *LBD* is quiet. It was a story that had to end at some point, but Lizzie’s step back from social media represents a great issue of control of one’s own reliance on simulations. By removing herself from that highly influenced and mediated position, the character of Lizzie Bennet can focus more on her new relationship with Darcy and bettering her relationship and understanding of Lydia. Like the millennials they represent, *LBD*’s characters cannot fully escape the simulations of the hyperreal world they live in, but these characters do illustrate an agency to limit the influence of those simulations and are thus still highly appealing to audiences trapped in the hyperreal and desiring some control.

The Hyperreality of the Audience

*LBD* continues the problems of social simulacra from *Pride and Prejudice* in the hyper mediated space of the internet where it presents its characters as real people dealing with similar life experiences to the millennial fan base. While the characters deal with their problems that mainly stem from their reliance on media, *LBD* in turn adds to the simulations of fans’ lives and creates a hyperreal text and experience. By pretending to be real, *LBD* becomes hyperreal. As an example of hyperreality, Baudrillard notes reality television and it’s “illusion of filming” where the family “lived as if we [the camera crew and the audience] were not there” which subtly implies that the family lived “as if you
[the viewer] were there.” It looked like a real family living their real life, but it was a simulation for entertainment. LBD works in a similar way. It presents itself with its multiple platforms and fan interactions as real. Lizzie talks to the camera so while she doesn’t pretend the camera isn’t there, it does readily seem like she is talking straight to her viewer “as if you were there”. The Lizzie and Lydia characters often use “you” when referring to their audiences, and they allow their audience privy to very personal and traumatic life events. Instead of reading of George Wickham or Caroline Lee’s manipulative actions and cruel intentions through a third person narrator, viewers of LBD get to see it first hand and also get manipulated. It’s a much more intimate look into the lives of the Bennet’s. With social media allowing for viewers to see the characters’ presentations and interact with them, viewers get manipulated by the simulations within the story world too. Su notes that the LBD team intentionally expanded characters and slowed down the plot so that “every character felt multi-dimensional and alive...so that when “stuff” happens between them [other characters] and Lizzie, we as an audience will feel the hit as strongly as Lizzie will.” Like Baudrillard theorizes reality television, LBD is presented as if the viewer is there with the characters. The audience is not just an audience to this fictional world anymore, they become a part of the fictional world and thus are more emotionally attached and manipulatable.

Even before the audience became really integrated into the story world, they were integral for the story world to grow and continue beyond the first few posts and videos as

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funding was limited.\textsuperscript{218} Beyond just funding though, fans held influence on how the story was portrayed. Lydia character’s story arch gained importance once creators saw the positive reception from fans, and how she was characterized was also altered as fan backlash over Lizzie calling Lydia a “stupid, whorey-slut” forced the creative team to reevaluate what a Lydia character meant and looked like in the current context.\textsuperscript{219} Without the fans’ engagement, \textit{LBD} may not have been fully produced or may have looked vastly different.

Fans held an important place of influence for the creators of \textit{LBD}, but fans also could interact in a digital setting with the characters as the story was being published. As has been noted, sometimes character’s Twitter and Tumblr accounts would respond and react to fans posts or questions which also made the characters seem like actual people. Beyond various tweets and comment responses to select fans, Lizzie and Lydia’s vlogs also included special “Q&As” where Lizzie and Lydia along with other select characters in their vlogs would answer fan questions similarly to how real YouTube and internet celebrities field questions from fans. Some of the questions to Lizzie included but were not limited to: “Who’s your favorite author?”,\textsuperscript{220} “If you were thrown into a vortex and woke up in the past, say, in Victorian England, how would you cope?”,\textsuperscript{221} “How important do you think first impressions are?”,\textsuperscript{222} etc. The questions are all from fans that inhabit the “real”, physical world where Lizzie Bennet is a fictional character. As fans

\textsuperscript{218} Jandl 170.  
interacted with and got responses from the characters, they become part of the fictional story world. Even when fans didn’t get a response, they were still commenting on a post by a fictional character which adds to the simulation of realism and makes the posts seem legitimate to other people. These questions and comments reflect that blurring of the fourth wall as all these questions could be from unknowing fans who sincerely want to know a non-fictional Lizzie’s view on something like first impressions but are almost certainly from adaptation-aware fans who realize the double meaning indicated in their questions. With actual people commenting and interacting with the characters, the world of *LBD* becomes further integrated into the digital life of fans. It inhabits this liminal space that is recognized as fictional but also real and represents a “hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself.”\(^{223}\) It is representative of the hyperreality common to contemporary audiences’ lives. By fans fulfilling their role and interactions with the story world, they further simulate their world and create the hyperreal of *LBD*.

