Much Ado About *Pride and Prejudice*:

Jane Austen’s Appropriation of Shakespeare’s Comedic Structure

by

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I. Introduction

Readers and critics of Jane Austen have noted her appropriation of Shakespeare. According to John Wiltshire, Jane Austen’s “dramatic quality” was most often praised and compared to that of Shakespeare to “indicate her level of achievement” (58). Commenting on Austen’s dramatic quality is part of the critical heritage that accompanies Jane Austen. George Lewes deemed Austen a “Prose Shakespeare” and continued his praise of her by citing her “marvelous dramatic power” unlike other writers of her age (Southam 138). Tennyson also wrote of Austen as “next to Shakespeare” in her “realism and the life-likeness of her characters” (Southam 21). In 1911, A.C. Bradley concluded that Austen’s “surpassing excellence within that comparatively narrow sphere whose limits she never tried to overpass” gave her the same success in her time which Shakespeare had achieved in his (32). However, it is the critical praise of Shakespearean scholar, Richard Simpson, that brought to light a new perspective of Austen’s work. Instead of making her the Shakespeare of her time, Simpson suggested that Austen’s relationship with Shakespeare was what Wiltshire calls “indebtedness or influence,” or conventional source study (59). Most of the comparative studies conducted on the subject of Shakespeare and Austen (between their literature, lives, or both) have followed the traditional model of source studies. This critical approach grants agency to the author, in this case Austen, who supposedly maintains total control of her work through conscious design and who places intentional allusions to other authors and works that can be proven through concrete, empirical evidence. The complication that arises from this practice is the exclusion of possible indirect sources, literary traditions, or remote sources that might have affected the author’s work.
Within the last 50 years, scholars have made significant strides in the field of intertextuality. This theoretical model, at the most basic level, seeks to discover the relationship between a literary work and the influences that shaped its development. According to Julia Kristeva, “[Mikhail] Bakhtin was one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply exist, but is generated in relation to another structure” (64). Kristeva coined the term “intertextuality,” based on what she saw as an “intertwining” or “interwoven” network of texts, cultures, and timelines. Since then, a range of critics and theorists, most famously Kristeva and Barthes, have questioned the traditional approaches to literary source study in order to, as Kevin Curran states, “locate less direct forms of influence, borrowings which result from shared ways of thinking within and across cultures rather than from linear textual transmission” (435).

This freedom from tradition, however, comes at a price. Being confronted with what Curran calls “a seemingly limitless discursive field, in which just about anything can be taken as an intertext for anything else,” critics can conceivably compare all texts to each other without worrying about imprecise lines of filiation, inaccurate historical generalization or impressionistic cultural views (435). Therefore, I would argue the need for a pragmatic solution in the form of intertextual guidelines to inform and assist scholars in their pursuit of indirect intertextual source connections.

In this study, I will be using Robert S. Miola’s “Seven Types of Intertextuality” to illustrate Austen’s use of Shakespeare’s comedic structure in the characterization and plot of *Pride and Prejudice*. Miola’s method is ideal for several reasons, the first being his clear cut organization of three categories and seven types of intertextuality that span from authorial
intention, cultural influence, and audience contribution. The second reason is his detachment from what he calls “the highly specialized usage of Kristeva, Barthes, and Derrida, that excludes varieties of conscious and uncurious imitation from consideration” (13). Furthermore, these three theorists, though essential to the foundations of intertextuality as a whole, tend to draw upon linguistic inferences that leave meaning seemingly unattainable and render the practice of comparing texts futile. Miola seeks to move past the “post-structuralist approach” and address what he sees as “the most prevalent intertextual relationship[s]” involving Shakespeare (13). The third reason for evoking Miola’s method is Miola's use of examples from Shakespeare’s predecessors and contemporaries to illustrate his types of intertextuality. I will be looking at how Austen shaped and developed her romantic plot and characterization from Shakespeare’s comedic structure.

*Pride and Prejudice*, though it is Austen’s most famous novel, is often overlooked by researchers who seek to find Shakespearean influences in Austen’s work. Some similarities to Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* are noted occasionally, but no one has taken on the challenge of making Austen’s appropriation of Shakespeare the main focus of an argument. Perhaps this is due to lack of a theoretical medium, like Miola’s method, that frames different forms of intertextual relationships, thus making them easier to identify. Therefore, this study will have two goals. The first goal will be to validate the intertextual approach of Robert S. Miola’s “Seven Types of Intertextuality." The second goal is to contribute to the existing academic discourse surrounding the intertextual relationship of Shakespeare and Austen by comparing the comedic structure of *Much Ado About Nothing* to the romantic characterization and comic plot pairing of *Pride and Prejudice*. 
This study will be divided into three sections. First, I will briefly describe Miola’s intertextual approach, identify the types of intertextuality I intend to use for my argument, and explain why this is the best method. The second section will make up the bulk of the paper and will consist of applying Miola’s “types” to Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* and Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. The third section will consist of further discourse on the results of this application and how Miola’s approach to intertextuality enlightens readers to the connection between Austen’s construction of the eighteenth century romance novel and Shakespeare’s dramatic comedy structure.

