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Humour and Irony in Jane Austen: novels and film adaptations

Humor a ironie Jane Austenové: Romány a jejich filmové adaptace

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

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Abstract / Abstrakt:

Even though Austen's novels may seem to be a kind of modern fairy-tales, enabling an emotional escape from everyday life to a world immune of contemporary uncertainties, in fact, they are intellectually satisfying for their witty, bitter and critical dialogues and the satire of the authorial commentary. Austen who submitted to the conventions of her age seems to have accepted her position in the narrow society she lived in and yet she looked at it with humour, which in her works often becomes the effect of her irony. Nevertheless, the usage of the means of humour and irony, to comment on the socio-economic position of women and the inner world of women is slightly different in Jane Austen's novels and in the film/television adaptations.

While readers, viewers or critics compare a novel and its adaptation, many of them consciously or subconsciously prefer the originary text above its screen version. Even though sometimes the success of the film overshadows the popularity of its fictional model, films are still regarded the lesser art, incomparable to literature. Films seem to be undemanding when we imagine the effort one has to produce while decoding meanings from fiction. Yet, both fiction and film have become strongly interconnected and almost inseparable. Directors have been able to strike the reading public by their original interpretations of the base texts aiming at reaching for the reality of expression by quite other means than novelists. The visual has proven to be as complicated and challenging for the viewer as the written for the reader.

Deciphering the various types of irony in the Austen's texts and their screen versions allows one to explore the religious morality of the author from which her irony seems to emerge. Austen's characters not only challenge themselves in the ironic discourse conceived by the author but they are also tested by the satire of the narrator. Moreover, irony is often revealed more inconspicuously by the movements, sounds or even silence both in the Austen's novels and the adaptations of them.

Although deeply rooted in her writing, both Austen's morality and the satire with which she lightens her moral views are transformed in the recent film adaptations to fit the expectations of the contemporary audience. Nevertheless, even though it may seem that the contemporary viewer admires Austen's heroines only due to their individualism, projected on them by the filmmakers, he or she may actually feel more enlightened by the set of values so interconnected with the heroine's story. Therefore, the changes made to achieve popularity with the audience seem not to obscure Austen's values.

I přesto, že romány Jane Austenové jsou často chápány jako moderní pohádky, které umožňující únik z každodenního koloběhu do světa zbaveného nejistot současnosti, ve své podstatě nejsou prosty intelektuálního vyžití díky svým duchaplným břitce kritickým dialogům a satirickému komentáři autorky. Austenová, podléhající dobovým konvencím se dokázala spokojit se svým postavením v úzkém společenském kruhu a přece své okolí chápala s humorem, který se v jejích dílech stává důsledkem její ironie. Avšak užití humoru a ironie ke komentování socioekonomického postavení žen a jejich vnitřního světa se částečně liší v austenovských románech a jejich filmových či televizních adaptacích.

Když čtenáři, diváci či kritici srovnávají román a jeho adaptaci, mnoho z nich, ať už vědomě či nevědomky, dává přednost literární předloze a ne její filmové adaptaci. Přestože úspěch filmu někdy zastíní popularitu románové předlohy, filmy jsou stále považovány za druhotné umění neschopné konkurovat literatuře. Filmy se zdají být nenáročnými, když uvážíme úsilí, které je nutné vynaložit k porozumění románu. Avšak literatura a film se v poslední době značně prolínají a stávají se téměř nerozlučnými. Režiséři ohromují čtenářskou obec svými nekonvenčními interpretacemi literárních předloh s cílem dosáhnout reálného vyjádření zcela jinými prostředky než spisovatelé. Prokázalo se tedy, že vizuálně může být stejně komplikované a náročné pro diváka jako psaný text pro čtenáře.

Dekódování rozličných druhů ironie v austenovských románech a jejich filmových verzích nám umožňuje odhalit náboženskou moralitu autorky, z níž její satiričnost pramení. Austenovské postavy svádějí nejen ironické slovní souboje stvořené autorkou, ale jsou také zkoušeny satirickým vypravěčem. Ironie je navíc často vyjádřena i daleko nenápadněji. Je nám vyjevována v pohybech, zvucích občas dokonce v tichu a to jak v románech Jane Austenové tak v jejich adaptacích.

Moralita Jane Austenové a satira s níž onu moralitu odlehčuje jsou, ačkoli hluboce zakořeněny v jejím literárním stylu, v adaptacích transformovány, aby zaujaly současné publikum. Přesto, i když by se mohlo zdát, že dnešní divák obdivuje austenovské hrdinky pouze kvůli jejich individualismu, který je pouhým výplodem filmařovy fantazie, může být publikum také ovlivněno souborem hodnot tolik propojených s hrdinčiným příběhem. Proto můžeme tvrdit, že změny prováděné při adaptaci románů za účelem větší sledovanosti nedeformují austenovské hodnoty.

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1. Introduction

Female reception of Austen derived film adaptations

Recently, the phenomenon of film adaptation has become a popular way of presenting literary texts to a wider audience. So many literary works are being adapted that, at the Oscars approximately three-quarters of the awards for Best Picture go to adaptations¹. However, according to *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, many critics think that when a text is remade for screen use, it should retain all of the original author's ideas. In other words, the adaptation should be true to the base text². These ideas, nevertheless, have become already out-dated in the modern culture of filmmaking. Nowadays, a number of filmmakers use new and imaginative thoughts to enrich the film versions of the literary texts. Indeed, a film theorist, Robert Stam, regards film adaptations as "'readings,' as part of a continuing dialogical process. Eager to distinguish himself from the judgmental and narrow approach of 'fidelity' criticism, he regards both literary and film adaptations equally as not about life, but about art, involved in a complex interchange with a range of other texts"³. By examining this quote, we realize that a film adaptation can present a new interpretation, or so called "critical reading," of the base text.