In the novel, the Meryton and Longbourn community, especially in the first few chapters, represents a “principle figure,” as its own character with a distinct consciousness and influence.\(^{224}\) In *LBD*, the digital community is that character. The *LBD* team allows the audience to take on that role from the novel and gives them influence over parts of the narrative. The team retains most of the control so the audience cannot completely derail the plot’s progression, but societal expectations of what a millennial and popular media personality should be and do did influence how Lizzie and others were characterized. The social simulacra and expectations are still at work in different ways, and by watching the videos and interacting on those media platforms, fans of *LBD* fulfill

\(^{223}\) Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 23.
\(^{224}\) Deresiewicz 113.
that communal role. With the hyperreality of *LBD* and audience as the community character, that audience has become an active participant in this world by simply watching. Fans can expand their influence by posting and interacting with the digital characters in other online spaces, but watching the videos, which seems like the most passive action, has become an interaction. Baudrillard states that as television becomes more simulated that the “the distinction between the passive and the active [would be] abolished;”225 *LBD* operates similarly to reality television and thus fulfills Baudrillard’s theory. The audience may seem like passive observers, but by becoming the community, they get manipulated like other characters and have influence what happens within the story world. No longer is the audience just privy to the lives of those on the screen, but with hyperreality, the audience must face the realization of their own part within the narrative. The audience has “enter[ed] into simulation, and thus into absolute manipulation– not into passivity, but into the indifferentiation of the active and the passive” by claiming their role as viewer.226

The audience’s inclusion into the story world is fulfilled mainly by using multiple popular social media sites to tell Lizzie’s story through the transmedia format. *LBD*’s transmedia elements allow for more characters to have dynamic personalities and depth. The alternate vlogs along with multiple social media usage by the characters in real time227 add to the realism of the story and the characters as people: “a transmedia approach lets the story breathe… and allows the audience to live in the world and to form deeper and stronger attachments to the characters.”228 Because characters’ social media

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227 Coinciding with the plot playing out in the vlogs but with little to no reference to the vlogs themselves.
228 Tepper 47.
accounts are posting and interacting with other characters’ accounts as well as fans’ accounts, those characters feel like more like actual people with histories and lives and less like fictional characters that live only in the text. While the creative team are the minds behind the tweets and posts and responses to fans, according to the username, the characters are creating those. It can become difficult to decipher whether a character’s posts are part of the fictional story world or if they are part of the reality that fans occupy. The creation of depth and authenticity of multiple characters through the transmedia elements produces multiple sympathetic characters who remind fans of people they know or even of themselves, and the realities of the story world and the viewers’ world become heavily blurred as the characters and community overlap. While Jandl, Tepper, Zeiser, and Seymour et. al. have all noted the immersive qualities of LBD, none of them recognized hyperreality which limits how this transmedia adaptation can be seen in regards to greater problems of mediation and the repercussions for fans. By applying Baudrillard’s theory, one can see the depth of thought that went into LBD and the broader social commentary on a contemporary digital existence.

Instead of a distinct fantasy land/digital amusement park that one must go out of a normal routine to access,²²⁹ LBD brings Pride and Prejudice into fan’s everyday lives. Their use of social media sites that most of their contemporary audience probably already uses on a regular basis helps to integrate the world of LBD into fans’ lives. Instead of having to seek out the world of Middle Earth or The Matrix, Charlotte and Lizzie’s posts are right on the fans’ social media timelines next to their friends’ posts. This digital space is an extension of a person’s physical reality and is arguably a simulated version of that

²²⁹ Jenkins “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling” and Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 12.
person’s self and existence. Despite this level of simulation, social media profiles are still places where users can feel they are somehow representative of themselves. It is a fractured, simulated, and digital self, but it can still feel like an important, real part of their existence. When *LBD* invades that space as a fictional story world, it overlaps with a space that feels kind of real to a consumer despite obviously being a simulation. Then fans and consumers’ simulated selves become a part of a completely fictional story world and distinctions of where their part of the fictional community ends, and a more real simulated self begins gets heavily blurred, thus hyperreality is exhibited.

