



RESEARCH PAPER

Intertextual Correspondence between Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Kamal's *Unmarriageable*

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ABSTRACT

The writing back of some literary work is the idea of its being in opposition to what it is written in reply for and it usually represents the fissures and gaps current in preceding literary work. The case of *Unmarriageable* is pretty unique. It is said to be *Pride and Prejudice* set in Pakistan. As in postmodern juxtapositions, nostalgia is current however reminiscence of the previous is now not rebellious or melancholic rather, as a substitute it is cherished and celebrated. The occasion of this paradox is subtly mirrored in *Unmarriageable* as it portrays the nation of Pakistani girls in the starting of twenty-first century. Austen introduced the situation and concerns confronted by Victorian women. The thematic issues additionally paved a straight way out for the re-writing. The universality of the stance of canonical textual content makes it relatable as it is introduced via allusions of *Pride and Prejudice* in *Unmarriageable*. This paper examines the novels *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *Unmarriageable* by Soniah Kamal in combination with one another, focusing on the similarities and differences between the two. The purpose of this study is to identify and categorize the various ways in which two distinct books are similar to one another, as well as to investigate and make sense of the intertextual similarities that exist between these two distinct books.

Key Words: Intertextual correspondence, Jane Austen, Re-telling, Soniah Kamal

Introduction

Jane Austen, one of the greatest writers of English language wrote six novels in all that have been re-written by many other writers, translated into many languages, and adapted into plays and films worldwide. One of the most famous and adapted of her novels is *Pride and Prejudice*, written in the early 19th century (1813). It depicts the English society of landowners and their attitude towards life. *Pride and Prejudice* is the story of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five unmarried daughters. They live within the estate of Longbourn in Hertfordshire, a rural district about thirty miles from London. Jane, the eldest of the daughters, is candy tempered and modest. Elizabeth, the heroine of the novel is smart and high-spirited. Mary, is undeniable and pompous whilst Lydia and Kitty, the two youngest are flighty and immature. *Pride and Prejudice* follows, mainly, the story of Elizabeth who is steadily falling in love with Mr Darcy. Like any younger heroine, she has to battle for her real love and tackle, additionally, her personal prejudice.

Pride and Prejudice has been re-written many times and adapted for films and plays. But Soniah Kamal's *Unmarriageable*, a Pakistani adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is a fresh and delightful update on Austen's famous work. The story of *Unmarriageable* mirrors that of *Pride and Prejudice* and there are so many parallels between both the novels. In a lot of ways, the book is pretty close to the original with minor changes. *Unmarriageable* is a charming update of *Pride and Prejudice* with Pakistani touch. *Unmarriageable*, being a fresh and lovely re-telling/re-writing of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, is set in the fictional city of Dilipabad. Kamal's novel closely follows the style and plot of the original work. Here the main character Elisabeth Bennet becomes Alys Binat and Fitzwilliam Darcy becomes Valentine Darsee. Kamal changes Bennet family into Binats and Bingley family into Bungles. Alys Binat is a thirty-year old English teacher in a fictional city of Dilipabad in Punjab. Mr. Binat is cheated by his brother and consequently the Binats have to face many financial issues as they lose all of their fortune and portion.

This novel shows a modern and strong independent Elizabeth, a young teacher Alys Binat who, like her fictive predecessor Elizabeth Bennet, is not afraid to give her opinions. Alys like her sisters is also under her mother's pressure to get married and marry well. Soniah Kamal's Mrs. Binat is much like Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*; always in search of making her daughters to get married with a rich man. Alys doesn't marry the rude and arrogant Darsee whose proposal she declines, as he is "Unmarriageable". Neither she will marry the wealthy, "suitable boy", Farhat Kaleen (Anna, 2020).

Kamal brings Austen's spirit to life. Plot of the novel also mirrors that of the original novel and there are so many parallels between Alys's story and that of Elizabeth's: the characters, humour and wit. There are so many references to South Asian culture, which are very beautifully explained for those readers less familiar with the culture. In the first chapter, in her role as a teacher at an all-girls school, Alys discusses the role of women in Pakistani society - a wonderful introduction to their world and the issues that girls and women deal with. After that, the story slows down a little (Anna, 2020). There are several references to *Pride and Prejudice* in the book and, as Alys says "we are [...] a society teeming with Austen's cruel Mrs Norrises, snobby looks-obsessed Sir Walters, and conniving John Thorpes and Lady Susans" (Kamal, 2019, p. 227).