Since the 1990's, both the Hollywood film adaptations of Austen novels – *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and *Emma* (1996) – and the British Heritage ones – *Persuasion* (1995), *Mansfield Park* (1999), *Pride and Prejudice* (1995, 2005) and *Northanger Abbey* (2007) – have portrayed the Austen heroines as independent, active, and with a sense of bitter ironical humour. Implicitly, a modern viewer perceives the heroines as contemporary female characters. Yet, this feminist portrayal of female is only slightly, if at all, present in Austen's novels. Austen's technique is rather conservative and based on the pursuit of the ideal Christian values thanks to the recognition of which her heroines reach the state of self-knowledge. Therefore, even though it may seem that the contemporary viewer admires Austen's heroines only due to their individualism, mostly conceived by the filmmakers, he or she may actually feel more enlightened by the set of values so interconnected with the heroine's life; the more so that these values such as love and, as Marilyn Butler says, the

¹ Lisa Hopkins, *Recollecting Shakespeare and Austen on Screen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 5.

² Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, eds. "Introduction – Literature on screen: a synoptic view" *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 2.

³ Cartmell and Whelehan "Introduction – Literature on screen: a synoptic view" 3.

“‘natural’ family feeling”⁴ are disappearing from the contemporary society in favour of the profane.

In the early nineteenth-century when Jane Austen, a daughter of a poor middle-class priest, published her six novels – *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (posthumously in 1818) – England was bound by conventions. Therefore, the Austen heroines could speak their mind only in a very negligible manner. According to Rebecca Dickson,

Jane Austen and her friends and relatives complied with early nineteenth-century expectations of women. In general, they were submissive to the wishes of their fathers, husbands and/or brothers, and always behaved with careful attention to the impressions they made on others...[In fact] when Austen was alive, a woman who did not act in a submissive, domestic manner was assumed to be of a lower social order...⁵

Nevertheless, the author’s literary strategy of portraying her heroines has continued to be adored by generations of female readers since the 19th century to the present. Therefore, we may wonder where the reason for Austen’s popularity actually dwells? When writing her novels Jane Austen’s consciousness seems to have fluctuated between two types of heroines: the ones who err and the way towards spiritual reform awaits them (Catherine, Marianne, Elizabeth Bennet, Emma) and the ones who are almost morally flawless exceeding in their values and actions their male counterparts (Elinor, Fanny Price, Anne). The process that seems to have caused Austen’s mind to fluctuate in this way is her own self-scrutiny or self-criticism. As the words of one of her prayers reveal,⁶ she seems to be oscillating between the good will to be better and the understandable tendency to criticize the tiny Christian community she lived in. Similarly, as Marilyn Butler puts it, “ [...] her moral human being wages war with the natural human being.”⁷ The result of this oscillating is the struggle for a life in accordance with the Christian values as well as the brilliant satirical commentary that she uses for all her novels when she realizes that this kind of morally pure life is so often

⁴ Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (NY: Clarendon Press Oxford, 2002) 244.

⁵ Rebecca Dickson, “Misrepresenting Jane Austen’s Ladies,” *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, eds. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001) 48.

⁶ “Incline us oh God! To think humbly of ourselves, to be severe only in examination of our own conduct, to consider our fellow creatures with kindness, and to judge of all they say and do with that charity which we would desire from them ourselves.” *Three prayers by Jane Austen III*, 28 Aug 1996, 4 Aug 2011 <<http://www.mirror.org/ken.roberts/austen.prayer3.html>>.

⁷ Butler 296.

obscured, especially by those who claim to be true Christians (for instance, the gluttonous and grumpy clergymen Mr Grant in *Mansfield Park* or Mr Elton in *Emma* who pretends to be honourable while being insincere etc....). Moreover, Austen's heroines never stay locked within the characteristic she provides them with. Either imperfect or seemingly flawless, they always struggle in the never-ending process of self-evaluation leading towards self-knowledge.

However, when the recent Hollywood (or Hollywood/British coproduction) Austen film adaptations *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and *Emma* (1996) appeared, the producers tried to make the heroines appealing to a large audience and especially the modern female audience. According to Dickson, "America likes its heroines to have no secrets, and since America's film-consumer base is an influential one, American expectations dictate what heroines will be like, even British ones"⁸. Dickson claims here that many film adaptations are shaped to a large extent by the director's and screenwriter's inclination to create a film that would attract the major American public. Therefore, the filmmakers of the adaptations of Austen novels used the little hints of individualism hidden in Austen's writing and made the self-conscious heroine of the novel a self-confident or even feminist and independent heroine on screen. This is the case of the Emma Thompson's adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, which is packed with subtle dialogues commenting on the socio-economic position of women at the dawn of the 19th century. Even though it also contains the portrayal of self-recognition of Marianne as well as Elinor's sense of duty, its outcome is more feminist than the actual novel. Furthermore, the adaptation of *Emma*, starring Gwyneth Paltrow, may be regarded as even more commercial because of the director's choice of a world famous actress for the main part and the decorativeness of the setting and kitschy as well as ahistorical costume designs throughout the film. The filmmakers also try to make Emma more active and independent by adding scenes where she is participating in some kind of an activity such as the archery scene or embroidering, decorating the church, shopping, riding barouche and helping the poor.

