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**CONFESSIONS OF A MOVIE-FAN:  
INTROSPECTION INTO THE EXPERIENTIAL  
CONSUMPTION OF “*PRIDE & PREJUDICE*”**

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**ABSTRACT**

By using subjective personal introspection, this paper describes the consumption of movies as a holistic experience. After reviewing the current literature, the author is discussing the consumption of movies as a holistic lived experience. He then provides rich evidence by describing his personal lived experience in the consumption of the recently released movie *Pride & Prejudice*. The introspective data suggest that a number of different factors contribute to the enjoyment of the movie, which include a) the consumed media format, b) the engagement with the movie and its components, c) the individual consumption context, d) the social consumption context, e) the atmosphere during consumption, f) the collection of movie-related memorabilia and g) the intertextuality between the movie experience and the consumer's personal life experience.

## CONFESSIONS OF A MOVIE-FAN: INTROSPECTION INTO THE EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION OF “*PRIDE & PREJUDICE*”

*A good old-fashioned story of guilt, poverty, love, madness and  
free video club membership.*

*(The Fisher King, Tri-Star Pictures 1991)*

### INTRODUCTION

For nearly a century, the movie industry has been one of the biggest industries in the world. In fact, movies have always played an essential role in many societies' popular culture as a form of entertainment (Hirschman 2004; Cooper-Martin 1991), as a social acculturation agent (O'Guinn, Faber and Rice 1985) and as an aesthetic art form (Holbrook 2005). Nevertheless, consumer research and marketing literature has paid very little attention to the consumption of movies as artistic products. This is the more unfortunate, as movie consumption has never been so popular worldwide as in the last decades. Several further industries from merchandising to glossy tabloid magazines satisfy our persistently growing interest in the glamour of film stars, starlets and even minor celebrities (Brown 2005; Schroeder 2005; Levin, Levin and Heath 1997). Some readers may now proclaim that some of the recent studies have actually focused on movies. Surely, research has been conducted in regard to movies as media for marketing communications (i.e. product placement), as cultural media of consumer symbolism in society (Holbrook and Hirschman 1993) or as a discussion object in the art-versus-commerce debate (Holbrook 2005, 1999), but there has been little research into how and why consumers' actually consume movies as products in themselves.

Probably like most other people, I have enjoyed watching the imaginative world of movies since my early childhood for the hedonic pleasure value that they provide (Hirschman and

Holbrook 1982). But for me as a consumer, movies are more than just another form of entertainment through which one can spend some quality time alone or in the company of friends. In fact, my fascination with movies meets pretty much Bloch's (1986: 539) definition of *product enthusiasm* where the *product* (in this case *movies*) *plays an important role and source of excitement and pleasure along sensory and aesthetic dimensions in a consumer's life*. Here, my enthusiasm for movies goes well beyond the obligatory visit to the cinema or the occasional rental of a DVD. Indeed, for more than 24 years I am now engaged in the large-scale collection (Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry, Holbrook and Roberts 1988) of movies on first VHS and nowadays on DVD to a similar extent as Holbrook (1995, 1987) has described his growing jazz collection. In short, movies provide meaning for me as ingredients in the experiential consumption of emotional experiences, as an exciting way to escape the reality of a routinised and boring life by living out my hopes, dreams and fantasies in my mind and, most importantly, as a source of inspiration and stimulation for pursuing a "new way of life".

Despite a large number of movies being watched worldwide in the cinemas, on TV or DVD on any given day, a closer look at the literature unfortunately shows that we still lack an understanding of why we as consumers are so fascinated by movies for nearly a century and love to watch them either alone or in the company of friends and family. Subsequently, we also lack an understanding of the enjoyment and contribution that movies as a holistic consumption experience bring to our subjectively experienced quality of life. Therefore, this paper is aimed at providing some rich insights into a consumer's lived experience of movie consumption from an existential-phenomenological perspective. By using subjective personal introspection, I will describe in detail my own lived consumption experiences in relation to the recently released movie *Pride & Prejudice* (Dir.: Joe Wright, UK 2005) and how I connected this movie experience to my personal life experience.

