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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an analysis of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and its success in the world. After a general introduction to the phenomenon of screen transposition, this analysis focuses on three adaptations. Part one provides a brief account of the author's literary context, the novel's characters and major themes, illustrating how the novel continues to fascinate readers all over the world. Part two discusses the adaptations: these are the movie produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and directed by Robert Z. Leonard in 1940, the mini-series aired by BBC in 1995 and finally Joe Wright's latest adaptation released in 2005. These chapters aim to highlight and compare the different productions. The relation between the original source and the screen adaptations is also investigated.

Introduction

1. About this Study

This thesis discusses the three different adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

After a brief and general introduction to the phenomenon of screen adaptation, the first part of this work focuses on the figure of Jane Austen. The first chapters focus on her life, her style, her historical and literary context and her works. Part one provides a general overview of the author and *Pride and Prejudice* and accounts for the novel's immense and enduring popularity throughout the years. Thanks to Jane Austen's fame it has been possible for her novels to be often transposed in films or mini-series for television. Secondly, the focus moves to the novel itself, to its plot, characters and major themes.

In the second part of this thesis, three of the numerous film reproductions of *Pride and Prejudice* are analysed. The terms of discussion relate to the plot changes and the reasons which may have caused them; cast selection and finally the difference between the original text and the adaptation and to various, typical aspects of each version as well. The first scenes of each adaptation are also relevant, in the 1940 movie directed by Robert Z. Leonard and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, in the 1995 mini-series aired on BBC and finally in the 2005 motion picture directed by Joe Wright. The last chapters of this section deal also with films which, to some extent, may be considered loose adaptations of Jane Austen's famous novel.

In the last part of this thesis, some conclusions are drawn. Finally, the appendix provides a long sequence of screenshots which allow readers to compare the actors, the different costumes and few selected scenes and locations.

2. About Adaptations

Since cinema was born at the end of the nineteenth century, motion pictures have been continually produced, providing audience a new and modern entertainment for spending their spare time. For over a hundred years new ideas and characters have been appearing on the big screen, subsequently also on television. Inevitably, the choice was influenced by the most popular stories of the time. Of all time, it would be more correct. Most of the literary classics have been adapted into a film at least once. Nowadays too worldwide successful authors do not wait more than five years to be approached by producers eager to buy the film rights of their works. Thus, a new kind of business was born and the “filmic translation”¹ is far to be an isolated case.

Alongside the new filmic production, a new literary criticism has developed during the last decades. It concerns the relationship between the original text and the adapted version on screen. Various and contrasting theories debate whether the study of film relates to the study of literature. According to Thomas Elsaesser, there is a real “war of independence”² between film studies and departments related to languages, literatures and mass communications. Considering nowadays’ society and

¹ Term borrowed by Battisti Chiara, *La traduzione filmica. Il romanzo e la sua trasposizione cinematografica*, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2008.

² Giddings Robert, Sheer Erica, *The Classical Novel. From Page to Screen*, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 1.

culture's predispositions towards the new mass media, it is surprising the increasing importance of the film studies. Accordingly, it seems that not "a single Department in higher education faculties of art or schools of humanities [...] does not offer a wide range of courses organised around the study of film".³

According to Sarah Cardwell, adaptation is "a text which *adapts* another text".⁴ However, she realises that the term does not explain anything new and she offers a few definitions of the term from the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

1. The action or process of adapting, fitting or suiting one thing to another.
2. The process of modifying a thing so as to suit new conditions.
3. The condition or state of being adapted ...
4. A special instance of adapting; and hence, *concr.* an adapted form or copy, a reproduction of anything modified to suit new uses.

The most useful definitions for this study are the third and the fourth options. Cardwell also suggests that the adaptation process may belong to the biological field, such as genetic, or, as in this case, culture adaptation. Although it is necessary for both cases to have an original source to refer to, they both "serve to perpetuate a more or less recognisable collection of certain 'original' features".⁵ As it has already been pointed out, an adaptation can attempt to improve or to revive its source with certain techniques which have generated new debates in literary criticism.

A further debate regarding this new branch of literary studies concerns methodology. The most frequent issue is the question of fidelity or faithfulness to the text. Sooner or later, the discussion concerning the analysis of a film leads to

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Cardwell Sarah, *Adaptation Revisited. Television and Classic Novel*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2002, p. 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

compare it to its source.⁶ As a matter of fact, the question of fidelity is revealed to be the first and primary point of references in critical reviews and essays.⁷ In addition, readers' passionate interest in how faithfully their favourite book has been transposed to screen has been also a topic of discussion. Brian McFarlane insists that "the study of adaptation has been inhibited and blurred by the near fixation with the issue of fidelity".⁸ According to him, there is no direct relation between fidelity and critical response. A faithful adaptation cannot be welcomed by the audience as it is supposed to be. On the other hand, a different adaptation may find a larger approval by viewers, albeit unfaithful. Bluestone observes that film-makers, while talking about the fidelity of their adaptations, actually are talking about how successful is movie or not for the box-office.⁹ Thus, basing a review of adaptations only on faithfulness is not always the right choice.

This form of criticism may appear "unconscious", as Imelda Whelehan suggests,¹⁰ however the result is the comparison of the fictional source and the film and the adaptation's success depends on its fidelity to the original text. An example which may be found outside intellectual and academic scenarios, is represented by audience general opinion while commenting a movie just seen at the cinema; more often, the film would be criticised for the plot changes, for the scenes cut or for its unsatisfying length, as it had frequently happened for J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter's* movies. However, as Webster remarks, "a film version of a novel is an independent text and should not be judged [...] by how faithful it is to the original". He also

⁶ Fulton quoted in Cardwell, *cit.*, p. 9.

⁷ Giddings-Sheer, *cit.*, p. 2.

⁸ McFarlane quoted in *Ibid.*

⁹ Cartmell Deborah, Whelehan Imelda, *Adaptations. From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, Routledge, London, 1999, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 3.

wonders what actually constitutes an original text.¹¹ Nonetheless, while approaching this “hybrid”¹² study, it is worth keeping in mind that the relation and differences between novel and film may find their roots in the production. Eventually, what is clear is that

Certain features of novelistic expression must be retained in order to guarantee a “successful” adaptation, but clearly the markers of success vary depending largely on which features of the literary narrative are deemed essential to a reproduction of its core meaning.¹³

A further aspect which is worth considering concerns the opposite situation. Film media have largely developed and the quantity of movie theatres from downtown to the suburbs has increased. Its industry never stops and it is much easier to spend only a few hours to see a movie rather than few days to read a book. Accordingly, it would not be exaggerated to maintain that the number of viewers is overcoming the readers. This generated the fear that the film medium could help readers depart from literature in favour of cinema, however this has been proved to be unfounded.¹⁴ On the contrary, the success of a film adaptation can attract a part of the audience to buy the book and maybe actually read it. Moreover, there may be the risk that reading is not as enjoyable as seeing the movie and it may occur that book is actually considered “a failed version of the film/TV series”.¹⁵ Finally, the debate certainly does not concern only fidelity. One must also take in account which version comes first: it often happens that readers who see the film adaptation do not find it close to the original text; on the other hand, viewers who enjoy the film and wish to

¹¹ Webster quoted in Cardwell, *cit.*, p. 20.

¹² Cartmell-Wheleham., p. 3-4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

read the novel which inspired it, may be disappointed by it. Apart from critic or academic reviewing, the success of a novel or an adaptation mostly depends on love at first sight.

Part I – Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*

1. The Author: Jane Austen (1775-1817)

In 1948, British literary critic Frank Raymond Leavis opens his work, *The Great Tradition*, claiming that the only great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad.¹⁶ Although his statement could be arguable by many other literary critics, unquestionably Jane Austen is one of the most important and most widely read authors in English literary panorama. Even if she has not found immediate success in life compared to other authors by her contemporaries at first, her fame and worldwide readership continue to grow. Her novels were published in different times and in many copies until today. Furthermore, as I will try to show, it may be not wrong to maintain that Jane Austen “conquered the world”, as Claire Harman clearly put it in her book,¹⁷ and her success is far to end.

1.1. Life and Education

Seventh child in a large family, Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 at Steventon in Hampshire, by Reverend George Austen and Cassandra Leigh. Both her parents belonged to the rural landowner class.¹⁸ Her father supported the family with additional income, besides the church “livings”, such as tutoring local boys¹⁹ and it comes logical that he also tutored his own six children.

¹⁶ Sanders Andrew, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature. Third Edition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 3.

¹⁷ Harman, Claire, *Jane’s Fame. How Jane Austen Conquered the World*, Canongate Books, Edinburgh, 2009;

¹⁸ Irvine, Robert Parker, *Jane Austen*, Routledge, Oxon, 2005, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Nevertheless, Jane's and her younger sister Cassandra's education was their mother's assessment at first, then the two girls went to boarding school for two years, Oxford, Southampton and Reading. If their mother taught them reading, writing and religion "at the very least", the conventional accomplishments at boarding schools expected young girls of their rank to learn needlework, English, French, Italian, music, drawing and possibly some history.²⁰ Reverend Austen's well-stock library was compounded of many, different titles and genres, including novels. Accordingly, the Austen girls spent most of their childhood surrounded by boys and "in the more challenging atmosphere of their own home".²¹ According to her first biographer, James Edward Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen was "an admirer of Johnson in prose, Crabbe in verse, and Cowper in both".²² Hence it is easy to realise that she was a well-fond reader before even being a writer and maybe this is one of the reasons that made her a great writer too. Female education appears to play an important role in Austen family and, as a result, in Austen's novels, her heroines often share the same cultural level as hers and are fond of novels too. Even charming Mr. Darcy is a "bibliophile"²³ and he is "always buying books".²⁴

It is known that Jane Austen started writing early in life while she was still in her teens²⁵ and more often it appears that writing and reading at home was her way to entertain her family. Along with her first volumes of stories and verses, she wrote the first drafts of what years after will become some of her well-known masterpieces.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Harman, *cit.*, p. 12.

²² Sanders, *cit.*, p. 373.

²³ Harman, *cit.*, p. 33.

²⁴ Austen J., *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin, London, 2003, p. 38. Henceforth, page references will be given in parentheses in text, as PP.

²⁵ Irvine, *cit.*, p. 2.

After his retirement, Reverend Austen took his wife and daughters with him and moved to Bath, a decision which let biographers speculate about the Austens increasing their daughters' chances to meet convenient husbands.²⁶ According to her biographers, during these years Austen had a serious relationship, obstructed by his relatives, with Thomas Langlois Lefroy.²⁷ She also received a proposal by the eldest son of the Bigg-Wither family, later withdrawn. However, while living in Bath, the publishing firm Crosby&co. bought her first manuscript entitled *Susan*, which will be posthumously published as *Northanger Abbey*.

In 1809, four years after George Austen's death, Jane, Cassandra and their mother moved back to Hampshire to settle at Chawton Cottage, back in the estate of Jane's childhood. There, she started writing again and revising her previous novels. She died on 18th July 1817, at the age of forty-one and unmarried.

1.2. Historical and Cultural Context

Jane Austen lived in a time of political and social order which can be dated back to the 'Glorious Revolution' in 1688, a time which some historians refer to as, as "the long eighteenth century", ending approximately in 1832.²⁸ During this period, English people witnessed the French Revolution and firstly welcomed it with enthusiasm, even though in 1793 and for almost two decades the reign engaged long wars against France. Nonetheless, the main effects of the Revolution in English society was to unveil the contradictions and tensions that had never disappeared since the Glorious Revolution. England at this time was still organised as a rather

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁷ The relationship was loosely narrated in the 2007 movie *Becoming Jane*, directed by Julian Jarrold, starring Anne Hathaway as Jane Austen and James McAvoy as Tom LeFroy.

²⁸ Irvine, *cit.*, p. 5.

hierarchal society, divided in three large groups: aristocracy, gentry and “everyone else”. Out of a population of over nine million, there were over ten thousand gentry families against few hundred aristocratic families,²⁹ but there was also an expanding class from the “everyone else” group; this was the urban middle class, whose property and income mostly came from trade and commerce. As already mentioned, Jane Austen’s family belonged to a rural branch of this new rising class.

However, in this hierarchal society which yet struggled to become more modern, there was still little place for women, though their condition was slowly changing. According to the “domestic thesis”,³⁰ the emerging of the public sphere and the capitalistic industry narrowed the situations for women who still had some authority or responsibilities, leaving them mainly the care of the domestic hearth. As a matter of fact, women were never master of themselves, for as daughters they belonged to their fathers and as wives they belonged to their husbands. Young wealthy ladies were allowed to widen their culture and their education by the ‘conduct literature’, in which it was possible to find advice on how to find a potential husband or how to behave with suitors, almost never considering the needs of a woman, who had to take modesty as their main and only virtue.³¹ The domestic theory was generally assumed as a middle-class invention. The new moneyed classes women distinguished themselves not only from the working women of the labouring classes, but also from the aristocratic women, who represented for their husbands a way to show off their wealth and power, by letting them wearing jewels and

²⁹ Vickery Amanda and Plumb John H. in Irvine, *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

expensive clothes when in public places.³² Anyway, it would be wrong to maintain that the ideal type of femininity was limited to the private sphere. It was present in women who deployed their virtues in public places too, “for the moral and social improvement of men”.³³

If trade in England gained importance and appeared as a new institution in the period, in the same way the ‘public sphere’ emerged in the social life of wealthy English families mostly. Debates about business world or government policy were encouraged in coffee-houses and salons. The period was named as ‘Enlightenment’ by intellectuals and exponents of a new criticism of society. In Britain this new way of thinking was often associated with the triumph of reason over emotion. Nonetheless, as Irvine points out, it rather suggests “their splitting apart and allocation to two separate roles in human life: reason to the pursuit of individual self-interest, emotion to the bonding together of society despite this”.³⁴

Between the XVIII and the XIX centuries, a new kind of artistic and literary strand found its expression thanks to “the emergence of new definitions of national and personal identity in terms of feeling”.³⁵ In opposition to the culture of Enlightenment, the authors who chose to follow this new cultural and literary strand were considered part of the newly born Romantic generation. At first, for the Romantics it was difficult to write and spread their thought in a culture still dominated by the Enlightenment. In their verses, these poets made the attempt to explain the world without any sort of mystification and this made the authority of

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p.10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

religion collide. Conversely, the Romantics thought of poetry as a way to “re-mystify” the world, as a transcendent power associable to God.³⁶

1.3. Works, Themes and Style

Various critics have often tried to classify Jane Austen as a Romantic author, sometimes also criticising her. However, as Irvine clearly observes, it would be inappropriate to collocate Austen in the Romantic period for three simple reasons: firstly, the Romantics were all poets, secondly they were all male and lastly, Jane Austen ignored that she was living in the age of Romantics.³⁷ It may be more accurate to collocate her in an undefined category between the end of the eighteenth century and the first years of the developing Romantic age. Though her first novels radically differed from other contemporary authors such as Swift and Pope, her last works embodied some distinct characteristics of the Romantics.

Jane Austen wrote novels, a genre that started to emerge during the eighteenth century and which was gradually arising from the common prejudice of literary critics who had a low consideration of it in literary terms. It had often been defined an opposition to romance.³⁸ The novel genre was always dominated by women, both as writers and mostly readers, because they were accessible and comprehensible by them even without having attended any classical education. At Austen’s time, the novel panorama included Frances Burney’s (1752-1840) works, the Gothic novels by Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), but most women novelists struggled to write and overcome the limits of their roles. This did not happen to Jane Austen, who had free

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

access to paper and ink and was even encouraged by her family, especially by her father.³⁹

Before exploring more deeply Jane Austen's figure as a novelist and understanding her style, it is worth citing and considering all her works, which are represented by six major novels and other minor or unfinished works (such as *Lady Susan*, 1794-1805, and *The Watsons*, 1804). She started writing as a young girl. Her first work were the *Juvenilia*, three bound notebook containing pieces written approximately around 1787,⁴⁰ both poems or stories, also the satirical novel *Love and Friendship* (1790) and the parody *The History of England* (1791). During the same years she wrote *Elinor and Marianne* and *First Impressions*, respectively first drafts of those which will be published as *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which portrayed the story of the poor Dashwood sisters, their experience of love and romance, and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). It is worth pointing out that her writing had two different phases, the first at the end of the 1790s and the second after 1809.⁴¹ These middle years represent the period when Austen lived in Bath and she wrote nothing new, maybe distracted by the active social life of the town. Once she left Bath, she started writing again and in 1814 *Mansfield Park* was published. The novel is the story of a little girl who is sent to live with her uncle's wealthy family and falls in love with her cousin. Austen also wrote *Emma* (1815), which is about a respectable young woman in an English country village who enjoys playing as a Cupid. Her parody of Gothic novel *Northanger Abbey* (1818) was published posthumously. It portrays the young protagonist's new life in Bath and sinister, fantastic expectations on the Northanger

³⁹ Harman, *cit.*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Jones Vivien, Introduction to Austen J., *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin, London, 2003, p. ix.

⁴¹ Harman, *cit.*, p. 42.

Abbey where she is invited to. Finally she is the author of *Persuasion* (1818), which follows its protagonist's sentimental disillusion and family decline.

Austen wrote in the last two decades of old British order, an order already in crisis because of the natural consequence of time and the European political situation, with problems which she slightly negotiated in her work. She lived through the American Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Revolution (1789), the war with France (1793-1802) and the abolition of slavery (1807), but in her novels there is almost no mention of all these events, especially in *Pride and Prejudice*, known as the "lightest" of all Austen's fictions.⁴² For instance, although her heroines are her contemporaries, serious issues concerning economics, religion and war are hardly debated. Despite this, Austen introduced soldiers or naval officers as characters in *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*. War and politics were not discussed in her novels, maybe because of her social class, the same to which most of her heroines and characters belonged. Thus it may be explained her little involvement in national and international affairs.⁴³ Austen's fictional world, though more realistic than others, appears as an imaginary world removed from serious problems of the day or only with slight references to them; a world limited to the countryside or to fashionable London and Bath; a world where middle-class society firmly kept "its values, its privileges and its snobbery".⁴⁴ For these reasons, her novels seem to stand apart from her literary contemporaries and their concerns. Yet Jane Austen represented her time much more other than writers did.

⁴² Cartmell Deborah, *Screen Adaptations. Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. The relationship between text and film*, Methuen Drama, London, 2010, p. 27.

⁴³ Sanders, *cit.*, p. 374.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Austen deliberately omitted some issues of the literary period she belonged to. Her use of irony, the most momentous strategy of her pen and style, was a reaction to the Romantic sensibility. With irony she spread her moral point of view on the merits and importance of “good conduct, good manners, sound reason, and marriage as an admirable social institution”,⁴⁵ all qualities aimed to balance the not always positive nature of marriage.

The central themes of Jane Austen’s novels, named the moral choices of women during courtship and matrimony, could be found earlier in his brother Henry’s tale “Cecilia” which may have been an inspiration to her.⁴⁶ Accordingly, she handled the same issues with two different techniques, which will make her famous and unique in her genre. Her greater ability was to write about the conventions of her time as she agreed with them. Yet, her prose is remarkable for its irony and a “dazzling verbal style”⁴⁷ which aimed to expose the moral “rotteness” of her “genteel” society.⁴⁸ Her greatest feat was to develop a formal technique which allowed her to write one thing and mean another, according to her moral interests, for she aimed to suggest readers that what they are reading is not the correct way to see them and to insinuate doubts in their belief.

The second technique which helped her to accomplish her moral feat is the free indirect speech. Austen employed this technique to allow readers to follow her characters thoughts and considerations. The technique is a sophisticated style of third-person narration which combines its characteristics with elements of direct

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

⁴⁶ Harman, *cit.*, p. 22. Henry Austen writes “Though an union of *love may* have some misery, a marriage of interest *can give no* happiness”.

⁴⁷ Irvine, *cit.*, p. 110.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

speech, without precise punctuation boundaries. Thanks to this narrative strategy, Austen succeeded in tying subjective and third-person perspectives more closely together.⁴⁹ In addition to this, Jane Austen wished her readers to empathize with her heroines, for their unspoken thoughts may be found throughout the text, using the words they would have spoken just like it would be possible to read their minds, always knowing what they feel.

It is important to recognise Jane Austen's irony while reading, in order to better comprehend the two main narrative structures of her novels. On the one hand, faithful to the Enlightenment spirit of the period, her novels appear somehow as *Bildungsromane*, since characters face a long interior and psychological journey which leads them to mature or to overcome their own defects. On the other hand, her novels of education, though specifically an Enlightenment form, exhibit the conventions of the romantic comedy of the Shakespearean plays in the "marriage plot".⁵⁰ The comedy plot may be read in terms of cathartic reception, for readers roughly know how the story will end up (with the marriage of the protagonists), but are proved by a enjoyable trepidation derived by the obstacles before the happy ending.⁵¹

1.4. Fame and Fortune

In the years immediately after her death, Jane Austen was considered as nothing more than the author of some delightful novels, good for entertaining readers, her fame was not expected to survive. For this reason, her nephew James Edward's

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

idea to write her biography was not welcomed. It was “unimaginable” that his aunt Jane could leave any sort of artistic and literary legacy.⁵² The most signifying obstacle was the comparison between Austen’s few admirers and very few thousand of sold copies against the well-known writers such as Walter Scott and Lord Byron.⁵³ Her fiction suffered mostly from “the revolution in the scope of the novel initiated by Scott”,⁵⁴ although Scott himself praised her fiction and style in an unsigned article which appeared on *The Quarterly Review* three months after the publication of *Emma*.

[...] a style of novel has arisen, within the last fifteen or twenty years, differing from the former in the points upon which the interest hinges; neither alarming our credulity nor amusing our imagination by wild variety of incident, or by those pictures of romantic affection and sensibility, which were formerly as certain attributes of fictitious characters as they are of rare occurrence among those who actually live and die. The substitute for these excitements, [...] was the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him.⁵⁵

It has been reported that His Royal Highness, George IV, 1762-1830, was a “great admirer” of Miss Austen’s novels, as revealed by Henry Austen’s physician, who was the Prince Regent’s physician too.⁵⁶ Although Harman observes that Jane Austen’s novels were not considered “an essential reading for the high Victorians, and certainly were not beloved”,⁵⁷ among her ‘fans’ also Queen Victoria was

⁵² Harman, *cit.*, p. 85.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 54. Harman reports that by July 1813 the first edition of *Sense and Sensibility* of around 750 copies had sold out, earning Austen a profit of £140.