The British adaptations *Persuasion* (1995), *Mansfield Park* (1999) and *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) make their heroines even more self-confident, independent, and questioning the defects of their society than the Hollywood films. Even though all of the main characters finally get married, it is as a reward for their outspokenness. "Accordingly," as Voiret points

⁸ Dickson 54.

out, “when Austen movie adaptations offer gentle and soft-spoken heroines, their gentleness and lack of expressivity are often at the very root of their unhappiness”⁹. In *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), for example, Elizabeth Bennet’s independence is depicted in her appearance as well as her freethinking spirit. She is the most rebellious of the Austen heroines although Austen did not intend Elizabeth to be praised for her straightforwardness which was contrary to the contemporary conventions. According to Marilyn Butler, “The trouble with *Pride and Prejudice* is that many readers do not perceive just how critical the author is of Elizabeth’s way of thinking. The meaning is obscure partly because Elizabeth’s thoughts are insufficiently characterized and partly because no character within the novel effectively criticizes her.”¹⁰ Elizabeth walks long distances, argues about her rights, and even refuses marriage in times when one depended on it. Moreover, in the film she reads and she does not bind her hair as a proof of her self-confidence. Possibly, Austen diverted from her conservatism and orthodoxy in *Pride and Prejudice* because Elizabeth was so close to her own identity that she was not able to condemn her faults properly. The author’s satire and cynicism are so well projected on Elizabeth that they seem inseparable from the novel. Accordingly, as Butler observes “No other Austen novel except *Pride and Prejudice* can be accused of the fault most censured by Johnson, that of exhibiting virtues and vices promiscuously mixed, and by this means confusing good and evil.”¹¹ Because of this, Elizabeth actually becomes a heroine whose vices seem to be admired by so many contemporary readers.

Similarly to *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), in *Persuasion* (1995), the depiction of Anne Eliot’s hair is significant for her internal change – the more independent and self-conscious she becomes the more stylishly her hair is combed. Yet, the image that Austen uses in connection with Anne is that of a nut explained by Butler as “– richest at the kernel, made private by its strong defensive exterior”¹². This alludes to Anne’s exceptional inner life but also to the fact that to the outside viewer she appears reserved and not at all at ease like a feminist would seem.

Consequently, Fanny Price, the heroine of the adaptation *Mansfield Park* (1999) directed by Patricia Rozema, is even transformed from a timid heroine in the novel to an

⁹ Martine Voiret, “Books to movies: Gender and Desire in Jane Austen’s Adaptations,” *Jane Austen and Co.: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture*, eds. Suzanne R. Pucci and James Thompson (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2003) 235.

¹⁰ Butler 216.

¹¹ Butler 217.

¹² Butler 278.

autonomous writer with her own nonconformist opinions. Paradoxically, this novel, which contains the most dialogues of all the Austen novels concerning the theme of religion and spirituality contrasted with worldly vanities and sceptical modern philosophies, is recreated by the director to a gospel of independence. In the novel, however, Fanny's self-realization does not lead to personal independence but rather to a greater closeness to God and the values he proposes to be cherished. Butler also observes that "[i]ronically, Fanny's feebleness, which modern readers tend particularly to dislike, is probably a device to make her less perfect, more human, and therefore more appealing [...] the real significance of her character for Jane Austen is not its weakness but its strength."¹³ Patricia Rozema's adaptation also allows for more sexual implications than any other film adaptation of Austen novels, even a lesbian love, which makes the film the most experimental Austen adaptation but also the most diverted from Austen's writing. In fact, as Butler points out, "[Austen] chooses to omit the sensuous, the irrational, the involuntary types of mental experience because, although she cannot deny their existence, she disapproves of them."¹⁴

Among the causes for the open sexual scenes in Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* (1999), is the success of the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* BBC miniseries with Colin Firth, directed by Simon Langton, which has broken the sexual taboo of showing male body as appealing to the female gaze. In other words, since the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* has been shot, the male characters of the Austen adaptations have been portrayed as the objects of female longing. Accordingly, as Voiret noted, the appearance of men in these adaptations appeals to the female gaze and to the post-feminist desire of a contemporary woman for marriage or partnership in general ¹⁵. Implicitly, we may infer that the female audience is targeted, the more so that also the women characters are made appealing and fashionable. In a similar way as the Austen novels, these adaptations present a woman as a subject rather than the object of the male desire. The male characters in both the Hollywood and British adaptations are transformed from dull and unappealing to charming and lovable. According to Devoney Looser, the Austen males in the adaptations are "respectful of the inclinations and opinions of the women in whom they take romantic interest"¹⁶. Thus, the adaptations of Austen's novels, by presenting this kind of male characters, not only achieve to approach closely the

¹³ Butler 248.

¹⁴ Butler 295.

¹⁵ Voiret 229.

¹⁶ Devoney Looser, "Feminist Implications of the Feminist Austen," *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, eds. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001) 173.

female audience but they also appeal subtly to the male one to become more emotionally engaged in relationships.

Consequently, Austen as a voice of the past depicted in the recent adaptations is only partly a return to conservatism, rather, however, implications of her writing allow for a step forward in targeting the feminine audience and making it realize its state of post-feminism. Post-feminist women are those who have already achieved independence over men and are respected as individuals in their work and personal environments. These women become the most likely feminine audience of the Austen costume dramas on screen because as Hopkins points out, “costume drama is invested with the needs and fantasies of the present [...] past is a place where contemporary dilemmas are worked through, identities are tested and are not necessarily resolved in a traditional manner”¹⁷. Moreover, the mixture of Austen’s characterization of her heroines as searching for true values and self-knowledge as well as the slightly shifted filmmakers’ viewing of the heroines as independent and protofeminist makes the films attractive for a contemporary audience. Therefore, the modern feminine audience can identify with the Austen heroines on screen in a similar way as with the female film characters from the recent romantic comedies, which indicates that the Austenian heroine has indeed become modern.