II. “Seven Types of Intertextuality”

Miola begins his argument by describing three variables he uses to organize his “types” and “categories” and explains why there are no clear cut divisions as well as some “overlapping” (13). He focuses on “first, the degree to which the trace of an earlier text is tagged by verbal echo; second, the degree to which its effect relies on audience recognition; third, the degree to which the appropriation is eristic” (Miola 13). These variables represent themselves in different categories with varying amounts of influence. Miola views these categories as “a continuum” that ranges from the “closest approximations” to “author-directed imitations,” “all the way through to intertextualities that exist in discourses created by the reader” (13). By viewing intertextuality as a continuum, Miola acknowledges the complexity of indirect sources and the varying degrees of influence they have on interpreting a text. This spectrum also frees Miola from the absolutism of traditional forms of source study which require empirical evidence and leave little room for speculation.
In what he calls “an attempt to map out some complex territory,” Miola constructs three categories made up of seven types of intertextuality. The first category is “comprise[d] [of] specific books or texts mediated directly through the author” through practices such as “revision, translation, quotation, allusion, [and] sources…” (14). The evidence for placing a text/s within the first category are the “parallel” patterns found between two authors either through “verbal iteration or echo” and “imagistic patterns” (14). This category contains four types of intertextual relationships: Revision, Translation, Quotation, and Sources. The first type, Revision, is “marked by evidence of the reviser’s preference and intentionality” for the reworking of a specific text (14). “The process,” to which Miola is referring, “occurs under the guiding and explicitly comparative eye of the revising author.” Miola’s second type, “Translation,” is the rewriting of a text in a new language and carries with it problems of accuracy, grammar, and word choice. This kind of relationship is easy to identify, but language, like currency, does not exchange equally. Miola points out that “to varying extents, all translations exhibit a kind of intertextual impossibility” (17) These two types do not apply to this study, as there is no textual evidence of Austen’s “preference and intentionality” for revising or translating Much Ado About Nothing.

Miola’s third type of intertextuality is Quotation, which literally “reproduces the anterior text (whole or part) in a later text” (17). He allows textual allusions here, but is careful to distinguish them as a “reference, not [a] re-enactment”(17). Quotations can be marked by “typographical signals, by a switch in a language” or by actually identifying the “original author of the text” (17). It is important to note the amount, location, and frequency of quotations in a posterior text for the author and reader’s ability to evoke value from various contexts. Miola
gives us the example of using quotes from classical literature to “portray the absence of divine order and justice in the corrupt [modern literary] world” (18). Additionally, the posterior author may be trying to foreshadow coming events in the narrative, such as the allusion to Shakespeare in Austen’s Sense and Sensibility. In that novel, antagonist John Willoughby says, “When you leave Barton to form your own establishment, Queen Mab shall receive you,” as he offers his horse to Marianne (64). In Romeo and Juliet, Queen Mab “‘is the hag, when maids lay on their backs, / That presses them’” (1. 4. 92-93). Readers who knew Shakespeare would have a pretty strong hint as to what Willoughby is really proposing” (Chandler 19). The Quotation technique would be useful in establishing Austen’s familiarity with Shakespeare in her other novels, but is of limited use in Pride and Prejudice due to the lack of direct allusions and references to Shakespeare. Therefore, I will not include it in my application.

Miola’s fourth type of intertextuality, the last in this category, are “Sources” (19). Instead of looking at direct references to an author, this type of intertextuality seeks to understand the contextual relationship between specific texts. The Sources type looks at intertextual relationships between sources such as Hamlet and Sense and Sensibility, rather than Shakespeare and Sense and Sensibility. Source texts “provide plot, character, idea, language, or style to later texts” (Miola 19). Miola uses the term “reading and remembering” to describe how an author uses a source text, consciously or unconsciously, to shape the formation of the new text (19). For example, we know that Austen was educated in Shakespeare at a young age; therefore, she was “reading and remembering” the work of Shakespeare, to varying degrees, while she was writing her own work. This practice resulted in Shakespeare becoming part of the identity associated with Austen’s novels.
It is important to recognize Miola’s three subdivisions of “source texts”: “The Source Coincident,” in which the posterior text is written in response to the former; “The Source Proximate,” the most popular form of intertextuality in which the posterior author “honors, reshapess, steals, ransacks, and plunders” from the source text; and “The Source Remote,” in which all sources and influences are not clearly marked (19-20). The third of these subdivisions, The Source Remote, is the most important for studying Austen’s appropriation of Much Ado About Nothing in Pride and Prejudice.

The Source Proximate is the most frequently studied form of intertextuality or what Miola refers to as “sources and texts” (19). The dynamics of this practice vary from “copying, paraphrasing, compression, conflation, expansion, omission, innovation, transference, and contradiction” (Miola 19). Miola refers to this source as the “book-on-the-desk model” (19). Miola maintains that “even in a closely followed source, there appears an interesting range of intertextual dynamics” (20). The posterior author cannot effectively copy or use the source without adding his or her influence into the finished product. While it appears likely that Austen was using Much Ado About Nothing as her “book-on-the-desk” model, she fails to mention anything in Pride and Prejudice that fits with the “Source Proximate” criteria. She does not “mark” the text with any direct reference to Shakespeare. Without directly referencing the source’s author, it is difficult to claim textual “allusions,” no matter how similar, to that author’s source in the posterior text. Therefore, I have chosen not to include the “Source Proximate” in my study.

However, “The source remote” includes the sources and influences that are “not clearly marked” and do not coincide with the “book-on-the-desk” model. Miola opens up this last
category to sources that the author might have previously known or read: “Grammar school
texts, classical stories and authors, the Bible, are evident in allusions, turns of phrase, or
reappropriated motifs” (20). The source remote is usually a highly original or popular
playwright, such as Shakespeare. This source also exists within a cultural paradigm considering
the posterior author’s heritage. For example, Lee Erickson states that “Austen herself was a
subscriber to Mrs. Martin’s circulating library in Basingstoke,” which was part of a system of
British libraries that perpetuated popular works throughout rural communities to middle class
patrons. (579). Austen described the library’s collection in a letter to her sister Cassandra in
1798.