The purpose of this paper is to unfold the differences and similarities between both the novels and the things that are still prevalent in the 21st century already discussed in Jane Austen's time. Through her characters Kamal tries to create a new thing in a new culture or in a totally different state. Kamal sharply follows Austen's style and transforms it according to Pakistani society. *Unmarriageable* strongly resembles Austen's approach, yet it also includes some fresh original ideas.

Literature Review

Pride and Prejudice has been re-written many times and adapted for films and plays. Kamal's *Unmarriageable* is fresh and completely a new update on *Pride and Prejudice*. However, writing in the *New York Journal of Books*, Cynthia A. Graham observed that "Kamal has given the five Bennet sisters rich and intricate personalities," and that "she builds charming and intelligible ladies." While Kamal's narrative is definitely spicier than anything Austen could have delivered in her day, it remains faithful to Austen's voice and intent. In general, the plot follows Austen's approach,

with references to Pakistani traditions and beliefs interwoven throughout the narrative. A humorous rendition of an old English fairy tale, *Unmarriageable* appears to be what it claims to be (Graham, 2019).

When it comes to the characters' names, the parallels between Kamal's narrative and Austen's are striking. But *Unmarriageable* is far more than a connect-the-dots retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* with 2001 Pakistan. In among the moments of broad humour, Kamal offers many moments of real insight into a lifestyle where class, reputation and marriageability continue to be paramount issues properly into the 21st century, even as she affords many examples of girls, especially, who are finding their personal niches in which to exchange the communique. Alys' aunt, as an instance, has transformed her skills for cake decorating right into a worthwhile enterprise. Alys herself is absolutely believable as a female now, fulfilled by means of her friends and profession, not just by her eventual romance and her enchantment to Darsee. Even the novel's title gives opportunities for playfulness and revelations, as readers finally come to see that the unmarriageable individual to whom the title refers may not be Alys after all (Piehl, 2019).

According to the *New York Times*, Kamal's *Unmarriageable* is a lovely and humorous interpretation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. A straightforward plot revolving around well-known characters and taking place in contemporary Pakistan is presented. The reader will have a unique and interesting experience because of the variation in locale and historical era from that of Austen's time period. The story is told from the point of view of a female character and each character's portrayal as a Pakistani is both familiar and completely unique adding to the novel's appeal. *Unmarriageable* is an excellent novel that everyone should read. As an adaptation of a classic work, the novel reads as though it were a modern-day classic in its own right. From beginning to end, it is a thoroughly enjoyable and expertly handled novel. It is a fantastic and well-written retelling or reworking of *Pride and Prejudice*, with a dash of South Asian adaption, desi weddings, and contemporary Pakistani women thrown in for good measure. Using a classic story as inspiration, *Unmarriageable* transforms it into a fresh and exciting contemporary story, worth reader's time.

According to Nudrat Kamal in *Dawn*, "the book uses a fantastic approach of adapting Austen's plot and commentary to current Pakistan while remaining witty and enjoyable to read." As a result, the Pakistani adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is a critical and popular success. Putting characters in certain locations is all about paying close attention to the finer details of the setting. *Unmarriageable* continues the cultural analysis and caustic wit of the original novel, offering an insider's perspective on a fascinating culture and country. Featuring universal themes of love and nature's ability to heal, Kamal's work is a charming retelling with a Pakistani touch. A distinct Pakistani flavour permeates the artwork, which presents the country in a fresh and original way. As with every culture or civilization, the value of a culture or society is derived from the language and aspirational fervour connected with that culture or society, and the timeless quality of a classic work may be attributed to the fact that it is recognised and adored by that culture's pop-culture. An accurate adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* set in the early nineteenth century; *Unmarriageable* is set in modern-day Pakistan.