In fact, the recent romantic comedies that are partially inspired by Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* – the British *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001) starring Renée Zellweger and the U.S. *You’ve Got Mail* (1998) starring Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks – seem to have not only substantial budget but also far greater gross in the U.S. than the Austen derived costume dramas. Commercially, the most successful Austen film adaptation is the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility*, directed by Ang Lee and starring Emma Thompson, Kate Winslet, Hugh Grant and Allan Rickman. This is the only Austen film adaptation that won an Oscar, for Emma Thompson’s screenplay. In the U.S., the gross of this movie was \$42,993,774. *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightly and Mathew Macfadyen, earned slightly less: \$38,405,088, and the 1996 *Emma*, directed by Douglas McGrath, earned only \$22,201,883. Unfortunately, the two most experimental British adaptations *Persuasion* (1995) directed by Roger Michell and *Mansfield Park* (1999) by Patricia Rozema, earned a mere \$5,462,325 and \$4,764,741 respectively. When we compare these figures to the gross of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001) - \$71,500,556 and *You’ve Got Mail* (1998) - \$115,731,542, it is clear

¹⁷ Hopkins 230.

that the contemporary romantic comedies are still more commercially successful than any of the film adaptations based on Austen novels, even though neither of these romantic comedies won an Oscar. This suggests that the audience of the Austen film adaptations is not the uncultured mass but rather more specific kinds of spectators.

Essentially, instead of being independent and self-confident, Austen's heroines are self-conscious or at least struggling to reach their self-consciousness by evaluating their actions and the consequences of their actions. In this way they become even stronger than the so-called feminists because they do not search for the faults in others but rather in themselves. Perhaps, they will never reach complete independence, however, similar to Jane Austen, their ends are rather to remain dependant not only on others who can help them to be a better person but also on their own set of values that makes their inner life more spiritual. We cannot detect much feminism or even protofeminism in Austen's novels, however, we still may perceive the relationships between men and women behaving to each other with mutual respect. As Marilyn Butler states, "Austen's heroines are not self-conscious feminists, yet they are all exemplary of the first claim of Enlightenment feminism: that women share the same moral nature as men, ought to share the same moral status, and exercise the same responsibility for their conduct."¹⁸

Jane Austen, even though conservative, does not impose her moral views on the reader – she thinks them right and claims them right because she lives them. In this way she reflects her own life and personal values onto her audience by the use of irony and satire as the modes of communication, as these are connected with her religion the same as the values she proposes to be obeyed. In other words, not only her moral claims but also her satirical cynicism result from her conservative religious background. Precipitate judgement, prejudice and criticism are characteristic features of Austen's narrator as well as of her heroines. As a result of the life in a small Christian community, Austen and her heroines judge and are cynical using irony as the driving force for their dialogues or speeches. On the other hand, in Austen's case, forgiving her characters their faults might mean also to forgive herself for the prejudice her narrative is bound by and from which she tries to break away. To forgive – a so much valued Christian virtue – is what she does for her heroines contrary to other contemporary writers whose "notions of poetic justice" according to Butler "are

¹⁸ Butler xxii. Quote by M. Kirkham

strict and somewhat violent..."¹⁹. Thus, as Butler claims, "It is Jane Austen's way of presenting individual, or more specifically, her scepticism about the subjective consciousness, that distinguishes her from the nineteenth-century novelist. She is a moral writer, but of type that may be antipathetic to the modern layman."²⁰

Even though Austen's novels may seem to be a kind of modern fairy-tales, enabling an emotional escape from everyday life to a world immune of contemporary uncertainties, in fact, they are intellectually satisfying for their witty, bitter and critical dialogues and the satire of the authorial commentary. Austen who submitted to the conventions of her age seems to have accepted her position in the narrow society she lived in and yet she looked at it with humour, which in her works often becomes the effect of her irony. Nevertheless, the usage of the means of humour and irony, to comment on the socio-economic position of women and the inner world of women is slightly different in Jane Austen's novels and in the film/television adaptations. This work shall try to trace instances of irony and humour in the Austen's novels and the films derived from them as well as to find out the difference in the effect of the novels and films on the reader and viewer – the contemporary and especially female audience. Moreover, I would like to ascertain if Austen's humour and irony contribute to the notion that her ideas used in the recent adaptations are timeless. Firstly, the theory of adaptation will be specified to make clear the process of transferring ideas from text to screen. Afterwards, individual novels and films will be explored to specify the types of irony used in them. Finally the conclusions will be made on the basis of the researched material. Above all, the film adaptations since the 1990's will be observed preferably the film adaptations rather than the television ones. The modern Hollywood and Bollywood romantic comedies based on Austen's novels such as *Clueless* (1995), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), *Kandukondain Kandukonain* (2000) or the most recent classical costume adaptations such as *Mansfield Park* (2007) and *Persuasion* (2007) or the TV series *Sense and Sensibility* (2008) and *Emma* (2009) will be excluded from this study because these mostly divert too much from the Austen's ironic style, and therefore the topic cannot be fully explored in them.

¹⁹ Butler 297.

²⁰ Butler 296.

2. Theory of adaptation

While readers, viewers or critics compare novel and its adaptation, many of them consciously or subconsciously prefer the originary text above its screen version. Even though sometimes the success of the film overshadows the popularity of its fictional model, films are still regarded the lesser art, incomparable to literature. Films seem to be undemanding when we imagine the effort one has to produce while decoding meanings from fiction. Yet, both fiction and film have become strongly interconnected and almost inseparable. Directors have been able to strike the reading public by their original interpretations of the base texts aiming at reaching for the reality of expression by quite other means than novelists. The visual has proven to be as complicated and challenging for the viewer as the written for the reader.