I have received a very civil note from Mrs. Martin requesting my name as
a Subscriber to her Library which opens the 14th of January, & my name,
or rather yours is accordingly given… Mrs. Martin tells us that her
Collection is not to consist only of Novels, but of every kind of literature…

(Letters 26)

From the description of Mrs. Martin’s Library, we can assume that Austen was exposed to every
kind of literature, including Shakespeare. Therefore, Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing
serves as a valid Remote Source for Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, even though the similarities to
Shakespeare’s plot and characterization are not clearly marked in Austen’s novel.

“Category II” in Miola’s article is based on traditions and original texts that “radiate
through numberless intermediaries and indirect routes” (20). This category overlaps with the
others “largely as a set of inherited expectations, reflexes, and strategies” (20). This classification
may not seem far off from the Source Remote but Miola differentiates between this category and
remote sources by citing the difference in “half-remembering” a source many years later and the
indirectness of traditions “in which the originary text may have never been read by the author at
all” (20). The first type in this category and the fifth type overall is “Conventions and
Configurations,” which covers the “classical, medical, and continental literatures, formal and
rhetorical,” elements that are used in conventional literature and seen in many different texts
(21). Shakespeare himself uses conventional characters like “the witty slave, bragging soldier,
blocking senex and so on,” which are all intertextually connected to the past literary tradition of
categorization, especially Roman New Comedy (Miola 21). These inherited traditions are
reworked into literature with or without the conscious attention of the author. Miola explains
authorial unconsciousness by comparing classical traditions with modern canonized literary
ideologies:

Shakespeare may have read … dramatists … in translations
yet he could have no more escaped them in the practice of his craft than moderns
can escape Freud or Marx, though only a relatively small percentage of people
have actually had direct contact with those seminal thinkers (21).

Of all the types that Miola lists, Conventions and Configurations will be the most useful in my
argument. I will attempt to find the inherited traditions that Austen appropriates in *Pride and
Prejudice* that also resonate in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Miola’s sixth type of Intertextuality is Genres, which seeks to include “the wide range of
linkings implicit and explicit in generic choices” in Category II (21). This type is comprised of
the “individual signifiers” of a genre such as the “play-within-the-play of revenge tragedy” or the
“singing shepherds in pastoral” (21). For example, Austen worked within the paradigms of the
eighteenth-century romance novel for the most part, but she did evoke elements of the Gothic
genre in *Northanger Abbey* to highlight the popularity of horror and mystery amongst young
women in the eighteenth century. Austen satirizes this Gothic literature by directing the
protagonist, Catherine Morland, through what Liisa Ladouceur calls typical Gothic tropes such
as “haunted houses, madness, and grief-stricken women in frilly nightshirts” (119). Austen
draws on Gothic conventions to illustrate the absurdity of early horror fiction and how it
influenced society to disregard the novel as a valid form of literature. Although Austen does not
satirize plot and characterization in Shakespeare’s comedy, she appropriates his dramatic
technique to develop a deeper complex characterization and emphasize joyful comic resolution.
By studying the characteristics of Shakespeare’s comedy genre, I will better understand Austen’s
use of this genre to construct the plot and characterization in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The third category includes the last type of Miola’s intertextuality called Paralogues and
is a type meant to highlight the relationship of the audience and the text. A Paralogue is any text
that seeks to provide information about the “intellectual, social, theological, or political
meanings” in another text (23). These secondary sources are written as a response to the original
author or text and have attached to the identity of the text itself. The readers and/or critics that
write these paralogues bring all of their past knowledge, their ideological upbringing, as well as
their own linguistic perceptions, and run the risk of creating “imprecise lines of filiation” or
perceived connections (Miola 23). Miola, understanding the free interpretation this technique
brings, warns that this type of intertextuality can lead to “rampant and irresponsible association,
facile cultural generalization, and anecdotal impressionistic historicizing” (23). He ends by
stating that different subsections of this type exist, but there are simply too many to count or
Although my argument does implement the use of paralogues through secondary sources, my main focus lies with the primary texts of Shakespeare and Austen. I am not researching the validity of a paralogue or conducting a scholarly review; therefore, I will not be using this form of intertextuality as part of my argument.

I believe that Miola comprehensively examines the relationships between authors, texts, traditions, and audiences. Of all the theories and methods on intertextuality, Miola’s is the most accessible and useful in applying this somewhat new area of study to traditionally criticized works. The types I will identify in this application are The Source Remote, Conventions and Configurations, and Genre. This selection serves as a solid frame for intertextual discourse that uncovers Austen’s appropriation of *Much Ado About Nothing*’s comedic structure in the plot and characterization of *Pride and Prejudice*.

