

Modernizing Jane Austen:  
The Success of Transmedia Storytelling

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS  
MODERNIZING JANE AUSTEN:  
THE SUCCESS OF TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

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This study extends the work of Henry Jenkins's *Convergence Culture* and Allegra Tepper's "Lizzie in Real Life: Social and Narrative Immersion Through Transmedia in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*" by showing that comments left on the 1995 film and "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" can be categorized and that YouTube as a space is providing a space for a fluidity of performative fan interaction. In order to connect Jenkins and Tepper's theories, this study collected, categorized, and organized YouTube comments scraped from episode 5 of the 1995 film version of *Pride and Prejudice* and episodes 98, 100, and 61 of "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." This study demonstrates the need to contextualize works such as Jenkins and Tepper within the public nature of sites like YouTube to account for important elements of fan interaction in understanding transmedia storytelling. Though proving Jenkins can be seen as proving that fans make money for the transmedia creator, that is not the main focus of my study. Instead, I am focusing on the idea that human or fan interaction can prove the many facets of fandom within the space.

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 1: *Pride and Prejudice* on Film

It is a truth universally acknowledged that *Pride and Prejudice* (*P&P*) is in want of a good adaptation. Whether on the movie screen or the computer screen, *P&P* has been adapted time and time again. Accessing, watching, enjoying, and interacting with these adaptations are fans. By fan, here I mean someone who is more than a casual consumer of media, instead; this person chooses to both watch and re-watch a series and actively engage with other members of the same fanbase online through some form of social media.

Transmedia storytelling and the medium of availability making the storytelling more accessible is shifting what it means to be a Jane Austen fan. With Internet-based adaptations, more fans can access the content without hitting the usual pay wall of the film industry. Fans with Internet access can watch “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” or even the 1995 film over and over again without having to pay for a single DVD or movie ticket. This chapter focuses on film adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and how they compare to the novel, a basis for fan discussion both in person at Jane Austen Society meetings and online on Jane Austen fan-led websites. The information contained in this chapter is of course well-known to fans, but still is necessary to build the foundation of my study here.

### Film Adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*

In order to understand the background knowledge of Austen adaptations<sup>1</sup>, it’s important to review a brief history of adaptations here. Because *Pride and Prejudice* has been adapted so many times for screens big and small, it’s no surprise that there is a nauseating amount of scholarship about it. This section focuses on the history of the films in non-chronological order

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<sup>1</sup> By adaptation I mean a film or series developed with Jane Austen’s novels as source material.

starting with the more straightforward films and what I term “Austen-adjacent” and ending with the 1995 film and “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” which are the two adaptations focused on for this study. According to Sue Parrill, author of *Jane Austen on Film and Television*, *Pride and Prejudice* has not only been the most popular Austen novel, but also the most often adapted novel for television and film (Parrill 48). Because of its popularity, *Pride and Prejudice* is a fan favorite and the source of fan discussion. This led me to choose the 1995 film and “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” over adaptations of other Austen novels because I expected fan interaction to be present in the space.

The first time *Pride and Prejudice* was adapted into a film was 1940. The 1940 MGM film was based on a screenplay by Jane Murfin and Aldous Huxley. This screenplay focused on turning the novel into the screwball comedy movie genre popular at the time. In order to fit this formula, Murfin and Huxley made some changes. For example, “the class difference between Elizabeth and Darcy have been accentuated. In the novel Elizabeth is essentially of the same class as Darcy, only less affluent...in the film, Darcy snubs Elizabeth at the first dance because he says he is in ‘no humor [...] to give consequence to the middle classes at play’” (Parrill 50). In this way, Elizabeth is shown to be of a lower class than Darcy.

Huxley and Murfin also made major changes to the characters in this version. Darcy is underwritten and Elizabeth is broad. Elizabeth also is rude on multiple occasions such as the ball scene where Elizabeth refuses to dance with Darcy yet accepts Wickham right away. According to Parrill, “all of the sisters in this film lack decorum and restraint” and that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are reduced to comic relief bit roles (Parrill 52). Mr. Collins is Lady Catherine’s librarian instead of a clergyman and Lady Catherine herself blesses Darcy and Elizabeth’s marriage.

Finally, the 1940 version includes changes to the timing and time period as well. The plot is simplified and compressed for a 117-minute runtime. This is a device imported from the screwball comedy genre. This early example of a film adaptation demonstrates not only the choices made to appeal to audiences at the time, it also shows that problems in the plot which take time in the novel to resolve are solved quickly in the movie. Darcy and Elizabeth vacillate quickly between hate and love. This film adaptation paved the way for future adaptations to not only make adaptive choices to fit the time frame, but also the time period they were created in. In this way, it is a progenitor to “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” 20<sup>th</sup> Century vlog style. This means that the screenwriters for this series anticipated catering to an audience and tried to adapt a style that would have more generalized appeal. This film ushered in a new era of Jane Austen fandom: cinephile fans obsessed over the film adaptations to come.

The costume designer for this version reportedly asked the director to place the film in a later time period so that the “costumes might be more opulent than those of Austen’s time” (Parrill 55). This means that the dresses in this film version are closer to *Gone with the Wind* than Regency splendor. The women also wear colors, prints, and accessories that would have been verboten for a young nineteenth century woman. Despite these major changes, the film was a success both critically and popularly. It opened at the Radio City Music Hall and made over a million dollars in its first month (Parrill 56). Within the moviegoers spending millions to see the film were white middle-class women who had both the time and capital to see the movie thus beginning the assumption that Jane Austen fans are all white middle-class women.

After the smash success of the film, Samuel Taylor created a one-hour teleplay on NBC’s *Philco Television Playhouse* in 1949. This adaptation was presented live in black and white and included an actress playing Jane Austen to “supply character analysis, transitions, and ironic

perspective” (Parrill 57). As with the previous adaptation, there are omissions to fit the plot into a one-hour timeframe. Pivotal moments like Darcy’s first failed proposal, which feature so strongly for character and plot development proposal occur in incorrect locations. Other pivotal plot developments such as time between Darcy’s first and second proposal and Lydia’s elopement are too quickly glossed over, and the problems associated with both are resolved too quickly. This adaptation was generally well received by fans, but there was no public discussion space yet to examine how the fans felt about it.

The next adaptation chronologically is the 1967 BBC version. This adaptation was divided into six thirty-minute episodes. Like the 1940 film and the 1947 television program, characters are changed, and the events are altered to fit the time frame. Mary Bennet is omitted completely from this version. Pivotal plot moments such as Elizabeth’s visit to Hunsford are abbreviated and Darcy’s first proposal comes after his first appearance at a dinner at Rosings instead of in London (Parrill 60). This adaptation was the last film made before the first Jane Austen Society of North America yearly meeting in 1979 meaning that fans still had no regulated outlet to meet and discuss the films with other fans.

Parrill also discusses a 1980 mini-series, but it is so similar to the 1995 that I will not mention it here. I discuss the 1995 film later in the chapter to provide a more detailed overview of the film. The most recent adaptation based solely on the novel is the 2005 directed by Joe Wright. Wright’s film is not warmly received by fans due to the changes made by Wright and the screenwriter, Deborah Moggach. Fan reception is not the same as critical reception or public box office reception. The settings, characters, and plot are closer to Austen’s text, but the actions of the characters and some of the dialogue are completely out of character. For example, Darcy’s second proposal is met with Elizabeth noting his hands are cold. These choices created a hotbed

of debate for Jane Austen fans and is a polarizing topic amongst them. There is, however, one aspect of this adaptation that angers Jane fans more than the rest: the U.S. ending. I will discuss later in the chapter what I mean by Jane fans. The American ending shows Matthew McFayden's Darcy and Keira Knightley's Elizabeth after their marriage in the moonlight at Pemberley. After asking her how she would prefer to be called, she remarks "You may only call me Mrs. Darcy when you are completely, and perfectly, and incandescently happy" ([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0414387/quotes/?tab=qt&ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_qu](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0414387/quotes/?tab=qt&ref_=tt_trv_qu)). Which leads Darcy to begin kissing Elizabeth on the forehead, cheeks, nose, and lips while muttering "Mrs. Darcy" over and over again. Indeed, many fans believe novel Darcy would never stoop to such foolish behavior.

Finally, there are the Austen-adjacent adaptations. Since they are far out of my scope of research, I'll only mention them here briefly. *Bridget Jones' Diary* is the 2001 adaptation of the book by Helen Fielding is loosely based on *Pride and Prejudice* and stars Colin Firth as Bridget's love interest named Mark Darcy. 2005's *Bride and Prejudice* is a lively reinterpretation of *Pride and Prejudice* in a Bollywood setting. The settings, events, and identities of the characters are all changed to fit the Bollywood theme. The most interesting addition to this adaptation is the musical numbers central to a Bollywood movie. Finally, 2016's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is based on the book of the same name by Seth Grahame-Smith. It shows Lizzy and her sisters as zombie hunters who must join forces with Darcy and Bingley to ward off hordes of zombies threatening their home. While a fun mashup of zombie lore and Austen, it's a loose adaptation at best. Again, while not connected directly to my research here, it is important to show just how commercialized and extensive the world of Jane Austen and *Pride and Prejudice* is.

## The 1995 BBC/A&E Film

Unlike the other adaptations discussed above, the 1995 BBC/A&E film has long been accepted by fans as the “best” and “most faithful” film adaptation. Again, I need to review the adaptive choices made by the screenwriter in detail to provide a clear background for fan knowledge about the adaptation. This includes discussing the format, characters, settings, dialogue, and important plot points. First and foremost, this film has the longest runtime of any *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation. The 300 minutes are divided into six episodes which were shown on A&E in the United States. This serialization encouraged fans to tune in week after week to see the events unfold. Since then, it has been released on DVD “in wide screen, letterboxed, and includes several extras—a feature on the making of the film, a Jane Austen biography and bibliography, and biographies of actors” (Parrill 61). Creating this set marketed towards fans creates a paywall that some fans may not be able to bypass. The film does exist on YouTube, but not in its entirety meaning that some fans may not have seen the complete 1995 film. The DVD allows fans to watch episodes over and over again whenever they want. The extra features allow for new fans of the series to familiarize themselves with *Pride and Prejudice* and with Jane Austen herself.

As mentioned above, this film version was serialized into episodes. This serialization is a pre-cursor to the episodic set up of “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.” Each episode opened with “a close-up of satin, brocade, and lace fabric, fabric-covered buttons, and a female hand with needle and thread poised to embroider on the fabric” (Parrill 61). Parrill notes that these titles make it clear that the audience is entering a woman’s world.<sup>2</sup> Music director Carl Davis created the

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, for the 1940 film and the 1947 teleplay, women had not yet the buying power to dominate the fanbase, an assumption now commonly associated with Jane Austen fandom. By women’s world, Parrill appears to mean a space created for and enjoyed by women.

main theme based upon a Beethoven septet. The theme is played on pianoforte by Melvyn Tan. The pianoforte is heard in the intimate scenes augmented by an eighteen-piece orchestra (Parrill 61). This music appeals to “a high culture aesthetic that values literature; history...[etc.]” (Margolis 26). Chapter 2 will discuss these ideas in greater detail.

This film content-wise is faithful to the novel. As is the nature of Hollywood, Davies made some changes to the source material to fit the film narrative. Much of the dialogue was taken from the novel, but the speaker or the circumstance in which the dialogue is spoken is changed (Parrill 61). For example, when the Bennets are leaving church, Mrs. Bennet informs Mr. Bennet that Netherfield has been let by an eligible bachelor with five thousand pounds a year. In this conversation, Mrs. Bennet states, “What a fine thing for our girls” which is directly lifted from the novel (Parrill 62). In the novel, the Bennet girls do not hear this conversation, but in this adaptation, they are present. Elizabeth then quips, “A single man in possession of a good fortune must be in need of a wife” (Parrill 63). This concludes my discussion of the background of the film that Jane fans are expected to have knowledge of.

## The Characters and Major Plot Points

This section focuses on the characters and the actors’ characterizations of them in the 1995 film followed by a discussion of important plot points. As I discovered in my study, fans discuss heavily the characters and plot of this film. To many fans, Jennifer Ehle is the best Elizabeth Bennet. Sue Parrill writes that “her interpretation of the role of Elizabeth Bennet reflects not only her own manner of portraying the character, but the way in which the screenwriter perceived the character” (Parrill 63). This Elizabeth is physically lively, active, and sexually captivating to Darcy. Davies calls this a “tom-boyish, gipsy-ish” quality (Parrill 63). Thus, Elizabeth walks not only to visit Jane at Netherfield, but also runs downhill and climbs a

rock in Derbyshire. As for her costuming, Ehle's costume again reflects her sexual appeal.

Elizabeth does not wear high-necked dresses or tuckers which would have been proper for a lady of her time. Instead she displays décolletage both in daytime and nighttime outfits.

Ehle's Elizabeth has also been the subject of debate as to how far her conversation and manner deviates from proper behavior of Austen's time. Mrs. Bennet in the novel curbs Elizabeth's "wild manner of conversing with Mr. Bingley" (Parrill 64). Lady Catherine de Bourgh is also gob smacked at Elizabeth's willingness to speak her mind. Parrill notes that of course this is what attracts Darcy to Elizabeth.

Amongst fans Colin Firth is the epitome and paragon of Fitzwilliam Darcy. In an interview quoted in *Jane Austen on Film and Television* Colin Firth called Darcy, "rather inscrutable, very taciturn, and used to keeping his emotions in check" and "what Darcy *doesn't say* is as important as what he says or does (Parrill 65). For example, Darcy speaks very little in the first episode choosing instead to glare disapprovingly at those not in his "group." He also distances himself from those considered inferior by staring out of windows (Parrill 65).

Like the scene after church, Davies faithfully includes Darcy's lines from the novel in the scene where Elizabeth plays the pianoforte at Rosings. Darcy openly confesses his inadequacy in conversing with strangers. Elizabeth "chides him for not making more of an effort" leading to "a new experience for Darcy to receive instruction from anyone, especially a woman" (Parrill 65). Unlike the other adaptations, Firth's Darcy is fully fleshed out and fully realized. This is evident in the scenes after Elizabeth's refusal where Darcy labors to write the explanatory letter to Elizabeth and where his anger and hurt are on full display. This Darcy is the only one also to confess to his inadequacy in conversing with strangers.

Davies's Darcy also has a life away from Elizabeth. Just like Elizabeth, Darcy is very physically active and sensitive (Parrill 66). Darcy and Bingley ride horses. Darcy bathes and gets out of a tub. In an iconic scene forever culturally linked to the series, Darcy even jumps into a lake in his underwear to swim. Firth's Darcy even fences and sweats! Parrill writes:

The spectacle of Colin Firth in a shirt open at the throat, a look of frustrated passion on his face, may have been responsible for the Darcymania that swept over England after *Pride and Prejudice* appeared on the BBC. However, Mimi Spencer, writing for the *Evening Standard*, asserts, "It was his button-front breeches and Irish-linen shirt that sparked off the contagion of Darcy fever." (Parrill 66)

Finally, the audience glimpses more into Darcy's private life and his character through the scene where Elizabeth reads Darcy's letter. As Darcy narrates in voiceover, the audience is treated to a montage showing Darcy's past relationship with Wickham. First, Darcy and Wickham as children fishing. Next, an "older, disapproving Darcy" in an academic gown finds "Wickham with a half-naked girl on his lap and a quizzical expression on his face" (Parrill 66). Then Darcy writing a check and giving it to Wickham. Finally, as Darcy writes about Wickham's seduction of young Georgiana, the audience sees Darcy discovering the two at Ramsgate and Darcy embracing Georgiana as Wickham flees (Parrill 66-67). This shows Darcy as "morally superior to Wickham," "fair to Wickham", and a "loving brother to Georgiana" (Parrill 67).