The creators of *LBD* didn’t actively try and hide the adaptation aspect of *LBD*, but at the same time they did cultivate reality-like aspects that blur the fiction of the texts as Jenkins notes: “treating [transmedia story worlds] as real spaces which intersect in some way with our own lived realities.” The coordination of videos, tweets, posts, and more add to the realism of Lizzie Bennet and her family and friends. Together the texts create a fictional reality that “invites play, invites immersion, and establishes a degree of authenticity into which the audience can buy in.” Unlike Baudrillard’s theory that “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real,” *LBD* points to that everything is simulated as the fiction overlaps with the audience’s digital reality. The creators of *LBD* intentionally used transmedia elements to add depth and a fictional authenticity to the story. Su, one of the producers, says in his blog about the believability of the adaptation: “there is this sense of believability for this particular show that actually predicates how the show is executed… Well as much as [some

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230 Jenkins “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling.”
231 Tepper 47.
elements] would be “unreal” in a 3rd person series, it’s very real in our show.”233 For Su and the other creators, there is an intentional blurring of reality as they kept or included DIY aspects to mask the professional quality. *LBD* intentionally blurs the fictional reality of its characters and the reality of its fans which helps to cultivate and continue the hyperreality.

The *LBD* creators note about the intentional obscuring of what is real, but they also indicate the same concept within the vlogs. In Lizzie’s vlog, “Hyper-Mediation in New Media - Ep: 80”, the characters of Lizzie and Darcy discuss media theory and note, “there's this theory about levels of mediation in media that says it's possible for artificiality to both remind the audience that what they're seeing is a construction, while at the same time adding to their level of immersion… by its very artificiality create[s] its own sense of verisimilitude.”234 By pretending, even momentarily, that something is real, “the network of artificial signs with become inextricably mixed up with real elements” and the scene seems realistic.235 This quote from the vlogs is a directly referencing when characters on Lizzie’s vlog use costume theatre to portray interactions that have happened between vlogs or in places that she cannot realistically bring her camera. By using costumes, the audience is invited to buy into that moment that the costume theatre is actually happening or at least a true representation of what has happened. On one level, the characters of Lizzie and Darcy are talking to each other about how costume theatre can seem realistic as if they are real, but on another level, the actors are also talking to

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their adaptation-aware audience about how they are fictional representations of characters that also seem like real people. The transmedia adaptation, because of its presentation as real-like, offers a “perfectly descriptive machine that offers all signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes.”\textsuperscript{236} LBD presents itself as real despite it being fiction creating a hyperreal text. The vlog title uses “hyper-mediation” but it could easily be “hyperreal”.

This hyperreal experience of the audience as the community role went further than even the LBD team expected. The fans became so protective of the characters they now saw as friends and as real, and they took strides to take down Lydia and Wickham’s sex tape website themselves. The website that was supposed to post the video on Valentine’s Day in 2013 was of course a fake site created by the LBD team to simulate that a sex tape would be available and that the fear of Lydia and her family was authentic. Committed fans though tried very hard to disrupt or take down the site themselves instead of allowing the plot to play out. Su and Green’s “the network of artificial signs [became] inextricably mixed up with real” and fans as well as the creators “[found themselves] in the real”\textsuperscript{237} causing the creators to break the fourth wall and ask the fans to stop trying to take down the site.\textsuperscript{238} LBD fans, from the hyperreal elements became so invested in their role in the story world, attempted to take steps that would have effectively ruined the rest of the plot. The fictional threat to Lydia and the rest of the Bennet family was a strong enough exigence to cause fans to take action as if Lydia and the other characters were real people facing real consequences.