Not only novels, but also films are influenced by the three Aristotle's unities of place (a play should be set in only one location); time (a play should only represent happenings of one day; the events of the past are recounted by the characters) and action (only actions and scenes relating to the main plot should be included; any unnecessary subplots should be omitted). Although we may find links to these unities in novels and films, the unities are of course adjusted to the media they are used in. Both novels and films have their own means of conveying a change of location. In the novel a new chapter, the authorial commentary, the narrator or a character let us know that we have moved from one place to another. In a film the change of location is achieved by the way of editing or sometimes a text on the screen helps us to shift in place and time (such as "London 1812" or "5 years later"). Novels are mostly rendered in the past tense whereas films are always told in the present point in time including flashbacks which move the scene to show a past event but again in present narrative. The several means of informing the audience that they are to shift back in time as it is mentioned in the *Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen* are, "for example, the camera moving into close-up, or a dissolve being used, or sound from the 'earlier' period being leaked in as the transition is made."¹ Concerning action, both novel and film usually contain subplots, which distinguishes them from drama as Aristotle saw it.

Moreover, word – spoken, thought or narrated – is the basic form of the novel that challenges the reader's perception. Film, on the other hand, imposes on the viewer so many effects including the subtlety of the *mise-en-scène* (actors in collaboration with their

¹ Brian McFarlane, "Reading film and literature," *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, eds. Cartmell and Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 21.

physical surroundings as manifested to the viewer through camera angle, distance and movement, and lighting²) or the editing and soundtrack that he or she is no less involved in the interpretation of the plot than in the novel. Consequently, as Whelehan points out, "After all, the process of presenting a literary text on film is one in which the stock formal devices of narrative - point of view, focalization, tense, voice, metaphor [or irony] - must be realized by quite other means, and this is where the creative mettle of the adapter is put supremely to the test."³

Novel is obviously not the only genre adaptable to film. Short stories, usually elaborated and extended, form another effective literary mode suitable for adaptation the same as novella which seems to be the ideal filmmaker's choice as it is not so complex as a novel but still more developed than a short story. Dramas, especially the historical and classical ones including Shakespeare's, seem to be adapted and also updated to fit the expectations and interests of the modern viewer. However, sometimes dramas may be too theatrical to be usable for the screen use because dialogue prevails over the introspective characteristic of the main protagonists as McFarlane claims, "'talk' is often seen as the enemy of film; it is not usually a compliment to a film to describe it as 'stagy' or 'theatrical.'"⁴ Moreover, according to Wagner "cinema is at its most convincing when it declines to be a dramatic mode and leans, rather, on its immediate antecedents in the aesthetic representation of reality (or irreality)."⁵ Lastly, the seemingly inadaptable, poems, seem to be adapted, even though the epic or narrative ones are mostly the case.

Therefore, as all these literary genres seem to be adapted, we may imply that narrative is the crucial mode to be transferred from text to screen. Whelehan uses Barthes distinction of the narrative unities to distributional (actions) and integrational or indicies (psychological states and the portrayal of character and location) to comment on the effectiveness of the transfer:

[Barthes] asserts that distributional functions can be to some extent transferred from one medium to the other, since they denote 'story' content and can be depicted audiovisually or verbally - indeed, to change a nucleus (he gives the example of changing a sombre ending to a happy one) would be to warrant the

² McFarlane 22.

³ Imelada Whelehan, "Adaptations: The contemporary dilemmas" *Adaptations*, eds. Cartmell and Whelehan (London: Routledge, 1999) 9.

⁴ McFarlane 25.

⁵ Whelehan 5.

charge of tampering with the original and the film-maker bent on 'faithful' adaptation must, as a basis for such an enterprise, seek to preserve the major cardinal functions. Indices on the other hand – the means by which character information, atmosphere and location are presented - require adaptation since their verbal or audiovisual depiction requires quite different means of representation.⁶

Because in the case of psychological states, characterization and setting, adaptation seems to be inevitable, it is crucial to mention Wagner's distinction of three types of adaptation one of which denies the necessity of adaptation by being too close to the original text. This denial is typical for *transposition*, a type of adaptation that puts "a novel directly [...] on screen".⁷ Commentary and analogy, the two other types, are both based on innovation and alteration and differ only in the extent of the two formerly mentioned. In *commentary* "an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect"⁸ and *analogy* concerns "a film that shifts the action of the fiction forward in time or otherwise changes its essential context; analogy goes further than shifting a scene or playing with the end, and must transplant the whole scenario so that little of the original is identifiable".⁹ These types of adaptation are all based on the presupposition that the substance of adaptation derives mainly and only from a literary text, however according to McFarlane, "we need to realize and allow for the fact that the anterior novel or play or poem is only one element of the film's intertextuality, an element of varying importance to viewers depending on how well or little they know or care about the precursor text."¹⁰

Interestingly, Whelehan claims that not only literary critics and filmmakers create new nonconformist interpretations of the original novels but also the fans take part in the recreation of the original by their experimental perception of either the books or their adaptations.¹¹ Dividing the viewers into fans and poachers, she distinguishes the way they perceive and interpret films. A poacher is a "wilful appropriator of meanings for ends which could not be anticipated by a film's or television serial's producers,"¹² whereas fan is an

⁶ Whelehan 10.

⁷ Whelehan 8.

⁸ Whelehan 8.

⁹ Whelehan 8.

¹⁰ McFarlane 25-26.

¹¹ Whelehan 16.

¹² Whelehan 15.