## **MOVIE CONSUMPTION AND MARKETING RESEARCH: A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

In the past two decades, a small number of consumer researchers have discovered the value of movies for the study of consumption – at this point Elisabeth Hirschman and Morris Holbrook must be mentioned in particular. However, in those studies, movies were only investigated as carriers of consumer symbolism (Holbrook and Hirschman 1993) rather than as consumption objects in themselves. The aim hereby was to uncover how the semiotics of movie narratives reflect a society's underlying myths and culture (Dalli and Gistri 2006; Hirschman 2004, 2000a, 1993, 1987; Hirschman and Stern 1994). In an alternative twist, researchers also outlined how depicted forms of consumption are used to describe individual characters and carry the movie's narrative (Holbrook, Bell and Grayson 1989; Holbrook and Grayson 1986). In either case, trained expert viewers watched the movies in order to analyse their semiotic content from an ideological perspective (i.e. feminism or marxism) with the aim to derive assumptions about their underlying meanings for society and the human condition. Although analysing movies by experts through the use of literary criticism is undoubtedly of major significance for society, it does not really explain the meaning that those movies have for the everyday life experience of the individual average consumer.

Most other traditional marketing research was purely interested in the economic dimensions of movie consumption by focusing often only on a movie's box office performance or on the sales and rentals of DVDs in specific target markets (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh and Bode 2004). Thus, movie consumption was generally reduced to the purchase of the individual tangible media formats (i.e. cinema, VHS, VCD or DVD) by specified consumer segments (Basil 2001; Krugman and Gopal 1991) rather than investigated in relation to movies as intangible brands in their own right. This scant attention directed at movie consumption might result from the fact that in contrast to conventional manufacturing and service brands, movies are composite artistic brands that reflect a very complex tapestry of various other brands. Indeed,

the participating actors and actresses, the director, the producers, the scriptwriters, the composers, the editors and the director of photography are all individual brands in the public domain (Schroeder 2005; Levin et al. 1997) that create the movie together as a composite artistic brand in its own right. If the movie is the screen version of a novel, then the artistic brand is even a sub-brand of another artistic brand (Brown 2005). The style, image and success of the movie in return influences each participant's personal brand image and value in the public and media (d'Astous 1999).

### **UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION OF MOVIES**

Due to the complex nature of movies, the acquisition of a movie in a particular media format is only of minor concern to the real movie-fan. What really counts for the consumer as a movie-fan is to enjoy the consumption of movies as a holistic experience in its entirety. Thus, movie consumption involves a plethora of factors and takes a multitude of shapes and forms that are different for each individual. In other words, people watch movies for lots of reasons and consequently display different viewing patterns (Holbrook 1999). For instance, the social context of the movie consumption plays an important role. The popular appeal of blockbuster movies derives from the fact that they are often viewed in the social company of friends as a collectively shared form of entertainment (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Basil 2001). On the other hand, movie-fans or connoisseurs enjoy watching movies usually as an individual experience for its own sake (Cooper-Martin 1991). In fact, they are more likely to feel annoyed, if their holistic enjoyment of the movie is disturbed by noisy, less enthusiastic viewers, poor sound and/or picture quality or any other interruptions that prevent relaxation and intrinsic devotion.

More often than not, movie-fans are not expert viewers, who disseminate a movie into its artistic components in order to judge its aesthetic value, but ordinary consumers who enjoy

watching movies for their own sake (Holbrook 1999). Their personal enjoyment of movie consumption can derive from the story they tell and the plight of their central characters or from the aesthetic cinematography captured by the camera or from the performance of the actors and actresses or from many other things (Hirschman 2004; d'Astous 1999). Very often, we would watch a movie simply because our favourite actor or actress plays in it, which is the only thing we really need to know (Schroeder 2005; Levin et al. 1997). On other occasions, we are fascinated by the genre (i.e. horror, science fiction or western) the movie belongs to (Hirschman 2000a). Or there was so much hype in the media that we simply want to know what the fuss is all about (d'Astous 1999), as was recently the case with *Brokeback Mountain* or *The Da Vinci Code*.

Another essential factor in the consumption of movies is the context of one's mood state and the personal objective of watching a particular movie. Good movies have the ability to capture our imagination and to stimulate real emotional responses (Hirschman 2000a). Hence, movie consumption can be an enjoyable way of compensating for a perceived deficit of personally experienced emotions. Indeed, I often watch action movies to distract myself from personal problems, comedies to cheer myself up when I feel depressed and romantic comedies to calm myself down when I am stressed or upset. The concept of intertextuality, by which consumers interconnect their personal life experiences with the textuality of the movie narrative, its characters and/or the relevant actor brands (Hirschman 2000b), plays hereby an essential role in the consumer's enjoyment and personal identification with the movie (narrative). Hirschman pointed out that the popularity of blockbuster movies could be explained by their close adherence to mythological narratives and archetypes (2000a, 1993, 1987), which leads to consumers intertwining aspects of their autobiographical narratives with story structures and archetypic figures drawn from their favourite movies (2004, 2000b).