\textsuperscript{236} Baudrillard, \textit{Simulacra and Simulation} 2.  
\textsuperscript{237} Baudrillard, \textit{Simulacra and Simulation} 20.  
\textsuperscript{238} Seymour et. al. 104 and Jandl 182.
The digital community takes steps to save the characters and almost disrupts the narrative in the process, but they have also added to the problem in the first place. They made Lizzie and Lydia popular with their views and gave justification to Wickham wanting to capitalize on Lydia’s internet stardom. The community gave their opinions and influenced how the story was told. As stated earlier, they may have passively watched, but it was still active engagement that allowed LBD to continue and bad things to happen to the characters. Like the novel’s community, the audience does not mean to intentionally harm nor cause bad things to happen, but as Lizzie says in her final vlog, “Through this all, I've been thinking about how these videos put me and my sisters and friends into the public spotlight. I mean there has been a lot of drama around here, and It's all been either indirectly or directly related to these videos.”

The Lizzie character implies that a lot of her family’s troubles have been because of her reliance on that digital community and the simulation of her life. Lizzie must remove herself from that digital community to take back control over how simulations and community affect her. Fans are then left to face their own mistaken perceptions and how they unintentionally added to the drama and problems of the Bennet sisters. It is a dramatic irony, vocalized throughout by the series’ playfulness with the fourth wall, but the irony goes unrealized until it is too late, and the audience is caught within the type of simulation the series warns against. Like Baudrillard theorized, the passive observer has become an active participant where by watching, the audience added to the fictional and real popularity of LBD which further justified the believability of the simulation and allowed the audience to be manipulated by the characters’ simulations.

239 The Lizzie Bennet Diaries “The End- Ep. 100.”
Creators, actors, and a majority of the audience know this is a constructed reality based on the plot of a 19th century novel, not the actual vlog of a twenty-four-year-old graduate student. If a viewer did not realize the fictionality of this project they probably didn’t dive very deep into the media and are unaware of Austen’s characters and plot. Within the story world, a fictional audience is assumed to exist that inhabits the same fictional reality as Lizzie and company, but that fictional audience is conflated with the fan audience that occupies the same physical reality as the creators and actors of LBD. Like with Gagnon and LaTouche’s articles on The Hunger Games and iCarly, audiences of LBD occupy the space of a traditional audience as well as the fictional audience of the story worlds. LBD simultaneously “strives to bring the characters of Pride and Prejudice further into the real world than ever before” and “provid[e] fans with the ability to become characters in the LBD universe as textual bodies.” The hyperreal of LBD, or the lack of “distinction between the real and the imaginary,” is seen overwhelmingly in its audience interactions. By combining its fictional audience with its real/fan audience, this Pride and Prejudice adaptation becomes one of the most hyperreal transmedia works but also one of the most hyperreal adaptations to date.

Conclusion

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is an example of the “‘material’ production…of the hyperreal.” Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, due to its exploration of simulacra and how to avoid manipulation by those simulacra, is highly appealing to audiences living in

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240 Jandl 182.
241 Seymour et. al. 102.
242 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 2-3.
243 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation 23.
a constant state of hyperreality. With the rise of internet culture and simulations without substance, people desired the real and could simulate access to it through Austen’s text. This led to a proliferation of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations as fans tried to continually recreate that experience. The over production of *Pride and Prejudice* has created a highly recognizable network of adaptations. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon theorizes that all adaptations contain traces of previous adaptations as well as modeling the source text and that “process of reception” becomes part of the text’s identity.²⁴⁴ O’Flynn also supports this statement with her discussion adaptation and transmedia in that same text’s epilogue.²⁴⁵ The network of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations has led to a sort of hyperreal conceptualization of the text as adaptations, simulations of the source text, have become blurred with the original. This blurring and acknowledgement of the intertextuality is seen in *LBD*. *LBD* is not only based on Austen’s text, but it often alludes to other *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations to add to its own realism. By alluding to other Austen adaptations, *LBD* seems more realistic and less like a traditional adaptation that doesn’t openly acknowledge its own intertextuality. The hyperreality of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations helps to create the hyperreality of *LBD*.