“extreme version of the actual cultural consumer”¹³. However likely it may seem that a poacher, as imaginative as he is described, is the only one from the poacher-fan pair to convey new meanings from the films he watches; fan’s interpretations of the high budget films may be similarly important for the later productions and remakes as those of a poacher.

Alternatively, the screenwriter and director of an adaptation become a kind of poachers themselves while conferring the meanings from the literary original to the adaptation on screen. Moreover, the filmmaker’s imagination is also influenced by the reactions and expectations of readers of the original text or viewers of the previous adaptations. In this interaction between the filmmaker and the viewer originates the crucial clash which causes the adaptation either to be successful or rejected, which also depends on the extent of faithfulness or eccentricity of the adaptation. Seemingly the adaptations which deflect from the originary text are more welcome by the viewer as he or she is given one of the many interpretations of the original, which supports the notion that adaptations are favoured for the plurality of meanings conveyed rather than for sticking to the ones preferred by the literary critics of the base text. Yet, as Reynolds claims, “what the spectator sees and hears is what he or she is allowed to see, and to set the agenda by foregrounding one issue or set of issues is to marginalize others”.¹⁴ From this we may imply that even though film seems to convey new meanings, these meanings are narrowly bound by the filmmaker’s scheme of the scenes. Still, as Whelehan claims, while translating from one narrative form to another the necessity of ‘violating’ the originary text is inevitable.¹⁵

The remake phenomenon can be observed when one wants to disentangle the variety of adaptations and the constant tendency to recreate and popularize a literary text to a wider audience. Remake, according to a dictionary definition, is a new recreated version of the original film or film adaptation. Typically, it should be as faithful to the previous film version or versions as possible. Usually, the plot and characters should be identical with the ones of the previous work of art. However, this definition is often deformed by the remakes made. Practically every director while producing a new a version is influenced by the previous ones. Mainly, however, he or she transforms the film to be able to reflect the contemporary audience. The more innovations and transformations made, the more striking

¹³ Whelehan 15.

¹⁴ Whelehan 12-13.

¹⁵ Whelehan 10.

and controversial the new film version becomes and the more viewers are tempted to see it and speak their opinion about it, either a praising or condemning one. Therefore, we may imply that remakes are mainly a commercial device made with the end to earn money. However, besides this, it seems, sometimes remakes are favoured above the previous versions. This may be caused by the contemporaneous choice of the main topics of the recreated films. Some themes may influence today's audience more than others and adaptations of classical novels seem to be one of the most successful films and remakes recently. But why?

According to *Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, the adaptations of classical works of literature including the works of Jane Austen can be distinguished to three types: Heritage, Hollywood and Fusion adaptations¹⁶. Heritage adaptations are those until the 1980's. The popular adaptations since the 1990's are so called Fusion adaptations because the focus on fidelity of the Heritage adaptations tends to disappear in favour of the Hollywood-like appeal to the worldwide audience. Linda V. Troost calls these adaptations of Austen novels since the 1990's Fusion adaptations because the Heritage genre fuses in them with the Hollywood commercial attractiveness. Moreover, according to Linda V. Troost, "Fusion film incorporates a larger and more complex picture of a novel's world than even the novelist may have considered and thereby allows modern viewers a safe arena in which to explore difficult ideas that still have relevance: 'contemporary anxieties and fantasies of national identity, sexuality, class, and power.'" ¹⁷

Fusion, disengaged from the Troost's term, may also be a relevant term to describe the phenomenon concerning particularly the Austen adaptations since these adaptations tend to influence each other. As John Wiltshire aptly states, "intertextuality must be seen as a marked feature of Austen adaptations. Whether consciously or not, they borrow from and allude to each other, so that the viewer of the whole emerging corpus may detect motifs, gestures, even whole sequences as echoes of a previous film."¹⁸ Moreover, the adaptations sometimes include motifs from several of the novels. For example, the piano forte that comes as a surprise for Marianne from Colonel Brandon in the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility* is actually a motif borrowed from *Emma* where the piano is a secret gift from Frank Churchill

¹⁶ Linda V. Troost, "The nineteenth-century novel on film: Jane Austen" *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, eds. Cartmell and Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 75.

¹⁷ Troost 87-88.

¹⁸ John Wiltshire, "Afterword on fidelity" *The Cinematic Jane Austen – Essays on the Filmic Sensibility of the Novels* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009) 163.

to Jane Fairfax. Therefore, we may perceive that Austen's novels and the adaptations of them create a metaphorical world – "Austenland" as Wiltshire calls it – in which the individual aspects of the novels and films join.

Interconnection between literature and film is not the only one in which film merges with other modes of art. According to Timothy Corrigan, "literary and theatrical works have regularly adapted historical chronicles; paintings have adapted theatrical or literary scenes, and music has converted literary figures into audio motifs and scores."¹⁹ There have been films shot about painters as well as architects and musicians; however, the models for these films are the mere biographies of the artists rather than works of fiction. Even though autobiographic aspects seem to be inserted into the recent adaptations of novels in order to make the film more authentic, actually, this tendency results in diversion from the originary text. Still, literature is the mode of art that is connected with film most closely as the screenplays include plot, characterization and dialogue the same as various genres of literature. Therefore the transmission of text to screen should be regarded as the most natural process and also beneficial for the extension of public knowledge of literature and interpretation of literature as such. Moreover, it should not be omitted that a reverse process is also possible when a film initiates an inception of a literary text. According to McFarlane, "To read a novel after seeing a film version of it will inevitably color one's response."²⁰ Thus, the connection among the modes of art is yet another factor that enriches the contemporary film production and thanks to it films can be justly regarded works of art even by those who doubt the importance of film as a mode of art as such.

¹⁹ Timothy Corrigan, "Literature on screen, a history in the gap" *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, eds. Cartmell and Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 29.