Theoretic Framework

This paper examines the intertextual correspondence between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Unmarriageable* through Ankhi Mukherjee's ideas on re-writing of a canonical text. She believes that emerging canons are investigated in relation to the larger cultural phenomena of book awards, the reception and dissemination of international literature, and multimedia reinterpretations of international classics. Her major interest is not what a literary canon is, but rather how it survives oblivion, transforms and most importantly, how and why postcolonial writers and critics construct and resurrect the idea of the conventional. Re-writing can provide a platform for a dialogue between texts. For her to re-write is to revise a textual content (Mukherjee, 2014). It is in the light of these observations that the paper aims to analyse the chosen classic text of *Pride and Prejudice*, re-written in the shape of Kamal's novel.

Discussion and Analysis

When reading works of literature or non-fiction, readers have the ability to find parallels between the works they are reading, regardless of whether the works are literary or not. This is the case even if the works are completely unrelated. Intertextuality is a term that is used to characterize the relationship that develops as a result of these parallels. This term is used to refer to the relationship that develops between the two texts. This paper examines the novels *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *Unmarriageable* by Soniah Kamal in combination with one another, focusing on the similarities and differences between the two. The purpose of this study is to identify and categorise the various ways in which two distinct books are similar to one another, as well as to investigate and make sense of the intertextual similarities that exist between the two distinct books. Additionally, the paper aims to determine and classify the various ways that how *Unmarriageable* by Soniah Kamal is the re-writing or re-telling of *Pride and Prejudice*.

The social problems found in both the novels are: women's position, class gaps and matchmaking. Each issue is discussed with connection to one another. If one takes a closer look at the position of women, it is obvious that they were subordinate to men. The only role they were obliged to play was that of a wife and a mother, especially when it comes to women of the upper class. Since they did not have to work, their only duty was to give birth to their children and to obey their husbands.

Women in the 19th century had some education, though not in today's form. They were educated from books that were at first read to them by their mothers until they were taught to read or, if they could afford it, by a governess who could teach them things like reading writing or playing certain instruments. Austen alludes to this many times in *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Unmarriageable*, Alys, like her fictive predecessor Elizabeth, is a strong character. When Darsee makes fun of Alys and calls her a stupid and average-looking girl she hears these views of Darsee about her and moves on. Like Elizabeth she gives more importance to her work and rejects two proposals throughout the novel. She wants to be independent financially as we can see that now in the 21st century there are many Pakistani women who are working as Doctors, Teachers and CEOs.

The class issues are not only found with regard to the social exchanges or judging persons but can also be seen in marriages across the classes. The practice of such marriages, however, can be seen in both of the selected novels: between Elizabeth and

Darcy, Alys and Darsee, and Jena and Bungles. When these marriages happen, many characters in the novels are shown as having objections. The issues related to marriages, between the high and the low classes, are shown through the marriage of Jane with Mr. Bingley. Knowing that Bingley was interested in Jane and likely to get married with her, Darcy tries to save his friend by separating Jane from Bingley as he thinks that such marriage would be the most imprudent marriage. It is stated by Darcy's cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, to Elizabeth: "what he told me was merely this that he congratulated himself on having lately saved a friend from the inconvenience of a most imprudent marriage" (Austen, 1813, p. 179). Similarly in 21st century when *Unmarriageable* re-writes *Pride and Prejudice* for a different cultural milieu (Pakistani culture) these class gaps and issues are still there. In Kamal's work when the Bungles sisters come to know about their brother's love for Jena they start objections and are not ready to accept her as their sister-in-law because she belongs to a low class family: "Her mother is a gold digger Hammy said to Mr. Bungles. But I like Jena Mr. Bungles said. I like her very much. That's because the mother has put a hex on you, Hammy said" (Kamal, 2019, p. 160).

Jane Austen's male characters are diverse. Some are comical, mean and even difficult to understand. Mr. Darcy has become a legend and the definition of a gentleman. Mr. Darcy was raised in true aristocratic style. He is versed in the arts of culture, conversation and good conduct in general, a part of the upbringing of children from the upper class. He is described as handsome, fine and tall, and over all gives the air of being a noble gentleman. In addition to these good qualities, he is the owner of Pemberley and has an astonishing income of ten thousand a year. Despite his many good qualities, his first impression is not good at all. The Bennets first perceive him as proud and rude. Pride is a bad quality and Mr. Darcy breaks the rules when he behaves with pride and offends the other guests at the ball. By some, he is excused because of his fortune: they claim he has the right to be proud and snobbish. Miss Lucas claims that Mr. Darcy's pride does not offend her much, because, as she asserts, there is an excuse for it: "one cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud" (Austen, 1813, p. 14).

