

Reconceptualising Marriage: Adaptation and Diasporic Identity in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated*

SHATHA M. ABUELHOMMUS *

Department of English Language and Literature,
Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts (FESA) / UNRWA,
Amman, Jordan
s.abualhommos@unrwa-edu.org

RITA ABU FARDAH

English Literature Department,
Luminus Technical University College,
Amman, Jordan

AMANI AL MARDINI

Student at the Department of English Language and Literature,
Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts (FESA) / UNRWA,
Amman, Jordan

NOUR ALKAILANI

English Literature Department,
Luminus Technical University College,
Amman, Jordan

ABSTRACT

*This paper presents a comparative literary analysis of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 2008) and Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* (2015) to examine how marriage is reconfigured across historical, cultural, and diasporic contexts. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Julie Sanders's concept of appropriation, and Young Yun Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation, the study investigates how Malik appropriates Austen's canonical narrative to negotiate contemporary British Muslim women's agency within the institution of marriage. Using a qualitative textual analysis, the study focuses on characterisation, familial structures, and social expectations surrounding marriage, particularly in relation to female autonomy and gender roles. The analysis reveals that while marriage in Austen's Regency context functions primarily as a socio-economic necessity structured by patriarchy, Malik recontextualises marriage as a site of cultural negotiation shaped by diasporic identity, religious commitment, and individual choice. This comparative reading highlights the adaptability of literary representations of marriage and underscores the continued relevance of Austen's themes within modern diasporic frameworks.*

Keywords: Diaspora; Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation; Julie Sanders's concept of appropriation; Austen; Marriage

INTRODUCTION

Marriage has long functioned as a central theme in literary representations of gender, family, and social order. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 2008), marriage is portrayed as a defining institution through which women in Regency-era England negotiate economic survival, social respectability, and limited forms of personal choice within a rigidly patriarchal system. As Amanda Vickery observes, women's lives during this period were largely structured around familial expectations, with marriage serving as a primary means of financial security and social

mobility (Vickery, p.156). Austen's novel thus reveals marriage not merely as a romantic ideal but as a social contract deeply embedded in class hierarchy and inheritance laws that restrict women's legal and economic independence.

In contrast, Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* (2015), a contemporary British Muslim diasporic novel, reconfigures marriage within the intersecting frameworks of religion, migration, and modern urban life. Set in contemporary London, the novel foregrounds the experiences of Sofia, a British Pakistani Muslim woman navigating familial expectations, cultural traditions, and personal autonomy. Within diasporic communities, marriage often operates as a mechanism for preserving cultural continuity and religious identity. Malik's narrative explores the tension between collective expectations and individual desires, highlighting how marriage becomes a contested space where women negotiate belonging, agency, and self-definition. Islamic perspectives on marriage further complicate this negotiation. Within Islamic tradition, marriage is viewed not only as a personal relationship but as a morally regulated institution grounded in mutual responsibility, compassion, and social stability. Rather than functioning solely as a private or romantic arrangement, marriage in Islam is embedded within ethical, familial, and communal frameworks. In diasporic contexts, however, these values interact with Western norms of individualism, often producing hybrid practices and expectations. Malik's novel reflects this intersection by portraying marriage as both a religiously meaningful commitment and a site of negotiation shaped by migration, gender norms, and generational change.

On the other hand, Diasporic literature frequently employs marriage as a critical lens through which identity transformation and cultural conflict are examined. In contemporary Pakistani diasporic fiction, marriage represents a convergence point for issues of honour, family authority, gender roles, and cultural preservation. Rather than serving as a neutral social institution, marriage functions as a symbolic structure that exposes the tensions between tradition and modernity, particularly for women whose bodies and choices often become sites of cultural regulation. Malik's work participates in this tradition while also reworking it through humour, resistance, and intertextual engagement with Austen's canonical text.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on *Pride and Prejudice* and on contemporary British Muslim fiction, limited attention has been given to how Austen's representation of marriage is adapted and appropriated within a modern diasporic and Islamic framework. Existing studies often examine the two novels in isolation or focus primarily on themes of romance and representation. This study addresses this gap by offering a comparative analysis that foregrounds adaptation, appropriation, and cross-cultural negotiation, paying particular attention to how marriage and female agency are re-encoded across time, culture, and faith.