Elizabeth's family members are also well presented in this film. Alison Steadman's Mrs. Bennet admirably worries about Mr. Bennet fighting Wickham and if Lydia knows the best place to purchase her wedding clothes and is seething at the Forsters for allowing Lydia to run away (Parrill 68). There is a clear parallel between Mrs. Bennet and Lydia who is destined to equal her mother in foolishness. Benjamin Whitrow's Mr. Bennet is also well played. Davies portrays Mr.

Bennet as “lazy and irresponsible in his pursuit of his simple pleasures of books and wine” (Parrill 68).

The 1995 adaptation includes a crucial scene with Mr. Bennet omitted from other adaptations. Here Elizabeth meets with her father after her engagement with Darcy. Mr. Bennet is concerned that Elizabeth has accepted a man she doesn’t love and tells her he would “hate to see her unable to respect her partner in life” (Parrill 68). This is clearly Mr. Bennet’s way of warning his daughter to avoid a marriage like his and a quick allusion to his feelings about Mrs. Bennet.

Parrill does not discuss Suzannah Harker’s Jane or Polly Maberly’s Kitty instead choosing to label them as well-portrayed (read here uninteresting). Instead she chooses next to discuss how Mary is portrayed by Lucy Briers (Figure 3 shows Briers in front of the pianoforte). Novel Mary is a “poseur” who prefers reading and exhibiting her talents in public to anything else. As she is seen as the least attractive Bennet sister, she tries other avenues to gain attention, but is ultimately unsuccessful as she is neither intelligent nor talented.

Film Mary admires Mr. Collins and “is the only one of the sisters who accepts Mr. Collins’s condolences as sincere” (Parrill 69). Just like the novel, Briers’s Mary is ready to perform musically at any time. She plays pianoforte with minimal competency. Her choice of an aria from Handel’s *Xerxes* “makes apparent to the viewer/listener how poor her singing and playing actually are” (Parrill 69).

Lydia’s flight with Wickham is unsurprising considering her behavior. In the film, the audience sees her at ease with her situation and unashamed as she lounges in her gown and robe in London (Parrill 71). She proudly tells Wickham that she has done what her sisters have not done and that she is only sixteen. As she returns to Longbourn with her new husband, Lydia

shows both no shame and no remorse for what she has done. Instead, “she parades her satisfaction with her handsome husband and suggests that Elizabeth must be envious” (Parrill 71). Ultimately, film Lydia reflects novel Lydia pretty well.

Wickham’s character is revealed by Elizabeth’s shifting opinions and attitudes on and towards him. When she likes him, he is well-mannered, open, and honest, but after Darcy reveals Wickham’s true nature, Elizabeth changes how she feels about Wickham. Adrian Lukis plays Wickham as a true handsome devil. Wickham’s flawed character is emphasized in this film version. For example, during Darcy’s letter scene and Mrs. Gardiner’s letter scene, the audience sees Wickham “taking money from Darcy, sees him wooing Georgiana, and sees him running away with Lydia” and “we hear Mrs. Philips tell of his gaming debts, his seduction of the village girls, and his outstanding bills to local merchants” (Parrill 72). This sets up brilliant characterizations for fans to debate and discuss (I will discuss later in the chapter how fans reacted to the characterizations of this film).

Mr. Collins is also well represented in the 1995 adaptation and as noted in chapter 2, is a fan-favorite comic-relief character. David Bamber plays up the ridiculousness of Collins. Caroline Noble, the hair and make-up designer, is said to have perceived Collins as “being sweaty, with a ‘moist upper lip’” leading her to part Bamber’s hair “low on one side to suggest incipient baldness” and slicking his hair down with grease (Parrill 72). Figure 4 shows Bamber’s foppish and greasy Mr. Collins. Collins’s foolishness is on full display in this adaptation. For example, when he dances with Elizabeth at Netherfield, Mr. Collins missteps, runs into another guest, and apologizes profusely.

The 1995 film also includes a good deal of Mr. Collins’s insipid conversations. This can be seen at the dinner at Longbourn. Mr. Collins tells the Bennets how he stores compliments to

be bestowed on the appropriate person or occasion. Mr. Bennet tries to urge him to do so while Elizabeth attempts to conceal her laughter (Parrill 73). Later, when Lydia runs away with Wickham, he tells the Bennets “that it would have been better for the family had Lydia died” a comment that angers even good-natured Jane (Parrill 73). In this way, by his appearance and actions, Mr. Collins creates another source of comic relief in the film.

Thus, the characters in the 1995 film are pretty close to Austen’s text. The long runtime of this version allows for more exploration of the characters’ personalities and for development and growth. Darcy and Elizabeth’s relationship is given time to grow and their feelings are given time to develop. Lydia and Wickham are given more background to their attraction. Finally, there are more clues into the nature of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet’s relationship and feelings towards each other.

This portion discusses the adaptive choices made to bring some of the major plot points of the novel to the big screen. Like the characters, the major plot points spur fan interactions online. Again, the long runtime of this film allows for the best adaptation of the novel’s main events onto the screen. Davies’ script sparkles with dialogue lifted directly from the source material. Likewise, the staging of main events beautifully captures the brilliance of the novel. For obvious reasons, Darcy’s proposals are a focal point of the film.

During the proposal at Hunsford, Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle perfectly capture Elizabeth and Darcy’s feelings through their actions. Ehle “conveys well Elizabeth’s simmering anger at Darcy because of what Colonel Fitzwilliam has revealed to her of Darcy’s role in causing Bingley to reject Jane” (Parrill 74). Firth “manages to suggest the intensity of Darcy’s struggle between his love for Elizabeth and his proud reluctance to ally himself with her family” (Parrill 74). Firth also “appears hardly able to believe that she [Elizabeth] could turn down the

great honor he does her” (Parrill 74). The letter-writing montage only increases the efficacy of this scene.

Darcy and Elizabeth’s reconciliation is also crucial to the film. Again, Davies’ script closely follows the dialogue of the novel. Darcy and Bingley call on Elizabeth, Jane, and Kitty at Longbourn. The party sets out to walk to Meryton. Kitty goes to visit Maria Lucas and Jane and Bingley distance themselves far enough away that Elizabeth and Darcy can talk discreetly. Darcy and Elizabeth lovingly look at each other and confess their feelings to each other (Parrill 75).

Finally, the ending of the film provides a satisfying conclusion. Darcy and Elizabeth and Jane and Bingley marry in a double wedding ceremony presided over by a smiling minister. This contrasts well with Lydia and Wickham’s earlier marriage ceremony where “the minister, Darcy, and the Gardiners wear solemn expressions and the bride looks frightened” (Parrill 76). As the marriage vows are read, the camera pans from the brides and bridegrooms to others in the congregation showing their feelings about the wedding such as a very sour Caroline Bingley.

The minister then lists different purposes of marriage and the audience is again treated to ironic contrasts. The minister first lists marriage for the procreation of children as the camera pans to Lady Catherine at home with her sickly daughter. Next, he states that marriage is a remedy against sin and fornication as the audience is treated to a glimpse of Wickham and Lydia in a bed. The third purpose is to provide mutual society and the audience sees Darcy and Elizabeth and Jane and Bingley lovingly looking at each other (Parrill 76). After the marriage, everyone gathers outside the church to watch Darcy and Elizabeth and Jane and Bingley get into two carriages. Mrs. Bennet tells Mr. Bennet that “they are blessed to have three daughters married” and the film ends with Darcy and Elizabeth exchanging a kiss (Parrill 76). Thus, the film ends before the epilogue’s events contained in the novel.

These examples once again show the mastery of Davies's script. The major plot points of the novel are adapted to the screen with dialogue taken directly from the novel. The use of montage, flashback, and other cinematic tools also provide rich backstory and greater understanding of the events. The actors also capture the inner feelings and motivations of their characters exceedingly well. All of this influenced my creation of a plot category for my data. I then discovered through my categorization that many fans chose to write about plot-based elements of the film and "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries."

### "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries"

In order to understand what fans are expected to know about "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" it is important to provide a background of this series as well. As noted in Silke Jandl's "*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Adapting Jane Austen in the Internet Age," this adaptation was written specifically for YouTube and transfers *Pride and Prejudice* into the year 2012. The story is "told in a series of videos restricted to only a few minutes at a time" with an average run time for an episode clocking in at around four minutes (Jandl 174). The one hundred core episodes of "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries"<sup>3</sup> contain only around seven hours of content (not counting spin-offs like "The Lydia Bennet" or "Better Living with Collins and Collins"). This of course meant that changes had to be made to the content of the series to fit both the time period of the adaptation and the vlog/YouTube episodic format.

### The Characters and Major Plot Points

This portion provides a brief background of the characters as they are adapted in this series as again, character and plot become important subjects for the YouTube comments I

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<sup>3</sup> "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" is a multiplatform adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* created by Bernie Su which reimagines the novel as a fictional video blog (vlog) recorded by Lizzie

examined. Jane Austen fans may or may not have previous knowledge of this, but it is prudent to provide the background, nonetheless. Lizzie Bennet, played by Ashley Clements, is “a 24-year-old graduate student studying Mass Communications and living at home in a suburban California town” (Tepper 46). She is the central character of the adaptation serving as both heroine and narrator. This fits the vlog format of one person speaking directly to the camera about their life experiences. She wears typical 2012 clothing unless she is reenacting an event with either her mother or Darcy where she dons a hat and shawl or a hat and bow tie respectively. Clements’s Lizzie is still outspoken and sarcastic especially when discussing Darcy.

As mentioned before, Bernie Su, in an effort to streamline the story for short YouTube clips, rearranged the characters appearing in the series. This paved the way for fan interactions discussing the characters in my Plot Comment category of this study. Characters like Mr. and Mrs. Bennet appear only in the form of reenacted scenes with Lizzie dressing up as her mother and Charlotte as Mr. Bennet. Jandl calls these exaggerated role-plays costume theater. Kitty is reduced to Lydia’s cat and Mary is completely absent from this adaptation. Jandl notes that “for the first twenty-four episodes viewers only see four characters: Lizzie, Charlotte, Lydia, and Jane” (Jandl 177). The main cast of the series includes Daniel Vincent Gordh as Mr. Darcy, Laura Spencer as Jane Bennet, Ashley Clements as Lizzie Bennet, Mary Kate Wiles as Lydia Bennet, and Julia Cho as Charlotte Lu.

Charlotte Lucas, played by Julia Cho, is changed to Charlotte Lu: editor of Lizzie’s vlogs. Charlotte is an aspiring filmmaker who convinces Lizzie to start her vlog. Unlike the novel and other film adaptations, Charlotte Lu is a main character appearing in many episodes. Also, this Charlotte does not romantically link in any way to Mr. Collins. Jane Bennet, played by Laura Spencer, is a merchandise coordinator for a fashion company. Jane is polite, sweet, and

practically perfect. She falls for Bing Lee and moves to Los Angeles to reconnect with him partway through the series.

Lydia Bennet, played by Mary Kate Wiles, is a college student and is described as feisty, energetic, and unapologetic (“The Lizzie Bennet Diaries”). Lizzie calls her “too old to be on any reality shows about having babies in high school” (“The Lizzie Bennet Diaries”). Lydia also has her own spinoff show with her cousin Mary and her cat, Kitty. Bing Lee, played by Christopher Sean, is a wealthy medical student who moves into the Netherfield House in the Bennets’ neighborhood. His name is a nod to Sean’s Asian-American heritage.

Jessica Jade Andres’s Caroline Lee is still Bing Lee’s sister. Unlike many of the characters in this series, Caroline knows about Lizzie’s vlogs. She also helps Lizzie hide her vlogs during Jane and Lizzie’s stay at Netherfield Hall. Her character also appears in the “Emma Approved” series created after “Lizzie Bennet Diaries” as Senator Elton’s fiancé. Maxwell Glick’s Mr. Collins has a changed first name, Ricky. Catherine de Bourgh has been changed into a venture capitalist who has teamed up with Mr. Collins to create a web video company (Collins and Collins). Instead of proposing marriage to Lizzie, Collins proposes Lizzie join Collins and Collins, an offer Lizzie rejects.

Darcy’s first name in this adaptation is shortened to William. Daniel Vincent Gordh’s Darcy is the heir to an entertainment company known as Pemberley Digital. Lizzie calls him a snobby, condescending robot and Jane just calls him tall. For 58 episodes Darcy only appears in Lizzie’s costume drama and the only character traits he has are what is revealed by Lizzie’s portrayal of him. In fact, Darcy is not fully revealed until episode 60 where he confesses his feelings for Lizzie.

George Wickham, played by Wes Aderhold, is a university swim coach. He claims that Darcy withheld money from Darcy's father ending Wickham's college dreams. Wes's Wickham is both fit and traditionally attractive. Wickham makes a brief, but important appearance in the series. Fitz Williams (the "Lizzie Bennet Diaries" Colonel Fitzwilliam) plays a fairly small part in the series. Fitz works with Darcy and Lizzie meets him at a dinner with Catherine de Bourgh. Finally, Georgiana "Gigi" Darcy played by Allison Page is a graphic designer at Pemberley Digital. Like Caroline, Gigi knows about Lizzies vlogs and is a fan of them. Gigi and George were romantically linked for a while, but their relationship ended when Darcy proved that George was using her for her money. Tweets from Gigi and Fitz's Twitters show that she tries to push Lizzie and Darcy together ("The Lizzie Bennet Diaries").

This portion focuses on how the major plot points from the novel were adapted to fit this YouTube format. Just like the 1995 film, the plot and characters became a major discussion topic in my findings discussed in chapters 3-5. Just as the characters in this adaptation have been modernized to fit the 20<sup>th</sup> century period, some of the important plot points of the novel have been transformed and modernized as well. For example, Mr. Collins's introduction happens while Charlotte and Lizzie are at Vidcon. Instead of proposing marriage, he proposes Lizzie come work for his online media company "Collins and Collins." Lydia and Lizzie meet Wickham in a bar where he reveals to them his backstory with Darcy. Instead of Bingley leaving Jane for London, Bing Lee leaves for L.A.

Instead of Lizzie visiting her aunt in London, Lizzie interns at Collins and Collins where she runs into Darcy. Also, this adaptation's first Darcy proposal comes in the form of Darcy confessing his feelings for Lizzie at Collins and Collins. Lizzie refuses to reciprocate his feelings

due to his rude behavior and his actions hurting Wickham and Jane. Darcy then discovers Lizzie's vlogs and watches them.

Darcy still writes Lizzie a letter, but again the content has changed. He tells Lizzie that he tried to steer Bing away from Jane because he thought she was only being nice. Darcy also explains that George Wickham was given sufficient money to pay for his tuition, but he gambled it away in a year and became angry when Darcy refused to give him more ("The Lizzie Bennet Diaries"). Instead of the fancy dissolves, camera work, and flashback, this scene has one camera focused on Lizzie as she reads the letter. Lydia leaves California for Las Vegas for New Years after misinterpreting a present for Lizzie's birthday. This is when Lydia and George begin their relationship.

Instead of Lizzie visiting Pemberley with her aunt and uncle, Lizzie visits Pemberley Digital owned by Darcy. There Darcy and Lizzie begin to grow closer as friends as they spend more time together. Their budding friendship is interrupted by Lizzie rushing home to deal with Lydia and Wickham's "elopement problem." Su replaces Lydia and Wickham eloping with Wickham bribing Lydia with releasing their sex tape through an online website. Before the tape can be released, Gigi Darcy takes down the website saving Lydia from embarrassment. Lizzie, at Jane's behest, watches some of Lydia's videos (from the Lydia spinoff series) and discovers that "her younger sister isn't as shallow as she thought and that she doesn't really know Lydia that well" ("The Lizzie Bennet Diaries"). This leads to the two sisters reconciling and strengthening their relationship.