But most of the time, an ordinary consumer's personal movie consumption experience is a healthy mix of all these components as "one big exciting mess", which cannot be grasped and fully understood by focusing narrowly on one single issue as done by previous studies (Basil 2001; Cooper-Martin 1991; Krugman and Gopal 1991). Indeed, it is the individual and social context of the consumption situation and the use of intertextuality during the actual movie usage that turns movie consumption into the unique, holistic lived experience that we all enjoy as ordinary consumers. Therefore, in order to fully understand movie consumption, we need to research it in its entire complexity as a holistic lived experience from the consumer's vintage point of view.

## **METHODOLOGY**

At this stage, I would like to apologise to all those readers who now expect to find hard, scientific evidence obtained in hypothetical-deductive methods, as I have to disappoint you. But as already argued earlier, the positivist tradition of collecting data in large-scale surveys or experimental designs to test and verify the relationship of predefined variables in a conceptual model through falsification (Calder and Tybout 1989, 1987) is highly unsuitable for fully and truly understanding the complex human phenomenon of movie consumption. Consequently, taking an existential-phenomenological perspective, which focuses directly on the consumer experience in the way it presents itself to consciousness, is much better suited to fully grasp movie consumption as a holistic lived experience from an individual's point of view (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989; Husserl 1986; Churchill and Wertz 1985). Hence, it requires a research method that allows for an easy, unlimited 24-hour access to an insider's ongoing lived experience with the phenomenon, while not having to wrestle with the difficult ethical concerns in regard to the informant's privacy (Brown 1998; Holbrook 1995). Thus, I will provide rich insights into my own lived consumption experiences with the recently released movie *Pride & Prejudice* by using subjective personal introspection (SPI).

20 years ago, Holbrook (1995, 1987, 1986) introduced SPI as an approach in consumer research that, as an extreme form of participant observation, “focuses on impressionistic narrative accounts of the writer’s own private consumption experiences” (Holbrook 2003: 45). This means that SPI lends itself perfectly to the purpose of this paper, as it allows me to obtain rich first-hand data of one consumer’s experiential consumption of a movie (in this case *Pride & Prejudice*) from the privileged perspective of a “real” insider. Although SPI was criticised in the past by neo-positivists and several interpretivists alike in a heated debate about its “scientific justification” (Gould and Maclaren 2003; Brown 1998; Holbrook 1995; Gould 1995; Wallendorf and Brucks 1993), I will not add further to the philosophical debate on SPI’s virtues and limitations at this point in time. However, I will address some of the concerns voiced by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) that are of particular relevance to the current research.

Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) felt that the reconstructive nature of human long-term memory in light of knowledge obtained in the intervening time would distort the retrospective recall of events. They also feared that data specificity is compromised by the danger of reporting generalised inferences rather than specific instances and voiced concerns about the extent to which the introspective data are recorded and accessible to others. Therefore, for this research I have collected my lived experiences as contemporaneous data while they occurred in real time - with any intervening time between actual occurrence and introspective data collection kept at the lowest possible minimum - to ensure high accuracy of the data. Subsequently, as the introspective data is not retrospectively recalled from a past event, the risk of distorting the data by the reconstructive nature of my long-term memory in light of any knowledge obtained at a later time is kept at a minimum. Furthermore, contemporaneous introspective data fields the unique advantage of providing a large pool of emotional data, including personal feelings, moods, thoughts, daydreams, fantasies and creativity, that would be

inaccessible to any other research method that is based on retrospective recall (i.e. structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews) and, as a result, inevitably be lost forever.

A justified point of criticism in relation to earlier research publications using SPI was the absence or inaccessibility of recorded data to others. In case of the current study, the data were (and still are) recorded systematically, unfiltered and on the spot in a specifically assigned diary, which is accessible for external review. The following essay represents a summary from the diary, which derived as part of a much larger introspective data collection and involved a total of approx. 20,000 relevant hand-written words as raw data taken in the period from late-July 2005 to early-February 2006. Nevertheless, the key focus lies on my lived experiences from September to October 2005, when *Pride & Prejudice* was released in Ireland. As a reminder that this study is taking an existential-phenomenological perspective (Thompson et al. 1989), the emphasis is placed hereby less on the mere recollection of factual behaviour during my consumption of *Pride & Prejudice* but much more on my lived experiences, i.e. perceptions, feelings, thoughts, daydreams, etc. as THE essential elements of my experiential consumption of this movie. However, as some of the emotional data were recorded in the “heat of the moment”, I took the liberty to rephrase them in order not to offend anybody unnecessarily. I also included some photographs of my *Pride & Prejudice* consumption experience to provide additional “objective” evidence. But now, raise the curtains and let the show begin...