⁵⁴ Irvine, *cit.*, p. 91.

⁵⁵ Scott Walter, “Emma; a Novel. By the Author of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, , *etc*” in *The Quarterly Review*, October 1815, referred in Harman, *cit.*, p. 73.

⁵⁶ Harman, *cit.*, p. 69.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

included.⁵⁸ Despite these influential admirers, Austen's readership and popularity increased only later in the nineteenth century. Indeed, only recently Austen has become popular as she never was during her lifetime and is now indeed a "truly global phenomenon."⁵⁹ Claire Harman lists a series of examples which witness Austen's fame:

The use of Austen's name knows no generic boundaries. Who else is cited with equal approval by feminists and misogynists, can be linked to nineteenth-century anarchism, twenty-first-century terrorism and the National Trust, forms part of the inspiration behind works as diverse as *Eugene Onegin* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*? During the 2006 World Cup Final, some viewers may have been monetarily distracted from the foot- and head-work of Zinedine Zidane by the Phillips advert behind the French goal announcing 'Sense and Simplicity', while a recent article about possible infiltration of US educational programmes by terrorists was titled 'Osama Bin Laden a Huge Jane Austen Fan'.⁶⁰

Yet there were also unflattering criticisms. In 1890, her first academic biographer Goldwin Smith criticized her work, assuming that it needs no commentary for there is no hidden philosophy in her nor illuminating topics for arguing. In her defence the reviewer John Mackinnon Robinson came, questioning that Smith had not understood the real art of Jane Austen. However, he agreed with him and assessed that it was difficult to write an entire book about her,⁶¹ even though the last argument has been revealed to be false during the last century. Austen is a "timeless classic",⁶² her novels have entered into the references text of English Literature courses for their soft subject and in order to increase the number of women students during the first decades of the twentieth century;⁶³ her books have been

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

translated and published into many languages,⁶⁴ although a branch of xenophobic Janeites, a “curious cult of idolaters”⁶⁵ of ‘Divine Jane’, prefers that her works remain in England as their author has done, for her humour and irony are so fine and delicate that no translation could appropriately reproduce it.⁶⁶

Jane Austen’s fame has been through different revival periods. A first revival occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, for there was a return in vogue of the Regency style of her time too;⁶⁷ or later in the second half of the century thanks to her novels adaptations, as I will show in Part II, and to the movie representation of her life in the biographical picture starring Anne Hathaway as Jane Austen (*Becoming Jane*, 2007).⁶⁸ What is more, this has contributed to increase her fame among young people too. The interest in Jane Austen will continue to “strengthen and expand”.⁶⁹ She is a personal and universal author, connected with present society despite two centuries of difference. Thanks to the “timelessness” nature of her work it would be “impossible to imagine a time when she or her works could have delighted us long enough”.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 245. Harman reports that before the war she was published in a dozen of languages, but in the following thirty years the languages increased and have been added translations in Japanese, Korean, Hebrew, Icelandic, Russian, Persian, Polish, Serbo-Croat, Bengali, Finnish, Chinese, Arabic, Hungarian, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu.

⁶⁵ Rubinstein, Elliot. (edited by), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Pride and Prejudice. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice Hall, Inc, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969, p. 16.

⁶⁶ Harman, *cit.*, p. 175.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 254-261.

⁶⁹ Southam Brian in Harman, *ibid.*, p. 282.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

2. The novel: *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

Along with *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* is the most famous novel by Jane Austen. Even though it was first drafted at an early stage of Austen's career, it "seems a perfectly realised work in its own right".⁷¹ This romantic novel follows the events occurring to the Bennet family, in a fictional country town, which are described through the point of view of Elizabeth, the second of the five Bennet daughters.

Austen wrote a first version of the novel between 1796 and 1797, under the title of *First Impressions*. Reverend Austen, who was the first and more confident supporter of his daughter, offered the manuscript to the publishing firm of Cadell and Davies, but it was declined. Austen then revised the text, changed the title in the new that everybody knows, and succeeded in selling it to Thomas Egerton for £110 in 1811.⁷² The novel has not much changed compared to the first version written when the author was only in her early twenties and, for this reason, the story is also set in that same period. To support this thesis, Jan Fergus argues that, in the novel, the militia regiment left Meryton to Brighton for the winter, but the Brighton camp was operative only from August 1793 to 1796 in the reality, hence the action of *Pride and Prejudice* might be set in 1793-4 or 1794-5.⁷³ Despite this, it would not be possible to easily match *Pride and Prejudice* to any period of Jane Austen's life before 1813.

⁷¹ Irvine, *cit.*, p. 39.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷³ Fergus Jan in Irvine, *Ibid.*

Indeed it may be considered the final product of her artistic career, “a valedictory to the world of *Sense and Sensibility* and a token of things to come.”⁷⁴

Published in three volumes, the novel is made up of sixty-one chapters. Its progress may be represented by a parabola or a delightful “symmetry of correspondence and antithesis”:⁷⁵ this pattern follows the sentimental movements of the two main characters who are initially united in a mutual hostility, until the final moment when they converge in mutual understanding and amity, a pattern very common in fiction. Indeed, in the first volume, all the characters and situations are presented while the story mostly appears as a pleasant comedy where nothing goes wrong. Readers may share the same feelings as Elizabeth’s towards Mr. Darcy, mainly feeling of disdainful indifference. In the second part, secrets and sub-plot of the characters are untangled, the Bennet situation appears to have no hope and Elizabeth’s consideration of Mr. Darcy shows no improvement. In the third and last volume, after final revelations, Elizabeth finds herself feeling different sentiments towards Mr. Darcy and their union concludes the story.

2.1. Plot

The story is set in Hertfordshire, near London, between the fictional towns of Longbourn and Meryton and it finds its starting point when Mr Bingley, a wealthy, young nobleman from London moves into Netherfield Park, a sumptuous property in the neighbourhood of Longbourn and Mrs. Bennet looks forward to introducing her five young daughters to him, with the hopes of a glorious and rich marriage. Her

⁷⁴ Walton Litz Arthur in Rubinstein, *cit.*, p. 61.

⁷⁵ Lascelles Mary in Rubinstein, *Ibid.*, p. 74.

hopes seem to find solid bases when Jane, her eldest, falls in love with Mr. Bingley and it seems she is loved in return, despite the obstacles put in the way by his sisters and his proud and antisocial friend Mr. Darcy, who is slightly despised by Elizabeth.

However, just when Jane Bennet is ready and anxious to receive a proposal, she receives news about the Netherfield tenants going back to London. This crashes onto the family like a boulder and Mrs. Bennet almost falls in despair, for she knows that, after Mr. Bennet's death, her daughters will have nothing and the only hope for them is a good marriage, the one with their cousin Mr. Collins, a clergyman, who after being refused by Elizabeth and will eventually marry her childhood friend Charlotte Lucas. It is during her visit to Charlotte in Kent that Elizabeth is introduced to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, a very important noblewoman, who is also Mr. Darcy's aunt. It appears predictable that the two of them, Elizabeth and Darcy, meet each other again and become a little closer just until the moment Elizabeth finds out from Colonel Fitzwilliam that it has been Mr. Darcy who suggested Mr. Bingley to leave Netherfield Park and avoid an inconvenient marriage with Jane. Her disdain about Darcy is only increased and neither his unexpected proposal to her can change her mind.

During the next weeks, Elizabeth travels with her uncle and aunt and they meet Mr. Darcy while visiting his property at Pemberley. He appears more friendly and kind to them, but once again the quiet existence of the family is interrupted when Lydia, the youngest daughter, elopes with Mr. Wickham, an officer in the militia at Meryton, who was introduced to the Bennet family as a very respectable young man. Only Elizabeth, after Darcy's explanation, knows his true nature. It turns out that he once tried to elope also with Darcy's young sister Georgiana with the only intent to

inherit her money. The situation gets better when Lydia comes back home married to Wickham, but she distractedly refers to Mr. Darcy as he was testimony at the wedding and Elizabeth realises that he was implicated in the arrangement of the wedding. Finally, Mr. Bingley too comes back to Netherfield and proposes to Jane, encouraged by his friend Darcy. At last, also Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth free themselves of all their pride and their prejudice against each other and soon get married, despite the initial disagreement of Lady Catherine.

2.2. Characters

‘Lizzy’ Bennet is the central character of the novel, which is written through her point of view. She is twenty years old, the second of the Bennet daughters and her father’s favourite, who appreciates her intelligence and her wit. She is fond of reading. During her staying at Netherfield, Miss Bingley ironically observes – “Miss Eliza Bennet [...] is a great reader and has no pleasure in any thing else” – even though Elizabeth herself modestly replies that she does “not deserve such praise nor such censure” (PP, 37). She is also lively and attractive, although not as beautiful as Jane. Elizabeth tends to misjudge people too early and does not change her first impression’s opinion. This is why she represents the “prejudice” of the title. She is quite an independent girl and does not conform to social conventions. This is shown in many occasions, but particularly when she refuses Mr. Collins’s proposal, even though she knows that accepting him she could save her father’s inheritance and help her sisters in the future. Gifted with a very strong character and a lively mind, she is more sensible than her parents. She tries to persuade Mr. Bennet not to let Lydia go with the Forsters: “If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her

exuberant spirits, and of teaching her that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment” (PP, 223). Every time Elizabeth has to face an argument or a discussion, especially with Mr. Darcy or his aunt, she is ready to reply, to show her wit and her sharp tongue, as it happens in the final confrontation with Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is aware that she “give[s] [her] opinion very decidedly for so young a person” (PP, 162):

“Tell me once for all, are you engaged to him?”

[...]

“I am not.”

Lady Catherine seemed pleased.

“And will you promise me, never to enter into such an engagement?”

“I will make no promise of that kind.”

“Miss Bennet, I am shocked and astonished. [...] I shall not go away, till you have given me the assurance I require.”

“And I certainly *never* shall give it. I am not to be intimidated into anything so wholly unreasonable. [...] Allow me to say, Lady Catherine, that the arguments with which you have supported this extraordinary application, have been as frivolous as the application was ill judged. You have widely mistaken my character, if you think I can be worked on by such persuasions as these. How far your nephew might approve of your interference in *his* affairs, I cannot tell; but you have certainly no right to concern yourself in mine. I must beg, therefore, to be importuned no farther on the subject.” (PP, 337-338)

It is also worth questioning when Elizabeth started to feel affection towards Mr. Darcy. She explains to her sister Jane that her love for Darcy came “gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe it must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley” (PP, 353). Nonetheless, she does not fall in love with his wealth. Materialistic criticisms have been moved against Elizabeth, but one should not misunderstand her. Indeed, Elizabeth starts appreciating Mr. Darcy after entering the house, however it happens for a different and deeper reason:

“The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendour, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings.” (PP, 236)

By observing the taste with which Mr. Darcy furnished his house and the care of the wood and the nature all around it, Elizabeth realises that Pemberley is literally a symbol of the man who owns it. Elizabeth gives up her prejudiced opinions about him and seems to meet a different side of Darcy and to discover his real personality, already partially unveiled in the long and detailed letter he had delivered her a few chapters before.⁷⁶

Fitzwilliam Darcy is the male co-protagonist of the novel and Elizabeth's male counterpart. He is twenty-eight years old, wealthy and unmarried, a very good party for all the girls in search of a husband. He is the owner of the vast Pemberley estate in Derbyshire, evaluated at least ten thousand pounds per year, and future inheritor of his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. He has only a younger sister, Georgiana. They have lost their parents years before and, as a consequence, he is the head of the family. He is tall, handsome and intelligent, but rather antisocial and too proud to appreciate the simple and poor inhabitants of the country, thus he may be represented by the "Pride" of the title. His bad temper and rude manners may derive from his father's conduct, as he eventually confesses to Elizabeth:

"As a child I was taught what was *right*, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately an only son, [...] I was spoilt by my parents, who though good themselves, [...] allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to *wish* at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own". (PP, 349)

Another allusion to his faults is expressed while Elizabeth plays the piano at Rosings. Here she subtly implies that if Mr. Darcy is not used to converse with strangers it is

⁷⁶ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 34.

only his fault, since he only needs practice. She metaphorically uses herself as an example referring to her music skills:

“I certainly have not the talent which some people possess,” said Darcy, “of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done”.

“My fingers”, said Elizabeth, “do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women’s do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault – because I would not take the trouble of practising.” (PP, 171)

Mr. Darcy has all the virtues of a fictional hero and yet he is extremely believable, “since Jane Austen has subjected him to a process of self-evaluation and self-recognition”.⁷⁷ Despite his slight deceits, Darcy is very generous. He owns a very large fortune and he uses it if can help the others, without any sort of avarice or regret. This is shown when he pays Wickham for marrying Lydia and in past events as well.

The twenty-three years old Jane Bennet, the eldest of the Bennet daughters, is considered the most beautiful young woman in the neighbourhood. Her “sweetness and disinterestedness are really angelic” and she is gifted with the attitude of “wish[ing] to think all the world respectable” (PP, 132). Her love story with Mr. Bingley is captivating, but compared to Elizabeth, “Jane is a shadowy accessory”.⁷⁸

Charles Bingley is the young, handsome and wealthy nobleman who moves to Netherfield Park and attracts the attention of the women of the neighbourhood. Unlike Darcy, he is much more good-mannered, generous and lively, sweet and kind, but less clever and easily persuaded because of his lack of resolution.

⁷⁷ Walton Litz in Rubinstein, *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷⁸ Wright Andrew H. in Rubinstein, *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Mr. Bennet is the head of the Bennet family, a gentleman with a modest income and five young unmarried daughters who, after his death, will inherit nothing because of the constraints regarding his property. With his sarcastic humour often mistreats his wife, to whom he has been married for twenty-three years. Staying often isolated in his library, he is quite disinterested in the marriage controversy, so he appears quite negligent in the family matters. Mr. Bennet rarely offers his help for his daughters' sake, but despite this, he cares about them, at least about Elizabeth's happiness, as he prefers her not to marry Mr. Collins rather than be unhappily married for the rest of her life (PP, 109-110).

Mrs. Bennet is described as having a "mind less difficult to develop. She [is] a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she [is] discontented, she fanci[es] herself nervous. The business of her life [is] to get her daughters married; its solace [is] visiting and news" (PP, 7). She claims to suffer from neuralgia and often refers to her "poor nerves", for which nobody feels a little compassion. With her often too explicit manners, she embarrasses her eldest daughters. Of all them, she always prefers the beautiful Jane, but she also recognises herself in Lydia's behaviour, so much that she easily forgives her elopement when she hears the news about the marriage and she cries "My dear, dear Lydia! This is delightful indeed! [...] She will be married at sixteen! [...] How I long to see her! and to see dear Wickham too! But the clothes, the wedding clothes! [...]" (PP, 189). She is silly and noisy, concerned more about the clothes rather than the shame and disgrace which have nearly fallen upon her family.

Mary Bennet is a minor character, not important for the development of the plot. She is the only of the Bennet daughters who is not gifted with handomness and,

along with her sister Elizabeth, she is fond of reading. Yet, “Mary had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner” (PP, 25). She is a “pedantic bore”⁷⁹. She is considered as silly as her younger sisters by Mr. Bennet. While talking to Elizabeth he says: “Do not make yourself uneasy, my love, [...] you will not appear to less advantage for having a couple of – or I may say, three very silly sisters” (PP, 223).

Catherine ‘Kitty’ Bennet is seventeen years old, the fourth of the Bennet sisters. She is always in the company of her sister Lydia, with whom she shares traits of character until eventually she grows up and matures in the company of her elder sisters. In the end she is only a minor figure in the plot scenario and has been defined as “just empty-headed”.⁸⁰

Lydia Bennet is the youngest of a Bennet daughters, though the first to marry.

She is described as

a stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance; a favourite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age. She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence, which the attention of the officers, to whom her uncle's good dinners, and her own easy manners recommended her, had increased into assurance.

(PP, 45)

Her lacks of moral and remorse, supported by her mother, almost leads her and her family to disgrace. She has been defined, like her elder sister Kitty, as an “empty-headed flirt”.⁸¹

George Wickham is an officer of the militia and old childhood friend of Mr. Darcy, whose father put him on his guardianship. He is portrayed as a liar and a

⁷⁹ Halliday E.M. in Rubinstein, *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

selfish, greedy gambler, who “had left gaming debts behind him to a very considerable amount” (PP, 282) and who only wants to take advantage of the situation and profit from his wealthy acquaintance. Among Austen’s anti-heroes, he is considered by Walton Litz the most plausible villain, for his actions, such as the elopement with Lydia, appear to be carefully prepared with a successful final aim, not limited to a conventional plot scheme.⁸² Moreover, Andrew Wright defines him as “handsome, persuasive, personable, disingenuous, calculating and dishonourable”⁸³ man.

Caroline Bingley is Charles’ unmarried sister, with a very wealthy dowry and interested feelings towards Mr. Darcy. She is jealous of Elizabeth and tries to persuade her brother’s friend to keep away from such relationship.

William Collins is “a tall, heavy-looking young man of five-and-twenty. His air [are] grave and stately, and his manners [are] very formal” (PP, 63). In addition, he is “a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man” (PP. 133). He is Mr. Bennet’s cousin and future inheritor of his property, a clergyman without any charm, who could not attract none of the Bennet sisters. He is too obsequious to his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, whom he tries to praise at any occasion.

Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's intimate friend, is “a sensible, intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven” (PP, 19). She realises she is growing old and risks to be a burden for her family, therefore she accepts Mr. Collins’ proposal after he has been refused by Elizabeth, even if she does not love him.

⁸² Walton Litz in Rubinstein, *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁸³ Wright in Rubinstein, *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh is Mr. Darcy's aunt and owner of Rosings Park, a property near the Collins house. She is "a tall, large woman, with strongly-marked features, which might once have been handsome. Her air [are] not conciliating, nor [are] her manner of receiving them such as to make her visitors forget their inferior rank. She [is] not rendered formidable by silence; but whatever she sa[ys] [is] spoken in so authoritative a tone, as marked her self-importance" (PP, 149). Austen may have introduced Lady Catherine's character in order to illustrate and criticise the higher class' snobbery which was present in her society.

Colonel Fitzwilliam is one of Lady Catherine's nephews, so he is Mr. Darcy's cousin and friend. He is roughly aware of the happenings in Longbourn and Netherfield since his cousin talks about it. He candidly confesses all he knows to Elizabeth, increasing her disdain towards Mr. Darcy.

Georgiana Darcy is Mr. Darcy's only sister and sixteen years old, with a dowry of thirty thousand pounds, which happens to be one of the reasons for which Mr. Wickham tried to elope with her. The housekeeper of Pemberley reserves many flattering words for her, considering her "the handsomest young lady that ever was seen; and so accomplished!—She plays and sings all day long" (PP, 237). She is very amiable and enthusiastically welcomes the idea of being soon related to Elizabeth, even though Caroline Bingley had wanted the Bennet to think that she and her brother Charles were intended to marry.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner are respectively Mrs. Bennet's brother sister-in-law. He is a successful businessman in London. His wife is very close to her nieces and, as a result, she offers to take Jane with them in London after Bingley left Netherfield Park. Later, the Gardiners take Elizabeth with them while travelling to the country

and end up meeting Mr. Darcy. They offer their help to the Bennets during the disgraceful weeks of Lydia elopement, managing to arrange her wedding in London. They have four young children.

2.3. Time and space

Pride and Prejudice takes place at the end of the 1790s, during the course of a few months, and Dorothy Van Ghent has observed that “the space can be covered in a few hours of coach between London and a country village or estate”.⁸⁴ It is a fictional country with imaginary villages and residences. Albeit imaginary, the setting refers to real places, such as Hertfordshire, Derbyshire, Kent and London.

Longbourn is the main fictional place where the story is set and it is the Bennet residence. Merytone is a fictional village in Hertfordshire, not far from Longbourn and it is where the militia regiment is quartered for a time. Netherfield Park is the imaginary and sumptuous residence of Mr. Bingley in Hertfordshire, in the neighbourhood of Longbourn and Meryton. Rosings Park is Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s magnificent residence, situated in Kent and near Hunsford, Mr. Collins’ imaginary house, and the real Westerham. Pemberley is Mr. Darcy’s large family estate in Derbyshire, near the fictional village of Lambton where the Gardiners and Elizabeth are hosted during their tour. While in Pemberley, Elizabeth starts to have feelings towards Mr. Darcy, as she admires the aesthetic beauties of his estate and finally understands his good taste and his “natural amiability”.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Van Ghent Dorothy in Rubinstein, *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸⁵ Walton Litz in Rubinstein, *ibid.*, p. 64.

Although London is the only town really existent in the world, it is not seen in the action of the plot, but it is only referred to in different occasions during the characters' speeches.

2.4. Major Themes

At the beginning of the book, after Mr. Darcy's introduction, Mary Bennet expresses her opinion defining pride as

“a very common failing. [...] Human nature is particularly prone to it. [...] Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us” (PP, 21).