Similar to his fictive predecessor, Darsee in *Unmarriageable* too shows the same qualities. He is a faithful friend of Mr. Bungles. No one should be judged by his first impact as shown in the novel. He may also have offended Alys however he isn't always totally a horrific man. He is good to his circle of relatives and his sisters. He proves his goodness whilst he facilitates Binat circle of relatives without any benefit of his own. Furthermore, he's considerate and his servants love him due to the fact that he loves them back. This fact comes into our understanding while Alys visits his estate. When he first meets with the Binats he reacts very rudely to them. He only talks with those belonging to his own social class - mostly Mr. Bungles and his sisters. After the first meeting, the Binats also don't like him and call him rude and arrogant. Mrs. Binat names him from Darsee to Dracula. But throughout the novel when Darsee and Alys get to meet with each other more frequently, they start understanding each other's character for better. When Darsee goes to Binat house to meet Alys everyone is shocked. When Alys tells him that she "overheard [him] telling Bungles [she] was unattractive and not smart," Darsee gave a guilty smile: "I was merely trying to get him to leave me alone. I had no intention of falling in love, and I resisted you as long as I could" (Kamal, 2019, p. 315).

Elizabeth Bennet is the most intelligent and sensible of the five Bennet sisters. She considers herself to be a proper lady and good judge of character. Throughout the

novel, she realizes that she is not perfect; she does misjudge people at times, she judges Darcy's actions without fully understanding his motivations. But she is very confident in herself and doesn't allow others to bring her down. She is very loyal to her sisters. She guides Jane in the matter of Mr. Bingley and tells her that wealth and rank is not important for a happy married life. She challenges others through her witty and intelligent retorts rather than through anger and petty remarks. She would rather sacrifice financial loveless marriage with a man unworthy of her. For Elizabeth, love is the most important element of marriage. She does not accept a marriage which is not based on love. She is a strong character. She knows who she is and also what she wants in her life and in her partner. She is described as having "a mixture of sweetness and archness." Elizabeth shows courage many a times in the novel. She is also honest throughout the novel. She always accepts her flaws, admits her mistakes, and does better. She is self-aware and intuitive and capable of self-examination and growth.

With the minor changes in her re-writing of Austen's famous characters, Kamal gives a totally new and fresh story. In Kamal's novel, Alys, who is the fictive re-writing of Elizabeth Bennet, isn't afraid to voice her opinions. She has several admirable characteristics: she is cute, clever, and singularly brilliant in conversation. Alys Binat is an unfailing attractive character. She is defined as a beauty and has specifically expressive eyes, but what anyone notices approximately in her is her lively wit and her appropriate feel. Mainly due to that suitable feel, Alys is her father's favourite child and her mom's least preferred. Her self-guarantee comes from eager, vital thoughts and is expressed via her quick-witted talk. Alys Binat challenges the anticipated gender norms of her society, especially when compared with other ladies in the novel. Alys Binat is inclined to express her views wherever she is, without fear, and with full confidence. In her very first meeting with her, Lady Benna dey Bagh interrogates Alys and is amazed by her open and frank replies. Neither will Alys marry the rude, proud, and snobbish Valentine Darsee, whose proposal she rejected, as he is "unmarriageable", nor will she marry the wealthy and "suitable boy" Farhat Kaleen. The novel, through the character of Alys, discusses the role of women in Pakistani society and gives a wonderful introduction to South Asian world as well as the issues that are faced by the girls and women from there.