### **MY EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION OF *PRIDE & PREJUDICE***

Over the summer of 2005, I became a fan of the very talented, young actress Jena Malone. And while browsing through her film listings on the IMDb website, I learned that she is playing the role of Lydia Bennet in the forthcoming new cinema version of *Pride & Prejudice*. The film was due to be released on 16th September and would present me for the

first time with the opportunity to see Jena Malone on the big screen. As she primarily appears in high quality independent movies such as *Donnie Darko*, *Life as a House*, *The United States of Leland* or *Saved*, whose releases are for commercial reasons often restricted to arthouse cinemas (especially in Europe), I was only able so far to watch her movies as DVDs on my laptop. However, if Jena Malone had not played a role in *Pride & Prejudice*, I probably would not have cared about the movie at all. In fact, back then I was never tempted even to read the novel by Jane Austen.

One of the main reasons was that a long time ago I had the misfortune to watch the highly praised and acclaimed BBC TV version with Colin Firth. While many people (certain movie critics among them) still view it as the “ultimate screen version of Jane Austen’s beloved novel” and as the “benchmark for all screen versions yet to come”, my opinion was slightly different. To be honest, I found it to be rubbish! Like most British period dramas (especially those made for TV by the BBC), I found it to be completely clichéd and stereotyped as a glorification of a nostalgic past that for sure has never existed in this form – except maybe in the imagination of a desperately bored middle-aged to elderly housewife. But, who knows, that might be the reason why so many female viewers saw in Colin Firth the ultimate personification of “their” Mr Darcy? The acting standard was on one level with that of *Coronation Street* (a popular, but mediocre British TV soap opera), while the characters were so one-dimensional that the only thing missing was a sign on the shoulder stating their name and dominant personality trait – just in case the viewer hasn’t noticed. Personally, I couldn’t care less about any of the portrayed characters.

On Sunday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, I saw that the Sunday Times featured an article about the forthcoming *Pride & Prejudice* movie in its *Culture* supplement (Photo 1). In the hope of also finding something written about Jena Malone I bought the Sunday Times for the first time ever. But

to my big disappointment, there wasn't one single word about Jena – just about leading actress Keira Knightley and director Joe Wright! The article itself, though, was actually very well and interestingly written by a female (and obviously feminist) author. First of all, the author shared my opinion of the BBC TV version and ensured me that I'm no longer the only one with a strong inherent dislike for it. But more importantly, she compared the new film version to the literary original by placing Jane Austen and her novel in the context of its time. She made the case that all previous small and big screen versions have placed the novel in the wrong period for mainly stylistic and glamorous reasons (One that is more in line with a romanticised nostalgic past rather than with the lived reality of Jane Austen's time!) and subsequently altered inevitably the understanding of the narrative and its societal background.



**Photo 1:** Articles from the Sunday Times *Culture*-Magazines, 31<sup>st</sup> July (above) and 11<sup>th</sup> September (below) 2005.



**Photo 2:** *Pride & Prejudice* memorabilia from my collection (incl. DVD, *Culture*-Magazine (31-07-2005), CD-Rom Press Kit, Autograph)

Therefore, by bypassing all the previous traditional Regency-lite conventions of “a painterly tableau of empire-line dresses, sotto voce ballroom squeals and high-ceilinged elegance”, which annoyed me so much in the BBC version, the coming movie would be much more realistic than any of its predecessors, she said. In fact, rather than in 1813, when the book was published, director Joe Wright located the new movie in the Georgian time of 1797, when Jane Austen actually wrote the initial draft of the book, and recreated the rural life of the gentry accordingly. More impressively, in order to ensure realism, Joe Wright prohibited the actresses to wear any make-up that wasn't available in the 1790s. For sure, this decision must have pissed off MaxFactor and their associated Hollywood make-up artists, who are well-known for their stylistic involvement in all glamorous, pseudo-historic Hollywood blockbusters. Especially, if the actresses would look more beautiful in their natural appearance than any of the MaxFactor-styled Hollywood glamour girls from the ads!

All in all, the article captured my interest for the movie. In fact, an internal excitement and expectation was mounting up. As a form of release, I went the next day to the local bookstore and bought a newly released copy of Jane Austen's novel, which “by coincidence” already featured the coming movie's poster artwork on the cover. As I read the book over the coming weeks, the story and its many characters grabbed me more and more. However, it must be noted that my personal reading of the book differed increasingly from the stiff and over-indulged reading presented by the dreadful BBC TV version I saw before. I couldn't wait any longer for the movie's release and started counting the days down to September 16<sup>th</sup>. In early September, something else happened in my personal life. After more than 11 struggling months, I finally had the courage to ask a certain girl out for a date. Due to a string of bad experiences in the past, I'm very shy and have a low self-esteem when it comes to making the first step and “conversing with women” I'm attracted to (i.e. in a pub, nite-club or in the college). Thus, this was a very big step for me.