In addition, the distinction between vanity and pride is made clear by Mr. Darcy himself when he explains that “Vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride – where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulations” (PP, 56). In the novel, pride is seen as the main obstacle for its protagonists to see the truth and live happily, for it is this feeling of importance which blinds them. Mr. Darcy's social status does not permit him to appreciate those who does not belong to his social sphere, whereas Elizabeth's vanity clouds her judgment and lets her think ill of Mr. Darcy against Mr. Wickham. Only at the end she realises she was moved not by her reason. The concept of pride in the novel is strictly connected to prejudice. Moreover, Mr. Darcy's pride may appear as a natural consequence of his prejudice towards people belonging to a different and lower class, while Elizabeth's prejudice finds its origin in her very pride, because she is confident of her first impressions. Nonetheless, as Walton Litz observes, “one cannot equate Darcy with Pride, or

Elizabeth with Prejudice”, since Mr. Darcy’s pride is founded on social prejudice, whereas Elizabeth’s prejudice at the beginning of the story finds its roots in her pride, trusting her own perceptions.⁸⁶

Love and marriage are what readers may expect to find in the novel from the very first, 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” (PP, 5). The incipit which made Jane Austen famous reminds readers the necessity and importance of marriage for a wealthy, single man. Nevertheless, Jane Austen questioned marriage herself by illustrating different examples of marriage, in which love is not always a solid or prerequisite component. As to the Bennets, they do not appear deeply in love, “the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make [Mrs. Bennet] understand [Mr. Bennet’s] character” (PP, 7) and Mrs. Bennet has always preferred militia officers, like her daughter Lydia; Lydia herself is married to an officer, but it is only an infatuation and a sexual passion by her side (indeed, her infatuation is “rather more with a uniform than with a man”⁸⁷). On the other hand, Mr. Wickham’s only interest is earning a good living with some noble girl’s dowry or an excuse to flee his creditors by eloping with a young girl who “seeks freedom and excitement”.⁸⁸ The author herself penned that his “affection for her soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted a little longer; and in spite of her youth and her manners, she retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had given her.” (PP, 366); Charlotte Lucas married Mr. Collins at the age of twenty-seven without love nor affection, but she recognises the possibility not to be a burden for her family for the

⁸⁶ Walton Litz in Rubinstein, *ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

⁸⁷ Van Ghent in Rubinstein, *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁸⁸ Mordecai M. in Rubinstein, *ibid.*, p. 85.

rest of her life and rather prefers a convenient marriage which ensure herself a wealthy life and a “comfortable home” (PP, 122), therefore she married for a mere economic interest. Not being romantic, she also sees marriage as “a question of the enticement and capture of the man by the woman”⁸⁹ and she cynically thinks that happiness “in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least” (PP, 24). In addition, giving herself to a man without love can be seen as a polite form of prostitution.⁹⁰ The two marriages of Jane to Mr. Bingley and Elizabeth to Mr. Darcy show that it is possible to find good partnership and love too. Furthermore, the end of the novel illustrates that it is possible to be happy and married pursuing love, since Elizabeth accepts Mr. Darcy’s proposal only after she is sure of her tender feelings. Finally, marriage relates to “property” and not only to “feelings”, for it is a complex engagement between the couple and society.⁹¹

Wealth and society are crucial aspects to be discussed. The central plot revolves around Mrs. Bennet’s need to find five husbands to her daughters in order to let them live wealthy rather than really happily after their father dies. Regardless of her daughter’s feelings, as it happened when Mr. Collins proposed to Elizabeth, Mrs. Bennet is only concerned with their wealthy future.

Mrs. Bennet was perfectly satisfied, and quitted the house under the delightful persuasion that, allowing for the necessary preparations of settlements, new carriages, and wedding clothes, she should undoubtedly see her daughter settled at Netherfield in the course of three or four months. Of having another daughter married to Mr. Collins, she thought with equal

⁸⁹ Milligan Ian, *Studying Jane Austen*, York Press-Longman, Beirut-Essex, 1988, p. 46-47.

⁹⁰ Mordecai M. in Rubinstein, *cit.*, p. 7.

⁹¹ Van Ghent in Rubinstein, *cit.*, p. 22.

certainty, and with considerable, though not equal, pleasure. Elizabeth was the least dear to her of all her children; and though the man and the match were quite good enough for *her*, the worth of each was eclipsed by Mr. Bingley and Netherfield. (PP, 101)

Finally, “the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life” (PP, 364). Jane Austen, in her realistic style, did not refrain from referencing to money, estates value and incomes. At that time, money and wealth were not the unique metre to judge people. Moreover, behaviour and good manners speak for themselves. Though belonging to the middle-class, Jane and Elizabeth, have mastered the codes of politeness and propriety, behave nearly as aristocrats, unlike the rest of the Bennet women.⁹² Through Mr. Darcy, Austen criticized those who measure people by their wealth rather than by their behaviour. Furthermore, it is worth to point out how Mr. Darcy considers his social duty to unveil Mr. Wickham’s true nature in order not to let other people be deceived by him. Lydia’s elopement was a more serious issue than it could be nowadays, for the ensuing scandal affected the rest of her family.

Family and women in *Pride and Prejudice* are often discussed as well. The importance of family is a momentous factor to evaluate a man or a woman. This is the case of Lydia, who would have brought the scandal onto the whole family and condemned her sisters too if Mr. Darcy had not intervened. By reflection, the good marriages of the two elder sisters put in a brighter light the youngest too. However, in order to prevent certain behaviours and scandals, it is the family’s responsibility to intellectually and morally educate the children. In the case of the Bennet family,

⁹² Irvine, *cit.*, p. 57.

parents have been quite negligent about their daughters' education and they do not seem to listen or accept the suggestions of the two eldest and wisest. Mrs. Bennet does not really comprehend her daughters' needs while her husband "chooses to hide behind his shield of brittle irony"⁹³ when he lets Lydia leave with Mr. and Mrs. Forster to Brighton. The woman condition at home was not the same of present time and Jane Austen often criticized society. This is shown also by her social status, since she preferred to be a single, unmarried woman. In the XIX century society, women social status was very unstable. In the novel the only salvation for five middle-class girls who will inherit nothing from their father was a good marriage. However, the Bennet situation was not the universal rule. There were women like Lady Catherine de Bourgh and her daughter who were actually able to inheriting properties.⁹⁴

Art and Nature is a final, characteristic antithesis present in the book. Mary Bennet's character is predominantly artistic, for she is much accomplished in art, albeit not talented nor very pleasing, compared to her sister Elizabeth, who failed in the "art" of voice cultivation, but sings more naturally and more pleasantly.⁹⁵ Elizabeth's characteristic "artlessness" can be observed in two additional passages.⁹⁶ When she travels with Mr. and Mrs. Gardner and she declares her pleasure in the sublimity of rocks and mountains ("What delight! what felicity! You give me fresh life and vigour. Adieu to disappointment and spleen. What are young men to rocks and mountains?" PP, 152). In another passage Elizabeth contemplates the beauty of

⁹³ Rubinstein, *cit.*, p. 9.

⁹⁴ Irvine, *cit.*, p. 59.

⁹⁵ Kliger S. in Rubinstein, *cit.*, p. 47.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Pemberley's natural landscape, which was "without any artificial appearance" (PP, 235). The art and nature antithesis has been seen as Austen's premeditated plan for constituting the love plot. Its symbolism covers the events which keep Elizabeth and Darcy initial hostility each other till the moment they tie together at the end.⁹⁷ Indeed, on the one hand Darcy is the "spokesman for civilization", he is "man-made" as he speaks in terms of class stratification. On the other hand, Elizabeth represents "man-in-nature", for joy can exist in the class-less, government-less, property-less conditions surrounding men as they were in the Eden before the Fall.⁹⁸ Still, as Samuel Klinger highlights, the art-nature antithesis can be found in every character of the novel.⁹⁹

2.5. Critical and Contemporary Reception

Jane Austen's fame is strictly connected to *Pride and Prejudice*, unanimously recognised as her masterpiece. According to World Book Day, it has also been chosen as the book the nation can't live without, followed on the podium by J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.¹⁰⁰ The antithesis of the title has been often used and adapted for different occasions, which most often does not slightly refer to the original subject of the novel, nevertheless the phrase has provided many headlines for its "sonorous, moralistic and nicely alliterative"¹⁰¹ formula. The same fate occurred to its opening sentence which has been frequently

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁰⁰ "Pride and Prejudice is top read" on *BBC News* (March 2007). Viewed on 26 November 2012 < <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6405737.stm> >.

¹⁰¹ Harman, *cit.*, p. 2.

adapted for different occasions and became one of the most abused quotes in the language, second only to Hamlet's "to be or not to be".¹⁰²

The novel reception was immediately positive after its publication. Fanny Knight reported in her diary that she and her friend Mary Oxenden had "finished *Pride and Prejudice* . . . perfection!!!",¹⁰³ while playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan strongly suggested to his neighbour, a Miss Shirreff, to "buy it immediately, for it was one of the cleverest things he ever read", urging her to follow his advice and, as a consequence, she became a new admirer of Austen's works.¹⁰⁴ The great opinion of Austen's work is also found in another early reader, Annabella Milbanke, Lord Byron's wife, who described *Pride and Prejudice* to her mother as "a very superior work" and "the most probable fiction she had ever read".¹⁰⁵ What is more, her interest became stronger especially in Mr. Darcy. This may be considered one of the first example of "Darcy-philia", the love and admiration felt towards Jane Austen's fictional character. Throughout years, Darcy conquered the hearts of numerous fans and he helped to increase the consideration that *Pride and Prejudice* was "probable, but in the service of erotic and materialistic dreaming"¹⁰⁶ since Darcy represented the "supreme bourgeois fantasy man" who also was "aristocratic, handsome, heterosexual and possessor of Pemberley".¹⁰⁷

It might be redundant to claim that *Pride and Prejudice* was "constantly referred back to as the very best of Jane's efforts so far".¹⁰⁸ Not only did the fame of

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

the novel is linked to the character of Mr. Darcy, but its triumph lies in Austen's ability to combine its dramatic structure to examples of sheer "poetry of wit", which Reuben Brower compares to Alexander Pope's poetry without couplets.¹⁰⁹

The success and notoriety of *Pride and Prejudice* granted it the honour to be one of the novels which most often have attracted cinema and television directors and producers. Its story has been transposed into different adaptations, as it is analysed in the next part of this thesis.

¹⁰⁹ Brower in Rubinstein, *cit.*, p. 31.

Part II - *Pride and Prejudice* on Screen

After the birth of cinema at the end of the XVIII century, film-makers have often chosen to adapt famous novels or tales for their first attempts of entertainment. Jane Austen's work has not appeared in the early cinema production, during the years of silent movies. This absence may be accounted for by considering the term 'silent' itself. How could a silent representation celebrate the character of Elizabeth Bennet at best? Deborah Cartmell finds a silent adaptation "quite absurd", in particular because of "the pleasure being in the choice of words and in the verbal subtleties".¹¹⁰ How could a silent movie represent Darcy's disdain towards Elizabeth at the first ball or Elizabeth reading Darcy's letter or her witty replies to the provocations of Lady Catherine de Bourgh?

Once the sound era had come, the very first recorded filming of the novel is in 1938 for a television adaptation. Since then the novel has been transposed to screen in two occasions (1940 and 2005, excluding spin-offs or loose adaptations) and seven television adaptations (from 1938 to 1995). The data shows the "highly *adaptagenic* nature of the novel in the sound era".¹¹¹ In addition, the large amount of television adaptations proves that every generation has its *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation, but also that Austen's novels are easier to be adapted for the small screen:

The episodic nature of her writing and the variety of subplots seem to be more at home in television than in film. While film is character-driven, normally focussing on two central characters, Austen's novels involve a large variety of characters whose relationships are complexly understated and require the time to unfold that only television allows.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Cartmell, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 12.

It is not surprising that Andrew Davies, responsible for the 1995 television adaptation, claims that Jane Austen is “the easiest of all writers to adapt because she is so precise in every detail, but also because she has contributed so much to the genre of romantic comedy through the structures of her novels”.¹¹³

Deborah Cartmell instead argues that to adapt a novel by Jane Austen is troublesome.¹¹⁴ She starts from Austen’s language, maintaining that the importance of her novels lies in the dialogue more than the appearance of the fiction and a good script must be able to underline it. The subtle relationship between irony and the narrator is difficult as well. For instance Elizabeth and the narrator do not always share the same point of view. To adapt Elizabeth’s refusal to Mr. Collins’ insistent proposal is a challenge for screen-writers.

Although the novel is seen by the point of view of Elizabeth, adapters wonder if it is correct to represent and see Mr. Darcy only through female eyes. Cartmell highlights the issue of the visualization of class. There are some “virtually invisible” servants in the novel, hardly named in few scenes, but actually present all the time. For example, she wonders, who is the “Sarah” named by Mrs Bennet before Mr Bingley visit? (“He is come – Mr. Bingley is come. He is, indeed. Make haste, make haste. Here, Sarah, come to Miss Bennet this moment, and help her on with her gown”, PP. 325).

One of the central themes of the novel is marriage. In the novel, all marriages (with the exception of the Gardiners) are represented as far away from the romantic ideal of a couple perfectly in love like in fairy tales. The book is punctuated by

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 18.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 40-42.

descriptions and reflections on mismatches, which are a challenge to represent in a visual adaptation, just like it happens with the parenthood issue. Especially motherhood is seen in a negative light with decisive discordant note in sentence like the final “Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters” (PP, 364).

Finally, the epistolary tradition is still strong and present in the book. The many and long letters that the characters read, the long and eager explication letter by Mr. Darcy or the infinitely precise account of the London situation by Mrs. Gardiner are pivotal passages which allow readers to empathise with the characters. Adapters can opt for different strategies in order to translate the fascination of the book into screen, even though some strategies prefer to omit the letters and to find a better solution.

1. *Pride and Prejudice* (1940)

For 55 years the only Austen film adaptation, the first of the big screen adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* was an “Hollywoodized” motion picture which followed the tradition of the “Screwball Comedy” of the 1930s and 1940s.¹¹⁵ It lasted 118 minutes and it was directed by Robert Z. Leonard,¹¹⁶ produced by Hunt Stromberg and distributed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, winner of the Best Art Direction (Black and White) Academy Award in 1941.

Aldous Huxley and Jane Murfin were chosen to adapt the script from the 1935 stage dramatisation by Helen Jerome, even though the major contribution to the script came only from Murfin. At the time, Huxley was a well known novelist and journalist, so it is most probable that the producer preferred to use his name as a ‘guarantee’ and to “signify the quality of the words and respect for the novel”.¹¹⁷ Since he earned a discreet amount of money in Hollywood, Huxley was ashamed of himself either because of the final product or because he recognised his scarce involvement in the writing. Claire Harman reports that in a letter to Eugene Saxton, Huxley described his work as being “an odd, cross-word puzzle job” and “one tries to do one’s best for Jane Austen; but actually the very fact of transforming the book into a picture must necessarily alter its whole quality in a profound way. [...] The insistence upon the story as opposed to the diffuse irony which the story is designed

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹¹⁶ Robert Zigler Leonard (1889-1968) was an American film director, actor, producer and screenwriter. He was twice nominated for Best Direction Academy Award, though he never won. For his contribution to the film production industry, he has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 84.

to contain, is a major falsification of Miss Austen".¹¹⁸ Certain additional dialogue in the screenplay have been praised for they could be "the kind of thing which Jane Austen *might* have said", as George Bluestone argues in his analysis.¹¹⁹ According to Cartmell, the movie was successfully and doubtless accepted as "authentic Austen" thanks to Huxley's name.¹²⁰ Compared to the 1935 theatre script, the 1940 adaptation followed the original novel more faithfully, since the play was a much more simplified version of the story with only three Bennet daughters and less complicated romantic relationships. Despite this, the film was not so 'authentic' as its audience may have expected for a reasonable amount of reasons.

1.1. Synopsis

Mrs. Bennet is mother to five daughters and is concerned about having them married before their father dies. When she discovers that the sumptuous property of Netherfield is let at last, her hope to see one of her daughters engaged to Mr. Bingley, the Netherfield rich tenant, raises.

The Bennet family meet Mr. Bingley, his sister Miss Bingley and his friend Mr. Darcy at Meryton Assembly, where some officers have been invited too. Mr. Bingley's interest is soon set on Jane Bennet, while Elizabeth Bennet becomes the object of Mr. Darcy's snobbery. Later Elizabeth herself refuses a dance with the proud man, accepting the invitation from Mr. Wickham, an officer who seems to know Mr. Darcy.

¹¹⁸ Harman, *cit.*, p. 215.

¹¹⁹ George Bluestone in Cardmell Sarah, *Adaptation revisited. Television and classic novel*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2002, p. 39.

¹²⁰ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 84.

After the first meeting, Jane is invited at Netherfield by Miss Bingley, but Mrs. Bennet, realising that it would rain soon, urges Jane not to take the chariot and to ride to Netherfield. Jane catches a strong cold and she is constrained to stay at Netherfield for a week. During her stay, Elizabeth pays her a visit and spends some time in company of Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley. Later on, she finds confirmation of her first impressions of them.

When the two girls are back home, the whole family is expecting the visit of Mr. Bennet's cousin, Mr. Collins, who will inherit the Longbourn estate at his death. However, Mr. Collins thinks of marrying one of his cousins and firstly he targets Jane, then Elizabeth, whose wishes and expectations are rather different.

The neighbourhood is again gathered at a great ball at Netherfield. The Bennet family, except Jane and Elizabeth, behave ridiculously. Soon after, the Netherfield party leaves for London, breaking all the hopes of seeing an engagement between Jane and Mr. Bingley. Instead, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth, who strongly refuses him, unintentionally bringing him in her dear friend Charlotte Lucas' arms, who then invites Elizabeth to come and visit them in Hunsford.

The promise is soon kept and Elizabeth is hosted at Mr. and Mrs. Collins'. While in Hunsford, she makes the acquaintance of Mr. Collins' patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the owner of Rosings Park. Elizabeth meets again Mr. Darcy, since he is the noblewoman's nephew and she unexpectedly receives an offer of marriage by him, on the very same day she discovers from Colonel Fitzwilliam, Mr. Darcy's cousin, that he was the responsible of her sister's Jane unhappiness. She refuses the offer and goes back home.

The situation at home is miserable because Lydia, the youngest sister, has eloped with Mr. Wickham and the news run fast, since Mr. Darcy visits Longbourn as well, to express his sympathy to Elizabeth by narrating the attempt of Wickham to elope with his younger sister Georgiana one year before.

Since the researches appear to be fruitless, the whole family is ready to leave the house in disgrace, but merry news arrive at once. Lydia is back home with Wickham and they are married. On the same morning, Lady Catherine de Bourgh arrives at Longbourn and she has a confrontation with Elizabeth. As she leaves, Mr. Darcy reaches Elizabeth and renews his proposal, while Mr. Bingley as well is back for Jane. Mrs. Bennet congratulates herself for three married daughters and the two left with suitors behind them.

1.2. First scenes

Like most of the movies shot in the 40s, the film shows the credits at the beginning, before characters or places are introduced. Then the scene opens in the main street of Meryton, following a shot of the interior of a cloth shop, where Mrs. Bennet, Jane and Elizabeth are shopping. The first line spoken is from the shopkeeper talking about fabrics to Mrs Bennet. This short episode acts as an introduction to the first appearance of Bingley and Darcy, whose silhouettes the Bennet women can see through the shop windows for a few moments. The scene introduces the women as consumers, aspiring admirers of fashion. As Deborah Cartmell suggests

The film subtly introduces the subject of love and money and men and women as objects to be bought as property, obliquely referencing Austen's second line: 'However little known the feelings or views of such a man

may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters' (PP, 5). Greer Garson's Elizabeth's witty one-liner is the climax of this sequence, instantly informing the viewer that she will be the star focus of this production.¹²¹

The information about the two gentlemen are carried by Aunt Phillips who enters the shop and then by Mrs. Lucas, who is accompanied by her daughter Charlotte. The two women are immediately presented as rivals, since they are both mothers to young girl at marriageable age. The rivalry is extremely accentuated when they make a chariot race in order to be first at home and invite their respectively husbands to call on Mr. Bingley, as if their daughters' happiness depended only on that. Before taking their chariot, Mrs. Bennet and the elder daughters are down the street, fetching the youngster sisters. The scene serves to clarify the girls' interests, so Mary is seen entering a bookshop and she shows her mother the book she is holding, while Kitty and Lydia are accompanied by officers in uniforms.

1.3. Main Cast

Greer Garson was chosen to portray Elizabeth Bennet, although the role was initially offered to Vivien Leigh, who was just awarded for her successful performance for *Gone with the Wind*.¹²² Despite a general consideration that Elizabeth Bennet should be dark-haired, Garson is fair-haired. Sue Parrill defines Garson as "too old and too knowing for this role"¹²³ and since Garson was 36 while

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 50.

¹²² Greer Garson (1904-1996) was a British actress. According to Brian McFarlane, she was a "legendarily ladylike Hollywood star" and in 1942 she won the Best Actress Academy award for *Mrs. Miniver*, after several nominations.

¹²³ Sue Parrill, *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations*, Jefferson, North Caroline and London, MacFarland, 2002, p. 52.

shooting the movie, Parill may not be blamed for her judgement. Cartmell does not appreciate her Elizabeth because of her age, arguing that she “comes across as irritatingly culpable for her unbecoming idleness and studied coquettish behaviour”.¹²⁴ Anyway, it is worth noticing that all the Bennet sisters appear older than they should be according to the novel.

Laurence Olivier was chosen to portray Mr. Darcy, although the role was initially offered to Clark Gable, the charming male protagonist in *Gone with the Wind*.¹²⁵ His interpretation of Mr. Darcy has often been seen in different terms. He appears smiling more, almost shy sometimes, clearly uncomfortable while in company, less severe than he ought to be and his superciliousness is considered “heavy handed”.¹²⁶ On the other hand, for many years he was the most famous version of Mr. Darcy, so that Colin Firth found himself uneasy in taking the same role for the 1995 BBC adaptation and in an interview he claims that “Olivier was fantastic and no one else could ever play the part”.¹²⁷ The Italian journalist Elvira Serra considers Olivier the closest representation of Darcy in terms of handsomeness, although she maintains that there is not yet an actor able to equal his charm and character.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 78.

¹²⁵ Laurence Olivier (1907-1989) was a director and producer, but mainly he was one of the “very great theatre actors of the 20th century”, most famous for his Shakspearean adaptations.

¹²⁶ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 6.

¹²⁷ Firth Colin in Birtwistle Sue, Conklin Susy, *The making of Pride and Prejudice*, BBC Books/Penguin Books, London, 1995, p. 98.

¹²⁸ Serra Elvira, “Il segreto di Mr. Darcy. L’eroe di Jane Austen fa ancora innamorare. È l’uomo che sa cambiare (con la donna giusta)”, *Corriere della Sera*, (26 November 2011). Viewed 23 November 2012 <http://www.corriere.it/cultura/11_novembre_26/il-segreto-di-mr-darcy-elvira-serra_0be42512-1801-11e1-9544-dc3583e849e1.shtml>;

1.4. Text and Adaptation

Since the opening credits of the movie, an attentive reader can notice that there is no “Those who live at Pemberley” cast list, referring only to Maryton, Longbourn, Netherfield and Rosings, already announcing an important change in the course of the events narrated by Jane Austen.