### III. Much Ado About *Pride and Prejudice*

Most of the existing research conducted on Shakespeare and Jane Austen focuses on her other five novels and minor works. Isobel Armstrong makes a strong case for *Hamlet* acting as the inspiration behind *Sense and Sensibility*, saying, “the play is everywhere in the novel,” and “it provides for that strange dreamwork structure—a kind of alternative text—which always seem to be lurking in Jane Austen’s beautifully ordered writing, ensuing in travesty, masquerade and dissidence” (15). Marcia McClintock Folsom, along with many others, has studied the use of Shakespeare’s direct references scattered throughout *Mansfield Park*. Folsom’s argument discusses the “play-within-a-play” structure of Shakespeare’s work, which Austen employs in her novel, as well as how familiar her audience would have been with the Bard: “Austen alludes to
The Merchant of Venice, Richard III, Julius Caesar, and Hamlet, and the casualness of these allusions shows how unnecessary it is for the characters or for the narrator to explain which plays or scenes they mean” (66). Richard Simpson, as early as 1870, noted that “Austen must surely have had Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night in her mind while she was writing this novel [Persuasion]” (Southam, 256). In Emma, John Wiltshire notes the use of Shakespeare’s line from A Midsummer Night’s Dream: “The course of true love never did run smooth—a Hartfield edition of Shakespeare would have a long note on that passage” (loc. 16710). In Northanger Abbey Austen references, the knowledge that one can attain through Shakespeare’s plays: “And from Shakespeare she gained a great store of information,” which also alludes to the education of Jane Austen herself (loc. 22047). Again, there is more than enough empirical evidence to prove that Austen really knew her Shakespeare, and the subject has been documented thoroughly. Yet the relationship between Much Ado About Nothing and Pride and Prejudice is not widely discussed, even though the characterization and plot of these works bear striking resemblances to each other.

Readers of Shakespeare and Austen have surely noted the similarities between the two works. However, Austen never provides verbal confirmation, in the form of a direct allusion or reference to Shakespeare, that she is working with a “book-on-the-desk” model described in the Source Proximate. Direct allusions to and conversations about Shakespeare are present in Austen’s other novels; thus, they are more suitable for the Source Proximate type. However, Miola’s Source Remote deems popular playwrights and authors as appropriate influences on an author’s work, even if not specifically referenced in the text (20). According to Gail Marshall, “[Shakespeare] is most important as a source of characters and situations which could be
reworked by modern writers," especially in eighteenth century novels (9). Marshall’s statement explains Austen’s appropriation of Shakespeare’s comedic structure as a “source of characters and situations” that Austen “rework[s]” as a writer in the eighteenth century (Marshall 9). By looking at Austen’s parallel characters and similar plot structure, we can infer that Austen had knowledge of *Much Ado About Nothing* and, to varying degrees, used its characterization and plot to formulate *Pride and Prejudice*.

John Macaulay has given Austen a place nearest to Shakespeare, for her “power of composing characters” (Southam 135). The anonymous reviewer of the novel in *The British Critic*, for instance, says of Elizabeth Bennet that "She is in fact the Beatrice of the tale; and falls in love on much the same principles of contrariety” (Southam 44). Even Tennyson spoke of Jane Austen as “next to Shakespeare” in her “realism and the life-likeness of her characters” (Southam 24). In *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*, Shakespeare’s Beatrice and Austen’s Elizabeth are more than just “next” to each other in construction; these heroines’ characterizations are parallel. They are both intelligent, expressive, and have deep insecurities about men, love, and marriage. In Act 1, scene 1, Beatrice is expressing her views on relationships and men after confronting an obnoxious Benedict, who shares similar views about women:

A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.   

(1.1.123-27)
This passage is very similar to Elizabeth’s response to Charlotte Lucas’s advice on how to catch a husband: “Where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married, and if I were determined to get a rich husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it” (Loc.5005) Lloyd Brown states, “[Austen’s] perfection of marriage in the woman’s situation as a whole, is more complex than a simple straightforward distinction between love matches and marriages of convenience” (30). Both Beatrice and Elizabeth are glad that they possess the “coldness” to recognize false ideas of love and marriage, and both are content to either wait for the right man or accept having no man at all. It is this pridefulness that protects Beatrice and Elizabeth from danger, but it also serves as the detriment to their happiness.

Their counterparts, Benedick and Mr. Darcy, are also heroic parallel characters citing their need for control, respect for propriety, and very high standards for their potential brides. In Act 2, scene 3, Benedick is alone in Leonato’s garden and, in a soliloquy, speaks of the weakness of men who are so quick to jump into marriage. According to Benedick, it would take a very unique woman to convince him to marry:

…I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. (2. 3. 26-29)
This passage illustrates that Benedick possesses the same pride that Beatrice exhibits in her speech. Other than this pride, we see that the couple shares a mutual distrust of the opposite sex, the intellect to exchange witty banter, and room to grow into their separate identities as well as their identity as a couple.

Darcy presents a similar view of marriage and women at the ball with Bingley, where he is perceived as “proud” and “above his company” (loc. 4858). Julie Manzelmann calls Darcy “a prisoner of his own pride” and “a selfish egoist” who is “unaware of his problem” (33). As he looks at Elizabeth, he declares that “She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humor at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (loc. 4876). While we cannot see into the mind of Darcy, as we do in Benedick’s soliloquy, it is apparent that both men see themselves as deserving of a woman who, due to their standards, may not exist in anyone other than the women they detest.

In addition to the main couples, Shakespeare and Austen present secondary couples in the form of Much Ado About Nothing’s Claudio and Hero and Pride and Prejudice’s Jane and Bingley. These couples mirror the same characterizations, relationship woes, and happy resolutions of the other, but their love is distinctly different than that of the primary couples. The secondary couples emphasize the complexity, growth, and passion of the primary couples. All of these characters—Claudio, Hero, Bingley, and Jane—all remain relatively the same throughout the text, and their love, though real, is less complicated and passionate than that of the heroes and heroines. Manzelmann does not discount the love between these secondary characters, but instead encourages the reader to imagine them as “an awkward couple sitting at opposite ends of a porch swing making shy glances at one another” (22). Mordecai Marcus also states that “while
they are lovable and kind, they lack insight, strength and self-confidence” (86). This flat kind of romance is seen when Claudio’s preoccupation with Hero’s beauty seems to outweigh his concern for her personality: “In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on (1. 1. 180). And here we see Bingley’s opinion of Jane: “Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld!” (loc. 4872) While genuine, Claudio and Bingley have little concern for the personality of the “creature” or “lady” they just fell in love with. These are identical expressions of the women’s beauty, only separated by the language of Shakespeare and Austen. The standards that Claudio and Bingley set for potential wife-material are less than Benedick and Darcy. This shows their agreeable nature, but also a naiveté, which is easily manipulated. Fortunately for Claudio and Bingley, Hero and Jane are sweet natured and incapable of finding fault in anyone. It is clear from the beginning that the innocence of Claudio and Hero, as well as Bingley and Jane, are setting them up for a future marriage.