But as she was already leaving on 20<sup>th</sup> September for an exchange year in Germany, I planned to make the date as romantic and memorable as possible. After a small dinner at candlelight in a cosy cafeteria, what could be more romantic to kick off a first date on the 17<sup>th</sup> September than sitting next to each other in a dark cinema and watching a romantic movie like *Pride & Prejudice*, whose story was loved by women for centuries? While I was looking in excitement forward to our date on next Saturday, TV ads were announcing the Irish and UK wide release of the movie for coming Friday. In the meantime, I bought on Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Sunday Times a second time, because the *Culture*-Magazine featured this time a detailed article about Jena Malone (photo 1). I was all over the moon, because it is the first “real” article about Jena written in an Irish/UK publication I’m aware of. Unfortunately, the European media always tend to ignore her completely. Thus, I was really happy and delighted! On Wednesday, I enthusiastically watched the news in order to see glimpses from the Dublin premiere of *Pride & Prejudice*. Jena Malone even appeared for 30 seconds on a short TV3 news report! Overall, the critics for the movie were surprisingly good. Not that I give much about them, but it’s definitely reassuring.

But then came the major disappointment! For some mysterious reasons, the company, which operates the majority of Irish cinemas, restricted the Irish-wide release of *Pride & Prejudice* to Dublin, Cork and Limerick only. After all the promotional build up, my personal expectations and my excitement, this no-show in my town was a frustrating let down! With the initial plan for my first date in shatters, we both went on to see *Cinderella Man* instead. It was the typical American “winning-against-the-odds” story that is nice to watch, but doesn’t leave any long-lasting impressions worth remembering. While Russell Crowe gave another good acting performance, I found Renee Zellweger to be totally annoying with her amateur stage school skills and her two standard face expressions that she puts on in all her movies. To me, she seems to be the living proof that talent isn’t always necessary to make an acting

career in Hollywood. But more importantly, the characters' story and the plot didn't really encourage the necessary emotions to feel with them. Therefore, no romantic feelings sprang over that would have encouraged me to hold my date in my arm or to dry a tear. Holding shortly her hand during a fight scene is not the same as doing it during a romantic love scene, isn't it? Instead, I spent half the movie wondering whether there is too much salt in the popcorn or too less popcorn in the salt. After some careful deliberations I came to the conclusion that the latter must have obviously been the case. In short, *Cinderella Man* didn't leave me with an urge to add the movie to my collection. And although the date was very nice after a few years of loneliness, it didn't worked out the way I hoped for and I returned to my usual, unexciting daily life routine as an unwilling, lonely single.

During the course of the next week, I was hoping that *Pride & Prejudice* would finally be released in my town as well. After all, it was just topping the box office. And indeed, the movie was finally released in all other areas in Ireland with only one exception – the area where I lived in. As I tried to phone the cinema to enquire their plans for showing *Pride & Prejudice*, I was only connected to a tape that gave me the current programme I already knew and allowed for automated bookings, but not for human enquiries. The website provided exactly the same information. Customer service, where are you?! Thus, I tried to enquire directly at the cinema and experienced real-life relationship marketing in practice. Instead of being treated as a valued customer, I was just unfriendly repudiated by a bored, disinterested employee who told me that “they don't know because all decisions are made by the Dublin headquarters” and that “there is no way of finding out”. In fact, he claimed that they don't even have a contact number for their headquarters! As a result, I felt not only disappointed but also seriously frustrated and angry about this lack of the basic marketing skills and the literally expressed disregard for their customers. And instead of showing a quality film like *Pride & Prejudice*, we get served with those miserable poor quality flicks that insult the

intelligence of anybody with an IQ of 80 and higher. As I said, I felt absolutely frustrated, angry and hugely disappointed and simply couldn't get over it for days!!!

One week later, *Pride & Prejudice* was finally released in my town as well. I felt excited and very enthusiastic again. A curious kind of happiness mixed with anticipation or even joy to finally see Jena Malone on the big screen would probably describe my feelings at that day best. And the wait was worth it! *Pride & Prejudice* is simply magnificent, a movie that you can watch over and over again. Actually, for the record, this movie is by far superior to any of its predecessors and in particular to the dull but popular BBC TV version of the novel!! The movie never gets boring and is just a joy to watch – beautiful landscape pictures a la *Lord of the Rings* combined with nice camera movements that outline the England of the 1790s. All actors did a great job in making every single character appear to be real and believable without succumbing to any artificial stage school mimics. Deep in your heart you really know why they do what they do and why they feel the way they feel. It doesn't even matter whether you sympathise with them or dislike them. In fact, as a story *Pride & Prejudice* really plays with the judgement errors made by first impressions (the original title of the novel). At the end, there aren't really any good or bad guys – only humans.