The first introductory scenes are utterly original, showing events not told in the book or only told in a different way. Most of the lines pronounced by the actors come from the new script, even though the momentous lines which have become famous throughout the years are not always kept faithfully. The events follow the original novel, except for few changes and differences which provide material for a discussion regarding the fidelity of the adaptation in terms of plot, character’s personality or setting.

The main difference concerns the time setting. Although the story was originally set at the end of the XVIII century, the Bennets are dressed according to the second half of the XIX century fashion. Not only have the producers decided to make visible the change from the costumes, but also the script writers provided further elements. When hearing about Netherfield being let at last, Mrs. Bennet claims “That’s the most heartening piece of news since the Battle of Waterloo”. This element let the audience realise that the facts are set after the 1815 at least, but the novel was published only in 1813.

Another difference which concerns time. The story itself has been compressed in a few days, whilst it is known that the time in the novel covers a few months. Thus, many passages are compressed and shortened. For example, when Mrs. Bennet urges her husband to call on Mr. Bingley, Mr. Bennet confesses he had

already invited the young man to the Assembly Ball giving him the tickets and he was only teasing his wife. Mr. Wickham is introduced to the audience at the beginning of the movie and not after Mr. Collins arrives at Longbourn.

In this adaptation, the Assembly Ball and the Lucas Lodge party are united in one single social event to which the officers are invited and Mr. Wickham is there, despite Mr. Darcy's presence. Elizabeth accepts to dance with Mr. Wickham, who was previously flirting with Lydia, and they talk about the weather, as it should have happened at Netherfield while dancing with Mr. Darcy. The Americanised version rewrites the novel "to expose the hypocrisy of the British class system, democratising Darcy in his gradual conversion by Elizabeth to accepting a more equal society".¹²⁹ For instance, his line "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am of no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (PP, 13) is changed to "A provincial young lady with a lively wit! Heaven preserve it. She looks tolerable enough, but I'm in no humour tonight to give consequence to the middle classes at play". After being snubbed in this way by Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth behaves with "uncharacteristic rudeness",¹³⁰ refusing to dance with him during the ball at Lucas Lodge and, immediately after, accepting a dance with a Wickham who, it is worth remembering, should not be there. Moreover, in order to avoid the reading of a letter, Miss Bingley's invitation to Jane at Netherfield is made on that occasion, after she invited her to make a tour of the hall like she will similarly do with Elizabeth in Netherfield's drawing-room.

¹²⁹ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 80.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6

When at Netherfield, Elizabeth refers to the arrival of Mr. Collins, her father's cousin, showing that the whole family was already aware of his visit. In fact, there is no scene where Mr. Bennet reads Mr. Collins' letter and explains who is coming, although the relationship between his cousin and Longbourn is made clear by Mrs. Bennet's disappointment. However, Mr. Collins, whose profession changed from vicar to Lady Catherine's librarian, maybe not to offend the clergy,¹³¹ immediately expresses his intentions to Mrs. Bennet, who soon becomes more amiable with him. On the very first evening, Mr. Collins observes his gentle cousins while they are playing and reading and opts firstly for Jane and then for Elizabeth.

Later, the ball at Netherfield Park is introduced by a still frame of a hand holding the written invitation and subsequently the audience moves into the splendour of the large property. Elizabeth is seen running away from Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy helps her to hide amid the bushes as her accomplice, both of them acting almost friendly to one another. Nonetheless, their friendly behaviour moves again to slight hostility when Elizabeth inquires about the relationship with Wickham and, moreover, during the "archery scene", an added scene which witness a little triumph of Elizabeth on Darcy, for she manages to hit the bull's eye perfectly and demonstrates the strength of the 'weak sex'. This choice (common to similar examples in next adaptations) has been seen as a way to flatter the predominant female audience of this kind of comedies. When Elizabeth goes away, Mr. Darcy stays alone with Miss Bingley and has the chance to praise not Elizabeth's eyes, as it happens in the novel, but rather her archery skills ("I think she handles a bow and

¹³¹ *Ibid.* In Harman, *cit.*, p. 74, it is underlined that Mr. Collins' character was "often praised (except by clergymen)".

arrow superbly”) which may be interpreted as a metaphor concerning bow and arrow, but the bull’s eye is Mr. Darcy’s heart, centred by Elizabeth. Miss Bingley congratulates then to Elizabeth for her “interesting, accomplished family” on the balcony and Mr. Darcy reaches the weeping girl, trying to comfort her, acting once again as a friend. In their lines, the antithesis between ‘pride’ and ‘prejudice’ is even more clear:

Elizabeth: You’re very puzzling Mr. Darcy. At this moment it’s very difficult to believe that you’re so *proud*.

Darcy: At this moment, it’s difficult to believe that you’re so *prejudiced*.

The two protagonists are still together when Lydia arrives at the balcony with a soldier, laughing aloud and making a fool of herself as the whole family, except Jane, does and Elizabeth seems to realise it, while Mr. Darcy goes away in explicit disdain.

The day after the Netherfield ball, Mr. Collins is ready to propose to Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet starts winking at Kitty in order to leave the two of them alone in the room, a gesture that Mrs. Bennet would have done for Jane and Mr. Bingley. Since Mr. Bingley’s proposal scene has been omitted and radically changed, the comic ‘winking scene’ has been anticipated for Collins, with Elizabeth’s despair. Mrs. Bennet’s desperation increases when she reads Miss Bingley’s letter, which reports that the party has left Netherfield Park. The subsequent happenings are compressed in one day, since Mr. Wickham pays a visit to Elizabeth only after Mr. Darcy left and he tells his story. Then, Charlotte Lucas arrives at Longbourn already engaged to Mr. Collins. Mrs. Bennet makes no attempt to hide her disappointment, while Elizabeth does not appear very blameful towards her friend and promises her to visit Hunsford soon.

The audience can follow and see Elizabeth's movements, while it is only told that Jane has gone to London with the Gardiners. Like a reference to the first shot of the movie, the girls appear again interested in fashion, as when Charlotte unpacks Elizabeth's baggage and finds her nightdress ("Lizzie, this is daring!"). Not a day Elizabeth waits for an invitation at Rosings Park, where she finds Mr. Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam already guests at their aunt's.

Elizabeth's conversation with the Colonel and her discovery about Mr. Darcy's involvement in Mr. Bingley quitting Netherfield is left in background. She returns home and talks about it with Charlotte in anger, but Mr. Darcy, whose first embarrassed visit is omitted, already awaits there for proposing, in a more transported way, since he kisses her hand and calls her "my darling". Most expectedly, Elizabeth rejects this proposal as well and returns at Longbourn the day after, without giving Mr. Darcy the time to write and deliver his letter. When she finds out about Lydia's elopement with Wickham, Elizabeth is accompanied by Charlotte, providing another short comic note to the tragic situation with Mrs. Bennet who sees "the vultures" already invading her home. Surprisingly, Mr. Darcy as well arrives at Longbourn because he heard about Lydia and expresses in words what he should have written and delivered at Hunsford. He narrates Mr. Wickham's previous attempt of elopement with his sister Georgiana, but he does not allude anything to the reasons for which he did not trust in Jane's interest towards Bingley. On one hand, if Mr. Darcy would have explained the true nature of Wickham earlier, Elizabeth would have tried to persuade her father to let Lydia leave with colonel Forster. However, the screenwriters also omitted Mrs. Forster's invitation to Brighton, so for Elizabeth it was impossible to avoid the dreadful fact and she could regret nothing.

The scene mostly helps Elizabeth to realise her tender feelings towards Mr. Darcy, as she confesses the Hunsford events to Jane in the library rather than in the bedchamber.

The piece of news runs fast and reach the Netherfield party in London. Miss Bingley reads a bulletin while chatting with the two men and Mr. Darcy's surprise makes the audience aware that he has not made his move yet. In fact, few days have passed and the Bennet family still lingers in despair, they already plan to move by the sea since Mr. Bennet gave up with the researches. Mr. Collins again visits the family using his inconvenient manners and, at the same time, Mr. Bennet receives a letter from his brother-in-law with Wickham's terms for the marriage. All at once the situation turns upside down and one minute later the newly married couple arrives, Lydia silly as she has always been without reckoning the consequences of her acts.

While the whole family is rejoicing for the marriage, most unexpectedly Lady Catherine pays her visit as well. She finds a messy house because of the upcoming moving, however she stays inside and does not ask Elizabeth to accompany her for a walk in the garden. Rather than discourage Elizabeth to marry Mr. Darcy and interfere in the relationship because of his engagement to Lady Anne, she threatens to leave her nephew penniless in order to verify Elizabeth's true interest, if love or money. Instead of Lydia and Mrs. Gardiner, it is the noblewoman who reports her nephew's involvement in Lydia's marriage as well, giving Elizabeth more reasons to appreciate and love Mr. Darcy. At the end of the movie, Lady Catherine is represented as a very pleasant old lady, a sort of Cupid or 'ambassador' who tests the Elizabeth's feelings in order to intercede for Darcy, giving him hope. This major change may be a free and deliberate interpretation of Mr. Darcy's discourse at the

end of the novel, while taking a walk with Elizabeth and talking about Lady Catherine's visit. Mr. Darcy says

“It taught me hope [...] as I had scarcely allowed myself to hope before. I knew enough of your disposition to be certain, that, had you been absolutely, irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine, frankly and openly.” (PP, 347)

This remarkable change in the noblewoman's character, from snob to sweet lady, occurred because Edna May Oliver “refused to play a villain”.¹³²

In the last thirty minutes of the movie, Longbourn gets very crowded because of the many visits paid. Not only are Mr. Collins, Wickham and Lydia there, but also Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, who finds and proposes to Jane in the garden, pushed by his sister, as Mr. Darcy explains to Elizabeth. Miss Bingley too is portrayed as a good character in the end. The two couples kiss in the garden with Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's surprise and delight. In addition, while Mrs. Bennet stands observing 'her' happy ending with three of her daughters married or engaged on the same day, two possible suitors appear for Kitty and Mary as well, whereas in the novel one reads that “Kitty, to her very material advantage, spent the chief of her time with her two elder sisters” (PP, 364) and “Mary was the only daughter who remained at home” (PP, 365). The screenwriters presumably wanted to grant a total happy ending to the Bennet sisters and it is probable that they were inspired by one of Mr. Bennet's last lines in the novel, after he approved Elizabeth and Darcy's engagement: “If any young men come for Mary or Kitty, send them in, for I am quite at leisure” (PP, 357). This was anticipated early on in the movie when, while speculating about his

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

daughters in Netherfield and their luck catching cold and husbands, Mr. Bennet ironically said:

“We’re hoping Elizabeth can catch a cold of her own and stay long enough to get engaged to Mr. Darcy. Then if a good snowstorm could be arranged, we’d send Kitty over. If a young man should be in the house, a young man who likes singing of course, and discuss philosophy, Mary could go. Then, if a dashing young soldier in a handsome uniform should appear for Lydia everything would be perfect my dear.”

Before analysing further differences, it may be useful to contextualise the production and the development of the film within World War II. As Ellen Belton suggests,¹³³ Karen Morley, the actress who played Charlotte Lucas, remembers the “disturbing effect on the actors of the unfolding news of Hitler’s march through the Netherlands and Belgium during the filming”. Thus, one of the production intentions might have been to show a fascinating Edenic England to the American audience and to infuse their minds with the love and respect for it in, somehow preparing them to the possibility to have the United States to be ally and to support the United Kingdom during the Second World War.¹³⁴ Moreover, the changes such as the omission of Pemberley or Lady Catherine’s benign character, mute the novel’s portrayal of social hierarchy and “Darcy’s snobbery thus becomes a personal flaw rather than the expression of an entire social system”.¹³⁵

As Deborah Cartmell points out, the subplots and great variety of characters created by Jane Austen is often better represented by television rather than film. Often the plot is conveniently changed by eliminating certain scenes in favour of

¹³³ Ellen Belton, *Reimagining Jane Austen: the 1940 and 1955 film versions of Pride and Prejudice. Jane Austen on Screen*, eds Gina MacDonald and Andrew F. MacDonald, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 178.

¹³⁴ Liora Brosh, *Screening Novel Women: Gender in the British Nineteenth Century Novel and its Film Adaptations*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2008, p. 19 and Belton, *cit.*, p. 186.

¹³⁵ Belton in Irvine, *cit.*, p. 158.

others¹³⁶ and, similarly, the representation of the events can differ from the original version. For instance, the letters reading scenes are utterly eliminated or reduced in many occasions as when Darcy informs Elizabeth of Wickham's attempt to elope with his sister Georgiana, the day after Elizabeth refused his proposal. The omission of the letter may refer to Cartmell's adaptation issues and to the difficulty of translating the letter reading in a motion picture,¹³⁷ hence the scriptwriters' choice to have Darcy speak aloud what happened to Georgiana. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the movie follows the 'Screwball Comedy' style and, in fact, one of the aspects of the novel which has not been changed is Mrs. Bennet's suffering nerves, often used and mentioned as a comic element. The same treatment has been reserved to the ill Jane Bennet during an invented physician's visit at Netherfield, when she is concerned about showing her nice profile to Mr. Bingley, as her mother recommended her, or when Lady Catherine enters in the messy room at Longbourn, listens to a parrot who complains of his nerves, echoing Mrs. Bennet, and sits on a carillon. The comic potential of Mary Bennet has been equally emphasised as well.

The 1940 adaptation omitted two pivotal journeys: Jane's visit to London with Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner in hope to find Bingley and later Elizabeth's exploration of the country with the Gardiners, until they reach Pemberley where she has the opportunity to better know Darcy's character and to meet his shy sister Georgiana. Both episodes are relevant for the development of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship. In the first case, Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley are responsible for not having Jane and Bingley meet in London, because of his low rated consideration of the girl. When

¹³⁶ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 12.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 40-42.

Elizabeth discovers this, she feels strongly motivated and justified to refuse Darcy's proposal while they are at Hunsford. In the second case, Elizabeth is able to admire Darcy's true self, seeing him apart from his pompous friends and relatives. The omission of the Pemberley scene may be connected to the excessive expense involved in creating an adequate scenography and also to the "need to paint a positive picture of the British for Americans on the verge of joining forces in the war".¹³⁸ When Elizabeth imagines herself mistress of Pemberley ("to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!", PP, 235) it may be possible to find a potential materialism in her. The scene was omitted in order to avoid similar critical receptions.

The cast has been revolutionised as well and some characters are completely absent, as Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, the Colonel and Mrs. Forster, Maria Lucas, Mr. and Mrs. Hurst and Georgiana Darcy. Since Elizabeth's, Jane's and Lydia's journeys were omitted, it was not necessary to include the Gardiners and the Forsters in the cast. Since Pemberley is never showed, Georgiana Darcy is only mentioned in four occasions, firstly by her brother while is writing to her and then while he explains Elizabeth what happened between his sister and Wickham. Miss Bingley alludes to Georgiana's engagement to Mr. Bingley and lastly by Lady Catherine de Bourgh who thinks that Georgiana is a very proficient musician.

1.5. Costumes

Not only did the screen players change the events of the plot, but also the time setting: the original story is set at the end of the XVIII century, in the 1790s, following a Regency style clothing. The clothes that the Bennet women wear are

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

instead typical of the 1820s or 1830s' hoop skirts and huge puffed sleeves. Women are "visually ridiculous in their unmistakably antebellum, *Gone with the Wind*-style costumes".¹³⁹ The result of this arbitrary change made by the costume designer, Edith Head, was that the dresses were "fantastically extravagant". Harman ironically remarks that "when Darcy and Elizabeth sit together on a bench, it is not pride nor prejudice which seems to keep them apart, so much as their clothes".¹⁴⁰

Moreover, the costume choice was undoubtedly influenced by the great success of Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* 1939 adaptation (distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer as well), in order to attract more audience with this trick and let the Bennet girls appear more as Scarlett O'Hara rather than their true characters. The parallelism would have been utterly explicit if the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer could have starred Vivian Leigh as Elizabeth and Clark Gable as Darcy. Other speculations and rumours about the movie claim that the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was facing a desperate bankrupt before producing the film. These rumours were also confirmed by the actors themselves. According to Greer Garson, the costumes they used were recycled from *Gone with the Wind* and not only explicitly inspired to them in order to imitate its success.¹⁴¹ In addition, according to Ann Rutherford, Lydia's actress, all the reel of Technicolor film was consumed for *Gone with the Wind*, hence the need of shooting the movie in black and white.¹⁴²

When the pressbook was released, it was possible to find considerable pride in its lines regarding the accuracy of the costumes, claiming that "the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Research Department consulted *Ackermann's Repository of Art and*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁰ Harman, *cit.*, p. 216.

¹⁴¹ IMDB <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032943/trivia?tab=gf>> viewed on 19 March 2013.

¹⁴² IMDB <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032943/trivia>> viewed on 19 March 2013.

Fashion, 40 volumes outlining English fashion, furnishing, and architecture from 1809 to 1829".¹⁴³ Although the costumes choice may be much debatable, the movie seems to invite the audience to look at the costumes rather than through them, as it was typical of films of the 30s and 40s.¹⁴⁴ It may appear that the extremely excessive costumes aim to distract from the narrative and please the eye. To support this thesis is the scene after the crisis between Elizabeth and Darcy during the party at Netherfield, which

begins with Elizabeth watering a window box in what appears to be a tailored dress. The dark color might be deemed to reflect her mood, but this interpretation is undermined by her deliberate pose and the extravagance of the costume. The camera moves out to reveal huge sleeves, dramatically slashed in black and white, with contrasting cuffs and a matching striped skirt and then shows Jane and Charlotte, equally elaborately dressed, attending to a group of puppies.¹⁴⁵

The pressbook, which it has been claimed to be highly accurate thanks to the Research Department, erroneously refers to Elizabeth as the eldest of the five sisters.¹⁴⁶ May be because of this big mistake that for the role of Elizabeth starred a visibly older actress.

Although the story is pleasantly entertaining, the novel readers may not be satisfied with this first adaptation, primarily because of the different interpretation of Elizabeth and Darcy relationship. The compression of time and events and the absence of some important characters reduce their story to a mere, long-lasting flirtation without any actual evolution and maturation, falling in love with one another after both are changed respectively by the other.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁴⁵ Christina Geraghty, *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptation of Literature and Drama*, Rowman&littlefield, 2008, pp. 36-7.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

2. *Pride and Prejudice* (1995)

For decades, the 1940 film has been the only adaptation of an Austen novel and it seemed “totally sufficient”.¹⁴⁷ With the passing of time and the increasing of mass culture, a new kind of tolerance developed towards the “multiplication of treatments in the media” which led to the production of a larger number of versions of a same book, adaptation of a subject or of a popular story.¹⁴⁸ In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, the numerous screen transpositions have regarded mostly television series. The series experience could be compared to the reading of a book, since the plot is split in instalments which provided long pauses before the story could go on, giving the time to reflect on what had happened and what will come next.¹⁴⁹ Following the same typology, at the end of the ‘80s a *Pride and Prejudice* revival gave Sue Birtwistle the chance to produce her own adaptation. “I know what I’d like to do: *Pride and Prejudice* and make it look like a fresh, lively story about real people”, she said while looking for an adapter.¹⁵⁰

Acclaimed by the fans as the most accurate and faithful adaptation, the BBC mini-series is maybe the best version of *Pride and Prejudice* on the screen or, at least, the “definitive” version,¹⁵¹ becoming the judgement metre for next attempts.¹⁵² After seven minor TV transpositions and after fifty years from the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer *Pride and Prejudice*, this is still considered the most successful edition so far and the merit of it is amenable to Andrew Davies’ script and likewise to Colin Firth’s Mr.

¹⁴⁷ Harman, *cit.*, p. 260.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁵⁰ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. v.

¹⁵¹ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Darcy, who have contributed to the birth of a phenomenon baptised by the press as “Darcymania”,¹⁵³ which was seemingly coexisting with the “Austenmania” phenomenon as well.¹⁵⁴

Produced by Sue Birtwistle and directed by Simon Langton, it is clear at the beginning that they want to part from the previous television series made on videotape. They want to film it, in order to shoot scenes full of energy and spurring freedom, otherwise difficult to represent recording in a studio. Although being the dominant medium for television, videotape does not serve drama, “it always looks undernourished; it’s too present, too literal. Unpoetic”.¹⁵⁵ Thanks to the filming opportunity, they are able to represent costumes, locations and interiors with much more accuracy than their predecessors. The passing of time is conveyed by the change of seasons and the corresponding change in costumes.¹⁵⁶

The series is divided in six episodes lasting approximately 327 minutes altogether and originated aired starting on the 24th of September till the 29th of October 1995 on BBC One. Originally, Andrew Davies said he had thought to write the script for five episode, but the needs of television required only four, six or seven episodes.¹⁵⁷ Thus, he found a different strategy in order to fill six episodes. Despite the initial problems, he knew how to structure the episodes. Using his words, he wanted “to ensure that each episode opened as vibrantly as possible and ended as strongly as possible – ideally at a key turning point in the story. Overall the first three episodes lead to Darcy’s arrogant first marriage proposal, which Elizabeth rejects;

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁵⁵ Birtwistle Sue, Conklin Susy, *The Making of Pride and Prejudice*, BBC Books/Penguin Books, London, 1995, p.v.

¹⁵⁶ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁵⁷ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 2.

the last three episodes lead up to his heart-felt second proposal, which a Elizabeth joyfully accepts”.¹⁵⁸

The series soon attracted the media attention even before they started filming. Originally, Sue Birtwistle reminded Davies that the story is “about many things, it’s principally about sex and it’s about money: those are the driving motives of the plot”¹⁵⁹ and Davies himself repeated this concept in an interview. Subsequently, titles like “Sex romp Jane Austen” hit newspaper headlines, announcing that the upcoming version would have full frontal nudity and daring sex scenes. What Birtwistle and Davies really meant was that “Darcy staring at Elizabeth across a room is exciting, that Darcy and Elizabeth touching hands the first time they dance is erotic”.¹⁶⁰ However, they assured their production free and easy publicity.