We then see both couples slowly discover their love. For instance, Beatrice and Benedick are tricked into admitting their feelings for one another and do not realize their friends’ scheme until they are both confronted with the fact that they are a good match. When Claudio and Hero expose Benedick and Beatrice’s letters, the two realize that they are meant to be together, and their shared respect for one another turns into romantic passion.

Claudio: And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her;
For here's a paper written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Fashion'd to Beatrice.
And here's another
Writ in my cousin's hand, stolen from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto Benedick. (5. 4. 85-90)

Even after they discover Don Pedro’s scheme, Beatrice and Benedick are still willing to admit
their love for each other, which implies that their love is true. Likewise, in a conversation
between Darcy and Elizabeth, after they have declared their love for each other, Elizabeth asks
Darcy when he knew he was in love with her, to which he replies, “I [Darcy] was in the middle
before I knew that I had begun” (loc. 9506). Elizabeth replies with an intriguing observation.
She says, “To be sure, you know no actual good of me—but nobody thinks of that when they fall
in love” (loc. 9511). Both couples come together after denying all of their preconceived notions
of what love should look like or how it should come into their lives.

The characterizations, conflicts, and resolutions are all similar in both of these texts.

However, the time difference between 1598 and 1796 (Shakespeare’s production of *Much Ado
About Nothing* and Austen’s writing of *Pride and Prejudice*) forced Austen to create a more
realistic world for her characters. This “reshaping” or “reworking” of the text is included under
Miola’s Sources type (19). According to Wiltshire’s observation, people are inclined to
recognize how “the dialogues between the two [Darcy and Elizabeth] resemble the contests of
wit – the way that a word or trope is caught and tossed back to the original speaker in reworked
or elaborated form – between the heroine [Beatrice] of *Much Ado About Nothing* and
Benedick” (Wiltshire 70-71). Gail Marshall states that “Austen, like many, takes a source idea
from Shakespeare, strips it down to it’s emotional fundamentals, and then rebuilds around that
central dilemma a setting more appropriate and available to the age of the novelist” (101). Austen
alters the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* in order to create the struggle of young women in the
eighteenth century. The struggle for economic stability, education, and advancement in society
placed a great deal of pressure on the eighteenth century woman. Austen includes these
struggles in situations such as Jane’s undesirable social status that is largely due to her family’s
reputation. Jane would bring very little money to a marriage contract, considering her four
sisters and zero brothers, and she is also socially inferior to Mr. Bingley. Her social inferiority is
perpetuated by her mother, who is uneducated and willing to marry her daughters off to anyone
who will have them. When Darcy is first acquainted with Mrs. Bennet, the conversation is quite
awkward and reveals Mrs. Bennet’s, as well as her “silly” daughters,’ lack of propriety. Austen’s
narrator points to Elizabeth’s “blushing for her mother” and trying not to let Mrs. Bennet “expose
herself” anymore than she already has (loc. 5269). Also, Bingley can hardly “keep his
countenance” when conversing with Mrs. Bennet, but strives to do so out of respect for
Elizabeth, who is embarrassed. Robert Heilman, says “Mrs. Bennet is the thoughtless,
indefatigable marrying mother who has no pride at all: anything goes” (133). Mrs. Bennet’s
behavior eventually leads to Darcy’s ill opinion of the Bennets and the pressure Darcy applies to
Bingley to forget about Jane.

Austen’s use of Mrs. Bennet’s poor reputation functions much like Don Pedro and
Claudio’s accusations against Hero’s virtue. This parallel is foreshadowed in the first scene of
*Much Ado About Nothing* when Leonato introduces Hero to his guests.

*Don Pedro:* You embrace your charge too willingly.

I think this is your daughter.

*Leonato:* Her mother hath many times told me so.
Benedick: Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her? (1. 1. 98-101)

Shakespeare shows us that marriage presented a huge risk for female infidelity and illegitimate children. This issue was a common concern in both Hero and Jane’s eras, considering the use of entailed estates and inheritances in which men were the only proprietors of money or land. Women could not legally represent themselves or provide for themselves well enough to be comfortable; therefore, they had to marry and produce children in order to survive financially and socially. Shakespeare implies here that a certain amount of suspicion came with marriage proposals. Therefore, it would be easy to convince the naive Claudio and Bingley that the woman they admire are ill-suited for men of their position, considering their social inadequacy.

The question of Hero’s legitimacy in the first scene is not the event that sparks Claudio’s suspicions, but it certainly adds to Hero’s problems. Both Jane and Hero undergo broken hearts and lovesickness, as well as a significant absence from the plot. After the broken nuptials occur between our secondary couples, both women disappear from the narrative. Hero is forced to fake her own death, only to reappear at the end of the play and marry Claudio. Jane goes to live with Mrs. Gardiner to heal from Mr. Bingley’s rejection and hopefully escape her family’s further decent into shame. She does find resolution, just like Hero, and eventually marries Bingley after a joyful reunion.