Accordingly, this paper examines how *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* adapts and appropriates *Pride and Prejudice* in its reimagining of marriage, gender roles, and familial expectations. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Julie Sanders's concept of appropriation, and Young Yun Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation, the study analyses how Malik transforms Austen's narrative to reflect the realities of contemporary British Muslim diasporic life. Through a comparative textual analysis of key characters, familial structures, and social pressures, the paper demonstrates how marriage evolves from a mechanism of economic survival in the nineteenth century into a dynamic site of resistance, negotiation, and identity formation in the twenty-first century. This study aims to examine how Malik appropriates Austen's narrative to reconceptualise marriage within a British Muslim diasporic framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has fascinated scholars throughout different centuries. However, one of the recent studies on this novel is by Bohang et al. (2025). This article portrays the social (economic, structural) conditions of women in 18th-century England as reflected in the novel. It employs literary analysis to investigate how women's roles, constraints, and economic dependencies are illustrated. Another recent paper on this novel is by Surbakti et al. (2024). In this study, these scholars discuss how patriarchal values and traditions function in the novel, and what impact they have on female characters in areas like inheritance and marriage choices. The theme of marriage and class is tackled by numerous scholars, yet one of the key studies on this is an article by Jill et al. (2024). This research paper uses a Marxist feminist lens, examining how class, gender, and economic links interact. It reveals how marriage is not just a romantic relationship but also an economic/social contract with elements of power and dependency.

Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* also received scholarly recognition. Putri et al. (2024), for instance, utilise Maslow's concept of self-actualisation to examine how Sofia's journey in love and her presentation of Muslim identity interact; they uncover that Sofia eventually reaches self-actualisation in both passion and in preserving her Muslim identity in a contemporary, diasporic setting. Similarly, in their paper, Muhamad et al. (2023) utilise Third Space theory to demonstrate the emergence of promising hybrid spaces in Malik's fiction. These third spaces act as vital points for Muslim British women to explore their sense of self and break out of binary constructs. Additionally, Lopamudra Basu (2022) studies how the novel is received by different audiences, and what its representation of British Muslim women does and doesn't achieve. Basu (2022) considers the limits of self-representation. For example, she shows how much the portrayal can contest existing stereotypes versus strengthening some expectations. Additionally, Fozia Chandio et al. (2021) investigate the depiction of Muslim women in *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* based on an orientalist point of view. They explain how the novel functions as a counter-narrative to the Western hypothesis that depicts Muslim women as passive and voiceless. They add that this assumption about Muslim women is rooted in a broader view of Islam as savage, backward, and hostile. Moreover, Sumera Saleem (2021) explains that Sofia's hijab is not submission; it is an act of resistance. What this paper attempts to add is to compare Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* in terms of adaptation and appropriation, showing Malik's recontextualization of the familial roles for women, specifically within the framework of contemporary British Muslim society.

Marriage in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has long attracted scholarly attention, particularly in relation to gender, class, and patriarchal social structures. Recent studies emphasise the restrictive socio-economic conditions that shape women's marital choices in Regency England. Bohang et al. (2025) examine how women's dependence on marriage for financial security reflects rigid class hierarchies and inheritance laws, positioning marriage as a social necessity rather than a purely romantic ideal. Their analysis reinforces the view that Austen critiques a system in which women's social value and security are largely determined by their marital prospects.

Feminist readings of *Pride and Prejudice* further illuminate the operation of patriarchy within marriage. Surbakti et al., (2024) argue that patriarchal traditions restrict female agency in matters of inheritance and spouse selection, reinforcing male authority within the family and society. Similarly, Jill et al., (2024), employing a Marxist feminist approach, highlight marriage as an economic transaction intertwined with class power and gender inequality. Collectively, these studies frame marriage as a mechanism of social regulation in Austen's novel. However, they

primarily remain confined to the historical context of Regency England and do not address how these marital ideologies are transformed when Austen's narrative is adapted into contemporary settings.

Critical engagement with Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* has largely focused on identity, representation, and Muslim womanhood within the British diaspora. Putri et al. (2024) analyse Sofia's journey through Maslow's concept of self-actualisation, suggesting that personal fulfilment and religious identity can coexist within a diasporic context. Basu (2022), however, adopts a more critical stance by examining the limits of self-representation in Malik's novel, questioning whether the text fully subverts dominant stereotypes of British Muslim women. While these studies engage productively with questions of agency and identity, they tend to overlook marriage as a central institution through which cultural negotiation and gendered expectations are articulated, particularly in dialogue with Austen's canonical work.