²⁰ McFarlane 27.

3. Irony as a figure of speech

Jane Austen's irony in text and on screen

While investigating Jane Austen's texts several obvious types of irony may be distinguished. These types are sometimes effectively and sometimes slightly less effectively transmitted on screen. In her plots Austen uses twists and turns that are not expected especially when a character that is seemingly positive turns out to be evil or deceitful. For example all the bad males and females such as Willoughby or Lucy Steel in *Sense and Sensibility*, Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Crawford and his sister Mary in *Mansfield Park*, Frank Churchill in *Emma* and Sir Walter Eliot in *Persuasion*. In creating these characters Jane Austen seems to have used *situational irony* in which an outcome turns out to be very different from what was expected, and which also uses the difference between what is expected to happen and what actually does. This kind of irony is the easiest to transfer to a film adaptation. *Dramatic irony*, though, which is used when Austen enters her texts as a critical narrator whose irony is, according to the definition, understood by the audience but not grasped by the characters, is much harder to shift from text to screen. Usually a voice over of a character substitutes the voice of the narrator or, more subtly, the narration is recreated by the visual. Consequently, when reading Austen's sometimes bitter and even cynical dialogues we may perceive another type of irony called *verbal* in which what is said is the opposite of what is meant. Transmitting dialogue on screen may seem simple but it often happens that Austen's irony is lost in translation and replaced by silly jokes unequal to the art of the author.

Nevertheless, irony can be also hidden in other modes of expression than the narrative or dialogue. By the interactions between the characters Jane Austen achieves to reveal their true identity. Her writing becomes lively, ironic, humorous or full of emotion through body language. According to Ariane Hudelet, "this secondary language, although largely inconspicuous, is nevertheless constantly present in the text and influences the words sometimes so radically that it changes their meanings, or substitutes itself for them entirely."¹ Films, on the other hand, often rely on the descriptive way of picturing scenes, and yet there is a way in this media to achieve irony - by audio. Sound, except for the spoken

¹ Ariane Hudelet "Beyond Words, Beyond Images: Jane Austen and the Art of Mise en Scène", *The Cinematic Jane Austen – Essays on the Filmic Sensibility of the Novels* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009) 59.

word of course, is the part of the audio-visual pair that is rarely noticed. Not only the visual – the noble dresses and great mansions, the well-known aspects of the heritage films – strikes us at first sight when watching a Jane Austen adaptation but also sounds and noises such as the pitch of one's voice or creaking of the floor in certain situations have their particular effects. Through them we feel the irony, humour or emotion much more vividly than by the mere dialogues. Thus, the body language and sounds – the *nonverbal* – can be considered another of the several modes of irony in Jane Austen's writing and the film adaptations of her novels.

3.1. Situational Irony

This type of irony is based on Jane Austen's ability of characterization. She portrays a hero or a heroine in one way and then suddenly we are forced to realize that his or her real nature is quite different. Arianne Hudelet uses Locke's philosophy to comment on Austen's strategy, "the journey which separates intuition from knowledge, first impressions from lasting judgements, is closely connected with sensations. The characters must constantly reconsider the agreement, or the disagreement between past and present experiences, and reason must sometimes correct the necessary subjectivity of memory."² Therefore, gradually revealed defects of character come to spoil the seemingly ideal romance as in the case of Fanny Price and Mr Crawford. We start to trust Crawford's behaviour changes for the better and also Fanny's judgement of him is not so harsh any more, yet at the moment in which we believe most strongly in the reparation of his nature, the author reveals the immorality of his elopement with Maria Bertram. Exactly at this point in the narration occurs the unexpected ironical twist. His flirtation with Fanny seems likely to become a serious attachment and yet this attachment is not destined to end up in a marriage. In Patricia Rozema's 1999 *Mansfield Park*, the moment of revelation becomes even more striking for the main heroine, Fanny, as she opens the door of the room where Crawford is making love to Maria. Another instance of situational irony appears only in the novel *Mansfield Park* but not in the Rozema's adaptation. This scene from the novel becomes a kind of indication of the later corruption of Maria Bertram. While visiting Sotherton, the mansion of Mr Rushworth – Maria's fiancé, and walking through its gardens, the party including Fanny,

² Ariane Hudelet "Deciphering Appearances in Jane Austen's Novels and Films" *The Cinematic Jane Austen – Essays on the Filmic Sensibility of the Novels* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009) 79.

Maria, Mr Rushworth and Mr Crawford reach a locked gate. The spoilt Maria persuades Mr Rushworth to go back to the house to fetch the key so that they can continue to walk further. The obedient Rushworth does as she wishes but before he is able to come back with the key, Maria and Mr Crawford manage to get to the other side of the gate through a shrubbery. Metaphorically, their escape suggests the frivolous nature of their relationship, which is to end up so scandalously. Consequently, we can consider this Maria's behaviour as yet another unexpected twist in the plot as she should be rather submissive to the conventions of the day and walk through the gate opened properly by the key. Already in this situation, we realize her preference of the informal Mr Crawford to the strait-laced Rushworth.

Another way in which the adaptations deal with the moment of revelation is the use of subjective flashbacks which show the change in the hero or heroine's perception of other characters. In the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth while reading Darcy's letter recounts the situations in which she spoke to Wickham and the camera shows scenes we have already seen from a different angle. In this way Elizabeth starts to understand Wickham's superficiality and her own blindness and prejudice.