Finally, while Lydia is still reeling and healing from her ordeal, she finds out that Darcy bought out the company that owned the website and the rights to her sex tape. Lizzie realizes how much she does love Darcy, but she's afraid that she's too late. Bing Lee returns to

California to apologize to Jane. He watched Lizzie's vlogs and discovered how much Jane actually cared about him through them. This leads to Jane and Bing resuming their romantic relationship. Darcy also returns to confess his feelings for Lizzie and Lizzie finally reveals she feels the same. This leads to them dating and Lizzie ultimately decides to quit vlogging so she can focus on living her life ("The Lizzie Bennet Diaries"). This is a departure from the original source material to fit the vlog format again providing an opportunity for fans to comment about it.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, the background information contained in this chapter is well-known by fans but is nevertheless important to include here. The different films have sparked debates between fans over which is the "best" version. This will be discussed more in the next chapter as I provide a distinction between fans and discuss the theories used in my study. I extend Jenkins and Tepper in later chapters by showing that fandom on YouTube can be studied, that there are different types of fans on YouTube, and that these fans choose to write about different subjects.

## Chapter 2: Transmedia Storytelling

This chapter explores the theories I used to frame my study. Fan studies, transmedia storytelling, and convergence culture have all been studied extensively in other scholarship in regard to Jane Austen and other fandoms (Henry Jenkins, Allegra Tepper, Emma Webb, Silke Jandl, Harriet Margolis, Todd Presner, Jeanne Kiefer, and Deborah Yaffe). Henry Jenkins's *Convergence Culture* is the keystone to many discussions of fan culture and its influence on media. This study focuses on extending the work of Jenkins specific to categorizing fandom within a public space like YouTube and using fan comment data to show the multiplicity of facets of Jane Austen fandom. Many of the ideas developed by Jenkins regarding fan culture should be considered alongside YouTube's unique storytelling format (the ability to upload videos and organize into a linear playlist). Here, I extend his work on transmedia storytelling and media convergence to show that fandom exists in YouTube and that YouTube is shifting the definition of Jane Austen fan.

To begin, Allegra Tepper's "Lizzie in Real Life: Social and Narrative Immersion Through Transmedia in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*" also analyzes how transmedia influences and encourages fan participation online. However, both Jenkins and Tepper fail to account for the publicness of YouTube. In failing to consider the public and open nature of YouTube comments, and the lack of moderation of comment posting on YouTube, Jenkins and Tepper fail to account for how the business choices of YouTube can shape and impact fan actions and activities. I created four distinct research questions both before I collected my data and after data collection to help shape my conclusions. Questions 1 and 2 deal needed to be created and answered definitively before I could continue my study. Questions 3 and 4 came from the expectations based on previous scholarship that fans would be present in the space and that they would choose

to write about previous knowledge or in direct response to the adaptation studied. My four research questions were: 1. Do users leave legitimate comments on the YouTube videos I studied? 2. Do fans leave comments on Jane Austen videos in recognizable ways? 3. Who/What are the fans in this space? and 4. What are fans choosing to comment/write about?

Silke Jandl's "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries Adapting Jane Austen in the Internet Age" discusses the adaptive choices made by creator Bernie Su in modernizing *Pride and Prejudice* for a YouTube audience. Jandl also touches on transmedia and fan interaction. Sue Parrill's *Jane Austen on Film and Television: a Critical Study of the Adaptations* is also key to understanding what adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* already exist and how they relate to the source material (see Chapter 1 for an extensive background of the adaptations using Parrill as my guide). Harriet Margolis's chapter "Janeite Culture: What Does the Name 'Jane Austen' Authorize?" is also critical to understanding how Janeites can be seen as a source of cultural capital to Hollywood studios creating adaptations. I used Margolis later in the chapter to define what a Janeite is. Webb's study of the evolution of YouTube and fan culture surrounding soap operas online also served as a model for my categorizations outlined in Chapter 3. My work differs from previous scholarship mentioned above because I studied a public Internet space, categorized fan comments, and determined that transmedia properties both support fandom and shift the definition of online fandom.

### The Evolution of the Fan Video and the Influence of YouTube on the Creative Decision-Making Process for Fans

Emma Webb, began her experience with online fan communities on a text-based website called "Port Charles Online." This site started in 1994 as "free-to-post message board" for fans of *General Hospital*. It derives its name from the town where *General Hospital* is set. This

community focuses on “discussing and dissecting the soap, both through this earlier incarnation, and starting in 2001, through its transformation into a pay-to-post site called SoapZone” (Webb 185).

Webb began noticing in 2000 that fans were making “slideshow” of “photographs taken either on-set for publicity and still shots captured from the soap” and posting them online (Webb 185). These videos were created to tell a story, show a perspective or celebrate a storyline or pairing of characters. Visitors of “Port Charles Online” could download and watch these videos as a new way of communicating with each other (Webb 185). It was these videos that inspired Webb to examine how fans of soap operas integrate video production into their communications and online activities. I didn’t study fan-made videos of course because “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” is a controlled transmedia property. However, this idea of different types of fans and different forms of fan interaction lends itself well to my categorization of fan comments on YouTube because I discovered through my study that different types of fans commented on the YouTube videos I chose.

Four years after the emergence of the slideshows, technology advanced to where fans at SoapZone began to use web sites like YouSendIt and MEGAUPLOAD to record clips or whole episodes of the soaps. This meant that fans who didn’t have a television subscription could catch up on their favorite soaps by downloading and watching the videos shared by other fans. The final type of early fan videos created were what Webb calls “fanvids” or fan music videos. These videos used music to comment on or analyze visuals or to use footage to tell new stories (Webb 186). In 2005, YouTube replaced YouSendIt and MEGAUPLOAD as the fan-favorite video-sharing application. The fans using early video sharing websites to watch and catch up on soap

operas is similar to modern Jane Austen fans using YouTube to access films without buying a movie ticket or DVD.

YouTube allowed fans to provide external links to content for immediate viewing. These links led to “clips that reinforced a specific interpretation of events that happened on a show or to a piece of evidence about a character’s motivation” (Webb 187). Viewers could immediately view and comment on linked videos. According to Webb, as of June 2008, YouTube hosted around 104,000 videos related to *General Hospital* and the most-viewed fanvid had been watched over three-and-a-half million times (Webb 187). Webb’s study shows that fan interaction on YouTube has a history.

After searching through the videos posted to YouTube about *General Hospital*, Webb created four main video categories. Her first category is clips from recent episodes of *General Hospital*. The second category is classic clips. These clips included any video about *General Hospital* with an original airdate of six months earlier than the upload date. The third category is fanvids or compilations of characters set to music. The last category created was for “other” videos of actors’ appearances on talk shows, entertainment shows, or other media (Webb 190). These categories can become problematic as Webb doesn’t acknowledge the possibility of overlap between categories (for example, a video posted six months after the airdate of an episode could be a fanvid or vice versa. Her categories also do not really match what I saw in my space.  Instead of fan videos, my space centers on fan comments. Therefore, my thesis extends Webb’s work into a new space online. Webb’s idea of categorization of her fan space did influence my decision to categorize comments in my study. Webb created these categories to distinguish and determine what fans were making videos in response to within her space. I

applied this to my space to discover if fans were present on YouTube and what exactly fans were responding to.

## Participatory Culture and YouTube

Todd Presner in “Critical Theory and the Mangle of Digital Humanities” writes that there is a “performative dimension of resistance and accommodation that characterizes the ‘doing’ of digital humanities through various kinds of agency: human, material, computational, conceptual, and disciplinary” (Presner 58). Participatory meaning that there are what Pressner notes as conditions for engagement with communities and individuals. This means that the space has opportunities for users to interact with each other in a public online space. This culture is “open-ended, nonhierarchical, and transmigratory...” (Presner 60). Presner also notes that traditional (or in his example broadcast) media is being replaced now by “decentralized, multi-directional ‘public utterances’ that are changing the way in which events unfold, become represented, and are disseminated (almost instantaneously) on a global scale” (Presner 62). As a result, a new public space has emerged (one that is adaptable, amorphous, global, ephemeral, and multi-mediated).

Presner doesn’t connect this theory to YouTube, but YouTube fits well with the participatory culture model. YouTube is a public sphere that allows for and encourages agency by suggesting videos to click and rewarding clicks. Webb’s soap opera fans have the agency to create and share fan-made videos on YouTube. YouTube also is set up to allow for participatory culture. YouTube is open-ended in that anyone with Internet access and know-how can create an account and leave comments on videos and that anyone can create video content. YouTube still has a bit of hierarchy in terms of dissemination of content: top creators are marketed heavier on the front page towards users to view their content. YouTube also has the capacity of

transmigration as the cross-platform connective capabilities are what allowed “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” to be transmedia storytelling. Pemberley Digital took full advantage of this as they created accounts for “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” on Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, LookBook, and Instagram. Finally, Pemberley Digital embraced multi-media in the form of multimodal/multiplatform content. As noted above, “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” universe exists on other forms of social media aside from YouTube.

Finally, in terms of traditional versus new media on YouTube, YouTube has not yet fully supplanted Hollywood or television as a form of entertainment media. YouTube is still a secondary source of entertainment. However, YouTube is changing the way events or stories are represented and released to a global audience. “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” takes the format of the 1995 film and compresses it to fit the “typical” YouTube video<sup>4</sup>.

The comments section on any video on YouTube is constantly changing and content on YouTube is always changing as well depending on what type of video is most popular at the time. YouTube is not completely amorphous as content has some kind of organization in how it’s displayed on a channel’s page. It is also not ephemeral as comments are archived on the video in chronological order. Neither YouTube nor Pemberley Digital has deleted comments on “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” videos showing that YouTube is also not heavily moderated or policed. The lack of moderation allows for commenters to post whatever they want, whenever they want. This also provided a great deal of data for me to study in the following chapters.

What is a Janeite?

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<sup>4</sup> By typical I mean the popular format supported by YouTube at the time. In 2013, short vlogs were a very popular YouTube video format.

As I noted earlier, YouTube is shifting the definition of Jane Austen fans. In order to see the shift, it's important to define more traditional fan culture or "Janeites." I also should point out that I am a Jane Austen fan myself; however, I do not consider myself a straight Janeite or Fangirl, rather I am a blend of the two. As Jeanne Kiefer points out in her study of Janeites attending a Jane Austen Society conference, "Anatomy of a Janeite: Results from The Jane Austen Survey 2008", a Janeite is much more than a "typical" Jane Austen enthusiast. Kiefer concludes that the Janeite community is very diverse and that "we are young, we are old, we are in between—in equal measures. We are teachers and librarians and book editors, as expected, but also judges, truck drivers, puppeteers, oceanographers, and zoo keepers... There is only one thing that connects everyone in this group: we all have a special place in our heart for Jane. And in my view, that is the most important part of the anatomy of a Janeite" (Kiefer 1). As for my definition, a Janeite is a fan who has extensive knowledge of the novels, has read the novels multiple times, and engages with other Janeite fans through attending conventions or writing and reading fanfiction. When online, these fans often identify as a Janeite. A majority of the Janeite fans surveyed by Kiefer were women with a median age of 40 (Kiefer 1). More than one-third work as teachers or librarians and the top "ten career fields are education, business administration, business services/worker/retail, library/archivist, finance, science engineering, writing/publishing, medical, arts law, and IT" (Kiefer 1). Janeites are also well educated, but not all have a concentration or study in English or Literature. This important as it undermines associations deeply connected to the Janeite community. However, Kiefer's findings did also feed into my assumptions about and definition of a Janeite

I was also interested to see how Kiefer's fans felt about Jane and her works. According to the study, thirty percent came to love Austen from reading one of the novels on their own,

twenty-nine percent cited seeing a film or TV production as the spark (Kiefer notes that younger respondents under 29 years old were more likely to cite the film/TV experience). One third of the respondents read one or two Austen novels annually and sixty-two percent considered themselves well-informed about Jane and her period (Kiefer 1). This is important as it influenced my expectations of knowledge possessed by fans.

*Pride and Prejudice* was voted as the Janeites' favorite novel, Elizabeth Bennet the favorite heroine, and Mr. Darcy the favorite hero. Wickham edged out Willoughby for favorite bad boy and Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins took first in favorite comic characters. In regard to film and TV adaptations, eighty-six percent felt that "they are a 'good thing' overall for appreciation of Jane" (Kiefer 1). This study was completed before the advent of the "Lizzie Bennet Diaries" so the fans were not surveyed about this adaptation. Sixty-two percent of respondents favored the 1995 film version of *Pride and Prejudice* compared to less than seven percent favoring the 2005 Joe Wright led *Pride and Prejudice*. These results further cemented my own expectations of the values and opinions held by traditional Janeites. The Janeites I've read about and have met personally in the past seem to agree with the respondents to Kiefer's study.

Harriet Margolis also provides a definition-of-sorts for Janeitism based on a quote from Claudia Johnson. Janeitism is "the self-consciously idolatrous enthusiasm for 'Jane' and every detail relative to her..." (Margolis 27). Janeites according to Margolis have access to different degrees of cultural capital. Since then, Austen-based films have become a hot commodity. According to Harriet Margolis, Jane Austen's name itself has become a recognizable brand that is a guarantor of success (Margolis 26). Margolis's idea of varying degrees of cultural capital lends itself to YouTube well. Fans who do not have the monetary capital to access the films may have the know-how and Internet access to access "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries."

As for the 1995 film, an estimated 10.1 million people watched it when it aired on the BBC and another about 3.7 million watched it on A&E when it aired in the United States (Parrill 61). Not all of those viewers were Janeites of course, but amongst those viewers were anxious Janeites. According to Margolis, Austen calls to mind “a high culture aesthetic that values literature; history; class hierarchies; an appreciation of irony and satire at the expense of class hierarchies; Anglophilia or at least a tolerance thereof, with a latent or implicit nostalgia attached to it; dialogue-driven narratives delivered in an elevated language; and the repression of foul language and overt sexuality” (Margolis 27). Margolis’s definition of sorts of Janeites is pretty problematic. The ideas presented here only feeds into the elitism associated with Janeitism. Sure, there are Janeites that fit this category and value this aesthetic, but there are also Janeites that would disagree totally with the ideals espoused by Margolis.

Adaptations also offer what Margolis calls “an inoffensive experience” to middle-class white people who think of themselves as both discerning and endowed with good taste (Margolis 27). These people could also be considered Janeites. Kiefer’s study showed that a large majority of Janeites are middle-class white women. My study discovered, however, that this assumption is flawed. I found comments left by fans from countries across the globe. This means that Janeites and Jane Austen fans are more than middle-class white women. What unites them is their love of all things Jane Austen. Janeites gush and argue in web forums over who their favorite characters are, which film versions are the most “faithful” to the text, and which actors best portray their beloved characters. Some write fanfiction and many more read fanfictions based on Austen’s works. Deborah Yaffe recounts some examples of online Janeite activities in Chapter 9 of *Among the Janeites*. Unsurprisingly, *Pride and Prejudice* is widely held as a favorite amongst the Janeites. As Kiefer’s study suggests, many Janeites see the 1995 film adaptation as the

“best.” As I mentioned earlier, Janeites are often associated with elitist white middle-aged women, but that is not always the case as Yaffe points out in chapter 9 of *Among the Janeites*. Janeites come from all classes, nationalities, and genders.

### Among the Janeites

In Chapter 9 of *Among the Janeites*, Deborah Yaffe explores the online Jane Austen fandom. According to Yaffe, Janeites are “Jane Austen’s adoring fans” who can fall in love with Jane at different times in their lives (Yaffe xiv). The concept of Janeites in Yaffe is the same, but the actual fans Yaffe details often diverge from this definition of “Jane Austen’s adoring fans” (Yaffe xiv). Online fan interaction began in 1991 when the first Jane Austen Listserv was created by a McGill University English instructor (Yaffe 181). Since then, Austen has exploded online on Tumblr, blogs, and Facebook. Names like “Fuck Yeah, Jane Austen,” “Bitch in a Bonnet”, “The Secret Dreamworld of a Jane Austen Fan”, and “Jane is My Wonderland” represent just how varied these fan pages are (Yaffe 181). The online fan forums and pages open up Austen fandom beyond the elitism of Janeiteism. The Facebook pages host Janeites from Poland, Italy, Greece, Romania, Brazil, and Turkey again showing the internationality of Jane Fandom.