Within broader diasporic literary studies, marriage is frequently theorised as a site of cultural negotiation and communal regulation. Gairola and Fatma (2018) argues that in contemporary Pakistani diasporic fiction, marriage functions as a convergence point for issues of honour, family authority, collective identity, and intergenerational conflict. Their work demonstrates how women's marital choices often symbolise wider tensions between tradition and modernity. However, such studies rarely consider how marriage in diasporic fiction engages intertextually with canonical Western literature, thereby overlooking adaptation as a significant literary strategy.

Discourse-oriented studies have emphasised that representations of women are shaped by ideological regimes rather than functioning as merely descriptive narratives. Edam et al. (2024) demonstrate that depictions of Arab women across cultural contexts reflect competing ideological paradigms that structure interpretations of agency, modernity, and tradition. Their analysis foregrounds the role of discourse in constructing gendered subjectivity, a premise that is central to the present comparative study. In this regard, the portrayal of marriage in *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* can be read as embedded within contemporary diasporic negotiations of identity, while Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* articulate marital ideology within the socio-economic and moral frameworks of Regency England. Both texts thus reveal marriage as a culturally mediated construct rather than an ahistorical romantic ideal.

Adaptation and appropriation studies offer a crucial framework for addressing this critical gap. Hutcheon (2006) conceptualises adaptation as "repetition without replication," foregrounding transformation rather than imitation, while Sanders (2015) emphasises cultural and ideological re-encoding in appropriative texts. Although Austen's works have been widely adapted in film and popular culture, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to textual adaptations within Muslim or diasporic literary contexts. As a result, the ways in which marriage, gender roles, and family structures are reimaged across cultural and religious boundaries remain underexplored.

This study positions itself at the intersection of Austen scholarship, diasporic literary criticism, and adaptation theory. Rather than examining *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* in isolation, it synthesises these fields to analyse how marriage is reconfigured through adaptation and cross-cultural negotiation. By foregrounding marriage as both a literary and cultural institution, this paper demonstrates how Malik appropriates Austen's narrative to articulate contemporary British Muslim women's agency, thereby extending existing scholarship on marriage, adaptation, and diasporic identity.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in literary adaptation and cross-cultural theory to examine how marriage is reimagined across historical, cultural, and diasporic contexts. It draws primarily on Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Julie Sanders's concept of appropriation, and Young Yun Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation. Together, these frameworks enable an analysis of how *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* transforms the thematic concerns of *Pride and Prejudice*, particularly in relation to marriage, gender roles, and female agency, without merely replicating Austen's narrative.

Hutcheon's theory of adaptation conceptualises adaptation as a form of "repetition without replication," emphasising transformation, reinterpretation, and contextual relocation rather than imitation. Adaptation, in this sense, presumes an informed reader who recognises the source text while engaging with a new cultural and ideological framework. This perspective is particularly relevant to Malik's novel, which consciously reworks Austen's narrative structures, character archetypes, and marital tensions within a contemporary British Muslim setting. Rather than reproducing Regency-era marriage conventions, Malik adapts them to address modern concerns such as diasporic identity, religious commitment, and women's autonomy.

Building on Hutcheon's work, Sanders's concept of appropriation further clarifies how adapted texts undergo cultural and ideological re-encoding. Appropriation allows authors to relocate existing narratives into new contexts, where meanings are reshaped by social values, belief systems, and power relations. In this study, Sanders's framework is used to analyse how Malik appropriates Austen's characters—such as the independent heroine, the marriage-oriented mother, and the socially compliant female foil—to reflect the lived realities of Pakistani British Muslim women. These characters are not replicated but reconfigured to highlight both continuity and divergence in the representation of marriage across time and culture.

Intertextuality operates as a key conceptual bridge between the two novels. Rather than functioning through direct imitation, intertextuality in Malik's novel emerges through thematic parallels, character resemblances, and narrative echoes that invite comparison with Austen's work. This study treats intertextuality as an analytical tool that reveals how *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* dialogues with *Pride and Prejudice*, allowing Austen's critique of marriage and patriarchy to be revisited within a diasporic and Islamic framework. Through this intertextual engagement, marriage becomes a shared narrative concern that is continually reshaped by cultural context.