2.1 Synopsis

The first episode starts with the rich Mr. Bingley settling down at Netherfield Park with his sisters, his brother-in-law and his close friend Mr. Darcy. The whole neighbourhood nourishes great expectations about him and particularly Mrs. Bennet is excited at the idea that one of her daughters might get married to him. At the first Assembly ball, Mr. Bingley gets close to Jane Bennet, whilst Mr. Darcy despises Elizabeth Bennet, who, since then, will think poor of him, especially after the gathering at Lucas Lodge. When Jane receives an invitation to have dinner at Netherfield with the Bingley sisters, Mrs. Bennet urges her to go on horseback because it is going to rain. Accordingly, Jane gets sick and is confined at Netherfield

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. v.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

for a few days. Elizabeth goes and visits her, spending two nights there as well, although she is not able to stand being in the same room with Mr. Darcy and she rejoices when she and Jane finally leave.

At the beginning of the second episode, Mr. Bennet informs that he has received a letter from his cousin Mr. Collins, to whom Longbourn is entitled after he dies. The clergyman soon arrives. On their way to Maryton, the Bennet sisters make a new acquaintance, Mr. Wickham, a soldier from the militia. Elizabeth finds out that Wickham and Darcy were childhood friends and this increases her disdain towards Mr. Darcy. During a ball at Netherfield, Elizabeth receives an offer to dance from Mr. Darcy and they have a brief confrontation about Wickham. The day after, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth who firmly refuses.

The third episode starts with unbelievable news that Mr. Collins has proposed to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend, and that she has accepted him. Despairing news reach Longbourn again, informing Jane that the Netherfield party has left and will not come back very soon. She then decides to go to London with her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners, in hope to find Bingley, who appears to ignore her instead. At the same time, Elizabeth goes to Kent to visit Charlotte, who now is Mrs. Collins. She is also introduced to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, her cousin's patroness and Mr. Darcy's aunt. At Rosings Park, she meets again Mr. Darcy and his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, from whom she learns that Darcy saved a friend from a risky marriage. She realises that it regards Mr. Bingley and Jane. Unexpectedly though, Mr. Darcy visits her at Hunsford twice and, on the second occasion, he proposes to Elizabeth. Offended by his manners, Elizabeth rejects the offer.

The fourth episode opens from the previous scenes. Mr. Darcy looking upset and in haste, comes back at Rosings Park and then spends the night writing a long justification letter which he delivers the very next day to Elizabeth. She learns about what has happened between him, Wickham and his young sister Georgiana. He also confesses he was responsible for separating his friend from her sister, because he did not trust her feelings. After reading the letter, Elizabeth decides to return home, as Jane also does. She partially confesses what happened in Kent, but avoids to mention Mr. Bingley and the reasons which pushed him to leave her. Few days later, Mr. Bingley allows Lydia to leave for Brighton as company for Colonel Forster's wife, despite Elizabeth strong oppositions. Elizabeth too decides to leave the country with the Gardiners. Thus, one day the party reaches Pemberley, Darcy's large estate, and surprisingly she sees Mr. Darcy again before leaving.

In the fifth episode, Mr. Darcy appears more gentle and good-mannered, so much that his politeness increases when he invites Elizabeth and the Gardiners to visit Pemberley again. Elizabeth then meets Georgiana for the first time and encounters once again Mr. Bingley. Unfortunately, she receives dreadful news from Jane about Lydia's elopement with Wickham. Mr. Darcy is there when she explains what happened, but eventually they part, because she needs to be home. Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Bennet go to London at once, looking for Lydia. Only after many days and researches and thanks to Mr. Gardiner, the Wickham and Lydia are found and forced to marry.

In the last episode, the newly married couple visits Longbourn before leaving for the North, but the young girl briefly mentions Mr. Darcy's involvement. Elizabeth then finds out from Mrs. Gardiner that it was Mr. Darcy who found her

sister and arranged the wedding. Mr. Bingley is back in the neighbourhood and receives his friend's blessing, so he can propose to Jane. Lady Catherine de Bourgh instead is disappointed to know that her nephew may be engaged to Elizabeth and pays a hostile visit to her, forbidding her to enter in such engagement, but Elizabeth refuses all her conditions. When Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy meet again, she thanks him for helping Lydia and admits that her feelings for him have completely changed. The episode ends with a double ceremony in the winter, with Elizabeth marrying Mr. Darcy and Jane marrying Mr. Bingley.

2.2. First Scenes

The first episode opens with Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy galloping across the countryside till they reach Netherfield. Mr. Bingley asks for his friend's opinion about it, eventually deciding to purchase the property that very same day, despite Darcy's weak encouragement. The camera then moves to Elizabeth, who observes from far away the two gentlemen. Subsequently, she runs downhill to return home, so the audience can see Longbourn and its inhabitants. She exchanges an understanding glance to her father through the library window and enters the house. Lydia and Kitty are the first sisters to be seen, while they are quarrelling as usual for an apparel. Mrs. Bennet, who is complaining about her nerves, stops the quarrel in Lydia's favour and then calls over her two elder daughters, Jane and Elizabeth. The Netherfield news is heard only the next day after mass and, ironically, Elizabeth quotes the novel's incipit relating to Mr. Bingley, even though she maintains that "For a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" rather than introducing her thought with "it is a truth universally acknowledged". Davies is

aware that such a line would have sounded quite pompous on her mouth, more typical of her sister Mary.¹⁶¹

By introducing men first, this opening anticipates the mood of the adaptation and the intentions of the scripter. Throughout the episodes there are more scenes with only men, something which contrasts with the novel. Jane Austen “famously never included any scenes in which a young lady could not be present”.¹⁶² In addition, the contrasting characters of the two men, one impulsive and the other critical, immediately prepare the audience for Mr. Darcy’s poor opinion of Elizabeth at the Assembly ball, when he says that Netherfield is “pretty enough, I grant you” and that Elizabeth is “tolerable, I suppose”.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, their conversation about taking Netherfield “anticipates the compromises of the novel’s ending, with both men having ‘to settle somewhere’ in spite of a society that can be perceived as ‘savage’”.¹⁶⁴ Andrew Davies’ justification for showing Bingley and Darcy at that moment is “to show them as two physical young men” and that they are like “young animals on their big horses”.¹⁶⁵ The sequence also aims to let audience get the sense of money and the difference between their incomes: without using words and dialogues, Davies offers an implicit comparison between Longbourn, nowadays likely considered very desirable, and Netherfield Park, at least twenty times bigger than the Bennet’s property, and gives the idea of how rich Mr. Bingley is if he can afford such expense.

¹⁶¹ Giddings Robert, Sheer Erica, *The Classical Novel. From Page to Screen*, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 79.

¹⁶² Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁶³ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 3.

Elizabeth's choice to run, which may also be stimulated by the sight of the two unknown men riding on horseback, expresses her vitality, not only of her mind, but also of her body. When she is at home, the relationships within her family are clearly showed with a few scenes or spoken lines. Elizabeth appears closer to her father, who recognises her wit, while Lydia and Kitty are two silly girls. Lydia in particular is encouraged by her mother, being her favourite daughter. No wonder that Mrs. Bennet will forgive her everything. Yet, Mrs. Bennet herself needs Jane and Elizabeth's support since they are the two most sensible among her girls.

2.3. Main Cast

"Casting all the parts in the production was a huge task",¹⁶⁶ said Sue Birtwistle. Firstly, she and Davies started to cast the actors for Darcy and Elizabeth and their choice eventually fell upon Colin Firth¹⁶⁷ and Jennifer Ehle.

Colin Firth was a rising star in the 1990s and "there can scarcely have been a woman or girlchild unaware of the minutiae of the life of TV's Mr Darcy (BAAn)".¹⁶⁸ Cartmell underlines how "it's difficult to find any review of Firth's later films without the seemingly obligatory reference to Mr. Darcy".¹⁶⁹ After the success of *Pride and prejudice* (1995), he starred in varied films, such as *The English Patient* (1996), *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2004), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004). In these latter

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁷ Colin Firth (born in Grayshott, 1960) is a British actor. Born to academic parents, trained at Chalk Farm Drama Centre, he made his West End debut in *Another Country* (1982) as a Communist sixth-former, reprising the role in the film (1984).

¹⁶⁸ McFarlane, *The Encyclopedia of British Film. Second edition*, BFI Methuen, London, 2003, p. 233-234.

¹⁶⁹ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 75.

movies he portrayed again a Mr. *Mark* Darcy, most probably thanks to his interpretation of the original *Fitzwilliam* Darcy, becoming a sex symbol. His utter and remarkable achievement arrived when he won the Academy award 2010 for Best Actor for starring King George VI in the Best Picture award winner *The King's Speech*. Curiously enough, before accepting the role for the BBC *Pride and Prejudice* production, he was prejudiced on interpreting a character from a book he had never read, because "it would probably be girls' stuff".¹⁷⁰ He then read Davies' script and found it remarkable, getting more anxious and unsure about interpreting a fascinating Mr. Darcy, for he did not "feel [he was] right for Darcy. [He did not] feel [he] would be able to make him what he should be. He [Darcy] seemed too big a figure somehow".¹⁷¹

Jennifer Ehle¹⁷² won the 1996 BAFTA for playing "a sexy, intelligent Elizabeth Bennet in the BBC TV adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*".¹⁷³ Since that success, she has played different roles for both cinema, television and theatre. She won another BAFTA for her role of Constance Lloyd Wilde in *Wilde* (1997) and Tony for her Broadway performance in *The Real Thing* (2000). In an interview, she recalled how much she loved Elizabeth Bennet when she read the novel as a young girl and pretended to be her.¹⁷⁴ Accordingly, when she was called for the audition, she wanted so much to be cast that she "cheated a bit".¹⁷⁵ Since she is blonde and

¹⁷⁰ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 97.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁷² Jennifer Ehle (born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1969) is a British actress, Central School-trained.

¹⁷³ McFarlane, *cit.*, p. 206-507.

¹⁷⁴ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

generally Elizabeth is imagined dark-haired, she dyed her eye-brows and did not washed her hair in order to look less fair. She succeeded in her purpose.

The problem for the casting was not only to find the leading actors, but to find the five Bennet girls, since their ages range from 15 to 22 years, and they are all important parts, especially Elizabeth, Jane and Lydia. Birtwistle and Davies could avoid one of the critiques raised against the 1940 adaptation, where a too old and mature Greer Garson had starred. Moreover, they were looking for “wit, charm and charisma, but also for the ability to *play* that period”.¹⁷⁶ As a matter of fact, not everyone was able to fit in the role in a costume drama because they appear too close to the 20th century. They were lucky enough to find Colin Firth, since “people like [him] are quite unusual in that they can play most decades quite easily; there is very little that he can’t tackle”.¹⁷⁷ After casting the Bennet sisters, the make-up artists were given the task of contrasting the actresses. For example, Elizabeth’s style was simple and unadorned, but on the contrary they wanted Jane to appear more Greek, because it was a popular style in the 1810s. Susannah Harker, playing Jane, was gifted with natural straight and beautiful features which were perfect for the aim. Caroline Noble, the make-up artist, had only to dye Harker’s hair in a lighter blonde, in order to contrast the dark wig which Jennifer Ehle had to wear.¹⁷⁸

2.4. Text and Adaptation

One of the advantages to shoot an episode series is that film itself lasts longer and the scriptwriters can avoid to cut certain scenes in favour of others. As Andrew

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Davies explains, “*Pride and Prejudice* has been done as quite a short movie, but you leave out some very important things doing it at that length. Because the book is so tight – her plot works just like a Swiss clock and doesn’t have any flabby bits in it – everything counts. [...] I was jolly pleased we were able to get it all in”.¹⁷⁹ Since originally Davies considered him able to write a script for five episodes, though obliged to do it for four or six instead, he preferred to add original scenes not present in the novel, but that could have been imagined by Jane Austen. Some examples may be recognised in the introduction scene and in some flashbacks or letters transpositions that the author had only alluded to. “What is the justification of spending money if you’re just going to produce a series of picture alongside the dialogue of the novel?”¹⁸⁰ Thus Davies justifies himself in having add an original touch to *Pride and Prejudice*.

According to the screenwriter, the adaptation is largely faithful to the novel. The dialogues are genuinely respected because Davies believes that Jane Austen wrote “some of the most delightful dialogue in literature”.¹⁸¹ Therefore their goal is “to remain true to the tone and spirit of *Pride and Prejudice*”,¹⁸² with the exception of those cuts to the dialogue which Davies reluctantly was obliged to do in order to fit everything in fifty-five minutes. Moreover, the expressions on people faces often can say much more than pompous and pedantic dialogues.¹⁸³ Nonetheless, it is possible to notice a few differences in the script’s language, such as the more frequent use of the contracted verbal forms or more modern expressions, in order to

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.

“make the dialogue sound like something that could be spoken in the early nineteenth century, but also something you wouldn’t think terribly artificial if it were spoken now”.¹⁸⁴ The result is that Davies’ dialogue “was imbued with energy and his whole approach was to make the characters real”.¹⁸⁵ And yet, despite Davies’ effort, Jennifer Ehle thinks of them as “the hardest dialogue I’ve ever had to learn. Shakespeare is a doddle compared to Jane Austen”.¹⁸⁶

The sequence order is respected as well, though Davies’ personal touch is visible only in few additional scenes which serve to give a larger account of the characters’ situation or of the facts that happened in the past. For instance, in the first episode, audience may comprehend Mr. Bennet’s desperate financial situation because he is seen calculating his low incomes. He has not been able to save money for their daughters, so they need a good marriage. Jane and Elizabeth’s inclination towards love and marriage is emphasised during their discussion in Jane’s bedroom after the first ball. Then, while she is at Netherfield, Elizabeth is the object of Mr. Darcy’s glance, who has just had a bath. Before the Netherfield ball, the easy-going Lydia runs through the corridors in her nightdress, encountering a very embarrassed Mr. Collins. Once again, Mr. Darcy is shown taking a bath into a lake, but this time it happens after he rides to Pemberley. He wears a wet shirt when he encounters Elizabeth, so the scene expresses more uneasiness between the two protagonists. When Lydia elopes with Mr. Wickham, few scenes show their accommodation in London, where “poor Lydia” did not look “at all miserable”, although the audience

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

can imagine that Wickham is regretting his “passionate impulse”.¹⁸⁷ By explicitly representing the two lovers in London, it is possible to show Mr. Darcy’s effort to find them as well, only because of the love he feels for Elizabeth. Later, he is seen alongside Mr. Bingley, when he avows that he was wrong about Jane and rhetorically gives him his blessing to the marriage (“Do you need my blessing?”).

It is worth considering how the letters are dramatised. As it is known, Jane Austen has written a large quantity of letters in her life and letters form an important part of *Pride and Prejudice*. Adapting them is one of the “biggest technical difficulty in adapting the book”.¹⁸⁸ Davies has to use different strategies. Sometimes, the characters are shown eagerly curious while reading their content aloud, using the same words of the novel or only summarising. In other occasions, the adapter chose to show a projection of their content on the screen. For example, Mr. Collins’ presentation letter shows him leaving Hunsford for Longbourn and introduces the rude Lady Catherine. Miss Bingley’s letter announcing that the party had left Netherfield Park is partially read aloud by Jane to Elizabeth and partially read with Caroline’s voice over, when showing the party gathered at Mr. Darcy’s house in London. This scene introduces Georgiana Darcy amiably smiling to Mr. Bingley. Jane’s letter from London shows her visiting Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst and their disappointment in the event, despite Jane’s candid opinion that they are just “a little out of spirits”. The turning point of the novel, Elizabeth’s realisation of how much she is prejudiced towards Mr. Darcy, takes place when she reads his justification letter, which is described by Jane Austen as “two sheets of letter paper, written quite

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

through, in a very close hand” (PP, 191) and runs across almost seven pages. Accordingly, this sequence occupies most of the fourth episode alternating both flashback and invented scenes and it illustrates Darcy and Wickham’s childhood, Wickham’s low inclination to be a clergyman or to respect his chastity vows and his attempt to elope with the innocent Georgiana. Lastly, an overview of the Bennet family at the Netherfield ball is projected through his eyes. On the contrary, Mr. Collins’ naively rude ‘mourning’ letter, which is sent after Lydia’s elopement, is omitted and replaced by a visit of the Hunsford cousin himself at Longbourn.

The fidelity to the original source text is kept until the end with few, tolerable exceptions. For instance, when Colonel Fitzwilliam talks to Elizabeth about Mr. Darcy he does not mention Georgiana, even though this small detail helps Elizabeth to value Mr. Darcy’s letter immediately trustful. In addition, the newly married Lydia’s line about taking Jane’s place at table because she is a married woman refers instead to the priority in entering the house. Later, instead of Mrs. Bennet, it is Mr. Bingley who invites the girls for a walk to Maryton in order to be with Jane. The last sequence shows the double marriage and for the viewers the story ends there. There is no reference to the last chapter of the novel, although two short shots show Lady Catherine’s disappointment while staying at Rosings Park and Lydia’s marital life in the company of an already bored Wickham, which expresses Jane Austen’s final vision of her characters. To crown the happy ending of the novel, the last picture is a stop frame of Mr. and Mrs. Darcy kissing on their chariot.

This adaptation focuses more on the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth. Although the original novel is addressed to women and, accordingly, it is a story focused on Elizabeth, this mini-series may be seen as a story about Darcy and

Elizabeth.¹⁸⁹ According to Davies, the central motor of the story is “Darcy’s sexual attraction to Elizabeth”.¹⁹⁰ Her wit, her vitality and her sharp tongue, her challenging behaviour towards him represent the reason for him to eventually fall in love with her, despite her connections and family. At this stage, it is important to analyse Mr. Darcy’s behaviour through the numerous camera frames. He does not smile, he hardly expresses his thoughts, he is a mystery and the audience is not able to say when he actually falls in love with Elizabeth. Certainly, he already feels slightly uneasy when she is a guest at Netherfield, as it suggested during the scene where they chance to meet in the playing room and he is playing alone at the billiard. Mr. Darcy had already praised Elizabeth’s eyes to Miss Bingley, but when he faces her alone he limits himself to a stiff politeness.

The scripter’s care was to show a different Darcy indeed. Despite his being “stiff and buttoned up the whole time”,¹⁹¹ he meant to show him during his spare time in short backstage scenes in order to give audience the idea that he could also emanate liveliness and enthusiasm about something like the Bennet sisters. Mr. Darcy is shown riding, both with Mr. Bingley or alone, shooting, fencing, taking a bath at Netherfield before looking at Elizabeth from the window and eventually swimming in a lake on his Pemberley grounds. Andrew Davies has realised that “in spite of being a popular novelist and screenwriter for numerous productions, he’ll probably be best remembered for putting Mr. Darcy in a wet shirt”.¹⁹² The scene is largely appreciated by the audience. Furthermore, it may be curious that those who have not read the book previously are “often shocked to discover that the lake

¹⁸⁹ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁰ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p.3.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁹² Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 9.

sequence is not in the novel”.¹⁹³ This may be one of the reasons for which Jennifer Ehle’s acting and gestures appear unusual for the scene, since she has no genuine reference in the text. According to Pidduck, Elizabeth’s reaction is closer to that “of a late twentieth-century western corporeality”.¹⁹⁴ Despite the screenwriter’s original idea to have the male protagonist entirely strip off, Mr. Darcy’s partial strip before swimming appears “more tantalising and exciting to viewers”.¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, in Davies’ mind, the swimming sequence at Pemberley is “a good illustration of how visual storytelling can communicate as much about a character as a literary description, though in a different way”.¹⁹⁶ The sequence takes place during Elizabeth’s visit of Pemberley alongside the Gardiners. The estate’s housekeeper shows them a portrait of a charming and smiling Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth struggles to figure out if that representation could ever be real. At the same time, while he is riding home, Mr. Darcy decides to take a bath into the lake, since he is sweaty and heavy breathed for the fatigue. Not only does Elizabeth realise that Mr. Darcy can be portrayed in a different way, but also the audience notices that the proud nobleman is just a young man with many responsibilities and he can sometimes have faults. This partial nudity may also suggest his interiority and a way to get more intimate with him.

Colin Firth, said that Davies’ script helped him during the filming. He acknowledged that the novel was more “a vastly enjoyable story” without the sense of “academic reverence” it was used to be.¹⁹⁷ Firth also comprehends Darcy’s inner

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁹⁴ Irvine, *cit.*, p. 150.

¹⁹⁵ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 71.

¹⁹⁶ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

self that Jane Austen had not deep developed. He realised the reasons behind Mr. Darcy's proud behaviour. For instance, when Mr. Darcy first appears at the Assembly ball he despises Elizabeth for a specific reason. Mr. Bingley has just proposed him to dance with Jane's "less attractive sister", without realising that he has offended his friend. Mr. Darcy replies "She's okay, but not good enough to tempt me" (PP, 13), but he's really saying is "Look, I'm supposed to be better than you, so don't give me the plain sister. I'm not even going to consider her".¹⁹⁸ And after the first, false step, Mr. Darcy notices Elizabeth for she is not intimidated by him and glances upon him without fear. He used to be the one giving others cheeky looks, so Elizabeth's glance represented something new in his life.

It has been pointed out that this adaptation tends to highlight more Mr. Darcy's figure, although the action is seen through Elizabeth's point of view. She is the novel's heroine with whom the female audience identify and with whom they empathise. Therefore, Davies' task was to make sure that the character who had obtained the world's affection and admiration could also conquer the audience thanks to the same characteristics present in the novel. One aspect of Elizabeth's liveliness is that she often runs, goes through the countryside and generally is fond of walking. Thus, her energy is not morally but also physical. According to Davies, this side of Elizabeth in the XIX century could be a "coded way" of Jane Austen to tell that she has sexual energy as well. An unaware Mr. Darcy may be attracted also by this, since "he is used to some very artificial females. Here's a natural one, who runs round,

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

gets her feet muddy, says what she thinks, sticks up for herself and it turns him on!”¹⁹⁹

Perhaps one critical aspect of this adaptation is the infantilisation of Mrs. Bennet. Deborah Cartmell considers her childish behaviour and “cartoon-like” movements mostly annoying, increasing the ridiculousness of the character, almost desexualised in baby-like dresses.²⁰⁰ It is clear that in the confrontation, Mr. Bennet is superior to his wife, giving more credit to the theory that, despite Davies’ denials, this version places men before women, both physically and metaphorically.²⁰¹

2.5. Historical Accuracy

The screenplay and the choice of the actors were only one part of the paramount work behind the production of a costume drama. As the designer Gerry Scott recalled in *The Making of Pride and Prejudice*, the arrangement of the scenarios, the costumes and every other aspect which would have served to make appear the whole production perfectly natural and real, was a difficult task.²⁰² The filmic result was obtained also thanks to the effort of a specialised team who has studied in advance the specific world created by the author and has tried to accurately reproduce its places and characteristics.

