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Review of Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations

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Comments

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Sue Parrill. *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2002.

Sue Parrill's new study of the adaptations of Jane Austen's novels presents a comprehensive overview of the subject. For high school or undergraduate students, or readers and viewers with a cursory interest in the novels and films, Parrill's book provides a gateway into the study, although the critical depth is limited. Austen scholars will be tempted to skip the three- to four-page plot summary at the beginning of each chapter. Those looking for in depth critical analyses of the film and television adaptations of the 1990s would find their time well spent with Troost and Greenfield's 2001 collection of essays, *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, from which Parrill quotes extensively. The book is divided into seven chapters: an introduction and one chapter on each novel. Parrill also provides a helpful filmography, complete with production and casting information, and a comprehensive bibliography. By including discussions about the early (1940s and 1950s) television adaptations, Parrill furnishes an historical context that is both interesting and valuable. Parrill's handling of Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* and the two 1996 *Emma* films is more readable than the other sections, because the lines between summary and criticism are smoothly drawn. Her explanation of the motivation behind various changes to the plot and characterization of the novels is also absorbing. For example, she explains that Patricia Rozema's treatment of slavery in her 1999 *Mansfield Park* is in response to the view of recent Austen scholars interpreting Fanny Price's plight as a slave's role. Parrill's new book is not necessarily a "must have" for Austen scholars, but it provides a good introduction to the subject for those who have little previous background.

—Lynda Hall