The only exception is Mr Wickham who represents the typical handsome, smooth talking guy girls are always falling for. Men like him always know how to be the centre of attention and how to attract women. However, behind their pretty masks and cheap words those guys are always shallow, arrogant and selfish cowards, who are only interested in their own advantage and don't care for anybody else. But while the decent, honest men like me can always look easily through their fog of deception (Obviously we are also jealous of their permanent and undeserved success with the ladies!), women still always seem to fall for them and don't want to see the falseness in their cheap words. But once they do, women always blame ALL men

for the grievances caused by those mercenaries (Ironically, Wickham is a lieutenant with a travelling regiment.), but never their own self-imposed blindness nor the Wickhams who hurt them. I have witnessed it at least a hundred times so far and I'm still counting. Poor Lydia as well will soon learn the hard way that she hasn't found her happiness. Next, Tom Hollander does an excellent job in portraying Mr Collins in exactly the way I have imagined him while reading the novel. Seeing Mr. Collins on screen helped me to feel much better about myself. I know that I'm not very handsome and women usually won't notice me, but I'm pretty sure that there is no way that I can ever be THAT dull and boring for anyone. Just to realise that gave me a confidence boost! However, I also felt sympathy for him, as I know how it feels like to seek happiness, but only to find yourself ignored and even laughed at by the females you admire because of being somehow unable to make interesting conversation.

This now leads to the central character of Mr Darcy. I could identify myself with him mainly because like me he is uncomfortable in starting a conversation or interacting with people he doesn't know – especially if they are of the opposite sex. And similar to my personal experiences, his introvert behaviour and insecurity is interpreted by the ladies (and other people) as arrogance, pride (hence the title) and incivility leading to women's prejudices and dislike of him. Matthew Macfadyen delivers an excellent performance in portraying Mr. Darcy in a way that lets him look unlikeable in an involuntary and passive fashion and whose real character must be discovered by the audience in the same manner as Elisabeth does by looking behind the prejudices that resulted from first impressions. His interpretation differs significantly from Colin Firth's rather theatrical performance. I could especially identify with Darcy's struggle in trying to talk to Elisabeth and to show his affections to her, which always results in forced mimics/face expressions and in saying the wrong words at the wrong time. Of course, it only supports or even feeds her prejudices against him. It happens to me all the time and only reinforces my personal insecurities. Thus, I know exactly how Mr. Darcy feels

lonely, share his internal struggle, hurts and disappointments, but also his hopes and wishes to be seen as the person he really is – at least by the woman he loves. In difference to me, however, Mr. Darcy has two advantages that at least in some way attract female interest: he is rich and handsome and I'm neither! But otherwise the internal similarities in character are striking. I just hope that at one point in time I will be rewarded like he was at the end.

But as a male I'm obviously much more interested in the female characters that form the focal point of the story. The main female characters are Elisabeth (Keira Knightley) and Jane Bennet (Rosamund Pike). Jane is the good-hearted oldest daughter who always thinks good of anybody and is also said to be the most attractive girl in the county. Although she is surely beautiful, she isn't really my type. Due to her free spirit and wit, Elisabeth would be more interesting to me. Keira Knightley delivers probably her best performance to-date in bringing this character to life. I was particularly stunned by how closely Elisabeth resembles girls I have met so far in her way of responding to the different types of men represented by Mr Darcy, Mr Wickham and Mr Collins. Like most women, she responded to each of these men with prejudice (hence the title) based on her first impression of their physical and social appearance rather than on their actual personalities. Isn't it ironic that women always criticise men for their tendency to judge women on their physical appearances, while they do exactly the same thing - despite all their claims of looking primarily for the "inner values" in men? Since when can you see the "inner values" from the outside in just a few minutes? However, in contrast to the more naive Lydia, Elisabeth at least recognises the errors of her prior judgements and tries to change them.

As a self-confessed fan of Jena Malone, I obviously paid particular attention to her character of Lydia Bennet, the youngest daughter. Although I have to admit that I'm biased, I simply know that Jena did an outstanding job in portraying Lydia as a rather wild, over-romantic 15-

year old girl with an obsession for fashion, dancing and officers – in short as the typical spoiled teenager of today and back then. Lydia is young, naive and just romantically in love with love itself rather than a particular man. And like any other young silly girl (Jane Austen's words), this ultimately leads her into serious trouble (in particular in regard to the society and class standards of that period) such as underage sex outside marriage. Although Wickham has married her (or better was made to marry her), she is too naive to see that, because of her physical youthful beauty and her child-like innocence (as most teenagers possess who grow up in a protected environment), she was just used for little more than a pleasurable one-night stand. I'm really sorry for Lydia, when she finds out that their happiness in marriage is just shambles, that Wickham doesn't care for her and will soon betray her with other women while treating her badly at the same time. Nevertheless, Jena Malone looks so sweet, sexy and incredible beautiful in those Georgian-style dresses without needing any MaxFactor make-up styling. She is a real natural beauty to fall in love with.