For the purpose of my study, I delineated two separate types of fans online: Janeites and Fangirls. This distinction matters because without it, I could not track if YouTube is in fact shifting the types of fans online. Remember that I defined a fan (regardless of specification) as someone who is more than a casual consumer of media, instead; this person chooses to both watch and re-watch a series and actively engage with other members of the same fanbase online through some form of social media. Yaffe does not consider that some of the examples above might be run by Fangirls. Jenkins and Tepper also fail to examine who the fans in their respective spaces are. I provide a more fleshed out definition of Fangirls in the next chapter, but

I'll provide a brief one here to distinguish the two types of fans. Fangirls use different performative language when posting online than Janeites. They use slang expressions like “omg” and “I can't even” to convey their direct emotional response to something. Some also do not adhere to English grammar rules or just hit random keys to express their inability to express their precise emotions. Fangirls also tend to favor sites like Tumblr or Twitter to post fanart and interact with other fangirls. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, my study shows that transmedia storytelling has shifted what it means to be a fan. This means that Austen fandom is changing into a blend between my Fangirl and Janeite data categories (this will be discussed more in Chapter 5).

Yaffe notes that there are hundreds of Jane Austen pages on Facebook created to mimic a page created by Jane herself. The online fandom does not stop there. These sites may be hosted by or set up by Janeites or Fangirls, but that does not really matter as the fans within these spaces could be part of either fan group. There are also phone apps such as the Ask Mr. Darcy app, a Magic Eight ball that dispenses advice in the form of *Pride and Prejudice* quotations (Yaffe 181) and plenty of Austen-based Twitter accounts. Captain Wentworth from *Persuasion* and Mr. Collins have their own Twitter accounts and there are again hundreds created for Jane herself. Finally, there are accounts created by fans with names like “Hipster Jane Austen, Jane Austen's Ghost, or JaneAustenNBA” (Yaffe 181). All of this shows the extensive worldbuilding of Jane Austen fandom online. As I mentioned earlier, my definition of Janeite is a fan with an extensive background knowledge of Jane Austen's novels. The examples I provide in this paragraph complicate the idea of what Janeites should know as not all Janeites would have knowledge of every fan page created online or phone application created.

Yaffe also recounts in this chapter her own personal experience with Jane Austen fan sites, particularly the Republic of Pemberley. Yaffe remarks that in the Republic of Pemberley website she found “her people,” namely, “the ones who could argue for hours—days! weeks!—about whether Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth plan a long engagement, about the relative merits of the Kate Beckinsale and Gwyneth Paltrow *Emma* adaptations, about the moral worth of Fanny Price’s suitor Henry Crawford” (Yaffe 183). Indeed, Janeites argue and discuss their opinions online extensively. What drew Yaffe into this space was the ability of the community to foster what she deems as civility due to the required signature on comments with a user’s real name or some variation of it. This site reflects just how elitist or gate-kept traditionally “Janeite” spaces online are. Contrary to this, YouTube is a much more public space that forgoes this need for using a user’s real name online. This means that YouTube fosters easier fan discussion than the traditional fan sites.

At time of publication of Yaffe’s book, the Republic of Pemberley got between five and ten million, yes MILLION, hits each month from 150,000 visitors hailing from 165 different countries (Yaffe 197). This shows that not only are Janeites more than just middle-class white women, but also that they’re very active in online fan communities. The users on Republic of Pemberley are not all Janeites, but there are Janeites active on the page. I included this distinction because it foreshadowed my findings in my own study. Janeites online still find what Yaffe calls a feeling of homecoming in discovering there are other fans out there who share their beliefs. Yaffe’s different views of Janeites showed me that Janeites online are more than just a middle-aged white woman.

What Was Studied

Now that I've overviewed what a Jane Austen fan is and what they're expected to know, it's important to overview what I studied and justify my decisions. I relied heavily on the theories set out by Harry Jenkins and Allegra Tepper. Both Jenkins and Tepper do not acknowledge YouTube, the publicness of the space, and the lack of moderation on YouTube. In this thesis, I researched YouTube comments to explore Janeite and Fangirl fandoms, if they existed, in public, unmoderated comments. I drew my data from YouTube exclusively, choosing this site because of the lack of gatekeeping. To better understand categories of fandom, and contemporary Janeite fandom, exploring comments left in such a public, non-gatekept space with no expectations of privacy allows for a more public look at fandom. With many Jane Austen fan spaces protected by log ins, the public nature of YouTube comments provides a unique perspective on how fans choose to interact with each other and Jane Austen material in a space with little expectation of privacy. As I mentioned previously, all of this contributes to a shifting fan type from a traditional Janeite fan.

### Transmedia Storytelling

Before discussing the gaps between Jenkins and Tepper, it's important to provide a background of their respective theories. I chose their theories about transmedia storytelling because it is the current topic of scholarship in regard to "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." Henry Jenkins writes that entertainment in the age of media convergence is "integrating multiple texts to create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium" (Jenkins 97). He also defines a transmedia story is one that "unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (Jenkins 97-98). This means that the story is diffused across multiple forms of media (or in the case of "The Lizzie

Bennet Diaries, multiple platforms). Jenkins' theory here lays the basis for Tepper's later article and eventually, for my study.

Transmedia storytelling is a story introduced in a film, expanded in television, novels, and comics, etc. Each portion is self-contained so that viewers don't necessarily need to have seen the original film to understand the other media. In fact, "Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise" (Jenkins 98). According to Jenkins, reading across the media gives a deeper experience that will inspire more consumption. Jenkins's bar for successful transmedia storytelling is very capitalistic in that successful transmedia will lead fans to spend more money creating a demand for more media or goods associated with the story to be produced. This experience will then in turn inspire consumer loyalty. Economically, this seems to make sense as:

The economic logic of a horizontally integrated entertainment industry—that is, one where a single company may have roots across all of the different media sectors—dictates the flow of content across media. Different media attract different market niches...A good transmedia franchise works to attract multiple constituencies by pitching the content somewhat differently in the different media (Jenkins 98).

This does not mean that media conglomerates are or should be manipulating or exploiting the fan base (in "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries's" case well-educated white women). Pemberley Digital as a company has roots in different social medias and diffuses content through each form of social media. This attracts fans to interact with the content in different ways over the different media. This leads back to Presner and his idea of participatory culture spread across spaces online.

Jenkins also makes an important distinction between transmedia storytelling and traditional storytelling methods of films alone. What he calls the "old Hollywood system"

depends on redundancy to “ensure that viewers could follow the plot at all times, even if they were distracted or went out to the lobby for a popcorn refill during a crucial scene” (Jenkins 106). The new storytelling “demands that we keep our eyes on the road at all times, and that we do research before we arrive at the theater” (Jenkins 106). Modern storytelling also has shifted into what Jenkins considers the art of world building. This means that movie makers and transmedia storytellers create “compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium” (Jenkins 116). Finally, Jenkins also argues that there is an emergence of new story structures “which create complexity by expanding the range of narrative possibility rather than pursuing a single path with a beginning, middle, and end” (Jenkins 121). This means that fans can, for example, start with YouTube and end at Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter or Lookbook and still be able to both access content from the original source and interact with the characters and world established in YouTube on other media.

Digital media also plays a large role in transmedia. Jenkins draws on theory from Janet Murray to discuss this world of new media. Murray’s focus on the “encyclopedic capacity” of digital media shows the possibilities this form can provide for established movie franchises (Jenkins 118). Murray believes that digital media will “lead to new narrative forms as audiences seek information beyond the limits of the individual story” (Jenkins 118). Murray also makes a comparison between the world-building of video games and cinema to the world-building present in William Faulkner’s novels and short stories. Readers of Faulkner created “contextualizing devices—color-coded paths, time lines, family trees, maps, clocks, calendars, and so on” to connect the novels and short stories all set in the same fictional town in Mississippi (Jenkins 118). This allowed readers and viewers to understand the “dense psychological and

cultural spaces...without being disoriented” (Jenkins 118). Of course, in order to understand the digital media, the fan needs some digital literacy (or know-how) in order to operate the media. This means that online Janeites also have digital literacy in order to access and interact with transmedia.

So what does this mean for “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries?” Allegra Tepper’s “*Lizzie in Real Life: Social and Narrative Immersion Through Transmedia in The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*” draws upon Jenkins’s theory and applies it to the online community of “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.” Tepper draws from Jenkins because as I previously mentioned, Jenkins is a key player in fan studies including transmedia. Tepper argues, “there is perhaps no transmedia property that better exemplifies these possibilities for innovative storytelling and audience connectivity than *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*” (Tepper 45). Tepper continues,

Capitalizing on the distinct storytelling opportunities presented by some dozen social platforms—and using some platforms in imaginative ways that transcend their proposed purposes—this web series does not simply tell a story; it builds a world. In doing so, it revitalizes a narrative that has universal resonance for its global virtual audience, and proves that in this age of adaptation, transmedia could be the last bastion for original narrative redux. Moreover, it proves that audiences are compelled by sustained critical engagement with both narrative content and the people behind it, if only given that opportunity (Tepper 45).

As previously mentioned, Jenkins sets a capitalistic bar for successful transmedia storytelling. At the time of Jenkins’s publication, he believed that true successful transmedia storytelling had not been achieved yet. Tepper’s article shows that not only is successful transmedia possible, but that “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” is a perfect example of what that looks like. Unlike Jenkins, Tepper’s bar for successful transmedia deals with critical fan engagement. Fans are able to access content across platforms and to interact with a completely immersive online world. In fact, each social media account linked to “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” can be an entry point into the series. Also, users need not have previous knowledge of *Pride and Prejudice* to understand

the series. As for reading across the media creating a more immersive experience, Pemberley Digital created social media accounts for each character in the series allowing fans to directly interact with the characters further expanding out the reaches of the universe of Lizzie Bennet. I'm extending both Jenkins and Tepper by showing that commenters on YouTube leave legitimate comments, that fandom can be shown and studied in the open and unmoderated space, that there are Janeites and other fans in the space, and that they are choosing to write about plot, characters, and their general reactions to the videos. I also discovered that the space is changing what it means to be a Jane Austen fan and the background knowledge required for these fans. This is important as fan studies in the past have not studied online fandom and have not officially delineated exactly what the different Jane Austen fans are.

## The World of Austen Research

As mentioned previously, Jane Austen has inspired a great deal of scholarly research. This includes research on the novels, films, and fan culture surrounding anything Austen. While there are articles about how "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" represents successful transmedia storytelling and how fans are interacting with it, there is no research definitively connecting the two. My study uses data collected from the YouTube comments on both an episode of the 1995 film, and a few key "Lizzie Bennet Diaries" episodes to show how fan interaction can determine the success of transmedia storytelling thus connecting fan studies with transmedia studies. In including comments from an episode of the 1995 film, I am building a larger fan comparison by connecting the film and "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." The 1995 film on YouTube also provides a new definition for Janeites and Fangirls online. Studying YouTube provides for unmoderated fan

comments. Finally, “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” provides newer material to attract new Austen fans into the space to interact with each other and with established Janeites.

## Chapter 3: Methods

This thesis focuses on four distinct research questions: 1. Do users leave legitimate comments on the YouTube videos I studied? 2. Do fans leave comments on Jane Austen videos in recognizable ways? 3. Who/What are the fans in this space? and 4. What are fans choosing to comment/write about? Jenkins and Tepper first do not consider YouTube in discussing fan interaction and second do not directly look at fan interactions. My research questions helped me to discover that fan interaction does exist on YouTube. First and foremost, Yaffe’s *Among the Janeites* formed my expectations for what a Janeite is and what background knowledge would be necessary to categorize a fan as such. Webb’s study and categorization of fan videos influenced my own category system in this study.

### Creating My Own Categories

My study looks at raw YouTube data and categorizes YouTube comments to show that fandom exists on YouTube and that the types of fans interacting with the site are shifting what it means to be a Janeite and a Jane Austen fan. I used Yaffe and Webb’s studies to create my own categories of fans. This allowed me to categorize types of fan writing. The first category I created was Janeite Comments. This category is for comments from the elite Jane Austen fans who dominate the other online Jane-Austen-themed communities. This includes any user who has previous knowledge of the source material or of Jane Austen herself and chooses to divulge said information in a comment.

The next category I created was what I called Fangirl comments. Fangirl of course as a term comes with some pejorative, derogatory, and sexist implications and baggage. For my usage in this study, I am not critiquing nor diminishing the importance of women who post with excessive emotional or “fan” responses. I’m merely adopting a term that is well known to the fan community to represent for fans of the “Lizzie Bennet Diaries” who differ from Janeites. Though fangirls is a problematic term, fans might rather adopt this term than Janeite due to elitist associations with the word “Janeite.” Janeites would rather be called a Janeite rather than a fangirl because of the derogatory connotations that would diminish their importance. Similar to Janeites, Fangirls also are seen just as white teenagers, but Fangirls can also come from different classes, races, and genders. To be a fangirl, all one needs is an active social media account and the know-how to use them. These fans use different performative language in their spaces online and never bind themselves to traditional grammar rules. To me, fangirls use language like “omg” to show their immediate emotional response to a character or plot point. For example, one user wrote, “oh my god i just fangirled everywhere.” Janeites use different performative language when online. This does not mean that Janeites don’t use fangirl performative language or that they are emotionless. Through my study, I was able to answer affirmatively to questions one and two that users do leave legitimate comments and that fan responses can be recognizable on Jane Austen videos. My categories are set up to answer my third research question of who or what are the fans on YouTube. This distinction in fan writing is not discussed in previous literature, especially as it exists in public social media forums with little regulation.

The third category I created was Episode or Plot Based Comments. This category is for comments that refer directly to plot points, character interactions, character appearances, or repetitions of dialogue from the episode. These comments are similar to Janeite or fan comments

but are often pointing specific time stamps of events in the episode or other general critiques. I separated these from fan categories because they often don't reveal any kind of previous knowledge of the text or use the fangirl performative language. For example, one commenter wrote, "I love how no-one's even got to talking about the thumbnail yet" in response to the video's thumbnail of Lizzie and Darcy together. For this study, I separated these comments from fan comments, but it may in fact overlap with either Janeite or Fangirl depending on the exact content of the comment. For example, "4:18 Lizzie stroking his tie. Gosh, too cute!" could be Plot or Fangirl. In Chapter 5, I discuss in more detail about the possibility of overlap between the categories.

The final category I created is Other Comments. I created a category to anticipate comments that wouldn't fit into my other categories. This is the only term I borrowed from Webb's study. These comments can be generally unrelated to the novel, films, or "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." I also considered any spam (comments of scam giveaways, random comments, or other unrelated comments) as unrelated other content including trolling. YouTube is an open and very public space where people fans or no can comment on videos. The Other category exists to see if fandom exists in the space and what are people choosing to write about in the space. If the majority of comments analyzed on a video are Other or unrelated, then fandom does not exist in the space.

### "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries"

I began my data collection with "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries." I was able to view comments from when the episode first aired to the present day. After searching "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" in the search bar of YouTube, I clicked on the playlist Pemberley Digital created

of all 100 main episodes as well as the special “Q&A (Question & Answer)” episodes. I decided to collect my data from Episodes 98, 100, and 61. These episodes cover important plot points for the series, plot points important to the fans I outlined in Chapter 1. I also chose these specific episodes because the heavily plot-based episodes contain more comments on the whole than episodes that are not. Thus, I was able to discover if fans were leaving comments on the episodes and what they are choosing to write about. Episode 98 shows the reconciliation of Lizzie and Darcy. Episode 100 ended the series. Finally, Episode 61 contains the first time Darcy appears as himself. Again, these events are familiar to and loved by Janeites and fans alike.