By using Miola’s Remote Source, the intertextual relationship between Pride and Prejudice and Much Ado About Nothing is evident, even without the use of direct references and quotations. In contrast to traditional models of research, the relationship of these works is not based upon “word for word” explication, but the interweaving of characterizations and plot. We know that Austen constructed her romantic characters and comic plot almost parallel to that of
Shakespeare’s comedic structure in more ways than one. The similar use of inherited traditions, specifically applied to character and plot, are illustrated in Miola’s Conventions and Configurations and Genre types of intertextuality (20).

Shakespeare’s presence in the early nineteenth century was largely perpetuated by the circulating library, which was mostly targeted to middle class patrons, women in charge of educating their children, and rural communities. We know that Austen was upper-middle class considering her father’s position in the clergy, and we know that her mother kept a subscription to a circulating library in order to educate her children as seen in her letter to Cassandra. Austen began writing as a child, at the age of 11 and completed a satirical play based on Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* called *The History of England*. William Baker notes Austen’s use of Shakespeare in her childhood production: “Henry the 4th, falling ill, his son the prince of wales came and took away the crown; whereon the King made a long speech, for which I must refer the Reader to Shakespear’s [sic] Plays” (119). As these childhood writings demonstrate, we know that Austen was educated in Shakespeare as a young girl. Her early exposure to Shakespeare reflects how the idea of Source Remote is important to an understanding of Austen’s borrowing from Shakespeare. Austen may have subconsciously taken plot and characterization from *Much Ado About Nothing* and appropriated it in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Miola’s ideas on Conventions and Configurations are perhaps the most relevant in this study. First, Miola acknowledges the “Configuration of the character and situation” as the traditional basis for all dramatic quality (21). Classic types of characters present themselves throughout all literature and have served as the basis for dramatic construction since the drama (Brockett and Hildy). Miola cites Shakespeare’s use of Roman figures: “the senex,” who is the
male elderly voice of reason; “virgo,” who is the pure and beautiful female love interest; and “adulescens,” or the hero who must grow to attain identity and virtue. All of these characters resonate in Austen’s novel (21). Like Shakespeare, Austen’s also uses these ancient prototypes in her novel to develop romantic characterization in *Pride and Prejudice*.

For example, Shakespeare uses Friar Frances to fill the classical role of the “senex,” or wise old man, in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The Friar is responsible for saving the life and reputation of Hero after she is wrongfully accused of being sexually impure. He convinces Leonato to be patient and advises him to hide Hero until the accusations against her virtue have been righted.

*Tis well consented: presently away;

For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure.

Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day

Perhaps is but prolong'd: have patience and endure. (4. 1. 251-54)

Austen replicates the senex by creating the character of Mrs. Gardiner, Jane’s Aunt. When Jane is left brokenhearted by Mr. Bingley’s abandonment, she goes to stay with Mrs. Gardiner in London, in an attempt to protect herself from further heartbreak. When Mrs. Gardiner invites Jane to stay with her, she says, “I hope they will not meet at all,” so that “his [Bingley’s] affection might be reanimated” and adds that “she [Mrs. Gardiner] did not consider it [Jane’s situation] entirely hopeless” (loc. 6351-6356).

In addition to this character configuration, Hero and Jane both occupy the role of “the virgo,” another classical character (21). The virgo is typically the “prize” love interest of the novel but does not appear many times in the text. She is typically beautiful, sweet and virtuous,
but has little personality. The description of the virgo perfectly matches that of Hero and Jane. In Act 1, scene 1, Claudio poses the question, “Can the world buy such a jewel?” making her a commodity or prize to be won (1.1.174). This line coincides with a statement about Jane and Bingley’s engagement when Sir Willian Lucas congratulates Bingley on “carrying away the brightest jewel of the country,” obviously referring to Jane (loc. 9557). Hero is seen as Claudio’s prize and Leonato’s bargaining chip for further alliances with Don Pedro. Similarly, Jane is the most “handsome” of the Bennet sisters and she is described as having “a great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner” (loc. 4991) Mrs. Bennet hopes for Jane to marry Bingley in order to secure a future for their livelihood and social advancement. Jane does not possess caustic qualities, like those of Elizabeth, that can find malice in anyone; especially Miss Bingley and Miss Hurst. In addition to their beauty and marriage potential, Hero and Jane remain silent for much of the plot.

There are other classical characters that present themselves throughout the texts. In many ways, the “ancilla,” or minor female character who serves as a plot catalyst, is represented in Shakespeare’s Ursula and Austen’s Charlotte Lucas. Both of these characters are minor to the text, but they help to advance the action in the plot, and they also help the “adulescens” learn and grow (21). In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Ursula is an integral member of the scheme to join Beatrice and Benedick together. Although Shakespeare specifies a specific purpose for her suspicions, and Ursula is playing along with Don Pedro’s plan, Ursula’s lines below resemble a statement by Charlotte Lucas. Ursula says:

> O, do not do your cousin such a wrong.

> She cannot be so much without true judgment—
Having so swift and excellent a wit

As she is prized to have—as to refuse

So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick. (3. 1. 87-91)

Ursula recognizes Beatrice’s uniquely independent and clever qualities that set her apart from women whose only hope is to marry for security and station. Charlotte is similarly not surprised that Elizabeth is so quick to judge Charlotte’s engagement to Mr. Collins, which is based only on financial security. She is patient with Elizabeth who, everyone acknowledges, to be “unconcerned as may be” regarding marriage prospects and guilty of wanting to “have her own way” (loc. 6176). It is here that Ursula and Charlotte attempt to sway the heroine’s attention away from her own attitudes about marriage and look at the real situation for women in a patriarchal society.