The female character I most emphasised with is Mary Bennet (Talulah Riley). Mary is shy and introvert and subsequently feels very lonely – much like me. She's said to be ordinary looking and less beautiful than Jane and Elisabeth, but I find her more interesting and attractive than the other two. Furthermore, she isn't wild and "silly" as her two younger sisters Kitty (Carey Mulligan) and Lydia are known to be. Instead, Mary consistently tries to be the perfect daughter to her parents and fulfil the cultural expectations that society at that time has held for women. But no matter how hard she tries, all her efforts remain unnoticed by her parents, sisters, relatives and men alike. As a result, Mary turns to books and even more to music. In fact, playing the pianoforte and singing has become the one thing that makes her happy and in her mind is the only thing with which she can draw attention to herself. There's a breakfast scene where the whole Bennet family is gathered. But while everybody else is eating at the table, Mary takes hers at the pianoforte. Subsequently, Mary is

very enthusiastic about grasping her chance to shine by singing and playing at Mr Bingley's ball. Unfortunately, while she is a relatively good player on the pianoforte, Mary's voice can't hold a note and her performance is a disaster. Everybody's laughing at her and when her father finally stops her, I could really feel how heartbroken and hurt she is. So much that I would have liked to comfort her! But instead she was left on her own crying and feeling sadly alone once again. The next day, it got even worse for Mary.

She was probably the only person in the family who would have settled for marrying Mr. Collins. As Jane was "unavailable" and Elisabeth rejected him, Mary was sure that, as the third daughter, it would now be her turn. You could read it in her face, although anything was said neither in the film nor in the novel (Excellent acting by Talulah Riley!). Instead, even Mr Collins ignores her by marrying Elisabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas instead. Subsequently, Mary remains the nice, but misunderstood and ignored person, who doesn't deserve to suffer the emotional hardships forced on her. Charlotte Lucas, finally, represents those women who, because of not meeting society's expected beauty standards, are so afraid of ending up alone that they settle for a loveless marriage with anyone who comes along. After marrying Mr Collins, Charlotte often keeps herself in a room that she has just for herself. She also encourages her husband to work in the garden – just to keep him out of the house as long as possible. Thus, rather than being happy together, both are just living beside each other in a mutual co-operation that resembles pretty much the relationship of my parents. Although the love between them is gone, they've got so used to each other's company that they can't live without each other anymore. Thus, my parents share their apartment like flatmates with each one having their own bedroom and bathroom while sharing the kitchen and the living-room.

Some readers may have noticed that I described in detail how I experienced the individual characters while watching the movie, but failed to mention the actual plot. The reason is

simply that a) the plot is well-known and b) that I've experienced the narrative through each of the characters. For those readers who don't know the plot of *Pride & Prejudice* I suggest the obvious: Read the novel or watch the movie or even better do both. It's a worthwhile experience, as *Pride & Prejudice* aroused definitely my emotions in many different ways and also raised my spirits. It was worth the waiting and excitement by exceeding my expectations by miles. I simply knew that I would watch it soon again! The only bad thing was that I had to change my perfect seat because two middle-aged ladies couldn't keep their mouths shut for just one single minute and stop commenting every single scene. Every time I go to the cinema, there is at least one ignorant person who seems to be determined ruining it for me!

The next week, I had an interview for a PhD at a Dublin-based university. The day before, I was so nervous that I simply couldn't concentrate and didn't feel so well. Actually, I felt very lonely and self-conscious, because of being a single for so long and not having the chance of a loving relationship in the nearer future. Subsequently, I left my desk early and drifted towards the local cinema. After reviewing the programme, my choice fell on *Pride & Prejudice* once again, because I simply knew that it would be good for my mood and restore my emotional well-being. This time there wasn't anyone around trying to spoil it for me, which was really great! My impressions from the first viewing a few days back were all confirmed. However, I paid even more attention to Jena Malone this time. She is so sweet, sexy and really owns the screen with her charm, even when she's not in the centre of the frame and therefore not the main focus of attention. She simply IS Lydia, but also continues to add her own style to it. An excellent actress, despite her young age, with a great future, who already has a more than impressive past on the small and big screen on her CV. It just required her smile, her eyes, and her presence to raise my spirits, to restore my emotional balance and to calm me mentally down again. The film itself made me become light-hearted

again, feeling much better about myself, and much more relaxed. I think I was even smiling for the first time that day. I couldn't see myself to be sure, but it surely felt like it.