Besides acknowledgement of other adaptations and that process of reception, *LBD* also creates hyperreality by integrating with the digital lives of their fan base. The transmedia components of popular social media platforms allowed fans to “treat [the story world] as real spaces which intersect in some way with [their] own lived realities”²⁴⁶ which “threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’

²⁴⁴ Hutcheon 8 and 21.
²⁴⁵ O’Flynn 187.
²⁴⁶ Jenkins “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling.”
and the ‘imaginary.’” While more traditional franchises and transmedia story worlds typically portray alternate realities and fantasy worlds, LBD presents its characters as conventional young adults in 21st century United States. College, student loans, job prospects, dating, etc. are the concerns of most young adults and now they can see those concerns reflected in their beloved Austen characters. This connection to these characters became real as fans interacted through comments, and even threatened the stability of the narrative when they tried to take down the sex tape website. Jandl, Tepper, Zeiser, and Seymour et. al. have all recognized how LBD “blurs the line between [fans’] everyday reality and the LBD narrative,” but by not acknowledging the hyperreality of such interactions, the socio-digital commentary can be overlooked. Acknowledgement of the hyperreality of this text allows one to see that in this digital space where the self is simulated, manipulation by the media and by others becomes much more pronounced. As Mulvey-Roberts expressed, radical adaptation reveals “the horrors lurking in the margins” to create an “ironic self-distancing and self-reflexivity through dialogue with another text,” and through LBD, contemporary audiences can better understand the warnings of simulations and manipulation that Austen cautions readers against. This transmedia adaptation integrates itself with fans’ lives and distorts the boundaries between fiction and reality allowing for a hyperreal text that warns against the potential manipulations that come with a hyperreal life.

The characters of LBD seem like they could be real people and their digital selves, through their social media, interact with fans like they were real thus they seem real even

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248 Tepper 47.
249 Mulvey-Roberts 17 and 20.
to knowing audiences: “if he is this good at acting crazy, it’s because he is [crazy].”

The social media and the presentation of the characters seems like typical, real 21st century young adults so they are, even momentarily, thought of as real. These hyperreal characters go through challenges and relationships simulated from Austen’s text, and update as well as extend the issues of simulations found in the novel. While the novel deals with the first two stages hyperreality, “1. It [the simulacrum] is the reflection of a basic reality. 2. It masks and perverts basic reality;” LBD’s characters confront the final two stages, “3. It [the simulacrum] masks the absence of a basic reality. 4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.”

Characters, and by extension the audience, are manipulated by Caroline Lee and George Wickham who present simulations of kind, understanding individuals when they are nothing of the sort and are actually manipulative people who use the simulations of social media to hide their real nature. Even Lydia and Lizzie as protagonists simulate their lives which lead to misunderstandings and further manipulations. The main conflict is when the simulations become too real and too personal, the sex tape forces the Bennet sisters and those around them to question their digital lives and the impact that has on their relationships and physical existence. Once the danger has passed, and the novel’s plot has reached its end, Lizzie chooses to end her diaries and reclaim some control over how she is mediated and influenced. Like her novel counterpart, Lizzie removes herself from the digital community that her inclusion in has caused many problems for her and her family, and by doing that she still exemplifies a way for audiences to retain some control over their own

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251 Baudrillard, *Simulations* 11.
manipulation and reality. Lizzie Bennet may be a pure simulacrum, but she illustrates to her audience how to avoid the same mistakes of simulation.

*LBD* is a hyperreal transmedia adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* that confuses boundaries and is able to critique society with the same wit and insight as its source text. The social customs and expectations of the 19th century are converted to the social media customs of the 21st century, and despite the supposed more open and honest communication of the internet, *LBD* shows that those same simulations and manipulations are at work and are even worse in the “hyperspace without atmosphere” of the internet. Application of Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* allows one to recognize the multiple layers of mediation present in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and how it so successfully integrates itself into the digital realities of fans across the globe. By blurring the line between textual reality and the audience’s reality, this text further reveals that reality is constructed, dependent on perspective, and can be manipulated by circumstance that Austen’s original text exhibits. Hutcheon argues that “adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places,” and that is just what *LBD* does to continue the legacy of Austen’s most famous work. Hank Green and Bernie Su’s *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is not just another *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation, but it is a new genre of storytelling that invokes Baudrillard’s theory of simulation and reflects the current condition of humanity’s hyperreal existence.