In addition to adaptation theory, this study employs Young Yun Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation to account for the diasporic dimension of Malik's novel. Kim's theory focuses on how individuals adjust psychologically, socially, and culturally when navigating between their heritage culture and the host environment. This framework is particularly useful for analysing Sofia's negotiation of marriage, as her decisions are shaped by Islamic values, familial expectations, and Western norms of individual choice. Kim's theory also informs the analysis of parental characters, especially Sofia's mother, whose evolving attitudes toward marriage reflect broader processes of cultural accommodation within the diaspora.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study establishes a framework that connects literary adaptation with cultural and identity negotiation. Hutcheon and Sanders provide the tools to analyse how Austen's narrative is transformed and appropriated, while Kim's theory explains how these transformations are shaped by diasporic experience. Together, these frameworks allow for a nuanced examination of marriage as a literary, cultural, and ideological construct that evolves across historical periods and sociocultural contexts.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative comparative design to examine representations of marriage in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated*. Close textual analysis is conducted, focusing on key characters, narrative events, and social interactions related to marriage, gender roles, and family expectations. The comparison is guided by defined analytical criteria, including representations of marriage, female agency, family authority, and cultural and religious impacts. These elements are investigated utilising Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Sanders's concept of appropriation, and Kim's theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. This permits intellectual interpretations rather than descriptive comparison. Furthermore, the study incorporates intertextual analysis to identify thematic parallels and narrative transformations between the two texts.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In his review of Hutcheon's book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Michael Kinney argues that through adaptation, authors permit reshaping and recommunicating ideas and themes by making some adjustments to fit the new environment and cultures in which new stories are retold. He adds that during adaptation, new texts must introduce something new. However, they should preserve the gist of the previous texts (Kinney, 2013). Dealing with marriage as a crucial demand for girls to be respected and accepted, and as one of the pressuring factors within their communities, is a central theme in both the 19th-century novel *Pride and Prejudice* and the 21st-century *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated*. In their article "The Adaptation of Arranged Marriages", Schaden and Jacob (2024) explain that some communities still perceive a woman's unmarried status as something that can vitiate the "reputation" of their families, which contributes to the continued prevalence of arranged marriage among these groups. Schaden and Jacob defined arranged marriages as marriages in which families play a central role in selecting the partner and are often viewed as a mechanism of "social reproduction". They also introduced what is called "modern arranged marriages". They explain that in this new type of marriage, it is crucial to reconsider how to choose partners and the requirements to build a successful family (Schaden & Jacob, 2024). Nonetheless, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the family and the Christian British community urge females to be part of arranged marriages.

Austen reflects on the early 19th-century social norms, where women's mobility and security are largely served by marriage. In Austen's perspective, marriage is not simply a romantic endeavour but a social and economic need. The novel opens with a famous line: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen, p.1), encapsulating the social pressure, whether for men or women, to secure a match financially. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* show how social and economic class is connected to marriage. For example, the Bennet sisters' marriage was the avenue for financial stability as well as social mobility. The family's estate is barred from the daughters due to primogeniture, meaning it will pass to the nearest male relative, Mr Collins. As Mrs Bennet anxiously phrases it, "You must be aware, my dear sir, that it will be altogether impossible for us to marry any of our daughters if you are so determined not to call" (Austen, p. 13). Her worries are not exaggerated-without marriage, her daughters will not inherit the estate; they will be lifelong dependent. Another instance: men like Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley had economic and social power; women had their beauty, manners and fertility. The literary scholar Claudia L. Johnson notes, "Marriage was the

only accessible form of advancement for genteel women" (Johnson, p. 98). In that context, Austen's consideration of marriage is realistic. Therefore, the novel is not merely a romantic novel, but beneath the surface lies commentary on the social and economic pressures that made marriage essential for women. Austen depicts the reality of marriage: it is not about love but about social and economic security. The novel sheds light on how deeply marriage was related to survival, respectability and opportunity in the 19th century.