**Photo 3: Items of my *Pride & Prejudice* Collection (incl. DVD, Book, CD-Rom Press Kit, Signed Autographs, Oscar Promo Booklet, *Culture Magazine*)**

But my experiential consumption of *Pride & Prejudice* didn't stop with the two visits to the cinema. In fact, they were just the beginning. Over the next months, I started to acquire a number of memorabilia on eBay. Some items of my collection are displayed in the photos 2 and 3. At first, I was buying the movie poster and a lobby card, which was soon followed by a cell plaque to decorate my desk, an original CD-Rom press kit and an Oscar promotion booklet. But as a devoted Jena Malone fan, I have started since late January 2006 to concentrate my financial resources on purchasing a number of autographed movie photos of her in the role of Lydia Bennet, which she has personally hand-signed while performing in the Broadway play *Doubt*. Although my whole Jena Malone collection is very dear to me,

these originally autographed photos of her are my most valued treasures. The only thing missing for most of the time was the chance to add *Pride & Prejudice* to my movie (and my Jena Malone) collection. In early December, I was offered a pirated DVD of the movie. To be honest, I was really tempted. But very often those pirate DVDs are of such poor quality that it simply wasn't worth the effort! Instead, I waited patiently and nervously for the official DVD release, which finally came on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2006. Actually, TESCO sold the DVD already on Sunday and I was one of the first who bought it.

The advantage of DVDs is not only the quality picture and sound, but also all the bonus features on the disc. And there are a number of exciting bonus features on the *Pride & Prejudice* DVD in addition to subtitles and director Joe Wright's audio commentary. They range from the alternative US ending to galleries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a number of short behind-the-scenes documentaries. Of course, my prime interest was in those documentaries that featured Jena Malone in front of and behind the camera. Thus, I love to watch the bonus features "The Politics of Dating in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England" and "The Bennets", which include movie scenes with Jena Malone as Lydia Bennet, show her in her private clothes during the rehearsals and feature a very short interview with her. However, I enjoy in particular watching the "On Set Diaries", where Jena Malone, Talulah Riley, Keira Knightley, Carey Mulligan, Rosamund Pike, Brenda Blethyn, Donald Sutherland, Tom Hollander and Matthew Macfadyen talk in private about their personal experiences while filming the movie and the close "family" bonds they have developed before and behind the camera. It's heart-warming to see how they have become even off the screen the "Bennet family", leaving me with the desire to be part of this perfect family bond. Another beauty of the documentary is that the actors and actresses are shown in private, when they are not playing their characters, as natural, lovely people like you and me. In fact, the documentary has increased my admiration for Jena Malone even more. Furthermore, I love to watch this movie as one of my favourites!

## CONCLUSION

Although people watch movies for a variety of reasons, I have argued in this paper that each consumer enjoys the consumption of movies as a holistic lived experience, which includes and depends on a tapestry of various interconnected factors. Therefore, to be fully understood movie consumption needs to be investigated in its entirety. By using subjective personal introspection, I have described my own personal lived experiences in the consumption of the recently released movie *Pride & Prejudice*. The obtained rich introspective data provides evidence that a tapestry of different factors contribute to the enjoyment of the movie, which include a) the consumed media format, b) the engagement with the movie and its components, c) the individual consumption context, d) the social consumption context, e) the atmosphere during consumption, f) the collection of movie-related memorabilia and g) the intertextuality between the movie experience and the consumer's personal life experience.

Of particular importance for the enjoyment and subjectively experienced contribution of movie consumption is the concept of intertextuality, by which the consumer connects the experience of the movie, its narrative, the characters and even the actor brands to one's personal life experiences. In doing so, movie consumption seems to provide consumers with the opportunity to compensate for a perceived deficit of emotional experiences in one's everyday life. Of course, I don't suggest that the presented introspective data and proposed findings could be generalised. However, I believe that the subjective personal introspection of my experiential consumption of *Pride & Prejudice* offers a certain degree of transferability by actively involving the reader. Each time, the reader thought "I know this feeling" or "I have had a similar experience", he or she actively engaged in what Hirschman (2000b) called an *Out-of-Text Intertextuality*, by which the reader interconnected my essay with his or her own personal experiences, and thereby confirmed the transferability of the described

phenomenon. But if it didn't take place, then I hope my idiosyncratic and narcissistic paper has at least made for some fun reading.

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