The producers decided to set the story in 1813, which is also the publication year of the novel. Though less than two centuries have passed, it was very difficult to find every object used in that period, unless in museums. As Gerry Scott maintains, although they had all the time and money in the world, it is impossible to be utterly

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰⁰ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 67.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁰² Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 35.

and perfectly accurate. Eventually she decided to simply take something that had the “flavour of the period”, since it was important to “grasp the spirit of the time”.²⁰³ Thus, the designers tried their best with the make-up or looking for cloth patterns closer to the original of the time.

A meticulous research job was done in order to highlight the social and class difference in the novel. Jane Austen kindly gave many details about money and incomes. Readers know that Mr. Bingley has “four or five thousand a year” (PP, 6), Mr. Darcy “ten thousand a year” (PP, 12) or that Lady Catherine’s “chimney-piece alone had cost eight hundred pounds” (PP, 74). In order to contrast and emphasise these differences, the designers have chosen to pay attention to the food on the table or to other objects commonly used on daily bases such as a pianoforte. Every house had an instrument, but the finest piano is Mr. Darcy’s new present for Georgiana at Pemberley, followed by the piano at Rosings Park and, lastly, the cheapest is the instrument played by Mary at Longbourn. The same is true of the carriages and the number of horses.²⁰⁴

Keeping in mind the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer adaptation with the extravagant and unusual costumes or the make-up and hairstyle of a different time, it is easily noticed the difference with the sober costumes that the protagonists wear or the diligence with which the Regency hairstyle is reproduced. It follows that Dinah Collin, the BBC costume designer, and Caroline Noble, the hair and make-up artist, took pains to dress and make-up the Bennet girls or Mr. Darcy. Noble has the luck to find source pictures of the period in museums, so she can more easily design the

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

hairstyle. However, those actors who have not the appropriate hair colour or length, like Jennifer Ehle, have to wear very natural wigs. In this way, it is easier to contrast Elizabeth's dark wig to Jane's fair hair. Additionally, the model for Lady Catherine's whole appearance is Queen Caroline, as she appears in James Lonsdale's portrait, dated back to 1820.²⁰⁵

Mostly important is the costume design. Dinah Collin recalls how "frightening" has been for her to realise that she had to find all the fabric and sew the gowns herself since "the early 1800s rail was empty". On the contrary, the rail of clothes from the 1850s and 1860s, like the costumes worn by Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier, "went on forever".²⁰⁶ Collin's next decision was to assure the actors some clothes in which they could appear as much natural as possible. Accordingly, Elizabeth's costumes are comfortable allowing her to move easily. For her, Dinah Collin chooses colours "that had an earthiness to them",²⁰⁷ with a lot of browns, in order to reflect the practical aspects of her character. Unlike in the previous adaptations, Jennifer Ehle's Elizabeth is often seen wearing plunging necklines, "contributing to the rewriting of the novel in a thickly veiled sex-romp format".²⁰⁸ Warm colours are also reserved to Mr. Bingley because of his likeable and friendly character, contrasting the dark green and grey used for Mr. Darcy. Colin Firth expresses the wish to appear "saturnine, but [does not] want to wear black".²⁰⁹ The gentlemen certainly had a lot of different coats, but the general idea is to highlight their social status in the wealth of their houses rather than with clothes,

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁰⁸ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 8.

²⁰⁹ Birtwistle, *cit.*, p. 52.

although this does not concern Caroline and Louisa Bingley. Brighter colours, silk and laces adorn their large wardrobe, contrasting the simplicity of the Bennet girls' gowns. The comparison suggests the idea that "the Bingley sisters wear the equivalent of Gucci".²¹⁰ Although the cowl does not make the monk, the costume design aimed at reflecting the characters' personality.

A further aspect that is worth mentioning is music. A team was engaged in the search of information about the period, so that the right dances and choreography could be performed. The music is also important to contrast the social standing between Maryton's inhabitants and Netherfield's tenants. It is needed to create a "great contrast of sound",²¹¹ as Carl Davis explains. The music is already written and arranged by him, but the sound of Maryton assembly room is intended to be rougher and cruder, played by a trio of real village musicians with their authentic instruments. Accordingly, the Netherfield ball has a larger orchestra, presumably requested by Miss Bingley from London, with "more sophisticated arrangements".²¹² The contrast between the two balls is projected in the choreography as well. Even though the guests are supposed to have the same dances both at Maryton and at Netherfield, in the first ball the dancers move in a more popular attitude than during the second one, since the guests want only to enjoy themselves. During the second special event they are much more concerned with elegance and composure. Thus, it is possible to listen to faster dances in jig at the first ball, then repeated at Netherfield, but with a remarkable difference in style.²¹³

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

3. *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

The first film adaptation of Jane Austen's novels was *Pride and Prejudice* in 1940, followed by the other works' adaptations both for television and for cinema. As a matter of fact, Jane Austen's novels have found more chances for television, since there have been fewer featured film adaptations. There was a first *Emma* adaptation in 1948, followed by another in 1996. *Northanger Abbey* had two TV film transpositions in 1986 and then again in 2007. The only film adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* was the film directed by Ang Lee in 1995, the same year of the BBC *Pride and Prejudice* airing. This was also the year of the first TV film of *Persuasion*, which was followed by another in 2007. Lastly, it was high time that *Mansfield Park* had been adapted in movies, the first in 1999 and the second in 2007. This means that, except for the numerous adaptations for television, *Pride and Prejudice* only featured film was the one produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. At least until 2005, when the young director Joe Wright adapted Jane Austen's famous novel for his debut on the large screen.

Ten years after the successful BBC mini-series, Wright and Deborah Moggach, the scriptwriter, decided to distinguish their version from the previous and most successful ones by setting the plot at the end of XVIII century, when the novel was first drafted, in spite of the early XIX century, when the book was published. According to Deborah Cartmell, the movie "uses celebrity status in the form of Keira Knightley as Elizabeth, and, to a lesser extent, Judi Dench as Lady Catherine, to

draw in the crowds”,²¹⁴ like Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier had done six decades before.

The adaptation highlights the close relation between nature and characters. This especially concerns Elizabeth who wears gowns in earthy colours. This version also emphasised the poor situation of the her family, in contrast to the BBC adaptation, which has been defined by Moggach as “the muddy hem version”.²¹⁵ However, Wright showed more affinity to the 1995 Ang Lee’s *Sense and Sensibility* adaptation, since Elizabeth personalities could be split in the sensitive Elinor and the sensible Marianne. His attempt was clearly visible by comparing the two DVD covers, which are “both in yellow and green shades with two pictures split by the film’s title, with Keira Knightley in the same profile shot of Emma Thompson (Elinor) in the earlier film”.²¹⁶

3.1. Synopsis

A small town in Hertfordshire is shaken by the news that a young, single nobleman has finally purchased the prestigious property of Netherfield Park. Mrs. Bennet, mother of five young women, cannot help hoping to marry off one of her daughters to Mr. Bingley, their new neighbour.

She finally meets him at the Maryton Assembly ball, alongside his proud friend, Mr. Darcy, and his snub, unmarried sister. Mr. Bingley is soon attracted by the elder sister Jane, while Mr. Darcy offends Elizabeth Bennet, unaware that she is listening. That is the beginning of two different relationships. Jane and Mr. Bingley

²¹⁴ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 11.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

fall in love, although unaware of their respective feelings, whilst Elizabeth's hostility towards Mr. Darcy increases day by day. Moreover, she meets a soldier from Colonel Forster's regiment in Maryton, a certain Mr. Wickham who claims to be one of Mr. Darcy's old family friends, but he was deceived by him and he has lost his inheritance.

Unfortunately, the main problem for the Bennet family is that Mr. Bennet's property, Longbourn, cannot be inherited by a female line. Its heir is actually one of his cousins, Mr. Collins, a clergyman. In order to help them in the future, Mr. Collins does not hide his intention to marry one of his fair cousins. Jane at first, then Elizabeth becomes his favourite.

The whole party is gathered at a ball at Netherfield Park, during which Mr. Darcy invites Elizabeth to dance and she unwillingly accepts. They argue about Mr. Wickham, who has not attended the ball, and Elizabeth does not hide her hostile feelings. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bennet enthusiastically praises Jane and Mr. Bingley, sure of his imminent marriage proposal and shows off her indiscreet behaviour. To the eyes of their hosts, especially to Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley, the Bennet family behaves reprehensibly and ridiculously, except Jane and Elizabeth.

After the ball, Mr. Collins is persuaded to propose to Elizabeth, but she disappoints her mother by rejecting him. At the same time, Jane receives news informing her that the Netherfield party has left for London and that they are not meant to come back soon. In addition, Mr. Collins has proposed to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's unromantic best friend. In order to visit the newly married couple, Elizabeth leaves for Hunsford, in Kent, while Jane visits London with Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, hoping to see Mr. Bingley.

At Hunsford, Elizabeth is invited to dine at Rosings Park, Mr. Collins' patroness' enormous property. Lady Catherine de Bourgh is also Mr. Darcy's aunt and in fact Elizabeth finds him there the very first evening. Thanks to the frequent invitations to Rosings Park, they meet more often. One day though, while attending Mr. Collins' mass, Elizabeth finds out from Colonel Fitzwilliam that it was Mr. Darcy to prevent Mr. Bingley's engagement to Jane. Now aware of what has happened, she strongly and angrily refuses Mr. Darcy's proposal. Later at night he presents her with a letter where he justifies himself and Mr. Wickham's failed attempt to elope with his sister Georgiana.

Elizabeth goes back to Longbourn, and so does Jane, who has never seen Mr. Bingley in London. While their younger sister Lydia leaves for Brighton with Colonel Forster's wife, Elizabeth starts a journey through the country with the Gardiners. They also visit Pemberley together and there she surprisingly meets Mr. Darcy again, along with his sister Georgiana. During the vacation, Elizabeth receives news from home, implying that Lydia has eloped with Mr. Wickham. She and the Gardiners rush back home to support the rest of the family.

Soon after, Lydia and Mr. Wickham are back at Longbourn and married. During lunch Lydia reveals that Mr. Darcy had found them and paid for the wedding. After they leave, the news that Netherfield Park is occupied again spread through the village. Subsequently Mr. Bingley visits Longbourn and then proposes to a tearful Jane. On the same night, Lady Catherine visits Elizabeth because of rumours concerning her engagement to her nephew. At dawn, a sleepless Elizabeth walks through the country and encounters Mr. Darcy, now feeling differently and in love

with him. They go back together at Longbourn to speak with Mr. Bennet, who unwillingly puts his beloved daughter in the hands of another man.

3.2. First Scenes

It appears that Joe Wright decided to distinguish his adaptation from the previous productions also by emphasising the role of nature in the movie. This is shown immediately in the main title short sequence. The first shot captures a country landscape at dawn and it is possible to listen to birds singing. As the sun rises above the trees, the title “Pride and Prejudice” appears, completely surrounded by the sunlight while a piano music substitutes the birdsong.

In this natural environment, a girl appears and the audience can easily identify her with Elizabeth Bennet. She walks through the countryside while reading a book, which appears “curiously yellowed with age”.²¹⁷ This clearly shows that the movie is an adaptation,²¹⁸ and an attentive viewer could recognise it as Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* itself.²¹⁹ It may also suggest that Elizabeth, besides being an observer and a passionate reader, is even eager to take her life under control, as she demonstrates in future events. Furthermore, it makes clear that Elizabeth is the protagonist and that the story will be seen from her point of view. Then she approaches Longbourn and closes her book with a sigh. The audience follows her across a bridge, while passing through some hanging laundry and farm animals. She allows viewers to be into her life. The camera moves in the inside and it reveals

²¹⁷ Doyle Carol M. quoted in Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 55.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112. Cartmell suggests a comparison to the Disney technique of “beginning a film with the opening of a book which metamorphoses into moving pictures, intimating that the moving images to come will be even more magical than the book it is based upon”.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Mary playing the piano. This seems an attempt to invite the audience to imagine that the soundtrack listened is Mary's production, so that "what seems to be non-diegetic music crosses over to diegetic".²²⁰ Jane is the first to be heard talking, after that she, Lydia and Kitty enter the scene, since she has to reproach her younger and noisy sister. The camera frames the table covered with messy bonnets and sewing kit and then it shows one of the servants while feeding geese and poultry in the courtyard.

Elizabeth looks inside the window, as if she were "set apart from her family in the position of an outsider looking in"²²¹ and then she enters the house. In the background Mrs. Bennet is seen talking to Mr. Bennet. Slowly and gradually both Elizabeth and the audience can overhear the conversation: "My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard? Netherfield Park is let at last. Do you not want to know who has taken it?". Her husband has no choice but to listen, exactly as their daughters are eavesdropping from the door. Elizabeth reaches and joins them, instead of reproaching them. After Mr. Bennet comes out the library, the family gathers in the living-room and the women eagerly try to convince him to call upon Mr. Bingley. Like in the 1940 adaptation, eventually Mr. Bennet admits he has already invited him to the Maryton Assembly ball.

3.3. Main Cast

Keira Knightley played the leading role.²²² She was twenty while shooting, so "not one-and-twenty" (PP, 162), just like the heroine of the novel is. Her long filmography testifies how fast her career has been, although her first, main

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

²²² Keira Knightley (born in Teddington, Middlesex, 1985), daughter of an award-winning screenwriter and an actor. She was on stage since the age of nine for TV spots or small parts.

appearance on the big screen was in 2002, when she played the “tomboy heroine”²²³ Jules in *Bend it like Beckham*. Her fame increased when she was the female leading actress in Disney’s *Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy, from 2003 to 2007. Meanwhile, she portrayed further roles like in the romantic comedy *Love Actually* (2003) and an alternative Guinevere in *King Arthur* (2004). *Pride and Prejudice* was not her first adaptation, since in 2002 she portrayed Lara in the remake of *Dr. Zhivago* for the small screen. Her role as Elizabeth earned her nominations for the Academy Award and the Golden Globe, besides new roles as leading actress. She was also the noblewoman Georgiana Cavendish in *The Duchess* (2008) and Sabina Spielrein in *A Dangerous Method* (2011). Joe Wright wanted her again on set for the role of Cecilia Turner in his adaptation of Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* in 2007 and for Tolstoj’s *Anna Karenina* in 2012. Even though she was often nominated, Knightley has not yet obtain any considerable prize.

The casting of Darcy was especially hard after great names such as Laurence Olivier and Colin Firth. The male leading role was entrusted to the Scottish Matthew Macfadyen.²²⁴ His career seemed to be limited to theatre and television, until Joe Wright wanted him to play Mr. Darcy. If the same role brought fame and honour to Colin Firth ten years before, that is not Macfadyen’s case, despite McFarlane’s expectations.²²⁵ Macfadyen was again on big set for projects like *Frost/Nixon* in 2008, Russel Crowe’s *Robin Hood* in 2010, he was Athos in the latest version of *The Three Musketeers* in 2011 and he stood again by Keira Knightley’s side in Joe

²²³ McFarlane, *cit.*, p. 384.

²²⁴ Matthew Macfadyen (born in Glasgow, 1974) is a Scottish actor. He attended the RADA school and his good training provided him some major roles in TV series such as *Perfect Strangers* (2000), *The Way We Live Now* (2001), *Spooks* (2002), *Secret Life* (2007), *Ashes* (2008) and *Ripper Street* (2012).

²²⁵ McFarlane, *cit.*, p. 441.

Wright *Anna Karenina* in 2012, portraying Stiva, Anna's brother. However these are marginal roles which have not yet granted him eternal fame.

Joe Wright's attempt to attract audience for the box-office appears evident by his engagement of other famous actors for relative minor roles. That is the case of Donald Sutherland (born in Saint John, New Brunswick, 1935) for Mr. Bennet, although it has been observed that at his age, seventy years old, he portrayed a too old father for Elizabeth;²²⁶ Brenda Blethyn (born in Ramsgate, Kent, 1946) for Mrs. Bennet, whose appearance contrasts with her fictional husband even though she was too old as well for portraying the Bennet girls' mother; and finally Judi Dench (born in Heworth, York, 1934), winner of numerous prizes, who portrayed a proud and elegant Lady Catherine de Bourgh, too old for her daughter Ann as well.

3.4. Text and Adaptation

Joe Wright's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* has been recently acclaimed as the third "major opus"²²⁷ related to Austen's novel. Although the script follows quite faithfully the original text, the director has made some changes in order to differentiate his version from its predecessors. Although his decisions did not represent a new arrangement of the story as it was for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer adaptation, they contributed to make slight and subtle differences between the novel and its filmic version. The changes related to the time setting, location scenes, characters' personality along with omissions and new lines. Moreover, in contrast to the BBC series, Jen Camden argues that "the cause of [the] controversial changes is

²²⁶ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 90.

²²⁷ Paquet-Deyris Anne-Marie, "Staging intimacy and interiority in Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*", *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/paquet-deyris.htm>>.

the director's interpretive decision to shift the focus of desire from Darcy to Elizabeth".²²⁸

In Andrew Davies' 1995 screenplay, the object of desire was the male protagonist. Joe Wright seemed to erase the Darcy cult. As Camden observes, "the only moment that might be described as sexualising Macfadyen's Mr. Darcy is when he walks across the moor near the conclusion of the film".²²⁹ Nevertheless, the scene is seen by Elizabeth's point of view, as if the director had wanted the audience to empathise with her while staring at the object of her desire. Camden also highlights three major changes to Austen's text which "simultaneously introduce and limit desire".²³⁰ These are touch, which is associated with sex, the reduction of Wickham's plot and the drastic additions near the conclusion. Concerning and focusing mainly on touch, the first opportunity Mr. Darcy has to touch Elizabeth is when he holds her hand helping her into the carriage, in a "close-up of hands that seems also disengaged from each actor's body".²³¹ This touch almost anticipates their "final pairing, in which Elizabeth quite literally accepts his hands by taking them into her own".²³² Other two scenes in which is possible to observe the same characteristic are when their faces close up to a nearly kiss during Mr. Darcy's proposal and, finally, when they meet in the moor and their silhouettes close to kiss are lighted by the sun rising.

²²⁸ Camden Jen, "Sex and the Scullery: The new *Pride and Prejudice*", *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/camden.htm>>.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 88.

These added scenes serve to “illuminate the sexual subtext of Jane Austen’s novel”.²³³

Deborah Moggach, the screenwriter, declared that her screenplay was “doomed to be overshadowed by Andrew Davies’ 1995 version”,²³⁴ hence the choice to set the film in the 1790s and maybe to make different choices in the script. For instance, when Mr. Darcy and his friends arrive at the Assembly ball, there is a brief glance exchange between him and Elizabeth as if she had charmed him for a moment. This contrasts with Mr. Darcy’s reaction and snobbery with which he will treat her later. However, his attraction to Elizabeth increases quite soon. In the text Elizabeth’s determined answer is given while they are gathered at Lucas Lodge, but in the adaptation this is not possible since the Lucas Lodge ball is omitted. Her reply is heard towards the end of the Assembly ball, when she explains that she likes “dancing, even if the partner is barely tolerable”, also suggesting Mr. Darcy that she has overheard him.

During the Assembly ball evening, Lydia and Kitty tell their mother that the regiments are supposed to reach Maryton the very next day, while in the novel and in previous adaptations the soldiers are already present and are dancing at the ball. The ‘silly’ women then go to Maryton to meet the soldiers, even though only a few days later, thanks to a handkerchief, they meet Mr. Wickham, with whom they enter a shop and walk home. It is along the riverside and not in Maryton main street that the group encounters Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy on horseback. In addition, it is always on the riverside, under a tree and so immersed in nature that Elizabeth slightly flirts

²³³ Camden, *cit.*

²³⁴ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 85.

with Mr. Wickham, while he recounts her his misadventures connected to Mr. Darcy's family.

During Mr. Collins' stay at Longbourn, it is worth remarking that while in the novel it is Mr. Bennet who provokes his cousin by asking: "whether [his] pleasing attentions [towards Lady Catherine] proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study" (PP, 67), in the film it is the young and lively Elizabeth who performs the line. Days later, the news about Mr. Collins' second offer of marriage to Charlotte Lucas is brought by Charlotte herself directly to Elizabeth, who is listlessly swinging on a seesaw. The seesaw's movement serves also to show the weather changing and the time passing, till the moment when Jane leaves for London and Elizabeth for Hunsford. At Rosings Park, she does not wait a day to find Mr. Darcy who will later admit that he came in Kent only to see her. Lady Catherine also does not pay much attention to Elizabeth at the piano. She suggests Charlotte to practice more with the musical instrument in the governess' room.

Mr. Bingley's proposal to Jane does not appear explicitly in the text and it is acknowledged only when Elizabeth reaches them in the drawing room, close to the fireplace. Joe Wright prefers to represent their engagement emotionally and explicitly. After the first visit to the Bennets at Longbourn, Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy make tests for the proposal on the lakeside. The young nobleman comes back to Longbourn and asks to be alone with Jane. Viewers see him move closer to Jane and kneel. The scene quickly and shortly change to the other women of the family and subsequently goes back to a tearfully and happy Jane who replies "Yes... A thousand times yes", before Mrs. Bennet crushes into the room and hugs her daughter. Those who approach for the first time *Pride and Prejudice* may believe

that the line was originally written by Jane Austen and yet they find out that it is not the case. However, the line has not even originally written for the first time by the scriptwriter Moggach. In one of the American sitcom *Friends*' episodes, Ross Geller portrayed by David Schwimmer enters his friends' apartment with the wedding ring he is intended to give to his British fiancé, evoking Chandler's ironic reaction.²³⁵

The episode script describes the exchange:

Ross: All right, here's the ring. (Shows Chandler the wedding ring he plans on giving Emily)

Chandler: (shocked) Yes! Yes! A thousand times, yes!²³⁶

This appears to prove that the line spoken by Jane is not original, but the theatrically way Matthew Perry (Chandler) replies may suggest that he is quoting something else. Already aware that it cannot be Jane Austen, the source should be searched in a previous work. That may be the case of a different American TV-series, *The Family Matters*. One episode shows the protagonist Steve belting out "Yes! Yes! A thousand times yes!" when his beloved Laura invites him to a concert as a date, even though her purpose is different from his romantic expectations.²³⁷ Finally, an earlier source for the scriptwriters may be loosely found in Yoko Ono's 1973 single "A Thousand Times Yes", whose lyrics recite "I said yes, I said yes, I said yes / I prayed a thousand times yes".²³⁸ Although it is not possible to know for sure which quotation has inspired Deborah Moggach, one can assume that her additional line to the engagement sequence was not her original idea.