This comparative analysis demonstrates that marriage functions as a central site of negotiation through which gender roles, cultural authority, and individual agency are articulated in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated*. While Austen presents marriage within a rigid patriarchal and class-based system that constrains women's choices, Malik reworks this framework through diasporic adaptation, situating marriage within contemporary British Muslim identity negotiations. Through the lens of adaptation and appropriation, Malik's novel does not merely replicate Austen's narrative model but reconfigures it to reflect evolving socio-cultural realities. Marriage itself is ultimately redefined through adaptation. In Austen's novel, marriage resolves narrative tension by restoring social harmony, often through compromise rather than transformation. Malik, however, resists closure through romantic resolution alone. Instead, marriage becomes an open-ended process linked to self-definition, ethical choice, and cultural belonging. This shift underscores Hutcheon's argument that adaptations are inherently interpretative acts shaped by their cultural moment. Malik's reworking of marriage foregrounds agency over conformity and negotiation over submission.

In tandem with Austen, Malik, in *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated*, sets her narrative in contemporary London. Nevertheless, she pictures Sofia as a Muslim woman navigating life in London while facing immense familial expectations to participate in an arranged marriage: "It's so weird how our parents are constantly nagging us to get married" (Malik, p. 9). Also, her Muslim Pakistani British community believes that marriage is essential for a Muslim woman. This perspective is substantiated through a conversation between Sofia's Pakistani British friend and her father: "The shadow of a man is better than a shadow of a wall." (Malik, p.102). Sofia bravely wrestles to have a marriage based on the modern notion of love and a match that she chooses independently, away from traditional matchmaking practices, with commitment to the norms of Islam. Consequently, she decided to write a book about Muslim dating: "It'd give a fascinating insight into modern Muslim dating and marriage." (Malik, p. 19). Accordingly, Malik adapts the theme of marriage in Austen's era and recontextualises it within a culture that involves both internal conservatism and externalisation. Thus, both novels tackle the idea of social expectations over personal decisions. Similarly, in both novels, love and marriage are not merely personal needs or decisions but social contracts.

Another important aspect to be examined in this study is the reuse of literary characters and the process of adapting them. In her work "Adaptation and Appropriation", Julie Sanders (2015) argues that adaptation allows for the creative reshaping and reinterpretation of "themes, characters, and ideas" (p. 57). Both Sofia Khan and Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonists of the two novels, suffer the continuous pressure of their families and societies to be indulged within the institution of marriage. Elizabeth undergoes the persecution of the traditional British society in the 19th century. Sofia endures the same struggle as the contemporary Muslim diasporic British Elizabeth Bennet, but with the addition of religious and diasporic experience as constraining factors. Nevertheless, both protagonists reject and resist the patriarchal expectations of their communities regarding marriage. Though Elizabeth got acquainted with Darcy through her mother in a traditional way, she refused marriage without love. Malik, on the other hand, appropriates this

by presenting Sofia's journey toward love away from her familial constraints and preservation, since her family's attempt to find her a suitable match echoes Austen's novel, where the mother tries hard to find a match for her daughters. Both Elizabeth and Sofia find that their matches, Mr Collins and Imran, lack affection; Mr Collins is a perfect husband in the eyes of society because he has the needed wealth and social status, but Elizabeth refuses him for his lack of genuine feelings. Sofia, on the other hand, refuses Imran, who is a good husband on paper, because he fails to ignite true affection. She firmly resists involvement in what she characterises as a "hole-in-the-wall" marriage. Sofia turns down the prospect of marrying her cousin, Imran, and resists the traditional demand of residing within an extended family, a common norm within the Pakistani British community in Diaspora: "... And now I must go and see Imran to tell him that I don't think I can marry him, even sans hole-in-the-wall". (Malik, p. 290)

Austen and Malik agree that love and personal affection should be prioritised over social conformity. However, Sofia is still obliged to the principles of Islam. In her article, "Embracing the Purpose of Marriage in Islam to Strengthen Your Family," Nur Hafiza Roslee examines the significance of marriage within the Islamic framework. She explains the concept of "al-kafaah", which refers to the compatibility between potential spouses, encompassing various factors such as religion, customs, education, and social class (Roslee, 2023). Accordingly, Sofia always bears in mind that her potential husband must be a Muslim: "And then I thought, Crush? Conal? ... What would be the point in that? He's not even Muslim." (Malik, p.376). Hence, Sofia is not a mere replica of Elizabeth; albeit, she has been readapted to fit the Muslim Pakistani British community to which she belongs. Sanders confirms the notion that adaptation is not mechanical reproduction. It is a matter of cultural "re-encoding" (Sanders, 2015). Kim claims that upon relocating to another country, refugees and immigrants normally express their religious identities in various forms while simultaneously being compelled to adjust their religious practices to avoid being rejected or neglected by the host environment. Consequently, this leads them to endure emotional and social isolation from their new community (Kim, p. 5). This is precisely what happens with Sofia, who is necessitated to engage in cross-cultural communications with foreign men in her search for a prospective husband. However, she remains committed to Islamic norms, notably refusing any physical contact with these potential husbands outside the bounds of marriage. Those boundaries are relevant in Sofia's relationship with Naim, the American man, and with other men. Naim observes the impact of Sofia's Islamic identity upon her relations with others:

You know the problem with Muslim dating? ... So many restrictions, he said, eyes hovering over my scarf. ... Don't get me wrong, I get if you're conservative, but everyone's too ready to jump from coffee to marriage... And why do you assume that everyone who wears a hijab is conservative? Well, your hijab means you're safe. It's like a social condom... Yes, to protect me from socially transmitted diseases. Like you... just the special cases.

(Malik, pp. 45,99)

While both texts centre female resilience, Malik's narrative moves beyond Austen's limitations by foregrounding intersectional pressures linked to religion, diaspora, and representation. Nevertheless, the adaptation does not reject Austen's thematic concerns; rather, it extends them, demonstrating how classical narratives can be repurposed to address contemporary gender politics. This dialogic relationship between texts highlights the enduring relevance of Austen's critique while affirming the necessity of cultural specificity in modern adaptations.

Other key figures to be examined in both novels are the mothers. In each case, the character is pointed to specifically as "The mother", highlighting their roles as mothers within their families rather than their individual identities or personal traits. Furthermore, in both works, the mother is

depicted as a vehicle of social pressure placed upon women, precisely regarding marriage. Even so, the ways the mothers are depicted, and the extent to which they evolve, vary depending on the distinct social context in both novels. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs Bennet is mainly portrayed as a comic character whose core focus is to have wealthy husbands for her daughters. She presents the maternal obsession with marrying her daughters due to the precarious economic situation and the social class in that era. For her, having five daughters and securing their marriages is not merely a social need, but it is a financial urgency. Austen describes this when she says: "The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (Austen, p. 7). Mrs Bennet's approach to matchmaking was embarrassing, often disgraced by social decorum and a clear misunderstanding of their daughters' emotional and intellectual needs as well as compatibility. Austen describes her as "a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper" (Austen, p. 3). Her restless attempts to match Mr Collins and Mr Bingley to their daughters embody the social pressure where marriage becomes the primary goal for women. Her character, which is often depicted sarcastically, highlights the several anxieties surrounding females at that time. (Jones, p. 45). She prioritises financial stability over personal happiness.

Conversely, in *Sofia Khan is Not Obligated*, Ammi- Sofia's mother- is keen to have her daughter married, but the main interest is not financial stability, but social continuity and religious compatibility within the Pakistani- British Muslim community. Ammi's anxiety stems from finding a Muslim husband for Sofia who can fulfil the social expectations. Her desire for Sofia's marriage refers to her deep affection and adherence to cultural values. Moreover, she departs slightly from the character of Mrs Bennet by demonstrating understanding of her daughter's desires and encouraging her choices. For instance, when Sofia announces her intention to marry a Western man- defying the societal expectation of Pakistani British society- and faces objections from some of her male relatives, her mother replies simply: "Bhabi, girls in our family don't do this, said Uncle Scot 'Bas,' said Mum. 'I'll say it only once more – those days are gone.'" (Malik p. 427). According to Kim's theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation, the obstacles faced by immigrants in the host culture compel them to undergo personal transformation. Namely, influence their identities. Indeed, individuals normally adjust their daily habits to align with norms and expectations of the new environment (Kim pp. 8,20). This concept is exemplified by Sofia's mother, who slightly deviates from Islamic values and Pakistani norms when she encouraged Sofia to wear makeup to enhance her opportunity in finding a husband, despite the fact that, within conventional Pakistani customs, women are typically expected to maintain modesty by covering their faces:

Acha, maybe put on some more makeup.' Mum looked at my apparently frail features. 'Or you'll look like one of those Gontonomo Bay wives.'" (Malik, p. 11) "Why aren't you marrying him? What happened? Didn't he like you? Why didn't you like him? You're too fussy. It's the hijab – I told you to wear it after you got married. Look at Ambreen; she was clever, and she didn't wear a hijab.