253 Hutcheon 176.
The Lizzie Bennet Diaries ended in March 2013 with the last video uploaded on March 28 and the last Twitter exchange between characters on March 29. The world of LBD continued to expand though as new transmedia adaptations, Welcome to Sanditon and Emma Approved, started in May and July 2013. These adaptations are based on Austen’s Sanditon (her unfinished novel) and Emma. While Austen never explicitly connected her stories, the creative team made their own connections by substituting Gigi Darcy in the place of Charlotte Heywood in Welcome to Sanditon, and Caroline Lee is a client of Emma Woodhouse and becomes engaged to James Elton in Emma Approved. These adaptations continued LBD’s story world, and then in March 2014, new LBD Twitter interactions began being posted plus two new vlogs were uploaded in May and June. Then five years after the initial uploads, #LBD5Year celebrated and reposted all of the videos and social media posts on Facebook to try and recreate that initial experience of seeing the content in real time. While the parts of LBD that were adapted from Pride and Prejudice ended in March 2013, the plot and world of LBD endured to generate more hyperreal occurrences for fans.

The creation of the new content and #LBD5Year was the result of the Pemberley Digital media company. Pemberley Digital was Darcy’s fictional media company in LBD, but it became a real company that produced the above-mentioned transmedia
adaptations plus *Frankenstein MD* and supports *The March Family Letters*. The Pemberley Digital website describes the company as, “An innovative web video production company that specializes in the adaptation of classic works onto the new media format. The company utilizes …social media platforms… to tell an enriched and immersive story that transcends across multiple formats.”\(^{254}\) With the success of *LBD*, the creative team was able to form a real company that creates transmedia adaptations and brought Darcy’s fictional company into the real world. While the website does not pretend to be run by William Darcy and overtly reveals the fictionality of its adaptations, it is an example of extraction that Jenkins defines as, “the fan takes aspects of the story away with them as resources they deploy in the spaces of their everyday life.”\(^{255}\) As fans and creators, the team behind these recreations was able to extract their fictional company into physical reality. Darcy’s fictional company is blurred with Su and Green’s real company making Pemberley Digital a hyperreal company.

After the regular *LBD* videos ended in March 2013, Pemberley Digital’s *Welcome to Sanditon* and *Emma Approved* expanded the story world initially created by *LBD* by using some of its characters. While the main characters of *LBD* weren’t in the new videos or social media interactions, by continuing plotlines of secondary characters, even briefly, it is implied that the lives of the main characters continue also. And while fans cannot check-in on Lizzie, Darcy, and Lydia, they get similar experiences with Gigi, Emma, and their secondary characters. Like *LBD*, hyperreal experiences were fostered with these transmedia adaptations, which even led to both *LBD* and *Emma Approved* winning


\(^{255}\) Jenkins “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling.”
Creative Arts Emmy for Outstanding Original Interactive Program in 2013 and 2015.\footnote{Pemberley Digital. “Emma Approved.” http://www.pemberleydigital.com/emma-approved/. Accessed 2 Apr. 2018.} These Emmy-winning productions along with *Welcome to Sanditon* developed and supported the hyperreal experience of their viewers. Chapter two explored how *LBD* blurred the lines between the fictional story world and the digital realities of its audience, and with the sequel adaptations this ambiguous boundary persists as the stories of this fictional world continue.

While *LBD* officially ended in 2013, in March of 2014 new Twitter interactions between *LBD* characters began again and then two additional vlogs were uploaded in May and June of 2014. The Twitter interactions began as if there had not been social media silence for a year, and they gave information about the Bennet’s parents selling the house and the sisters coming home to move their stuff out. There were also some posts wishing Lizzie and Charlotte happy birthday. While initially not seeming substantial as the Twitter exchanges do not add anything really new to the story beyond losing their childhood home, these tweets, like the other adaptations with Gigi and Emma, make it seem like life is continuing for the characters despite not posting regularly. The illusion of time passing, parallel to the lives of the audience like in the original uploads, adds to the overall realism. More substantial content and updates on their lives comes with the two additional vlogs that Lizzie posted in May and June 2014.