²³⁵ Episode 4x22, "The One with the Worst Best Man Ever", aired in 1998.

²³⁶ *Friends* script-dialogue transcript. Viewed on 22 March 2013, <<http://www.livesinabox.com/friends/season4/422wbme.htm>>.

²³⁷ Episode 4x15, "A Thought in the Dark", aired in 1993.

²³⁸ "A Thousand Times Yes" is the seventh track of Yoko Ono's fourth album "Feeling the Space", recorded and released in 1973 by Apple Records and produced by John Lennon.

Like the 1940 adaptation, here too Mr. and Mrs. Hurst are omitted, leaving Miss Bingley as Charles' only sister. Maria and Lady Lucas are also absent and so is the ball at Lucas Lodge, compressing all the events as Maryton Assembly ball. Mr. Bingley is portrayed as shy and uncomfortable when he is in Jane's company, and he also appears slightly stupid. A young, solar and unrestrained Tamzin Merchant appears as Georgiana Darcy, who in the novel is shown as largely shy with strangers. However, the deepest changes concern the representation of the Bennets, who are seen by Wright as more benign.

As Barbara K. Seeber argues, in the novel Mr. Bennet is not described as a perfect example of both father and husband, because his marriage often serves as a negative example to his daughters, who, one can assume, have learnt from their parents' mistakes and will live a delightful marital experience.²³⁹ Elizabeth too demonstrates to "had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband" (PP, 228) and recognises his deceits in various occasions, from the beginning of the novel till the end. For instance, Mr. Bennet rejoices in finding out that it was Darcy who paid for Lydia's wedding, because "it will save [him] a world of trouble and economy". But Mr. Darcy was Elizabeth's lover, so Mr. Bennet would offer to pay his debts and "he [Darcy] will rant and storm about his love for [Elizabeth], and there will be an end of the matter" (PP, 357). In contrast, the same scene in the 2005 adaptation shows a very moved father who does not appear ready to part from his favourite and witty daughter. His last line, which concludes the U.K. version of the movie, may be read under a different light. While in the novel Mr.

²³⁹ Seeber Barbara, "A Bennet utopia: Adapting the father in *Pride and Prejudice*", *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/seeber.htm>>

Bennet is “at leisure” (PP, 357) for he must not pay debts either to his brother-in-law or to his son-in-law, Daniel Sutherson’s smiling Mr. Bennet may suggest that he is sincerely glad for his daughter’s happiness and good marriage, though he also knows that he will lose her. In addition, Jane Austen simply shows a father who is easily persuaded by his daughter’s words about Mr. Darcy’s worthiness and replies “If this be the case, he deserves you” (PP, 357). In the script the line “I cannot believe that anyone can deserve you, but it seems I am overruled. I heartily give my consent” shows how Mr. Bennet cannot do anything to avoid the near separation.

Seeker again underlines how “Wright’s Mr. Bennet is an attentive husband as well as a loving father”, who does not laugh at them and rather feels for them. He does never define her girls as the “silliest in the country” (PP, 30) and actively participates in her daughters’ life. At Netherfield ball, he chooses to intervene and stop Mary from playing without being urged by Elizabeth and he is seen later to console and comfort Mary in private. Sally B. Palmer also notices that during the scene of Lady Catherine’s visit “he holds up the light, standing as the protector of his family against this intruder, as his women crowd around him”.²⁴⁰ Sutherland’s Mr. Bennet’s behaviour changes towards his daughters, but also towards his wife. In this version, Mr. Bennet is seen more like an accomplice in his wife’s matching game, since, when Jane is sent to Netherfield in horseback, he comments “Good grief, woman, your skills in the art of matchmaking are positively occult” rather than “if your daughter [...] should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was [...] under your orders” (PP, 32). They both laugh instead, as if they were a team and agreed on

²⁴⁰ Palmer Sally B., “*Little Women at Longbourn: The Re-writing *Pride and Prejudice**”, *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/palmer.htm>>.

every matter. Joe Wright's Mr. Bennet "displays not reprehensible impropriety but kindly indulgence and even solicitousness towards his wife".²⁴¹ He kisses her and smiles even when he mocks her, as a sort of attempt to soften his aspersions. Not least, at the end of the movie the Bennets are seen in their marital bed kissing and rejoicing in Jane's good chance "as a unit rather than drawing attention to the separation between them by making Mrs. Bennet the butt of jokes."²⁴²

Not only has Mr. Bennet's characterization been changed both as a father and a husband, but also Mrs. Bennet's vulgar and selfishness personality changes into a more affectionate mother and wife. Her real concern has always been to see her daughters married off despite their feelings, as it happened when Mr. Collins proposed to Elizabeth. According to director Joe Wright, Mrs. Bennet is "an amazing mother. . . . She'd walk across coals for any of her daughters".²⁴³ It is no wonder that in his adaptation no one faults Mrs. Bennet's behaviour, neither Mr. Darcy during his proposal or in his letter. He only refers to Elizabeth's family in general. Palmer again pinpoints that Mrs. Bennet also accompanies her daughters to Maryton, an event which does not occur in the novel, and during Netherfield ball Mr. Darcy cannot overhear her satisfaction because her behaviour is "played down by showing her as carelessly tipsy, rather than intrinsically loud and presumptuous, a characterization reinforced by showing her with a hangover next morning".²⁴⁴ After Lydia's elopement with Wickham, Mrs. Bennet's laments and complaints do not appear purely selfish. On the contrary, she shows "true maternal grief"²⁴⁵ and worries about

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Seeber, *cit.*

²⁴³ Palmer, *cit.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

her daughters' future. She justifies herself to Kitty stating that "when you have five daughters, perhaps you'll understand". In addition, when Lydia leaves Longbourn as Mr. Wickham's wife, she languidly comments that "nothing is so hard as parting with one's *children*; one is so forlorn without them!" (italic added) in contrast to the original line which substitutes "children" with "friends" (PP, 312), as the real concern of Mrs. Bennet is the loss of company. Nonetheless, the film-makers may have failed in portraying a better image of the mother because of an evident incongruence at the end of the movie. When Mr. Darcy comes to Longbourn to ask Mr. Bennet's permission to marry Elizabeth and her mother does not seem convinced, crying "but she doesn't like him!". This idea certainly is not in her mind when she wants her daughter to accept Mr. Collins' proposal.

It has already been underlined how nature plays a momentous role in Wright's adaptation. Natural elements are present in the scenes even when they were not supposed to be. For instance, Mr. Bennet collects insects such as dragonflies as a hobby, but also takes care of his flowers and plants. A flower is offered to Elizabeth by Mr. Collins instantly before he proposes. Furthermore, certain scenes set in the interior are moved outside and those which Jane Austen set outside in the grounds are set inside. Laurie Kaplan observes that Wright seems to have failed in comprehending the symbolic significance that Austen meant with her choices, because he shows "a lack of regard for Austen's subtext and irony, especially where she has used a particular indoor or outdoor scene to build a thematic network".²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ Kaplan Laurie, "Inside out/outside in: *Pride and Prejudice* on Film 2005", *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/kaplan.htm>>.

The first setting change occurs after Elizabeth rejects Mr. Collins' proposal. In the novel, Mrs. Bennet looks for her husband and summons Elizabeth in the library, which represents his sole refuge from the mess of the family. He shows no interest in the matter, not even if it concerns his favourite daughter's future. The film transfers the scene to the lakeside, where Elizabeth has run. The natural background is evocative, but it fails in determining peculiar traits of Mr. Bennet's character. Furthermore, Kaplan also observes that, even if this scene allows Mr. Bennet to "strike a Byronic pose against the gorgeous watery background, [it] exposes Mrs. Bennet [...] to ridicule: with her petticoats flapping, she is visually and aurally equated with the quacking geese."²⁴⁷

Subsequently, in the text Elizabeth finds out Mr. Darcy's involvement in Mr. Bingley's affairs from Colonel Fitzwilliam during a long walk in Rosings Park's grounds. In the filmic transposition this scene is set in church during the mass celebrated by Mr. Collins, who embarrasses a bored assembly when he refers to the qualities obtained only through the "intercourse" of friendship or incivility. Meanwhile, outside it is raining and thundering. Kaplan observes again that the general mood of the crowded church, which does not allow to concentrate on what is really important, serves only to prepare the audience to Mr. Darcy's proposal.

In the novel, Mr. Darcy visits Elizabeth at Hunsford because she has stayed home after she has discovered the truth about Mr. Bingley for leaving Netherfield Park. Thus "the setting of the scene in a small interior space has the effect of heightening the drama because there is no means of emotional relief—except for

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Darcy to leave”.²⁴⁸ In the film, the location rapidly moves from the church to the exterior of a Greek-like temple, which the audience may assume is found in the immense grounds of Rosings Park. Elizabeth runs in order to find a shelter from the rain and is followed by Mr. Darcy, in a scene that Kaplan considers alike to Heathcliff’s confrontation with Catherine on the Yorkshire moors. The noise of the rain contrasts with the silence present in the room at Hunsford and it nearly underscores lines in the dialogue. However, the thunders’ roar may also be seen as a metaphor for Elizabeth’s rage while she rejects Mr. Darcy or when she tries to justify Jane’s lack of emotions for Mr. Bingley replying that her “sister hardly shows her true feelings for [her]”. It may appear strange that later the delivery of Mr. Darcy’s letter happens by night, “in a narrow room where light from a window falls obliquely on Elizabeth as she stands and reads a line or two and then gazes out”,²⁴⁹ while the text illustrates Elizabeth meeting Mr. Darcy in the woods during a walk and begins reading the letter in Rosings Park’s lane. The letter too is different from the one described by Jane Austen, since the viewers can observe two pages not quite thickly written.

As Mary Chan observes, Elizabeth’s association with nature “is best exemplified (and amplified) by the long, sweeping helicopter shot of [Elizabeth] standing on the precipice of a large cliff, the wind blowing her hair and the sun shining down”²⁵⁰ during her journey in Derbyshire with the Gardiners. However, the final, main inversion of inside/outdoor scenes occurs during Lady Catherine’s visit,

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ Chan Mary M., “Location, location, location: The space of *Pride and Prejudice*”, *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/chan.htm>>.

which takes place at night. Thus further underscoring her indiscretion and rudeness. She decides to meet and talk to Elizabeth in the drawing room instead of choosing the “prettyish kind of little wilderness on one side of [the] lawn” (PP, 333), even though in this way “the uncomfortable comedic effect not only of Lady Catherine’s haranguing Elizabeth in the little wilderness, but of Elizabeth’s triumph over intimidation”²⁵¹ is cancelled.

After this confrontation, Elizabeth rudely speaks to her family, requiring “for once in your life, leave me alone!”. This is the prelude to the end, a sleepless night at the end of which she decides to walk to the countryside, where she eventually meets Mr. Darcy. He has just received the news from his aunt and wears only a flowing overcoat over his open shirt that Cartmell suggests may be a “clear nod to Firth’s Darcy’s famous state of undress”.²⁵² They meet at dawn, with a rising sun which lights their figures similarly to the opening scene. Elizabeth takes Darcy’s hands and kisses them, saying that they are cold, somehow reminding the audience of the cold marble statue found in the Pemberley gallery.²⁵³ They get closer to each other, almost kiss, though still separated by the sunlight.

While European audience are left with Mr. Bennet’s line as closing scene of the movie, the American ending adds an extra scene showing Pemberley at night, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy newly married and presumably after the consummation of their nuptial bed in an

²⁵¹ Kaplan, *cit.*

²⁵² Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 90.

²⁵³ Camden, *cit.* It worth underlining that the Pemberley galleries undergo a 3D adaptation, since the original canvas are substituted by marble statues.

uncomfortable combination of physicality (Elizabeth's stroking of Darcy's bare calf), dramatic landscape (the torchlit grounds of Pemberley), and youthful chatter sealed with a profusion of kisses.²⁵⁴

The couple discusses what Mr. Darcy should call his wife and she replies that "You may only call me Mrs. Darcy when you are completely, perfectly and incandescently happy" while he repeatedly kisses her. The additional scene has raised numerous criticisms from Austen's most intimate fans. Susan Wloszczyna reports that "many of the 450 members of the Jane Austen Society of North America [...] were so taken aback by the unexpected onslaught of mush that even those who liked the movie up until then held their applause. Or broke out laughing".²⁵⁵ The overall opinion claims that the alternative ending does not deal anything with Jane Austen's novel.

3.5. Costumes, Music and Technique

It has been already highlighted that this adaptation has anticipated the period setting to the end of the XVIII century, but the decision appears not to be "an attempt at a revisionist interpretation".²⁵⁶ According to Ann M. Tandy, the reason is derived by Joe Wright's personal taste, because he dislikes the Regency-style dresses, especially the empire waistline. However, the costume designer Jessica Durran has worked to distinguish all the styles worn by the women. For instance, Miss Caroline

²⁵⁴ Dole Carol M., "Jane Austen and Mud: *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), British realism, and the heritage film", *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/dole.htm>>.

²⁵⁵ Wloszczyna Susan, "It was the best kiss, it was worst in 'Pride and Prejudice'", *USA Today* (13 November 2005). Viewed 25 May 2012 <http://www.usatoday.com/life/movies/news/2005-11-13-pride-kiss_x.htm>.

²⁵⁶ Tandy Ann M., "Just what a young man ought to be: the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* and transitional ideas of gentility", *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.27, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/tandy.htm>>.

Bingley wears the latest and more glamour creation, while “Mrs Bennet’s dresses are earlier than 1797, and Lady Catherine’s are even earlier, because those two would have best clothes from previous years in their wardrobe”.²⁵⁷ The difference in fashion choice is emphasised at the Netherfield ball, showing and contrasting Mrs. Bennet’s and her generation’s dresses “in the tightly laced bodices of eighteenth-century fashion, decorated with gauzy scarves at the neckline”²⁵⁸ and three first examples of proto-Regency dresses in Jane, Elizabeth and Caroline. As Christine Gerathy notices, the general impression is that the costumes “are deliberately worn looking and much more comfortable in appearance” and, like in the BBC mini-series, Elizabeth can be admired more often in earthy colours, “reflecting her naturalness and lack of ostentation”.²⁵⁹ Despite the claim of realism in the costume choice, Cartmell pinpoints how “it is unlikely that a woman of this period could wander around so freely without a hat, or meet a suitor at dawn wearing a dressing gown”.²⁶⁰ She also criticizes Mr. Bennet’s representation with his perfect and white teeth, or Mrs. Bennet’s characterization, which appears far from a XVIII century’s woman.

Dario Marinelli’s original soundtrack represents a further element of analysis, since his music offers a subtle and personal interpretation of what viewers are admiring on the screen. The Italian composer has chosen pianoforte melodies for accompanying Elizabeth’s life, as it is immediately understandable at the beginning of the movie, with Mary Bennet’s performance. Even though readers already know that Mary is not a very accomplished musician or artist, the same melody can be subsequently heard at Pemberley, while Elizabeth is wandering through the galleries.

²⁵⁷ Jessica Durrant quoted in Tandy, *cit.*

²⁵⁸ Tandy, *cit.*

²⁵⁹ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 86.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

This time the instrument is played by Georgiana Darcy, a much more accomplished young lady. Deborah Cartmell observes that the parallelism may suggest that “Elizabeth has found another home in Pemberley”.²⁶¹ In addition, it also “calls attention to the magnetic appeal of the pianoforte, as a feature of Austen and in adaptations of her novels, in general”.²⁶² In fact, most of the soundtrack is composed for a piano, except for the balls. The Assembly ball is for noisy and messily crowded, with a country band who prefers playing jigs for commoners, far from being elegant like the Netherfield ball. Despite this, the pleasant sound of pianoforte does not accompany the only Elizabeth’s and Mr. Darcy’s dance. For their confrontation on the dance floor a violin solo was chosen, following their movements and humour.

The Netherfield ball represents an occasion for Joe Wright to “focus on the emotional truth of the story”²⁶³ and his tactic is developed by using creative photography and emphasises Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy’s relationship.

When it is time for Darcy and Elizabeth to dance, the camera steps in to re-focus the viewer’s attention from the spectacle of the ball onto the romantic plotline. During Elizabeth and Darcy’s dance, the turning point of their relationship, the camera, with no regard for the basic rules of cinematography, leaves its traditional set up and follows the two in their movements as they whirl and complete the complex figures of their dance. In this scene, the camera periodically “crosses the line,” a cinematography no-no in which, by moving the camera placement more than 180 degrees from the previous location, the character’s positioning from right to left (or vice versa) in the frame reverses. The result is a confused and displaced viewer. This rule is rarely broken in cinematic production in general and almost never in a heritage film.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Durgan Jessica, “Framing Heritage: The role of Cinematography in *Pride and Prejudice*”, *Jane Austen Society of North America* (V.25, n.2, Summer 2007). Viewed 25 May 2012 <<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/durgan.htm>>.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Cartmell also notices that Joe Wright's strategy is his means of communicating the audience that they are watching Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's story and, although they do not know it yet, they "only have eyes for each other".²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 21.

4. Loose adaptations

Jane Austen's achievement is not limited to stage or screen straight representations of her novels. In popular culture her work has often inspired different stories, either for few details or for a complete rewriting of the plot in a different context. Deborah Cartmell wisely suggests that the term "adaptation" does not exclusively refer to the reproduction of the Regency style in a costume drama, but there can also be modernisations of Jane Austen's most famous novels, as it has been happened to Shakespeare's plays as well. For her purpose, Cartmell has invited her students to list some titles which show explicit or implicit borrowings from *Pride and Prejudice*:

- *Lost in Austen*, 2008;
- *Miss Austen Regrets*, 2008;
- *Twilight*, 2008 (book: 2005);
- *Becoming Jane*, 2007;
- *The Jane Austen Book Club*, 2007 (book: 2004);
- *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 2001 (book: 1996);
- *Sex and the City* TV series, 1998- (book: 1997);
- *You've Got Mail* (1998);
- *Pretty Woman* (1990);
- *When Harry Met Sally* (1989);
- Episode of *Dallas* entitled *Pride and Prejudice* (July 7, 1989);
- *Beauty and the Beast* (1987).²⁶⁶

It can be certainly possible to agree or disagree with this list. Or one can add titles of other loose or looser adaptations. However, it inevitably poses the question about "how far an adaptation can go before it ceases to be an adaptation".²⁶⁷ In addition, this further proof demonstrates that certain classics become immortal, evergreen which seem to never bore the audience.

²⁶⁶ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 94.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The attention of the last part of this thesis focuses on three of the latest loose adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, produced in the first decade of the 21st century. These are *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Bride and Prejudice* and *Lost in Austen*.

4.1. *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001)

Produced by Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner and Jonathan Cavendish, the movie was itself an adaptation of Helen Fielding's best seller, whose successful outcome has provided her to write a sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. The result was a British romantic comedy set at the end of the 20th century in London, where Elizabeth's *alter ego* is Bridget, portrayed by the American actress Renée Zellweger. The two male protagonists were portrayed by Hugh Grant, Bridget's boss who represents Wickham, and by Colin Firth as the lawyer Mark Darcy. No wonder which pairing will be true at the end, with the presence of Colin Firth for starring the contemporary Fitzwilliam Darcy. Hence the movie may be considered as a double adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and of the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice*.²⁶⁸

Bridget Jones is a young woman in her early thirties who is still single and worries about her weight. She works at a book publishing company, ironically named Pemberley Press, and she is infatuated with her boss, Daniel Cleaver. The movie opens with her arriving at the New Year party organised by her parents at home, where she is welcomed by her mother, who keeps on suggesting her probable suitors and men to be dated. Here, she meets the son of their neighbours, Mark Darcy, who despises her for their vices of smoking and drinking. Back to work, Bridget starts

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

flirting with Daniel, even though everybody knows he is a womanizer. She then finds out that Daniel and Mark know and hate each other since when Mark has slept with Daniel's fiancée. Their relationship eventually ends when she finds Daniel with another woman and quits her job. Bridget encounters Mark and they start to show feelings for each other. One night, during a party at Bridget's, Daniel visits her to claim Bridget, raising Mark's rage. The two men have a fight which witnesses Mark winner, but that also causes Bridget to chide him for his behaviour. When she is alone, she discovers from her mother the true version about the two men's hostility, blaming Daniel who slept with Mark's Japanese former wife. However, soon Mark has to leave to New York for job along with his attractive assistant. Just when Bridget is ready for leave with her friends in order to mend her broken heart, Mark comes back for her and, although the last, few comedic problems, they kiss.

In the whole plot there are both similarities and differences with the original story. The modernised context could not allow the exact reproduction of some of the Austen's narrative. For instance, Lydia's elopement with Wickham is substituted by Bridget's mother "who disgraces the family through her association with a criminal named Julio who embezzles several families' savings into non-existent timeshares".²⁶⁹ Darcy's help in Bridget's situation occurs when he contributes to her career as a journalist, allowing her to have an exclusive interview with his two clients. The Assembly ball is replaced by a book launch hosted by Pemberley Press and it is worth noticing how interesting would be to let the characters discuss "whether adaptations should be watched as replacement or without knowledge of their literary

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

sources”.²⁷⁰ Bridget’s opinion contrasts with Perpetua’s, her line manager and possibly Charlotte’s *alter ego*,²⁷¹ for she would ban the adaptations while Bridget appreciates the adaptations over the classics.