(Malik, p. 78)

Comparing the two mothers reveals parallels and divergences. Both mothers show matriarchal concerns according to their societies. Both use their social connections, direct suggestions and other ways to lead their daughters to marriage. Both reflect anxieties about unmarried women. Yet, the tone is different; Mrs Bennet is comical while Ammi embodies her concerns with empathy.

Alongside the portrayal of the mother, the father figure is also adapted in *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated*. Fathers in both novels play the role of passive observer and silent judge. Mr Bennet is intellectually superior to his wife. He understands his wife's absurdity and his daughter's

silliness, but he never reacts and often responds with sarcasm and then escapes into the sanctuary of his library. His reaction towards his family is a representation of the patriarchal role in that era; he is only the financial provider and nothing more. He is portrayed as favouring Elizabeth, but he did not do anything to support her and her sisters. His most significant intervention comes at the end, when he shows his deep affection by questioning Elizabeth about Mr Darcy to be assured of her real affection; he said: "My child, let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life" (Austen, p. 378). This moment reflects his deeper concern towards her happiness over financial status. In contrast, Sofia's father maintains a quieter presence and often allows Sofia's mother to take the lead. Yet, he still embodies traditional values; his silence suggests a tacit approval of cultural expectations, even if he does not exert direct pressure on Sofia. See what you've done? You always let her do what she likes, said Mum, looking at Dad (Malik, p. 50). This contrast highlights how both fathers navigate societal norms in different ways: Mr Bennet subtly promotes his daughter's autonomy, while Sofia's father reinforces tradition through his passive compliance.

Furthermore, Malik adapts Jane Bennet through Sofia's sister, Maria, not by mere imitation, but by re-encoding her traits to fit the modern diasporic-British framework. Malik highlights how Muslim- Pakistani women are still committed to the religious and cultural expectations of their communities. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane is the eldest sister who is described as the most beautiful and the gentlest. She accepts Mr Bingley's proposal. Elizabeth criticises her, saying that "You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in your life." (Austen, p. 20). Austen criticises Jane; although she is presented as virtuous, beautiful, modest and polite, she is criticised for naivety. Her relationship with Mr Bingley is an adherence to the social norms and traditional roles. This opposes Elizabeth's refusal of the social norms. Jane accepts Mr Bingley's proposal without hesitation even though there was a separation between them that lasted for a period. Jane shows the internalisation of social pressure for women in the Regency Era, where they must be married, and a man should secure them financially. Similarly, Maria is depicted as conventionally feminine, respectful of familial, societal, and religious expectations. Unlike Sofia, she is obliged to her family's values and norms. While Sofia resists the idea of arranged marriage and the constraints of living in an extended family-referring to it disparagingly as "a hole in the wall"- Maria embraces these conventions without rejection:

I want to say: keep the curtains, dear; you'll need them for covering that hole you'll probably end up living with [...]' This is one of many reasons I've turned my back on marriage,' I said. {...} That's not living with the in-laws, that's living in an institution. But she has decided to live with the in-laws.

(Malik, pp. 7-8)

Another noteworthy point is that both Austen and Malik employ foil characters to highlight how traditional views of marriage extend beyond the immediate families of Elizabeth Bennet and Sofia Khan; they are representative of broader communal expectations- 19th-century British society and the 21st-century Pakistani-British one. Charlotte Lucas- Elizabeth's friend - and Hannah- Sofia's friend- serve as narrative foils to Elizabeth and Sofia, respectively. Lucas embodies the social pressure. Her inner decision to marry Mr Collins, a man who does not love her, is a calculated move for economic and social stability. She admits that

I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr Collins's character, connection, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.

(Austen, p. 122)

Charlotte here says honestly that the basic need is the socio-economic vulnerabilities in the Regency era, making marriage a step to survival and status. Lady Cathrine de Bourgh, on the other hand, represents the aristocratic figure who represents pressure from a higher social status, attempting to dictate marriage based on connection and class. She forcefully opposes Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy; her intervention to stop the union, ironically, leads them to confront their feelings. As noted, the economic factor is the palpable reason behind forcing girls towards marriage. Friends like Lady Catherine are direct authoritarians, while Charlotte makes pragmatic choices which oppose Elizabeth's thoughts and decisions.