Once I settled upon my source episodes, I had to find a way to organize the comments on the videos. I chose comments because 1. YouTube archives comments well so I could access fan interactions new and old and 2. YouTube is not monitored very closely so comments are rarely deleted unless the creator deletes them (Pemberley Digital did not delete comments on the series). I Googled “YouTube Comment Scraper” to find an online tool to collect comments from my chosen episodes. I chose a *Comment Scraper* run as an extension of GitHub and hosted by the site [www.ytcomments.klostermann.ca](http://www.ytcomments.klostermann.ca). This specific tool was created by a user called philbot9. On GitHub, this tool is listed as a web client that scrapes YouTube comments. I had to use Google Chrome as the website is not supported by Safari. *The YouTube Comment Scraper* pulls comments from a YouTube video via a pasted URL and exports it to a file that can be opened either in Microsoft Excel or Apple Numbers. The file of the results stores the username, comment, and date that each comment is posted (Figure 1).

I started by copying the video link for episode 98 and pasted it into the *Comment Scraper*. I then clicked “scrape” and opened the Apple Numbers spreadsheet created. I then saved the spreadsheet to my laptop. The data collected for this portion was collected on February

12, 2019 at around 4 pm. Figure 6 shows a screenshot of the raw data from the YouTube Comment Scraper. I then repeated the process with episode 100 and 61 on the same day. Once I had the raw data, I had to decide what to do with it. I decided then to copy individual comments and paste them into an Excel spreadsheet.

	B	C	D	
	user	date	timestamp	commentText
1	Pix The Glitch Queen	2 weeks ago	1548795158690	"Regardless of your position of authority over me, I don't like what you did to Jane."
2				SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP
3	stardust_and_ashes	1 month ago	1547326358693	"I knew it" us too, charlotte, us too
4	Roberto Fontiglia	1 month ago	1547326358697	"You're quite prolific." Damn right I can't go to sleep because there are so many of these...
5	My Dog Is Bae	2 months ago	1544647958701	Hahaha when you have the book so you can read the letter
6	NaTeesha85	3 months ago	1542055958703	BUT I LOVE NEWSIES
7	Tasnim	5 months ago	1536785558705	"I'm not going to sue you."  Translation: The fuck does this bitch think I spend my money on?
8	Abigail Chorley	5 months ago	1536785558707	0:18 your thumb?
9	Buffy8Fan	5 months ago	1536785558709	"I totally knew it." is my favorite Charlotte moment.  This is the video they showed in the TED Talk that got me intrigued to the point of wanting to watch the series  "And a Newsie." Laughed out loud.  Got a little angry when she just disregarded the letter even knowing she would read it.
10	Chloe Young	7 months ago	1531428758711	1:57 Charlotte's face kills me everytime
11	Charis Alexander	8 months ago	1528836758712	"...and a Newsie" I feel so bad for laughing at that.
12	Antika	8 months ago	1528836758714	I'm going to go...do something work-related.
13	Elena Blu	9 months ago	1526158358716	Fuck yeah go Charlotte
14	Dana Farblecks	9 months ago	1526158358718	Pausing every 2 seconds, because AAAAH this is too much to handle more than a sentence at a time
15	emma buggelli	10 months ago	1523566358720	every time darcy walks on I need to pause it
16	Rahvee	10 months ago	1523566358722	you called me a robot and a newsie

Figure 1: Youtube Comments from an Episode of "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries"

## The 1995 Film

After I completed my data collection for the Lizzie Bennet Diaries, I repeated the process with an episode of the original 1995 film to compare the types of fan interaction within the same space. Again, I went directly to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and clicked in the search bar. I typed in "1995 Pride and Prejudice" and clicked search. After weeding through some partial episodes, I decided to look at comments on a full episode in order to preserve authenticity. In my search to

preserve authenticity, I introduced some variables with this second collection of data. For example, the episode may not be easily found by users. The user who posted the video also is not legitimately affiliated with the BBC or A&E so the video could be taken down due to copyright. The first full episode I found was episode 5. I clicked on it, paused the video, and copied the link.

I re-opened the YouTube Comment Scraper and pasted the video link and hit scrape. Once the comments had again been scraped, I saved the Apple Numbers sheet to my laptop and began to read through the comments to categorize them. This episode had less views than the “Lizzie Bennet Diaries” episodes I chose so I did not skip over any comments this time. I created a new page/tab in Excel to store the comment data here and again copied and pasted comments into their respective categories. All my data was collected March 13, 2019 at 10 am.

Figure 2 shows the raw data collected from the 1995 film on YouTube. Figure 3 shows the Excel sheet with categorized comments collected from the 1995 film. The 1995 film had a total of 90 comments.

id	user	date	timestamp	comment text
UgyfVuc_KDqsLDVqeut4AaABAg	Simona Gabriela Rad	3 days ago	1552226112165	Vizionez cu mare placere acest film, o ecranizare deosebita, un scenariu
UgxQSys-zpEuveCEN0F4AaABAg	enigmaticallyso	2 weeks ago	1551275712167	The woman who plays Mrs. Gardiner and the woman who plays Miss
UgxaVS54IA3tMNPtLhIZ4AaABAg	Glyn Brain	2 weeks ago	1551275712168	35:06 Mr Collins is brilliantly oily & slimy.
Ugz0fAX90Wr6H5MMQ6Z4AaABAg	darklightkelly	2 weeks ago	1551275712170	Is this image flipped... I was sure the piano scene was on right not le
Ugw6SplX07oY57c96kN4AaABAg	Maureen m	3 weeks ago	1550670912172	I watched this again today and only realised that none of the Bennett
UgyN_mLFYj3ALzbn6ct4AaABAg	kritterbug43	1 month ago	1550066112174	Can't watch this the sound is not right and the movie is flipped.. It ru
UgzujufHUTtSiezf1SV4AaABAg	Denise Evans	1 month ago	1550066112176	Why is it all the wrong way around .if you watch it on tv.or cd disc ev
UgytLcQkqQ6chQvrna94AaABAg	j Fj	1 month ago	1550066112179	Good god where did they shoot it so precisely.
UgyE443oxIHk3TpV9214AaABAg	Shneha Prasad	1 month ago	1550066112180	Darcy is soo soothingly and charmingly concerned here ! Its just am
Ugyz9E-U40Wi9PfeU54AaABAg	Hana For Success	1 month ago	1550066112182	I feel so bad about women's status in the past. They had to be so sn
UgxPtZ1Ag6q-1eN3trR4AaABAg	Chabal Challon	1 month ago	1550066112184	J'adore. ...c exactement les mêmes évènements que le livre...je l'ai lu
UgyD4TmMMI-QHEROvDJ4AaABAg	Könül Aslan	1 month ago	1550066112186	I shall never see him again- Elizabeth would have never thought she
UgxZLlu4aHVLLeHqa214AaABAg	mactine2k7	1 month ago	1550066112188	Sound is...low/slow. Makes it hard to watch.
UgxVwUXmeTb1dgerZcF4AaABAg	Eugene Paynter	2 months ago	1547387712189	Sharmella Krishnasamy I must agree with your comment I used to a very happy funny guy then the the most devastating loss happened to me the loss of the my one true love. I was hurt beyond anything that I had ever felt b4 it completely destr The loss killed something in me that day a coldness took hold and re Other lessons of life taught me to have a hardness that would have b Today that hardness and coldness have served me well when I need

Figure 2: Comments on Episode 5 of the 1995 Film

	Janeites	Fangirl	Episode/Plot	Other
2	Data collected on 3/13/19 at 10 am			
3				
4				
5	j'adore. ...c exactement les mêmes évènements que le livre...je l'ai lu en français et je l'ai retenu presque par coeur que j'ai pas de mal à comprendre et à bien suivre ces parties malgré mon niveau très moyen en anglais	OMG I have this OBSESSION with Mr Darcy/Colin and I think it is getting worse.	The woman who plays Mrs. Gardiner and the woman who plays Miss Darcy are mother and daughter in real life.	Vizionez cu mare placere acest film, o ecranizare deosebita, un scenariu bine pus la punct, actori talentati cu roluri bine alese, marturisesc ca sunt indragostita ever de mister Darcy, in realitate as accepta in viata mea un lord ca dl firih...multumesc youtube pentr film mai traduceti filmele din cand in cand...
7	*Austen had no control over the printed texts of Pride and Prejudice at all. She was displeased by the divisions of the volumes in the first 1813 edition, blunders in paragraphing and a lack of clarity in the way the novels' dialogues were printed.*	Idol, Mr Bennett XD	35:06 Mr Collins is brilliantly oily & slimy.	Can't watch this the sound is not right and the movie is flipped.. It ruins it for me.
3	<a href="https://www.janeausten.co.uk/oxford-worlds-classics-pride-and-prejudice/">https://www.janeausten.co.uk/oxford-worlds-classics-pride-and-prejudice/</a>	I love this movie and everything about it	Is this image flipped... I was sure the piano scene was on right not left... :(	Why is it all the wrong way around .if you watch it on tv.or cd disc everything is facing the other way .anyone else seeing it .
	Thanks for the great upload, Angelo! I've been in love with this movie since its first debut in 1995, on PBS. Yes, it's not just that Collin is the BEST Darcy ever. I love			I feel so bad about women's status in the past. They had

Figure 3: Categorized Comments from Episode 5 of the 1995 Film

Once I settled on these categories, I created columns in Microsoft Excel to paste comments from my YouTube Scrapes. I created the categories before I pulled my data from YouTube. Episode 100 had a total of 46,666 comments, Episode 98 had 10,916, and Episode 61



## Chapter 4: Results

### “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” Comments

#### Episode 98

In this chapter, I include the comments as written by the users. All misspellings and creative language uses have been kept. On episode 98, I analyzed a total of 112 comments taken from copying every 100<sup>th</sup> comment on the video into Excel (see Figure 5 for the comparison). Of those, 2 were Janeite Comments such as “Aaaannnd you wrote this on the very video we've all been waiting for for a solid year.... very wise. Gee I can't help but wonder at what point you feel the writers threw poignancy and depth out the window and began writing purely for monetary gain... perhaps it was the same moment Ms. Austen did back in 1813 when she realized her readers were reacting similiarly... hmm....”, 70 were Fangirl Comments such as “SQUEEEEEEEEEEE I'm sorry, but that's the level this video has brought me to. My mind can't do anything else right now”, 38 were Plot Comments such as “4:18 Lizzie stroking his tie. Gosh, too cute!”, and 3 were Other Comments such as “me too!!” That means that around 2% of the total analyzed were categorized Janeites, 62% were categorized Fangirls, 34% were categorized as Plot, and 3% were categorized as Other (See Figure 5 and 6).