These two videos were presented as question and answer vlogs for students in Dr. Gardiner’s, Lizzie’s former graduate professor’s, “Hyper-mediation in New Media seminar.”\footnote{The Lizzie Benet Diaries “Dr. Gardiner’s Seminar - Bonus 1.”} While the fictional audience are the students in Dr. Gardiner’s class, these
vlogs are for the fans of *LBD* to get updated on what is supposedly happening in the characters’ lives. As noted, like during the regular uploads, the story world is presented as having continued even when the camera has not been filming which adds to the realism of the characters’ lives. The first video is just Lizzie giving general updates on the major characters and her new business. Particularly, she mentions Gigi being in Sanditon, California which is a reference to *Welcome to Sanditon*. She avoids the numerous Darcy questions until she can verify with him that sharing their relationship online is acceptable. He even joins the second video as they collaborate to update the audience on their working relations and their romantic one. A big question that is asked is “what specifically was in Darcy’s letter?” and while he doesn’t remember the specific wording, Lizzie mentions that she pasted it in her diary. This alludes to another platform of the transmedia content. The team novelized *LBD* in *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet* and presented it as Lizzie’s diary where she divulges everything that she put in her videos but also the stuff that didn’t make it to the screen like Jane’s pregnancy scare and Darcy’s letter. These two bonus videos, even more so than the continuation that *Welcome to Sanditon* and *Emma Approved* imply, illustrates the lives of the beloved *LBD* characters as they move beyond the original story line. Typically, to extend the story in such a way, fans must rely on their own imaginations or unofficial fan fiction on sites like Tumblr to picture what happens once the narrative has ended. These videos canonize, or make official, the “happily ever after” of Jane and Bing and Lizzie and Darcy while also indicating that Gigi and Lydia are also doing well. It is a continuation and validation that fans desired, but it also serves to inspire more fan engagement.

258 “Dr. Gardiner’s Seminar – Bonus 1” and “Dr. Gardiner’s Seminar - Bonus 2.”
Like stated in the previous chapter, *LBD* relied on fans just to get the story beyond the first few episodes and to advertise for them with the team’s severely limited funds. They encouraged fan engagement and fan interaction as it was integral to their own success as well as the believability of the narrative. By adding this extra content, the creators appeased fans that desired more and further inspired more fan-created content. In the bonus vlogs, Lizzie and Darcy hint at their relationship in the years to come and even marriage. Fans used that and the other content to inspire fan fiction, creative images, memes, and more. This sort of “where are they now?” helped to sustain fan engagement which continued *LBD*’s hyperreality. The hyperreality of *LBD* only works if fans are engaging with it and fulfilling that communal role. Even when new content was no longer being added by the creative team, they still took steps to maintain that interactivity.

To commemorate *LBD* being on the internet for five years, Pemberley Digital and Bernie Su created #LBD5Year. This event reproduced all of the transmedia content on Facebook five years after it was originally published on its original platform, so YouTube videos, Twitter exchanges, and other social media posts were shared on the same day they were originally uploaded just five years later. The news release about #LBD5Year states, “In celebrating the 5 year anniversary, fans who missed the original run now have the opportunity to experience the show live with the transmedia elements. So by having it all unfold in one place (Facebook) we hope to make things easier for new viewers.”

The #LBD5Year hashtag, like all hashtags, created an intertextual network of not only the reposted content but also fan reactions and comments on the event; this allowed

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Pemberley Digital to engage with fans through different characters’ social media and their own account. Fans of the series, again, got to interact with the story and live through the comedy and drama of Lizzie Bennet and her friends. From April 2017 to March 2018, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*’ Facebook page reposted the original vlogs and social media posts. If they will continue to post the 2014 content next year remains questionable, but through this event, Pemberley Digital has created a relevancy to *LBD* again and reinspired fan interaction. This event also exemplifies Baudrillard’s “production, and overproduction… of the real which escapes society,”260 to attempt to recreate that experience of the first viewing of *LBD*.

While they cannot recreate the same experience that *LBD* had when it was being originally uploaded, Pemberley Digital extended the story world through more posts and videos and with the #LBD5Year event. The same hyperrealism cannot be duplicated, but keeping the story going or recreating the experience promotes continued fan interactions. Continued fan interactions allow for immersion and extractability of the story world as fans rewatch videos and interact with old social media posts. One can still go back to the social media and pretend that Lizzie Bennet was real, but without new content and new fan interactions, the characters become stale and much more like static, fictional characters and less like dynamic, real people. #LBD5Year invigorated the series and helped fans new and old fall in love with the story again. It will be interesting to see how Pemberley Digital continues to address the symptoms of their aging story world, and if they will produce the much-requested Darcy and Lizzie wedding video.261