Benedick and Darcy, flawed as they may be, are still advantageous marriage material; yet, Beatrice and Elizabeth still protest. According to Manzelmann, their “sense of pride has been fostered by [their] own convictions, [their] own belief, not unfounded, that she is the moral conscience of [the] household” (33).

The classical character of the “adulescens,” or hero, in both sources is formulated somewhat differently, which proves Austen’s close associations with Shakespeare’s classical character arrangement. Many dramas devote the hero quality to one character, whereas Shakespeare assigns the role of the “adulescens” to a couple. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare creates the characters of Beatrice and Benedick to emphasize the equality and fulfillment that accompanies a companionate marriage. However, companionate marriage is something that can only be achieved through finding one’s personal identity, a struggle that both
Beatrice and Benedick must go through in order to find happiness and fulfillment with each other. They complete their destiny to live as one heroic team, just as a singular character would do in a typical bildungsroman tale.

Shakespeare also provides a route to marriage through Hero and Claudio’s relationship. This union follows the more traditional model of a man taking possession of a wife, regardless of thought to equality. However, Bingley and Jane’s separate dispositions and less passionate personalities seem to work. Julia Prewitt Brown sees these primary marriages as joinings that “celebrate the achievement of a moral and intellectual excellence which fulfills a moral ideal” (42). Many people have used Beatrice and Benedick to illustrate gender equality or Shakespeare’s subtle nod to feminism. According to Stuart M. Tave, “Before they marry, the heroes must lose the self to gain the self, or, in social and moral terms, achieve their identity; and that identity has great force” (72). Likewise, according to Manzelmann, “The man and woman [Beatrice and Benedick] experience growth and maturation before the relationship culminates in their matrimony” (1). Beatrice and Benedick must both face their faults and come together for the sake of Hero and Claudio’s relationship, which leads to their deepened love for each other at the resolution of the play. The form of the hero takes the shape of a companionate relationship in Shakespeare just as it does in Austen with Darcy and Elizabeth.

Darcy needs someone like Beatrice, “who will set him free from his own egotistical pride, and Elizabeth needs a man who will be strong and protective, but not domineering” (Manzelmann 33). Manzelmann says that “both know the full meaning of pride and have their own pride decreased before the end” (32). When Elizabeth jokingly tells Darcy, “I have always seen a great similarity in the turn of our minds,” she speaks an important truth.
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5895). By identifying a stock character like the “adulescens” with couples instead of individuals, *Pride and Prejudice* continues to portray common elements with *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In addition to stock characters, Simpson notes how Shakespeare’s use of Neoplatonic inherited traditions place reason over passion. This technique is used to divide characteristics in Shakespeare’s and Austen’s romantic couples. For instance, Shakespeare continually uses a lack of intelligence to display wicked or unsophisticated behavior. Characters who pursue their passion without first weighing the consequences, like Romeo and Juliet, or display a lack of willpower in their decisiveness, such as Hamlet, are the subjects of tragedies. In comedies, Shakespeare presents a plot that allows romantic characters to learn and gain wisdom, which ultimately ends in marriage. This corresponds with Austen’s characters, who are commonly the subjects of the “bildungsroman” or “coming-of-age” tradition in the eighteenth-century novel wherein characters are encouraged to educate themselves and be practical and intelligent in their decisions. Simpson states that, just as Shakespeare does, “she [Austen] prefers to exhibit it [wickedness] as a weakness of intelligence, an inability of the common-sense to rule the passions which it neither comprehends nor commands” (250).

We see this moral scrutiny in characters most in *Much Ado About Nothing* through Margaret and Borachio’s relationship and *Pride and Prejudice* through Lydia and Wickham’s relationship. Margaret and Lydia are ignorant, thoughtless, and selfish. They do not think about the ramifications of their actions or the effects they could have on the potential for other characters to succeed, such as Hero’s and Jane’s imminent marriage. Borachio and Wickham are out for money and social advancement and use seductive behavior to acquire it. Margaret and
Borachio and Lydia and Wickham are the most unscrupulous pair in the play and the novel. If they had acted with reason, Don John would have attempted and failed to frame Hero, and the Bennet family might have been spared the embarrassment of an elopement. Instead, these couples let their passion for money and lust overrule their reason and are wooed by sinister intentions and morally debasing acts. Similarly, Lydia Bennet and Mr. Wickham, marry each other with “high animal spirits," only to be left with a life of tragic circumstance thereafter (40). Lydia and Wickham deepen the poor repute that follows the Bennet family. These relationships involve impulse and adventure, but the whole affair is “sordid and the intrigue temporary” (Menzelmann 20).

These relationships contrast well with the primary and secondary couples in Shakespeare and Austen. Margaret and Borachio and Lydia and Wickam are artificial, distorted reflections of passionate love. Unlike Beatrice and Benedick, who display their passion through wit and working for the greater good, Margaret and Borachio evince passion with no intellectual direction. According to Richard Mckeon, “platonic love begins midway down the ladder of love at marriage: [Beatrice]/Elizabeth and [Hero]/Jane climb up the ladder to a higher level of feeling and intelligence which is charity as love in marriage…” (514). The wickedness of the immoral couples are both born out of stupidity rather than malice. According to AndrewWright, Margaret and Borachio and Lydia and Wickham do not suffer “the dangers of intellectual complexity” (106) like that of Benedick and Beatrice; thus, they misappropriate their passions into lust and greed.