Today's society places a high value on marriage, believing that love is the only valid motivation for doing so. The social world of 19th-century England is depicted by Austen in her book with an understanding of the social issues impacting that society, in which marriage is solely based on economic considerations and social history rather than compatibility and love. In her writings, Austen discusses how marriage and class interact. With exceptional irony and satire, Austen suggests how humans are motivated by social rank and all women strive to establish a reputation for money and marriage. Similar to Regency-era England, Kamal's book depicts marriage as a form of female mobility. This subject permeates much of the plot and the character interactions in the salons. Alys, the protagonist scholar, announces her engagement to a class of delighted young adults in the opening pages of the book. Later on, the family members themselves attend a luxurious, high-society wedding. The title of the book also establishes the tone for many of Alys' criticisms of the marital institution. In *Unmarriageable* the discussion of marriage offers a perception of women's nuanced politics that can be connected to their social setting and social standing: a fruitful area for reflection on the two feminisms that are revealed in the story. Alys is frequently admonished for voicing her disapproval of marriage arrangements, comparing marriage to sex paintings, rejecting proposals that take the radical road, and opposing early engagements. Alys, the least romantic of her

sisters, finds the prospect of being able to pick her life partner and get married for love appeal. This may be related to her constant fondness for her in an effort to influence her choices of whoever to choose.

Pakistani females are under intense pressure to marry in order to avoid becoming a financial burden on their families and a source of social discontent. Alys disapproves of early age engagements, compares marriage to intercourse work, rejects two proposals over the route of the novel, and is frequently rebuked for being vocal about her disdain for the group of marriage. From the marriages discussed in the novels, it can be maintained that Lydia and Wickham's marriage basing on sex and beauty and Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage basing on beauty and youth both result in unhappiness. Darcy and Elizabeth's marriage have happiness in life because their marriage is based on morality. Similarly in the Kamal's novel the marriage of Alys and Darsee depends on real love and respect so they enjoy a happy married life. There are several references and correspondences to Jane Austen's work in Kamal's re-writing of *Pride and Prejudice*. Alys says: "we are [...] a society teeming with Austen's cruel Mrs. Norrises, snobby looks-obsessed sir Walter's and conniving John Thorpes and Lady Susans" (Kamal. 2019, p. 227).

Conclusion

This paper highlights the intertextuality between the selected novels. The intertextuality can be seen through the characters and events that take place in the novels. Main characters and situations are interlinked with one another with small changes. Kamal beautifully re-uses Austen's magic and style. The story of *Pride and Prejudice* has been retold a great number of times over the course of the years. This is the result of numerous film, television, and YouTube adaptations of Austen's original novel, as well as a multitude of publications that draw on the novel's framework, characters, and story arc to create something completely different. The development of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, a Regency-era novel that makes shrewd and funny observations on class, society, gender, and marriage, reaches loftier heights here with Kamal. *Unmarriageable: Pride and Prejudice in Pakistan* is an excellent and entertaining re-working of Austen's classic book: *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel follows the Binat family as they negotiate marriage, gender, and sexuality in an upper-class Pakistani culture that is heavily reliant on rules.

With a suitable amount of the post-colonial creativity accessible in the West, Kamal's narrative highlights the necessity for former colonies to be able to narrate their own history. The Kamal book emphasises marriage as a form of social mobility for women, and this idea dominates much of the plot as well as the salon debates amongst the characters, just as it did in Regency-era England. In general, the plot of the novel is noticeably a great deal identical as Austen's, with the addition of Pakistani traditions and the bells and whistles of the new millennium. Revolving across the Binat family, specifically the story's protagonist, Alys, who takes a shine to a snooty gentleman referred to as Valentine Darsee, Kamal's story appears to have all of the ingredients that make *Pride and Prejudice's* re-telling an interesting, dramatic and a laugh South Asian model whole with huge, fat desi weddings, current Pakistani girls, prosperous bachelors and the unrelenting quest for love.

This isn't the first Pakistani re-telling of Austen. In 2017, a group of Pakistani women known as the Jane Austen Society of Pakistan wrote *Austenistan*, a gathering of short memories based on Austen's characters. Kamal's re-telling goes deeper, using

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as a device to explore magnificence, feminism and postcolonial Pakistani society. In *Unmarriageable* Kamal shows how the issues of class division have remained the same from 18th century to 21st century. *Unmarriageable* is an indication of how class structures have remained same over time and space. Social class is an underlying issue in the lives of the characters and strongly affects the decisions they make during the novel (Rao, 2019). Kamal in her novel offers many moments of real insight into a culture where class, reputation and marriageability continue to be paramount considerations well into the 21st century. The beauty of Kamal's *Unmarriageable* is that every character is familiar and wonderfully new in Pakistani garb. *Unmarriageable* is an enjoyable book with a postmodern and postcolonial sensibility.

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