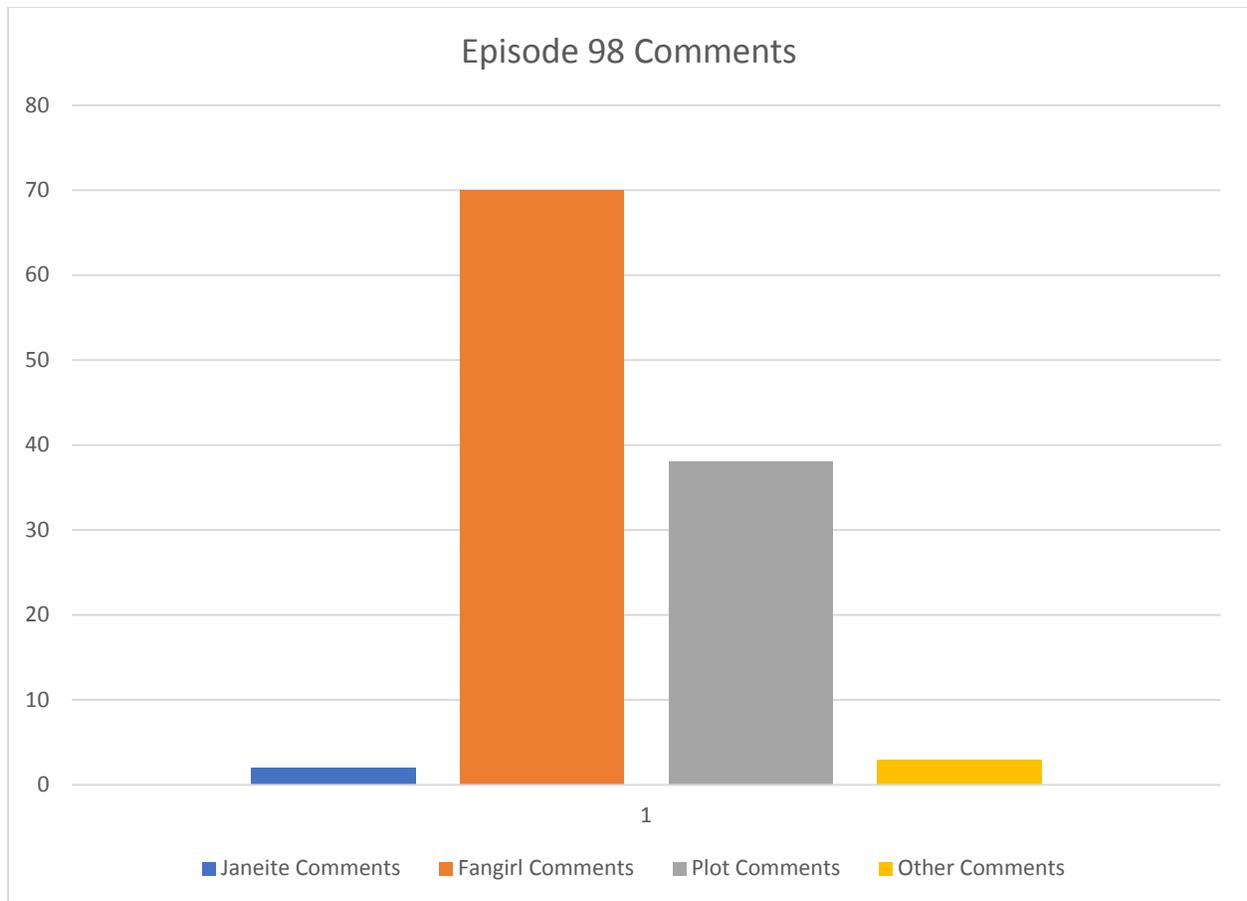


Figure 5: Bar Graph of Comment Data from Episode 98

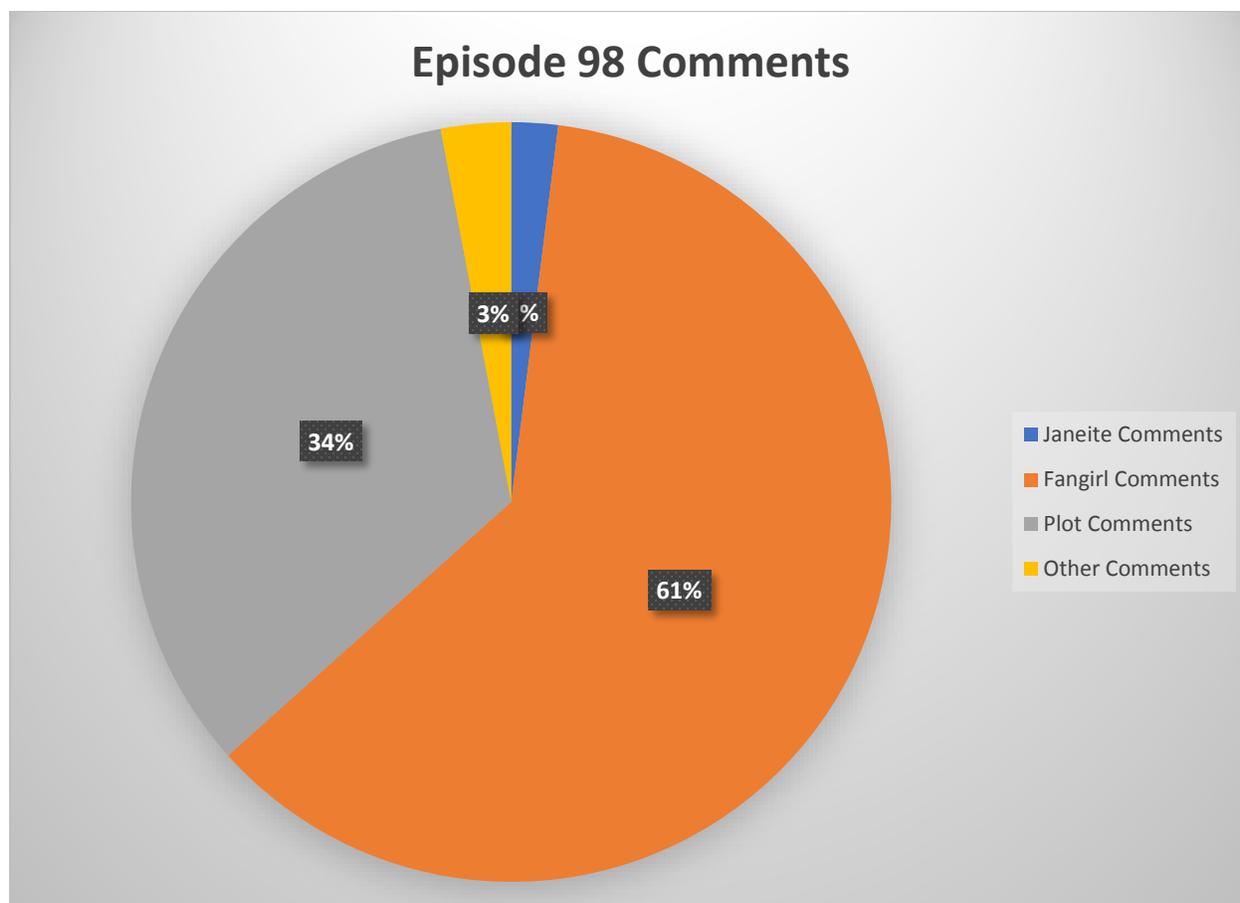


Figure 6: Pie Chart of Comment Data from Episode 98

## Episode 100

For episode 100, I analyzed a total of 100 comments taken from copying every 100<sup>th</sup> comment into Excel (see Figure 7). Of those comments: 2 were Janeite Comments such as “Am I the only traditionalist here (besides Mrs. Bennet) who wishes there had been at least one marriage proposal? Careers are nice, but....”, 34 were Fangirl Comments such as “AEFRHSEIGTHEKSJHFUGRH THE ENDING!!!! I am going to miss this series so much!”, 8 were Plot Based Comments such as “lydia's back!”, and 6 were Other Comments such as “WAIT, I LIVE IN CANADA, WILL I GET TO SEE COLLINS?” (see Figure 8). This means

that 4% of the comments categorized as Janeites, 68% were categorized as Fangirls, 16% were categorized as Plot, and 12% were categorized as Other.

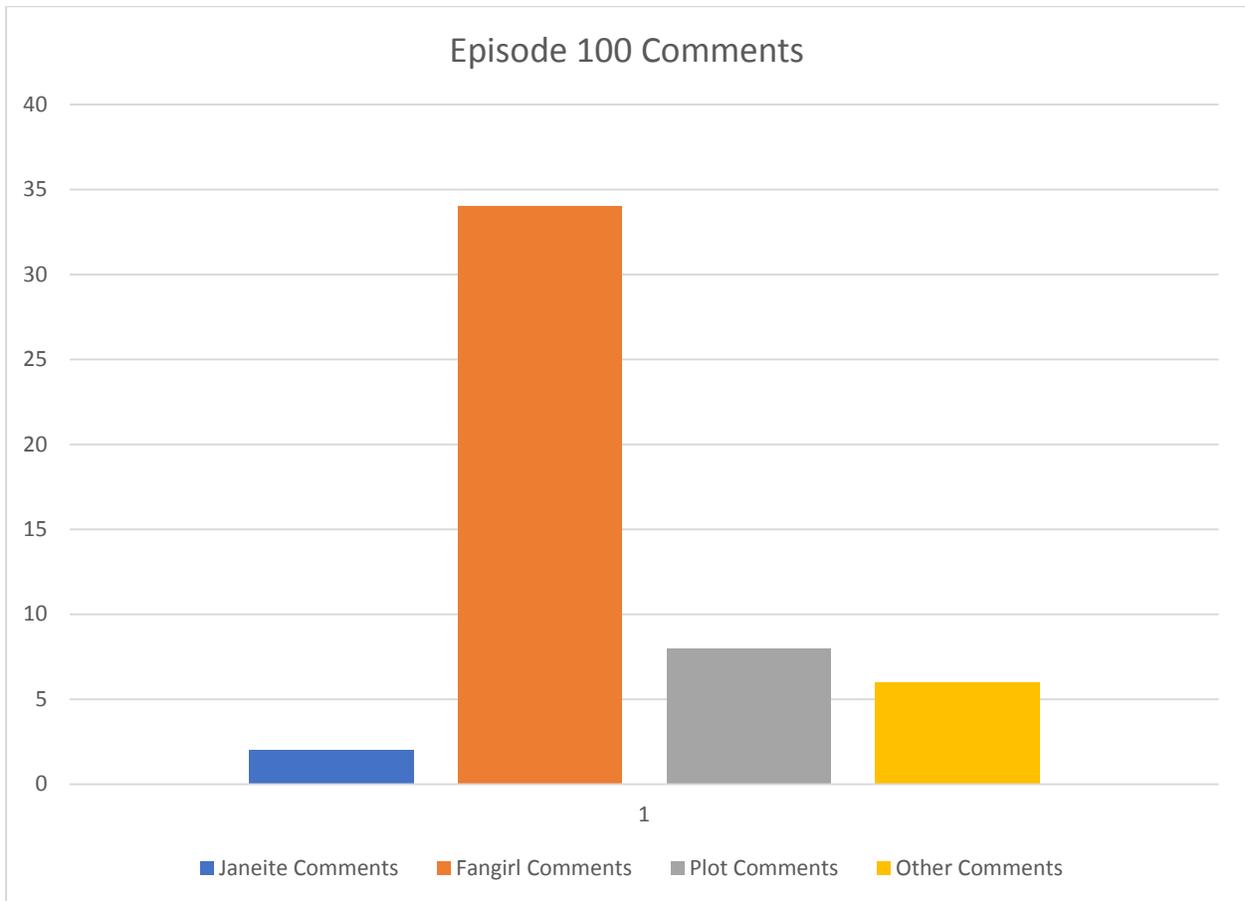


Figure 7: Bar Graph of the Comment Data from Episode 100

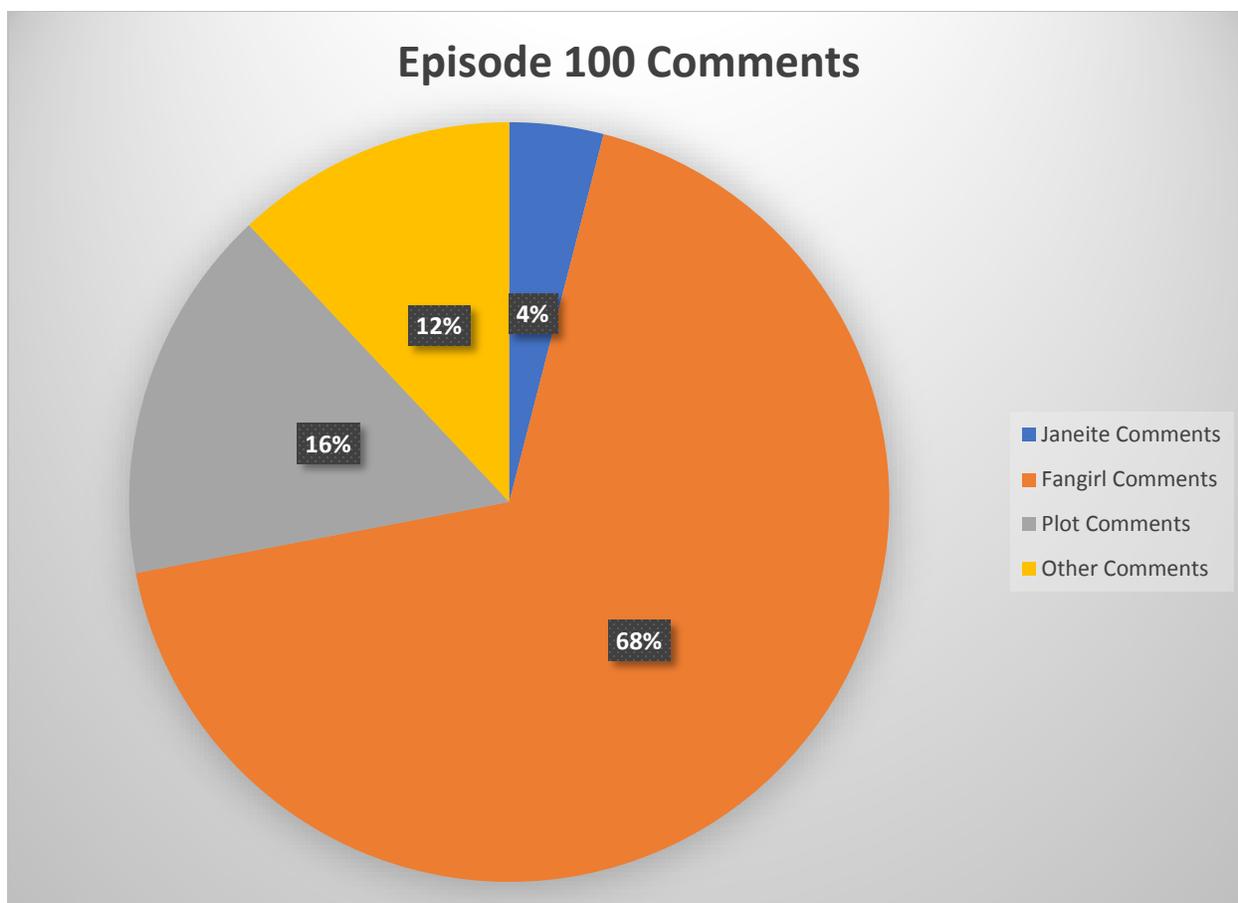


Figure 8: Pie Chart of the Comment Data from Episode 100

## Episode 61

The final “Lizzie Bennet Diaries” episode I collected from was episode 61. I analyzed 30 total comments from this episode taken from copying every 100<sup>th</sup> comment (see Figure 9). This episode had the least total comments of the three episodes. Of those comments: 1 was a Janeite Comment “I’ve watched all the episodes up to this point in one day. I also had church services morning and evening, and managed to eat meals and relieve myself. :P So yeah. Totally possible. But then, I am a woman in love with Jane Austen retellings, soooo.... pretty sure Darcy could handle it.”, 15 were Fangirl Comments such as “I only have one thing to say... YOU TWO ARE GONNA MAKE BEAUTIFUL BEAUTIFUL BABIES”, 11 were Plot Comments such as “I

literally shouted "READ IT!!!!" at the top of my lungs over and over until she read it.", and 3 were Other Comments such as "I was taught cursive for about five years in elementary school and then I didn't start using it again until last year (when I was a junior in high school) I like it now. It looks nicer (see Figure 10)." This means that 3% of the total comments were categorized as Janeite, 50% were categorized as Fangirl, 37% were categorized as Plot, and 10% were categorized as Other.