Miola’s “Genre” type of intertextuality explains the connection between Shakespeare’s comedic structure and Jane Austen’s domestic romance novel. The forms of generic
intertextuality are less about the direct correspondences of characterization and plot of the stories and more about shared comic tropes used to accentuate characterization and plot. Shakespeare uses traditions commonly found in Roman New Comedy genre in *Much Ado About Nothing*, such as dances and “revellings,” in which disguises and eavesdropping provide for romantic intrigue. The dance in *Much Ado About Nothing* occurs in the first act and provides foreshadowing for the romantic pairings and conflicts, such as the union of Beatrice and Benedick or Claudio and Hero, for the rest of the play. Austen uses and alters these generic devices to fit her eighteenth-century romance by creating balls and overheard conversations, much resembling eavesdropping. She uses the first ball in the novel to set up the conflict of the quarrelsome couple, such as Darcy and Elizabeth, whose antagonism drives the rest of the narrative.

Shakespeare often uses small communities and remote locations for his settings in order to provide a solid background for his fiction and isolate the fantastical nature of his drama. Leonato’s estate and the small, rural communities in *Pride and Prejudice* are prime examples of generic transference from stage plays to novels. Austen reappropriates these locations to create more familiarity with her readers. Austen wrote about the life she knew; a country home with large families and few acquaintances. Circulating libraries reached out to these demographics, and as a result, Austen’s most popular characteristic in her writing was her ability to relate to her audience. The genre of Shakespeare’s comedy transferred from the stage to the novel and worked out advantageously for Austen’s success.

Shakespeare’s comedies also contain mechanisms such as nightly balls and festivities that include disguises and eavesdropping. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, there is a “revelling” in the first act, in which Claudio declares his affection and marriage intention for Hero (1. 1. 291).
This is much like the ball in which Bingley and Jane are introduced and also the scene in *Pride and Prejudice* where Darcy’s personality is revealed as “proud” and “disagreeable” (loc. 4858).

Similarly, Beatrice reveals Benedick’s pride and disagreeableness to the audience when he, while wearing a disguise, asks her to describe “Signior Benedick”: (2. 1. 125).

Beatrice: Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool;

only his gift is in devising impossible slanders:

none but libertines delight in him; and the

commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy;

for he both pleases men and angers them, and then

they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in

the fleet: I would he had boarded me. (2. 1. 131-37)

Austen uses the first ball in the narrative to describe similar characteristics of Mr. Darcy through her omniscient narrator. Also, Elizabeth eavesdrops on the conversation between Darcy and Bingley when they are discussing potential dance partners. Darcy scorns Elizabeth, indicating the initial dislike associated with her continual prejudices identified with her future husband. The dance is an opportunity for the primary couples in Shakespeare and Austen to display their dislike of one another to each other and to the audience.

Just like Shakespeare’s comedies, Austen’s romance novel ends with multiple marriages. According to Simpson, “she [Austen] concentrated her forces on bringing her heroes and heroines together, and marrying them off happily” (246) Elizabeth and Darcy grow to find their personal identities and learn to love each other. According to John Pikoulis, “love grows where Elizabeth’s spirit prevails, all else is the caprice of Lydia, the calculation of a Charlotte or the
lifeline agony of a Mr. Bennet” (50). Similarly, Joseph Wisenfarth assets that Beatrice and Benedick, Elizabeth and Darcy, are ideal couples in a less than ideal world:

The rhythm and modulation of the human events that lead [the primary couples] to the altar suggest that their marriages are an ideal. They achieve that friendship based on confidence and integrity that Johnson extolled in the Rambler, no 18, as the foundation of true love and happy marriage (80).

It is evident through Miola’s Source Remote, Convention and Configuration, and Genre types of intertextuality that Much Ado About Nothing had a profound effect on Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. Austen draws on Shakespeare to show comedic character growth. This growth is based on the maturation that comes from suffering and tests of intelligence and fidelity. After examining this string of parallels, it is hard to imagine that Austen was not thinking of Much Ado About Nothing when constructing the masterpiece that would become part of her legacy.

IV. Discussion and Conclusion

After looking closely at Pride and Prejudice, it is interesting that more research has not been conducted on the distinct connections between Austen’s construction of character and plot and Shakespeare’s comedic structure. Some similarities to Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing are noted occasionally, but no one has taken on the challenge of making Shakespeare and Austen’s relationship the main focus of an argument. Perhaps this omission is due to lack of a theoretical medium, like Miola’s method, that helps to frame the connections in Austen’s
romance plot and characterization to Shakespeare’s comedy. So far, I have acknowledged evidence of the Source Remote, Conventions and Configurations, and Generic types of intertextuality present between *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

In 1843, Thomas Macaulay wrote, “Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who… have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud” (Southam 135). According to John Wiltshire, comparing Austen to Shakespeare contributed to their “history of promotion” rather than “critical history” (58). Austen’s dramatic quality was usually compared to Shakespeare’s in order to indicate her level of achievement. However, Miola’s intertextual method has shown us that although Austen’s work was viewed as highly original, she too was influenced by the Bard, especially in *Pride and Prejudice*. No author, even Shakespeare, had total control or original thought in the productions of his or her work. Influence on an author can manifest from corrected editions of earlier publications to paralogues that seek to inform and investigate literature. Seeing that Shakespeare and Austen were formally educated, it is feasible that influence came from multiple sources in both of their respected forms of literature. Certain themes and characters are meant to endure throughout literature, such as the hero or placing reason over passion. If Shakespeare and Austen are considered more successful authors than most, it is because they recognized what worked and knew how to deliver it. I did not conduct this study to discount Jane Austen of her literary achievements, but rather to highlight the intertextual connections most important to great literature.
Works Cited


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