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hyperreality still linger as new fans find themselves captivated by LBD and old fans revisit to attempt to simulate their initial viewing, but like adaptations never quite capture Pride and Prejudice, revisiting The Lizzie Bennet Diaries will never quite be as exciting nor as immersing as it was that first year with Lizzie Bennet.
CONCLUSION

By applying Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* to Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and Hank Green and Bernie Su’s *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, one can see social institutions’ reliance on simulacra and the continually compounding mediation of existence. Predating Baudrillard’s work by 168 years, Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* reveals a compelling critique of how society depends on and perpetuates unreflective simulations and standards that obstruct understanding and communication. By combining the lines of scholarship that have explored how Austen exhibits societal issues and the one that observes her postmodern sentiments, readers and scholars alike can recognize that her presentation and critique of the social is postmodern. The “truth universally acknowledged” that dictates how society should function no matter how “little known the feelings or views of such a man [or anyone] may be.”262 She presents perverted and harmful simulacra as the immoral community that needs to be better, while Pemberley with Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy is presented to be “the desirable society represented [by] their clear-sightedness and maturity [and]… based upon a real understanding of themselves and each other and upon a proper combination of values.”263 This critique and modeling of a redeemed community presents to those who may feel manipulated and unempowered a way to resist their own simulation and gain control.

262 Austen 1 and 3.
263 Paris 100.
This transgression of the simulations to find an unsimulated real is appealing to contemporary audiences who face continual simulation and manipulation in the age of the internet. As they feel nostalgia for that place of freedom and control, they feel compelled to recreate *Pride and Prejudice* in a desperate attempt to gain access to that unmediated real. Instead they further simulate the text and their own existence which has led to Hank Green and Bernie Su’s transmedia adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. This social media-based, multi-platform adaptation turned Lizzie Bennet and her friends into millennials facing a highly simulated world, unreliable job prospects, and mountains of student debt. The intended audience of millennials that simulate their existence through social media can highly identify with Lizzie and thus become her digital community. As they watch and interact with Lizzie and those around her, the boundary between the audience’s simulated reality and the fictional reality of the story world becomes heavily blurred and hyperreality is created. This lack of distinction between real and fake immerses fans further into the story world, but also extracts Lizzie Bennet into the real world. As the story ends when Lizzie must remove herself from the simulation to regain control of her life, the audience is left to face their own simulated existence and dependence on unreliable simulacra. Like Austen critiqued society of her time, *LBD* critiques the digital society and warns against the same media use it relied on for its success.

Even after *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* ended, Pemberley Digital, the hyperreal company of William Darcy and Bernie Su, expanded the story world and added updates to continue the realism of the characters’ lives. They also attempted in some sense to recreate *LBD* with their #LBD5Year event. While the same level of hyperreality cannot
be duplicated with LBD ever again, these attempts to continue the hyperrealism illustrate what Baudrillard theorized, that contemporary audiences will try to simulate access to a real even if they cannot succeed and even if it is not actually real in the first place. LBD and its reality is a slippery concept that eludes definition and boundaries. While reflecting on making LBD, Su states, “Personally, for a guy that lives in Hollywood, where everything is essentially “fake” and constructed, it’s fun and refreshing to have a creative piece that is pure writing and performance.”\(^{264}\) (“BTS: Lydia/Mary Q&A”). He means fake as in special effects versus the much more personal and arguable authenticity of an actor in front of a camera, but this quote also points to the overall ambiguity of LBD and the trouble that comes with deciphering what is real. Lizzie and her friends look and feel real to audiences who identify with their struggles, and they inhabit a space on social media timelines like one’s real friends. The transmedia spaces the LBD team chose to present the Bennet sisters are the “spaces which intersect in some way with our own lived realities” which fosters a hyperreal relationship between audience and text (Jenkins “Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling”). The Lizzie Bennet Diaries represents the growing simulation of humanity and its desire for an unsimulated real they can no longer access.

Together Pride and Prejudice and The Lizzie Bennet Diaries represent the growing and encompassing simulations of reality and how society responds to and combats those. Often seen as “chick literature” and a “sappy love story,” Pride and Prejudice and its adaptations are often dismissed by society and popular culture as simple and idealistic. This thesis has shown that neither text is simple nor ignorant, but both are

highly reflective and observant texts that realize larger societal issues of how people rely on imperfect simulations that obstruct open, honest communication and understanding that harm individuals as well as the larger communities.
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