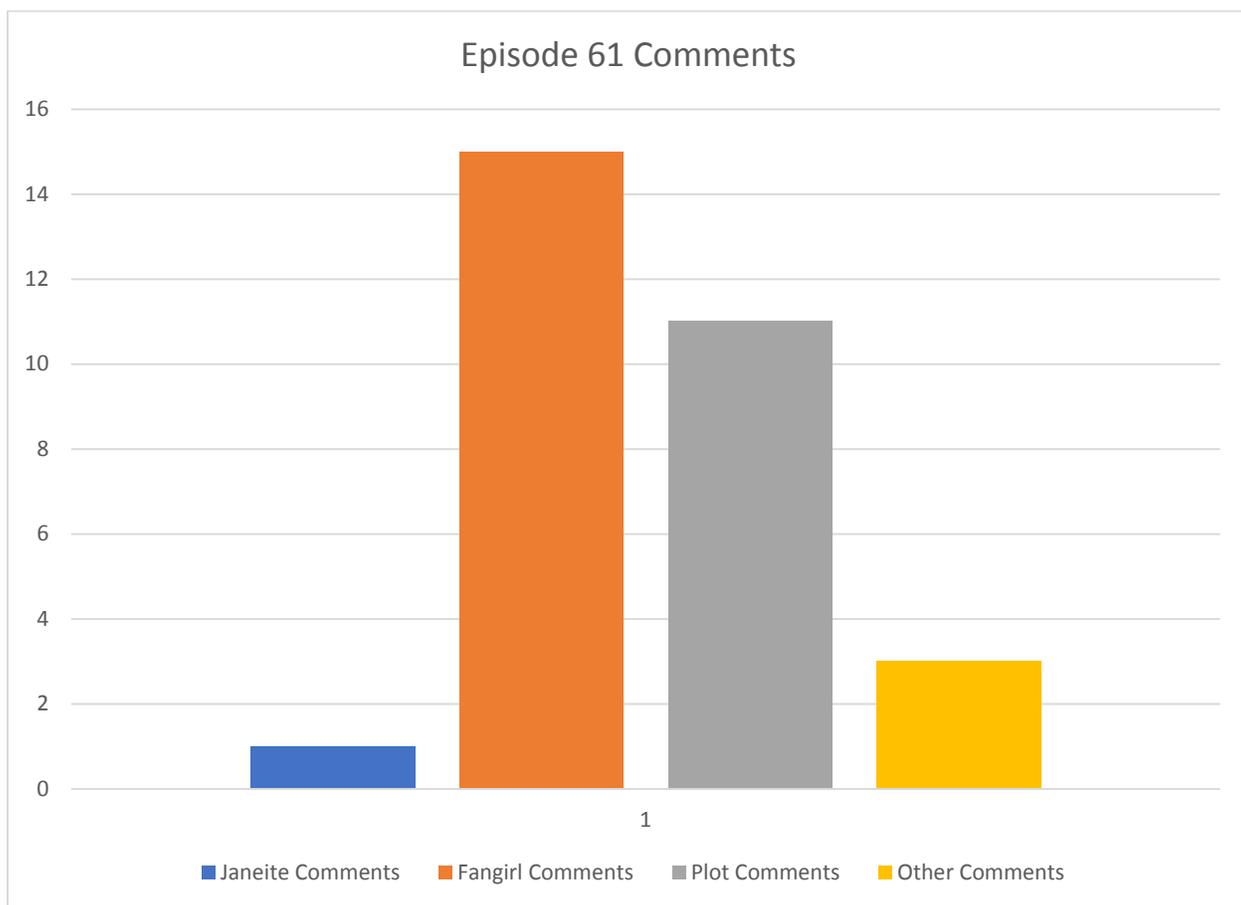


Figure 9: Bar Graph of the Comment Data from Episode 61

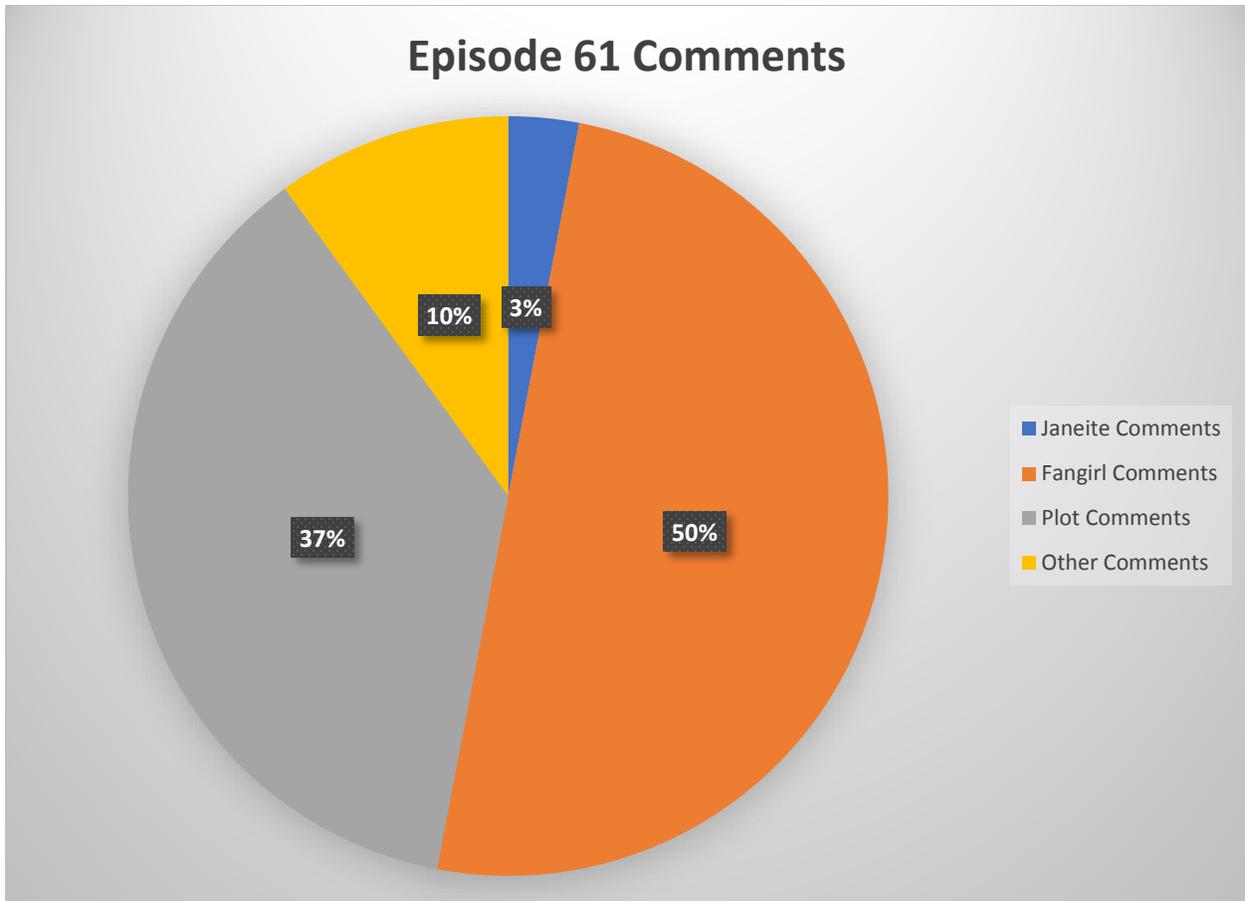


Figure 10: Pie Chart of the Comment Data on Episode 61

### All Episodes

Across the three episodes I analyzed a total of 193 comments (See Figure 11). Of those comments: 5 were categorized as Janeite Comments, 119 were categorized as Fangirl Comments, 57 were categorized as Plot Comments, and 12 were categorized as Other Comments. That means 3% of the total comments categorized as Janeites, 62% were categorized as Fangirls, 30% were categorized as Plot, and 6% were categorized as Other (see Figure 12).

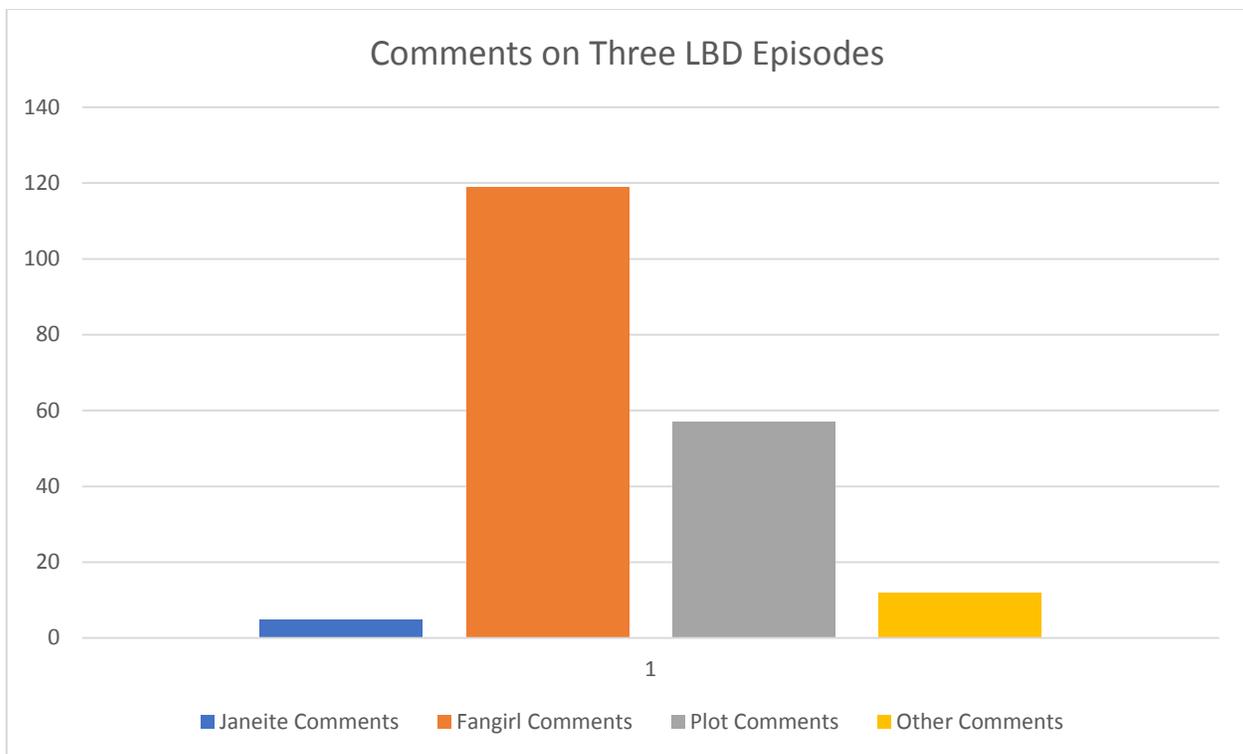


Figure 11: Bar Graph of the Comment Data on Three Selected Videos

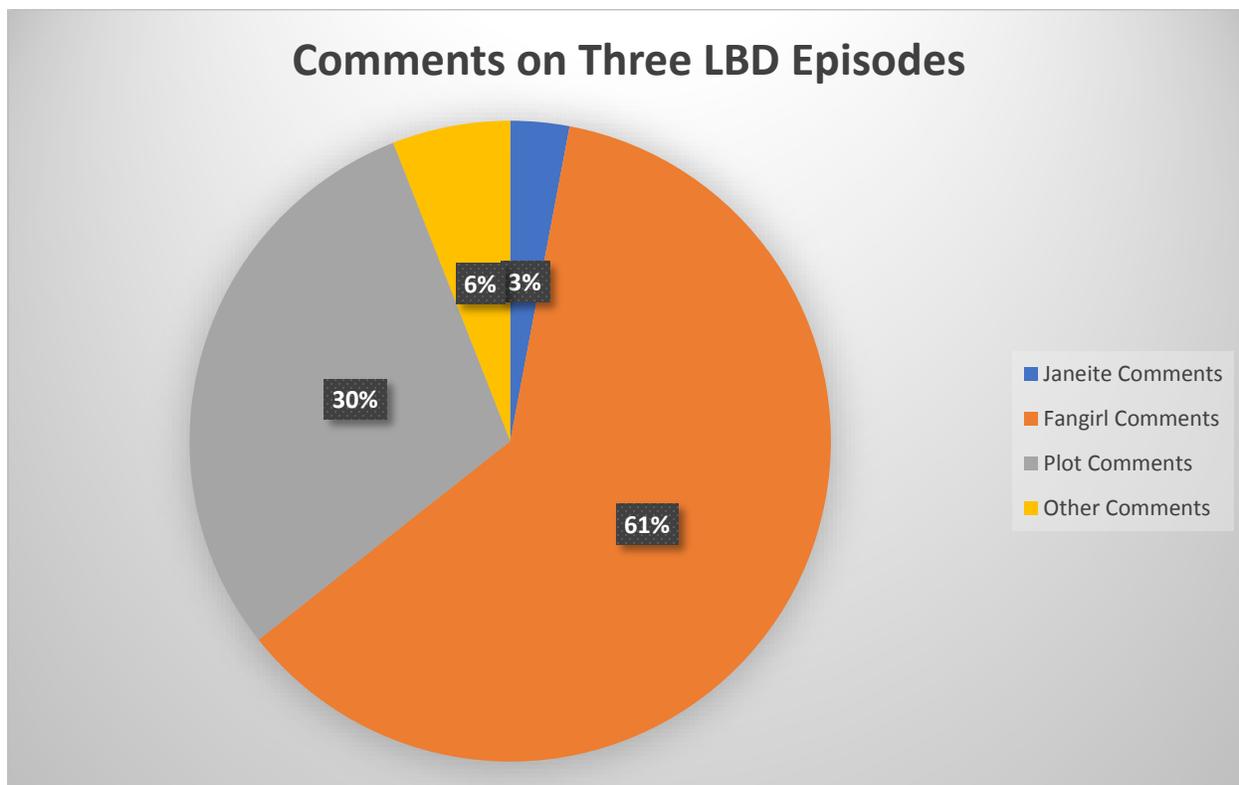


Figure 12: Pie Chart of Comment Data from Three Selected Episodes

## The 1995 Film

### Episode 5

After collecting data from the three “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” episodes, I collected data from episode 5 of the 1995 film. I collected a total of 45 comments from this episode taken directly from the comment scrape (see Figure 13). Of those comments: 13 were categorized as Janeite Comments such as “You and sooo many other people. I was so happy when I stumbled upon it years ago. This series is the closest to the book that I have seen. The comments section turned into a veritable community; then YouTube took it down. Next time I saw that someone had successfully uploaded the series, I downloaded all six episodes and saved on my external hard drive”, 6 were categorized as Fangirl Comments such as “Idol, Mr Bennett XD”, 26 were categorized as Plot Comments such as “35:06 Mr Collins is brilliantly oily & slimy”, and 8 were categorized as Other Comments such as “I feel so bad about women's status in the past. They had to be so sneaky to get a husband of social status and wealth! We still do not have equal right at this moment, but at least things are better. Our society is so similar to that of chimps. Bonobos are equally related to us, but we are more like chimps, where the males ally with each other to beat female chimps”. This means that of the total comments, 3% were categorized as Janeites, 2% were categorized as Fangirls, 58% were categorized as Plot, and 18% were categorized as Other (see Figure 14).