The connection between the book and the movie becomes more evident during the New Year party, when Bridget overhears Mark criticising her at the Turkey Curry Buffet, clearly referring to Elizabeth who overhears Mr. Darcy despising her at the Assembly ball. Although Mark Darcy becomes “a textbook romantic hero at the close”,²⁷² at first he appears far from being the romantic object of desire because of his snobbery. When his mother offers him a date with Bridget, he replies “Mother, I do not need a blind date. Particularly not with some verbally incontinent spinster... Who smokes like a chimney, drinks like a fish... And dresses like her mother”.²⁷³ Accordingly to Shelley Cobb, Elizabeth is “updated into Bridget [...] through a post feminist lens, in which the heroine feels [...] even more intently the cruelty of Darcy’s words”.²⁷⁴ Thus, the consequence of the words is more penetrating in Bridget’s life and they cause the change for the diary and her personality.

Furthermore, Imelda Whelehan notices that the film accentuates the romantic by “Harlequening” the story:

The fact that Darcy and Bridget’s final encounter takes place in another strangely deserted street reminds us that all romances in formula fiction

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁷¹ Cartmell recognises Miss Charlotte Bingley in Perpetua’s character, but she would be perfectly immortalised in Mark Darcy’s assistant. On the other hand, Bridget and Perpetua’s opposite opinions about adaptations might be a representation of Elizabeth and Charlotte contrasting opinions concerning marriage and love.

²⁷² Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 96.

²⁷³ *Bridget Jones’s Diary* script-dialogue transcript. Viewed on 18 April 2013, <http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/b/bridget-jones-diary-script-transcript.html>.

²⁷⁴ Quoted in Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 97.

occur in a vacuum where work and the other petty commitments of life fall away.²⁷⁵

This aspect would have been impossible to be represented in Jane Austen's novel. Another advantage of this kind of adaptation is that *Bridget Jones's Diary* can be appreciated by the audience even without knowing Jane Austen. Although some knowledge of *Pride and Prejudice* would be necessary in order to catch the subtle references and enjoy more the comedy, it is an example of the classics' evolution in popular era and how two representations of the same work can live and survive completely detached from one another.

4.2. *Bride and Prejudice* (2004)

Another example of loose adaptation which does not require any knowledge of the original source is the romantic musical and Bollywood-style film *Bride and Prejudice*, produced and directed by Indian director Gurinder Chadha. This adaptation moved the setting in contemporary world, travelling through India, London and the United States, starring an international cast. For Lalita Bakshi, the Indian Elizabeth Bennet, it was chosen the Indian actress and former Miss World Aishwarya Rai, while the American William "Will" Darcy was New Zealand actor Martin Henderson. Moreover, it shared some typical features of the Bollywood production, such as the musical and dancing element or the tradition of Indian cinema according to which the protagonists never kiss and which "pleasingly accords with the decorous romances of Austen's novel".²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 98.

²⁷⁶ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 101.

The movie opens with a shot of the Golden Temple, which references to a traditional and religious icon of good luck,²⁷⁷ accompanied by a prayer. The credits still roll when Lalita appears on the screen, while taking notes in a book and sat on the back of a tractor in a field immerse in the sunlight. The scene intertwines with the shot of a plane landing, from which Darcy, Balraj (Bingley) and Kiran (Miss Bingley) descend and they subsequently take a taxi driving through the streets of Amritsar. Poor Will Darcy appear disillusioned for not being in New York, but his holidays with his Indian friends will last only two weeks. However, Balraj is Indian only by birth and actually lives in London. This detail makes him more appealing for Manorama Bakshi (Mrs. Bennet), who wishes her eldest daughter Jaya (Jane) to meet and conquer the visiting foreigner. Thus Lalita's first line comments her mother's urgency, saying that "All mothers think that any single guy with big bucks must be shopping for a wife", to which an embarrassed and amused Jaya replies that she actually hopes he is.

They all meet at a common friend's wedding and the following events loosely follow the original novel, although in a different context and according to the Bollywood style. Will Darcy works at the family hotel business, while Balraj is a barrister, as Mark Darcy in *Bridget Jones's Diary* was. Mr. Collins becomes Mr. Kholi, a cousin who had found his fortune in the States and ultimately marries Lalita's friend Chandra. Lalita also meets Johnny Wickham and is initially attracted by him, but her younger sister Lakhi will almost elope with him. Despite some misunderstandings, Jaya and Balraj eventually get engaged. Will Darcy shows up during his friend's wedding and plays the traditional drums, in order to demonstrate

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Lalita that he is ready to accept Indian culture. In the end, the two married couple leave riding elephants down the street of Amritsar.

As Cartmell underlines, “Gurinder Chadha’s relinquishment of ‘Pride’ calls attention to the retained ‘Prejudice’ in the film’s title, focussing on a more serious side of the story and one that effortlessly adapts to the 21st century”.²⁷⁸ The contrast between the different cultures is made evident in the opening sequence which shows Lalita and Darcy in opposite situations and attitudes. However, the director claimed that she had no intentions to question the interracial relationship as a serious issue in India or to criticise arranged marriages, since she shows a happy one between the Kohlis.²⁷⁹

Certain details have been changed in order to be properly adapted to the Indian and modern context. For instance, instead of not being very skilled in playing the piano, Maya, the Indian Mary Bennet, entertains her guests with an exotic but tacky dance which threatens to never end. Lady Catherine’s character is not Darcy’s aunt, but his mother. Towards the end of the movie, Darcy and Wickham fight and it is worth noticing that it happens in front of the British Film Institute in London while projecting the Bollywood film *Purab Aur Pachhim* (1970), which is one of the first Bollywood films about Indians in the UK. The scene is also a reminiscence of the fight between Hugh Grant and Colin Firth in *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. The fight is not the only reference to a previous *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation. Mr. Bakshi quotes Mr. Bennet from the 1940 version when he ironically comments that “perhaps we should have drowned one or two at the time of their birth”, while his wife is

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

complaining that their four daughters are still unmarried, although the line is not present in the novel.²⁸⁰ Lastly, Cartmell emphasises an imperceptible detail which is the presence of *Pride and Prejudice* itself, as the novel that Lalita is reading on the beach while she is in the company of Darcy and Kiran, before meeting Wickham. As in Joe Wright's adaptation, the presence of the book is "a consistent feature of postmodern adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* that [...] makes Elizabeth both like the author, in control of her story, and like the audience".²⁸¹

4.3. *Lost in Austen* (2008)

"It is a truth generally acknowledged that we are all longing to escape. I escape always to my favourite book *Pride and Prejudice*. I've read it so many tomes now the words just say themselves in my head and it's like a window opening, it's like I'm actually there. It's become a place I know so intimately I can see that world, I can touch it. I can see Darcy."²⁸²

Jane Austen's canon can be considered second only to Shakespeare, since her fictions have been transposed to popular culture not only in straight or loose adaptations, but also by re-interpreting her life or with episodes of time travelling.²⁸³ If for Shakespeare the two opportunities were respectively the movie *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and BBC's *Doctor Who* episode *The Shakespearean Code* (2007), for Jane Austen there has been *Becoming Jane* (2007) and *Lost in Austen* (2008). The four-episode series by ITV features a time travel story which involves an exchange between Elizabeth Bennet and her 21st century fan Amanda Price. Cartmell observes that "the series poses some interesting questions about the contemporary fascination

²⁸⁰ Seeber, *cit.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁸² Series introduction.

²⁸³ Cartmell, *cit.*, pp. 20, 102-103.

with Austen adaptations and adaptation in general, and the 21st century nostalgia for the pre-feminist world that Austen's books seem to represent",²⁸⁴ also thanks to the manners, courtesy and language of Austen's men. The rich cast presents Gemma Anterton in the role of Elizabeth, Jemima Rooper in the role of Amanda or new Elizabeth, Alex Kingston for Mrs. Bennet, Elliot Cowan for the ever beloved Mr. Darcy and Lindsay Duncan for Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who finally has the right age in order to appear actually Anne's mother rather than grandmother.

The series starts with a shot of Amanda, a bank clerk who lives in London with her boyfriend. Her first statement is "I have no right to complain about my life", followed by different chaotic scenes, memories of her life, and other claims which conclude with "I do what we all do, I take it on the chin, and patch myself up with Jane Austen". She is seen in the tube while reading a book and the voiceover continues "[...] it's just sometimes I'd rather stay in with Elizabeth Bennet". The introduction of Amanda's character emphasises her desire to escape into a better world, perhaps justified by "the coarseness of the 21st century world that surrounds her".²⁸⁵ Amanda is lured by a better world which she assumes to be much friendlier and homelier than the present: the past.

Everything changes for Amanda when one night she hears noises from her bathroom and finds a girl who claims to be miss Elizabeth Bennet. The next day they meet again and Amanda realises that, in the parallel world of *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel has just started, since Mr. Bingley has recently moved to Netherfield Park. At that point, the two girls exchange positions and Amanda lives at Longbourn while

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Elizabeth stays in contemporary London and finds an occupation as a nanny. Even though Amanda makes every effort to be sure that the plot she knows may progress as it should, she manages only to mess it. When Mr. Bingley visits Longbourn, he is attracted by Amanda's low-cut blouse and does not admire Jane, who does not receive any invitation to Netherfield but will be pushed by her new acquaintance to ride thither with the risk of dying for grippe. Amanda also gets engaged to Mr. Collins trying to save Jane, but eventually Jane, the obedient daughter, is married to her cousin. Luckily for them, the marriage is not consumed and it can be solved for letting her marry to Mr. Bingley in the end. Before their happy ending, Mr. Bingley desperately tries to elope with Lydia and fights with Mr. Bennet, who is close to dying. Hence Amanda goes back to contemporary London in search of Elizabeth. She finds her completely used to her new life, but manages to bring her home and they all nurse Mr. Bennet. Finally, the father realises that Elizabeth is happier in London and let her go after offering her the "unhappy alternative", Jane and Mr. Bingley plan to leave for America and Amanda decides to stay in the book world alongside Mr. Darcy at Pemberley.

The series reveals a new side of each character, unknown to the fans and to Jane Austen as well. Elizabeth had a pig as special friend along with Charlotte. She and Charlotte had promised to become missionaries in Africa if they would end up being unhappy. Miss Bingley is a lesbian who plans to marry Mr. Darcy anyway for his wealth, but eventually will notice Wickham. Georgiana truly loved and tried to seduce Wickham, who is not portrayed as a deceiver and a gambler, but he is loveable and truly helpful to Amanda. Lydia is not foolishly persuaded by Wickham and she is sexually aware from the beginning of the story. Mr. Bennet's first name is

revealed to be Claude and Mrs. Bennet's stupidity changes into malice, however together they are able to reply to Lady Catherine with the manners she deserves and eventually find again the passion in their marriage. The suggestion that what viewers see could not be found in the novel is given in each episode's opening sequence, where Amanda throws away the book, and, as a confirmation of it, by the third episode Amanda rips up the book and throws it into a lake at Pemberley.

Like other typical post-modern adaptations, this series refers in many scenes to previous *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations rather than strictly to the novel. The connection is more explicit to the BBC version, in episode fourth, when Gemma Anterton's Elizabeth searches pictures of her future husband on the web and she finds Colin Firth's photos for his role in the 1995. References to the British actor run throughout the series, like when Amanda talks to her mother at the beginning of the first episode, but especially when Amanda has "a postmodern moment"²⁸⁶ and asks Cowan's Mr. Darcy to take a bath in the lake, in order to reproduce Firth's famous Darcy in a wet shirt. Furthermore, in the final episode, Amanda mirrors Bridget Jones rather than Elizabeth Bennet when her boyfriend Michael and Darcy have a brief fight in contemporary London. Lastly, it is worth reckoning with the role of the costume gowns. An attentive viewer might be able to notice that some of the dresses that Amanda and Elizabeth wear were the costume scenes for Jennifer Ehle and Susannah Harker in the 1995 version. Here the function of the costume is to "recall other adaptations, covertly inviting the viewer to contemplate the process of

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

adaptation itself” but also to draw attention to the fact that there can be only a single source text, while the references may be multiple.²⁸⁷

A further key of interpretation may be represented by Elizabeth’s ability to adapt herself and easily settle into London. In the final episode, she and Amanda book a taxi but, since Amanda has no wallet with her, Elizabeth pays with her own credit card, maintaining that she was “born out of time and out of place”. The real suggestion might be that she was a modern woman already in Jane Austen’s mind, representing a new kind of heroine in who every female reader wanted to be identified with, being strong, smart, beautiful and determined. On the other hand, , Mr. Darcy represents the example of the ideal, male object of desire both in the past and in the modern era.²⁸⁸ His manners and charm still fascinate women throughout the centuries, so that they despise and never easily appreciate what they already have, like Amanda with her boyfriend Michael. And yet, it may be arguable that Amanda’s passion is merely “a fabricated one, based on modern re-readings”.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁸⁸ Serra, *cit.*

²⁸⁹ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 106.

Conclusions

Starting from the assumption that “a filmic adaptation is automatically different and original due to the change of medium”,²⁹⁰ all these adaptations are faithful to the original text. When shooting a movie, directors face different choices which concern budget, actors, locations, crew and so forth. For the same reason, in the main title certain formulae such as “inspired by”, “based on” or “free adaptation of” may be found, the aim being to warn the audience that they will not find an effective equivalency between the text and what they are seeing. Even if five or more directors with similar aesthetic inclination and artistic background tried to represent their version of *Pride and Prejudice* or any work of fiction, the resulting movies would be closely comparable, although with many differences which distinguish each film from the other. This phenomenon, defined “automatic difference”,²⁹¹ contributes to the endless production of adaptations of a same novel.

According to the editors of *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, the boom of Austen’s fictions on screen started in the United Kingdom with the 1995 “wet-T-shirt” of the BBC series.²⁹² Yet, more copies of a certain work do not always mean that the product is being devaluated. On the contrary, copies may contribute to “create the prestige of the original”.²⁹³ Altogether they form a larger hypotext for the filmmakers who wish to approach for the first time the related source. These copies are also part of a larger intertextual reference of texts which generate other texts in an infinite process of “recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of

²⁹⁰ Stam Robert, Raengo Alessandra (edited by), *Literature and Film. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, Malden MA, Blackwell, 2005, p. 17.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 127.

²⁹³ Stam, *cit.*, p. 31.

origin”.²⁹⁴ For this reason, it is certainly possible to assume that *Pride and Prejudice* owes much to the film and television industries, but the film and television industries

owe at least as much to the novel for its contribution to the seemingly unstoppable genre of adaptation *qua* adaptation and to the enduring genre of romantic comedy, both of which appropriate the alleged escapism identified by readers of Austen’s fiction.²⁹⁵

Before reviewing a new *Pride and Prejudice* version, cinema critics often take for granted that the best one is the acclaimed BBC mini-series and that the story is “nothing new”.²⁹⁶ Nonetheless, it is also possible to be entertained by a story already known and which does not represent anything new in the filmic panorama thanks to the already mentioned automatic difference. In the case of Jane Austen, who, like Shakespeare, is considered almost a “national treasure”,²⁹⁷ her work still attracts readers and viewers. Both directors and producers know that her name signifies quality, stability, culture and tradition. Moreover, her stories share the same characteristics of a romance combined with comedy:

Take a heroine who’s intelligent, good-humoured and loyal, but also judgmental, stubborn and a bit of a smarty-pants. Make the hero seemingly unavailable, beyond the heroine’s reach in status, wealth, looks or eligibility. Give her embarrassing relatives, talkative friends, rich-bitch rivals and an unwanted suitor. Create a misunderstanding that keeps the leads apart but is quickly cleared up with an honest explanation or last-chance declaration of love. Voilà, you have a Meg Ryan/Sandra Bullock/J.Lo movie.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 24.

²⁹⁶ Travers Peter, “*Pride and Prejudice* Review” on *Rolling Stone* (3 November 2005). Viewed 14 May 2012 <<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/pride-and-prejudice-20051103>>.

²⁹⁷ Cartmell, *cit.*, p. 126.

²⁹⁸ “*Pride and Prejudice* Review” on *Empire Magazine*. Viewed on 14 May 2012 <<http://www.empireonline.com/reviews/reviewcomplete.asp?FID=10080>>.

This scheme provides many successful stories not only in Hollywood. Hence it is not surprising that the Austen plot may also be revised in numerous adaptations (since the first attempt in 1940). It is well-known that cinema industry takes and makes its own only promising stories. They can come from classic or contemporary novels, historical figures biographies, comics book or newspaper stories, but what is important is how much profit can be gained from them.²⁹⁹ In this respect, Jane Austen represents a gold mine.

²⁹⁹ Stam, *cit.*, p. 45.

Appendix

Characters and actors (1940)



Elizabeth Bennet



Jane Bennet



Mr. Darcy



Mr. Bingley



Lydia Bennet



Mr. Wickham



Mr. Bennet



Mrs. Bennet



Miss Bingley



Lady Catherine de Bourgh



Charlotte Lucas



Mr. Collins

Scenes from the Movie (1940)



First shot of Maryton Main Street



The chariot chase between Lady Lucas and Mrs. Bennet at the beginning of the film



The Assembly ball



The Bennet women at Maryton Assembly ball, wearing their extravagant gowns



Elizabeth overhearing Mr. Darcy while talking about her



Netherfield park



The archery scene



Elizabeth watering the flowers from the window before Mr. Collins' proposal



Rosings Park's interior



Mr. Darcy's affectionate proposal



Mr. Bingley's proposal to Jane



Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's kiss

Gone With The Wind (1939)



Clark Gable and Vivienne Leigh starring as Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara



One of Scarlett's gowns

Characters and Actors (1995)



Elizabeth Bennet



Mr. Darcy



Jane Bennet



Mr. Bingley



Mr. Bennet



Mrs. Bennet



Lydia Bennet



Mr. Wickham



Miss Bingley



Georgiana Darcy



Charlotte Lucas



Mr. Collins



Lady Catherine



James Lonsdale's Queen Caroline

Scenes from the Series (1995)



Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy admiring Netherfield and discussing the purchase



Jane returning home, at Longbourn, after having seen the two men on horseback



The Bennet Daughters



Maryton Assembly ball



Elizabeth overhearing Mr. Darcy while talking about her



Mr. Darcy taking a bath at Netherfield, before staring at Elizabeth through a window



Lydia, running in a nightdress room by room, encounters Mr. Collins



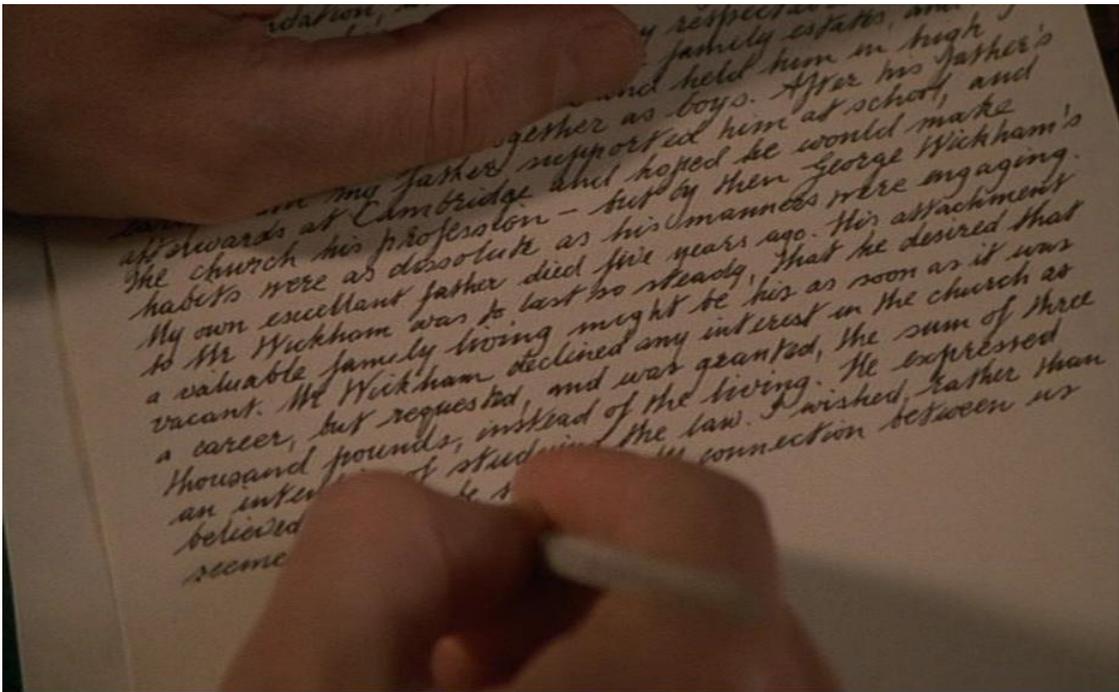
Netherfield ball



Rosings Park



Elizabeth after rejecting Mr. Darcy's proposal



Mr. Darcy's justification letter



Elizabeth in Derbyshire



Pemberley



Mr. Darcy's famous 'wet shirt' sequence



Elizabeth entering the room immediately after Mr. Bingley proposed to Jane



Double wedding



Final kiss. End of Episode Six.

Characters and Actors (2005)



Elizabeth Bennet



Mr. Darcy



Jane Bennet



Mr. Bingley



Mr. Bennet



Mrs. Bennet



Lydia Bennet



Mr. Wickham



Miss Bingley



Georgiana Darcy



Charlotte Lucas



Mr. Collins



Lady Catherine

Scenes from the Movie (2005)



Elizabeth reading *Pride and Prejudice* at the beginning of the film



The Bennet women



Longbourn



The Assembly ball



Elizabeth dancing with Mr. Darcy at Netherfield ball



Netherfield Park



Rosings Park



Pemberley



Mr. Bingley's proposal



“What are men to rocks and mountains?”. Elizabeth visiting Derbyshire

Bridget Jones's Diary (2001)



Bridget and Mark meet at the New Year party



Mark and Daniel fighting in front of the restaurant



Bridget's declaration in undergarments at the end of the movie

Bride and Prejudice (2004)



Lalika Bakshi and Will Darcy first conversation at the beginning of the movie



Lalika and Johnny Wickham dancing at a traditional Indian event



Maya Bakshi's dance in honour of their embarrassed guests

Lost in Austen (2007)



Amanda and Elizabeth through the passage in Amanda's bathroom



Darcy recalls Colin Firth's wet shirt, by satisfying Amanda's post-modern wish

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