Unlike Sofia, Hannah is obliged to the traditions of her Muslim Pakistani community. Hannah enters a polygamous marriage, being a second wife to Zulfi. Unlike Sofia, who engages in a cross-cultural relationship based on mutual understanding and emotional compatibility, Hannah obeys the traditional and religious expectations of her society. Hence, both women represent alternative responses to the social pressures placed upon them. This contrast is underscored in Hannah's dialogue with Sofia:

What was it your dad said when you told your parents about Zulfi? Hannah: (in Arabic accent) 'You are almost thirty-one, never married, I show you a man, and you say no... Maybe you are lesbian.' How do you feel about, you know, husband sharing? Hannah: It's not ideal? But then what's ideal? Have you interviewed anyone else yet?

(Malik, p. 64)

Both Charlotte and Hannah, through distinct contexts, reveal the constant conflict between the individual desire and the collective expectation. The contrasting voices of Austen and Malik reassert Hutcheon's point of view that adaptation is a matter of "repetition without replication," permitting narratives to maintain their core conflicts while reconstructing them to suit the new environment (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7).

The endings of both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* are to some extent similar, yet they still expose the cultural, historical, and ideological diversity of the contexts in which each story was written. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth's rejection of Mr Collins' and then Mr Darcy's proposals stresses her desire to have a marriage that is solely based on love, though her refusal does not neglect the economic and social-class necessity of marriage for women in her time. She replies to Mr Darcy's proposal the first time by saying, "You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so" (Austen, p. 120). At the moment Mr Darcy chose to confess his love and to show his respect to Elizabeth, she agreed to marry him, realising that the proposal was grounded in social affection rather than social or financial advantage. Ultimately, Elizabeth's choice aligns with both the romantic ideal of Elizabeth and the approval of her family. She says that: "You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so." Analogously, Sofia's rejection of Imran exemplifies self-assertion and reinforces the significance of the novel's title "Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated". Like Elizabeth, Sofia is not obliged to both societal and familial traditions. However, she is committed to her ideological and spiritual beliefs, evident in her eventual acceptance of Conal's proposal after his conversion to Islam.

Overall, this analysis confirms that *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* operates as a non-replicative appropriation of *Pride and Prejudice*, using adaptation to interrogate marriage as a culturally contingent institution. By situating marriage at the intersection of patriarchy, agency, and diasporic negotiation, the study advances adaptation scholarship and contributes to broader discussions of gender and identity in contemporary literature.

CONCLUSION

This study examines how marriage is reconceptualised through literary adaptation by comparing Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated*. Drawing on Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Sanders's concept of appropriation, and Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation, the analysis demonstrates that marriage operates as a culturally contingent institution shaped by historical context, gender norms, and identity negotiation. While Austen's novel frames marriage largely as a socio-economic necessity constrained by patriarchy and class, Malik's diasporic reworking transforms it into a dynamic space of agency, negotiation, and self-definition. The findings reveal that Malik's text does not merely modernise Austen's narrative but re-encodes it within a British Muslim diasporic framework, foregrounding intersectional pressures related to religion, community expectations, and female autonomy. Through its representation of Sofia Khan, the novel extends Austen's critique of marriage by positioning resistance not only against patriarchal structures but also against reductive cultural stereotypes. In doing so, Malik illustrates how adaptation can function as a critical intervention that both honours and challenges canonical texts.

This study contributes to adaptation studies by demonstrating how non-replicative appropriation allows classical literature to remain relevant in contemporary cultural discourse. By integrating theories of adaptation and cross-cultural identity formation, the paper advances understanding of how marriage narratives are reshaped in diasporic literature to reflect evolving gender politics. It also contributes to scholarship on British Muslim writing by highlighting how humour, reflexivity, and character agency complicate monolithic representations of Muslim women and marriage. The limitations of the study—namely its focus on two novels—suggest avenues for future research. Further studies could extend this comparative framework to include other Austen adaptations, transnational retellings, or a broader corpus of diasporic marriage narratives. Such research would further illuminate how adaptation operates as a cultural strategy for negotiating tradition and modernity.

In conclusion, *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* demonstrates the enduring adaptability of *Pride and Prejudice*, reaffirming literature's capacity to bridge historical distance while addressing contemporary social concerns. By reconceptualising marriage through adaptation, the novel not only revisits Austen's critique of patriarchal norms but also situates it within the lived realities of twenty-first-century diasporic identity, thereby underscoring the continued relevance of adaptation as both literary practice and cultural dialogue.

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