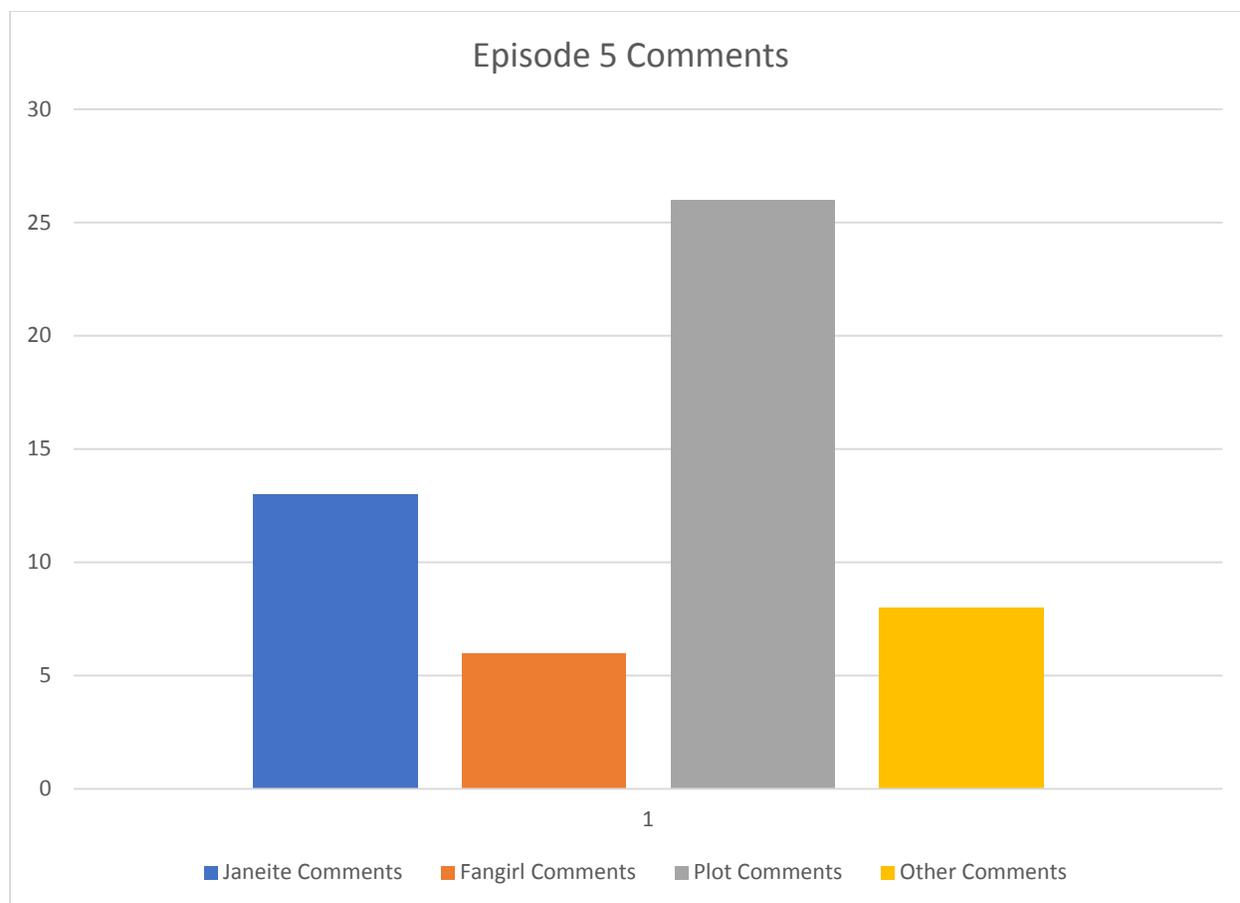


Figure 13: Bar Graph of the Comment Data on Episode 5

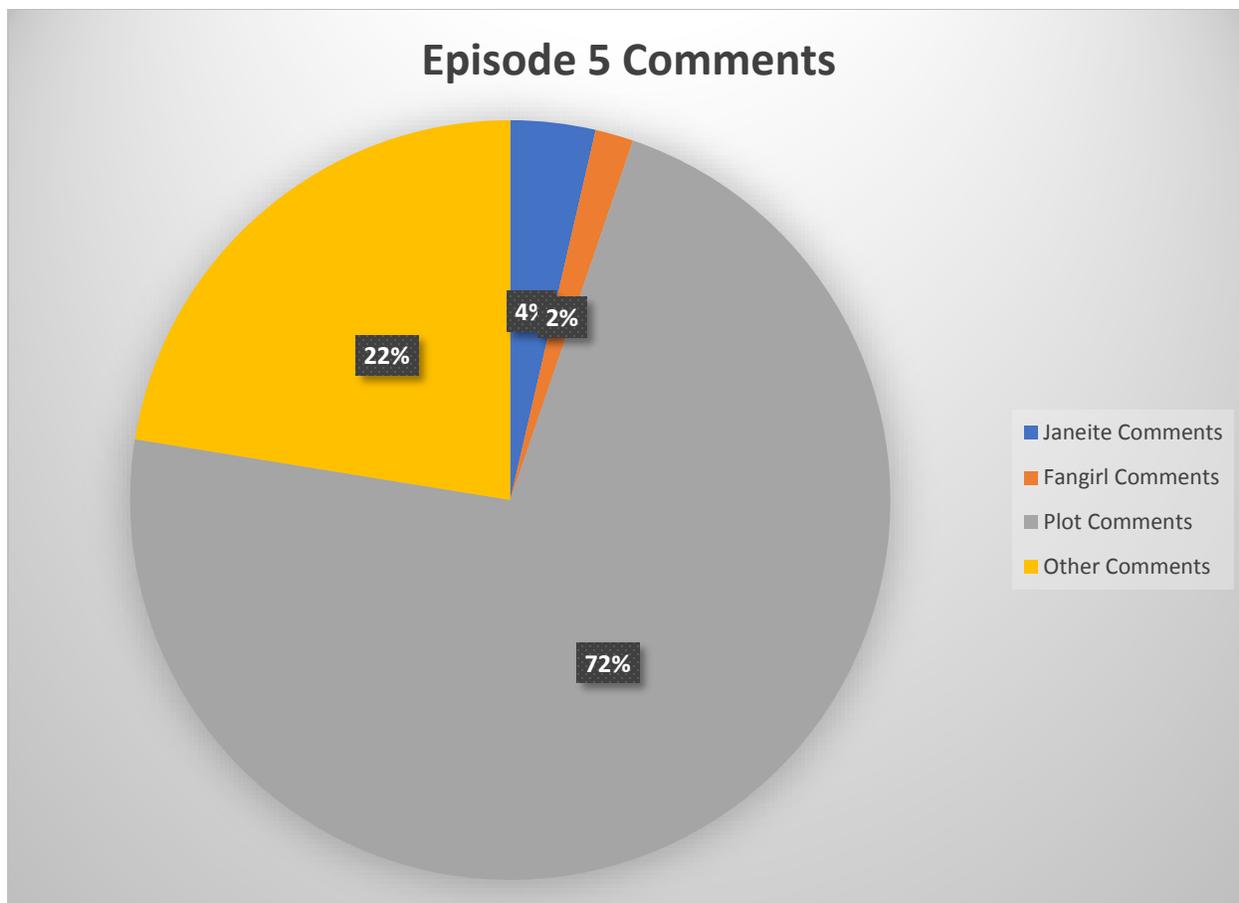


Figure 14: Pie Chart of Comment Data on Episode 5

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

This chapter discusses the implications of my categories and the comment data. I begin by describing the assumptions I made before collecting my data versus my results in light of my research questions. I then pose some questions that arose during my research that I cannot currently answer based on my study. Finally, I discuss how my data extends and enhances both Jenkins and Tepper's theories of transmedia storytelling.

### Expectations

As previously mentioned, I created four research questions to frame my study. 1. Do users leave legitimate comments on the YouTube videos I studied? 2. Do fans leave comments on Jane Austen videos in recognizable ways? 3. Who/What are the fans in this space? and 4. What are fans choosing to comment/write about? To begin, this study wouldn't exist unless Question 1 is answered affirmatively. As noted by my analysis, I collected a total of 193 comments from "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" and 45 comments from the 1995 film. Based on my four categories, 3 of which can be considered "legitimate comments." 94% of the comments analyzed from "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" can be considered legitimate comments while 80% of the 1995 film comments are legitimate.

I also found that fandom can in fact be detected or studied in the space. 69% of "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" comments analyzed came from what I classified as either Janeites or Fangirls. 42% of the 1995 film episode comments also came from fans. As previously mentioned, the study would not have been successful had I been unable to definitively answer questions 1 and 2. Finally, I discovered users chose to comment on what I categorized as Janeite, Fangirl, Plot and Other. This includes discussing reading the novel, immediate emotional reactions, discussing characters and plot, or posting unrelated or spam comments.

### “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries”

Now that I’ve outlined and expanded on my research questions, I will outline the expectations I brought to this study beginning with “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.” Before collecting the hard data, I had expected the three videos I had chosen to contain more Janeite and Fangirl comments than Plot related comments due to the subject matter hopefully inspiring some fan discussion. I had also expected that of the comments left on each video, the majority would be left by fans (either Janeite or Fangirl). Once I collected the data, I was surprised at the final breakdown of the comments. Episodes 100 and 98 contained a large amount of comments as expected, but Episode 61 did not have many comments at all. This means that the data did not meet my expectation for Episode 61, but that my other expectations were met.

I had also previously expected the Janeite community to interact in some way with the series because the low policing of YouTube comments supports discussions. This expectation came from my study of Yaffe’s chapter on Janeites online that I provided in Chapter 2. YouTube to me seemed like an open place for fans of all ages to comment on and discuss “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” and the 1995 film. I was surprised to discover that few comments appeared to be from Janeites. This of course can be due to either the medium or my categorization. In fact, only about 6% of the comments I collected were what I would categorize as Janeite Comments. Instead, the majority of fan comments (62%) were from Fangirls. Also, I had not expected such a fluidity of fan performance in the space between Fangirl and Janeite (in that the comments categorized could be placed in both categories). This indicates that the types of comments favored by the space use the Fangirl language meaning that others might be influenced to leave comments with fangirl-like language. Again, the term fangirl has pejorative connotations, but is a term that fits the language practices in the space.

I had also expected before data collection that there would be more spam comments on the videos. This expectation comes from YouTube's reputation of being a home to Internet trolls posting spam on any video regardless of subject. Instead, only 6% of the comments I analyzed were categorized as Other thus again meeting my expectation. Finally, I had anticipated a small percentage of Plot Comments and was surprised that 30% of the comments analyzed were categorized as Plot. This number was larger than I had previously expected. This means that instead of discussing fan-related topics as I had expected, many fans chose to discuss direct references to the videos. This is a different performance practice than I had anticipated.

### *Pride and Prejudice* 1995

Unlike "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries," the comment data pulled from the 1995 film did not completely disrupt my expectations for the types of comments found on the episode I chose from YouTube. These expectations were shaped greatly by Keifer's study, Parill's chapter on *Pride and Prejudice* films, Harriet Margolis's chapter about the commercialized nature of Jane Austen's name, and Deborah Yaffe's *Among the Janeites*. I had expected before collecting the data 1. That Janeites loved this adaptation best and 2. That Janeites actively discuss this fact online. From the 45 comments I analyzed only 13 were categorized as Janeite. I had expected that there would be a few comments categorized as Fangirl (in fact only 6 of the analyzed comments were considered thus). What surprised me the most was that 58% of the comments were categorized as Plot. I had expected there to be less plot comments than Janeite or Fangirl, but Plot was larger than the former combined! This means that fans online in what I expected to be a Janeite-dominated space shifted their performative language to discuss direct references to the video. I was also surprised that there were more Other comments than Fangirl (8 were categorized as Other while 6 were categorized as Fangirl). However, the comments I categorized

as Other were not true spam. Unlike “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” the YouTube space for the 1995 film is not well populated with fans, however the discovery of fan interaction and performance here is very important. Obviously, the smaller fan interaction here leads me to question why is this space not more densely populated? What is it about this YouTube space that makes it less incentivized to post?

### Connecting Tepper and Jenkins

My study shows concretely that fans do interact with the transmedia storytelling set up by “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” therefore connecting Jenkins’s theories to a new fan space: YouTube. Tepper cites in her article a few instances where fan interaction was present within the series; however, she does not provide any hard evidence to support her claim. My study provides quantitative data to show that fan interaction dominates the YouTube space for both “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” and the 1995 film online (which implies that these fans have some digital literacy/know-how of how to use technology). As I mentioned in earlier chapters, Jenkins and Tepper both choose to ignore YouTube as a source of transmedia fan interaction. YouTube is a very public space with low moderation. With “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” over the course of three selected episodes, 124 out of my analyzed 193 comments were left by both Janeites and fangirls. In percentages, that’s 64% of the comments I analyzed! For episode 5 of the 1995 film, 19 out of the 45 analyzed comments were from Janeites and fangirls. This equates to 42% of the comments I analyzed. My definition and delineation of Janeite and fangirl led to these results. I also made the choice to keep the film data separate from “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” which could have affected my data as well. In spite of this, the majority of the comments were categorized as fan comments again showing fans leave comments on Jane Austen videos in

recognizable ways. This means that YouTube provides a supportive community for fans to engage with each other and the film or “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.”

I was also able to discover that fans interacted directly with characters by posting comments addressing Lizzie, Lydia, or Jane. This was not anticipated when I was creating my categories but was lumped in with the Plot Comments during data analysis. In future study, this could become a separate category. Jenkins stresses the importance of worldbuilding as a part of transmedia storytelling. Tepper again discusses briefly that fan comments such as these constitute a part of worldbuilding within “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” world. My study shows conclusively through comments directly addressing characters like “Well happy birthday Lizzie,” that some users choose to suspend disbelief and stay within the online world of Lizzie Bennet. Both Tepper and Jenkins do not provide a concrete way to determine if a transmedia property is successful or not. My study provides that crucial link of a test to determine the success of transmedia by categorizing comments and determining if fan comments constitute a majority. I discovered through analyzing the 1995 film that there is very little actual fan interaction in the YouTube space (only 1% and 2% of the comments were categorized as Janeite or Fangirl) whereas a large majority (64%) of comments on “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” were categorized as Janeite or Fangirl. Thus, the new space offered by transmedia properties like “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” offers and encourages fan interaction.

### Questions and Continuing My Study

While completing my study, I found there were some questions that my data could not at this time answer. These questions can further my study in the future. The first question I came across while categorizing my comment data was: Would Janeites on YouTube identify themselves as such? Similarly, does the elitist connotation of the Janeite label discourage fans

from using it while interacting on YouTube? Of the Janeite comments I categorized, not one user identified themselves as a Janeite directly. Out of the raw data collected, only 2 comments actually used the word Janeite. As I did not survey or contact the commenters, I was unable to determine if they identified as Janeite or just a fan. In a similar vein as my previous question, I wondered if some of the “Fangirls” could in fact be Janeites. In further study, these categories might bleed into each other as it is difficult to affirmatively mark fan comments as Janeite or Fangirl without consulting with users in the space. Plot comments can also bleed into Fangirl or Janeite depending on the content. The only advantage of keeping the distinction between the types of fans is to see if Janeites are interacting with the space or if the space has valued and espoused a new fan community of fangirls. This leads me to wonder if fandom is not so black and white and instead includes different facets to fandom.

To continue my study, I also have three questions to extend the scope of transmedia storytelling from just “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.” First: would the Janeites or fans interact in the same way on the other social media platforms created in conjunction with “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries?” Tepper points to the other platforms as proof of worldbuilding in transmedia. If a majority of comments on other social media sites come from fans, then the transmedia property is successful, and the online world is built. Second, are the other Pemberley Digital adaptations or properties as successful in their attempt at transmedia storytelling? Since “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” Pemberley Digital has extended their properties to include a series based on Jane Austen’s *Emma*, a series based on Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and has acquired an adaptation based on Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*. As with “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” each adaptation has multimedia elements in the form of official social media pages.

Finally, after completing my study I was left with the question if transmedia storytelling is the future of literary cinematic adaptation. This question will probably not be answered in the near future, but I am hopeful that it can be answerable. Jenkins and Tepper both note that younger fans respond well to transmedia. However, I am still unsure that transmedia can totally tackle or dismantle traditional media. Still, media conglomerates could adopt transmedia elements. Until that happens, this question will remain unanswered.

## Conclusions

Fan data can be used to determine the success of transmedia. As I mentioned above, transmedia storytelling's success lies in fan interaction. Therefore, collecting concrete data from YouTube comments can show how much fan interaction exists. For example, I discovered that a majority of comments I analyzed from both the 1995 film and "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" were left by fans. 60% of commenters on "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" are Janeite fans or Fangirl fans and 31% of commenters on the 1995 film were from fans as well.

Users do leave legitimate comments on YouTube. I analyzed a total of 193 comments from "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" and 45 from the 1995 film. 3 of my 4 comment categories can be considered legitimate comments. This means that 94% of the comments analyzed from "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" were legitimate and 80% from the 1995 film were considered legitimate.

Fans do in fact leave comments in recognizable ways on YouTube. 69% of "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" comments analyzed were placed in the Janeite or Fangirl category. 42% of the 1995 film comments were placed in the Janeite or Fangirl category.

Users choose to comment on subjects pertaining to the Janeite, Fangirl, Plot or Other categories. This includes discussing reading the novel, immediate emotional reactions, discussions of characters and plot, or posting unrelated or spam comments.

Janeites and Jane fans are more than just middle-class, privileged white women. As Deborah Yaffe mentions in *Among the Janeites*, online Jane Austen fan communities exist across the globe. In my data mine, I came across fan comments in several languages and from commenters from several countries such as “J'adore...ce exactement les mêmes évènements que le livre...je l'ai lu en français et je l'ai retenu presque par coeur que j'ai pas de mal à comprendre et à bien suivre ces parties malgré mon niveau très moyen en anglais, (French)” and “Vizionez cu mare placere acest film, o ecranizare deosebita, un scenariu bine pus la punct, actori talentati cu roluri bine alese, marturisesc ca sunt indragostita ever de mister Darcy, in realitate as accepta in viata mea un lord ca dl firth...multumesc youtube pentr film mai traduceti filmele din cand in cand...(Portuguese).”

Janeites online persist even in public Internet spaces like YouTube. Despite the initial pressure of YouTube, fans still were willing to get involved in posting comments and replying to threads. And despite the occasional spam comment, Janeites and Jane fans (fangirls) still led the percentages on the comments I analyzed for this study. For example, a commenter on the 1995 film wrote, “True, I read the book too. Took a Jane Austen course in university. I guess it's not the story line in the tv series, I think I just hate the actor/actress and the way they directed it. I don't know. And the movie is more modernized, you can watch it in HD. Lol.” Even though this user did not identify as a Janeite, I still considered them as such due to their extensive knowledge of Austen.

“The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” has inspired a new generation/new type of fans. Through my data collection and organization, I discovered that the majority of comments collected on all three videos fell into the Fangirl Category. Many of these comments including performative and emotional language such as “omg” and “the feels.” These types of reactions come from younger

generation fangirls. Jenkins notes at the end of “Searching for the Origami Unicorn” that transmedia “approaches work best with younger consumers...because they have more time on their hands” and that “many older consumers are left confused or uninvolved with such entertainments” (Jenkins 134). This is evident in the language used by fangirl commenters that suggest their youth such as “darcy is just a cutie patootie.”

“The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” is conclusively a successful transmedia story. My data shows that fans have interacted and continue to interact online with the series on YouTube. The fan interaction with the characters also shows the success of Bernie Su’s worldbuilding online. For example, Episode 100 had a total of 46,666 comments, Episode 98 had 10,916, and Episode 61 had 3,089 comments. My study just barely scratches the surface of the types of comments left on each episode of “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” but still provides a good illustration of the interaction present in the space.

YouTube seems like a safe space online for Janeites new and old. This is evident in the comment data I pulled from episode 5 of the 1995 film. Despite the majority of the comments being unrelated to the film, there was still a sizable percentage of fan comments and discussion threads left on the video. As I mentioned in an earlier conclusion, despite the spam, Janeites and fans prevail. Of the 45 I analyzed; 17 comments came from fans which is equal to around 31% of my total analyzed comments.

Finally, I am adding to the field of study by extending Jenkins and Tepper’s theories of transmedia storytelling by showing concretely that fans do interact with the transmedia storytelling in “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.” I also provide quantitative data to show that fan interaction dominates the YouTube spaces for both “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries” and the 1995 film. Jenkins and Tepper fail to acknowledge YouTube and ignore its public nature and low

moderation. With “The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” over the three episodes selected, 124 of my analyzed 193 comments were categorized as Janeites and Fangirls (this is 64% of the data). For Episode 5 of the 1995 film, 19 out of the 45 analyzed comments were categorized as Janeite or Fangirl (This is 42% of the data).

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