

# Raymond's review of *Pride and Prejudice* (Keira Knightley version)

[devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20051114-01](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20051114-01)

November 14, 2005



Raymond Chen

This weekend I saw the latest reinterpretation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. I was introduced to the wondrous world of Jane Austen by the marvelous BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* from 1995. (The Bollywood interpretation I found diverting, but Darcy's "Pemberley" hotel was not as awe-inspiring as it needed to be for the story to work. The "Mr. Collins" character was a riot, though.)

I went in with some trepidation, because some members of the Jane Austen Society of North America felt that this was the WORST ADAPTATION EVER. (Okay, not really, but it was fun to write.) The best sound bite from the director was his reaction to people who were all nitpicking over details: "They can, I dunno, go and jump in the lake." Was this a backhanded reference to the swoon-inducing lake scene in the heralded BBC production? (A scene which, by the way, doesn't exist in the book.)

I enjoyed this adaptation. Sure it wasn't a literal interpretation, but if you want a literal interpretation, go watch Colin Firth again. (Warning: Spoilers, but I mean, come on, like you don't know the story backwards and forwards by now!)

- I think Wright was closer to the mark on the relative pulchritude of the characters. Jane is prettier than Elizabeth (something that most adaptations get backwards), Wickham is charming and handsome (in a swoonily Orlando Bloom sort of way), and Charlotte is homely.
- I enjoyed Wright's take on Mr. Collins. Still sweaty, but less snively than the BBC version.
- Many people didn't like Matthew MacFadyen's Darcy, but I thought he did a good job, though his entrance to the Meryton assembly was overdone.
- Caroline Bingley still had that condescending attitude, but it's hard to top Anna Chancellor from the BBC version.

- You could tell where the new dialog was introduced. It didn't have quite that Jane Austen magic to it, and in places sounded anachronistic. (For example, when the servant introduces "Mrs. Bennett, Miss Bennett, Miss Bennett, and Miss Bennett." Only the eldest unmarried daughter goes by the name "Miss X"; the younger ones include their Christian names. But it made for a cute joke, so I'll forgive it.)
- The humor was well-done.
- I enjoyed that when Darcy makes a surprise early return to Pemberley, you can hear in your mind Elizabeth saying to herself, "crap crap crap crap crap".
- In the scenes where Elizabeth learns of Lydia's situation and where she is confronted by Lady Catherine, it felt as if Keira Knightley were channeling Jennifer Ehle. Somehow, even though it was Keira's lips moving, the voice coming out sounded just like Jennifer Ehle's...
- I think the director was trying to make me puke or induce some sort of epileptic seizure. One scene is shot from a rapidly-spinning camera (woozy) and a fabricated dream sequence was introduced by a really annoying sequence with flashing colors.
- In my mind, the two fabricated scenes at the end were awful.

Overall, though, I'd give the movie a strong recommendation.

By the way, the Biography Channel is re-running the BBC *Pride and Prejudice* starting tonight. Psst, Biography Channel, news flash: *Pride and Prejudice* is not a biography. Elizabeth Bennett is a **fictional** character.

[Edit 11am: Fixed spelling of Ms. Knightley's name.]

Raymond Chen

**Follow**