Some films, unfortunately, seem to reveal the dishonourable nature of the evil characters much earlier than Austen would do. For example, in the 1996 *Emma* the character of Frank Churchill, although we do not know about his engagement to Jane Fairfax, seems very suspicious from the beginning of the film both in his countenance and the way of expression and the viewer really does not think him a likely suitor for Emma. Similarly, in *Northanger Abbey* 2007, Isabella and her brother John seem to be able to cheat only the main heroine. Clearly, the audience prefers the Tilney's from the first moment Catherine meets with them.

Films, in contrast to theatre plays, seem to have the ability of keeping better trace of the inner feelings of characters. In the adaptations of Jane Austen's novels usually the psychological growth of a heroine becomes the most desirable for the filmmakers to shift from text to screen. Marianne and Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* seem to be an ideal pair, however Willoughby's want of fortune spoils their chance for love. In the 1995 Ang Lee's adaptation, we are on the edge of a proposal but Marianne's crying immediately hints at Willoughby's dishonour and we understand that his intentions are contrary to what we expected. Still, when she reads his letter explaining his behaviour, she has a tendency to justify his conduct and she claims he has not broken any promise. Only after the Colonel

Brendon's revelation of Willoughby's misconduct committed on Brandon's adopted child, she is able to see through him. In the case of captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* we are encountering a reverse model – a male character who realizes the shallowness of Luisa Musgrove in contrast with the responsible and caring Anne Elliot. In *Persuasion*, however, we perceive especially the ironic duplicity of Mr Elliot who is yet another of the Austen characters who appears to be a gentleman but actually is bound by selfishness and self-interest.

3. 2. Verbal and nonverbal irony

Emma

In the novels as well as the adaptations, Austen's ironic dialogues are used by which the duplicity of the characters or their minds is revealed. In *Emma*, for example, the dialogue between the main heroine and Harriet Smith shows the defects in Emma's character:

I lay it down as a general rule, Harriet, that if a woman doubts as to whether she should accept a man or not, she certainly ought to refuse him. If she can hesitate as to 'Yes,' she ought to say 'No' directly. It is not a state to be safely entered into with doubtful feelings, with half a heart.³

Although Emma means well and wants the best for Harriet, which is a marriage with Mr Elton who is much more accomplished according to her judgement than Robert Martin, her judgement will prove to be wrong and thus when she says: "I thought it my duty as a friend, and older than yourself, to say thus much to you. But do not imagine that I want to influence you"⁴, her speech is ironic because she knows perfectly well that she is actually influencing Harriet to refuse Mr Martin. Consequently, in her conversation with Mr Knightly, which in the McGrath's film takes place while they are performing archery, Emma's wrong doing is realized by her companion. Apart from the Austen's bitterly critical speech of Mr Knightley⁵, a would-be ironic hint is added to the adaptation when Knightley

³ Jane Austen, *Emma* (Kindle Edition: Public Domain Books, 2006) loc 659.

⁴ Austen, *Emma* loc 659.

⁵ "Depend upon it, Elton will not do. Elton is a very good sort of man, and a very respectable vicar of Highbury, but not at all likely to make an imprudent match. He knows the value of a good income as well as anybody. Elton may talk sentimentally, but he will act rationally. [...] He knows that he is a very handsome young man, and a great favourite wherever he goes; and from his general way of talking in unreserved moments, where there are only men present, I am convinced that he does not mean to throw himself away. I have heard him

says to Emma who just missed the target, "Try not to kill my dogs."⁶ Of course, she does not try to do any such thing, however, she shoots in a wrong direction because she is disappointed by Knightley's disapproval of her conduct concerning Harriet Smith's refusal of Mr Martin.

Another such comical hint can be perceived in the added scene of the adaptation in which Emma meets Frank Churchill for the first time. Her carriage gets stuck in a creek and he comes on horseback, seemingly to rescue her. He commences conversation in this way, "Is your horse just washing his feet or are the darker forces at work here?" / "The letter I'm afraid, something has happened to the wheel and I cannot move" [replies Emma] / "Well you'll just have to live here then, bye, bye,"⁷ declares Frank shockingly and pretends to be leaving. Finally, of course, he helps her.

Furthermore, before the ball, which Mr Knightley does not want to attend, his monologue seems simply bored. In the film; however, the scene takes places outdoors while he is playing with his dogs. He says: "I have no taste for [dancing]. I would rather fetch that stick" to which Emma replies: "I'll try to remember to bring it to the ball!"⁸ These kinds of jokes are often added to the adaptations to make them comical, however, sometimes they seem to be too much arranged to feel connected with the dialogues created by Austen. Austen's conversations still give the reader more pleasure and seem to be more brisk when adapted to films as well. For example, during the ball, Mr Knightley who was resolved not to go is evidently pleased by being there, which proves his discourse with Emma: "Whom are you going to dance with? Asked Mr Knightley. / She hesitated a moment, and then replied, "With you, if you will ask me." / "Will you?" said he, offering his hand. / "Indeed I will. You have shewn that you can dance, and you know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it all improper."⁹

Emma also includes several characters whose nature is ironic as such. To start with, Mr Elton concealing his love for Emma pretends he is sorry that Harriet Smith cannot join the Christmas Party but Emma does not recognize his affection. Although he annoys her the whole evening by impertinent questions, she does not tell him anything impolite. In the

speak with great animation of a large family of young ladies that his sisters are intimate with, who have all twenty thousand pounds apiece." Austen, *Emma* loc 848.

⁶ *Emma*, prod. Miramax, dir. Douglas McGrath, 1996, 24 min. 28 sec.

⁷ *Emma*, 1996, 51 min. 25 sec.

⁸ *Emma*, 1996, 72 min. 27 sec.

⁹ Austen, *Emma* loc 4285.

1996 *Emma* Elton comes and sits between the conversing Emma and Mr Knightly, even though there evidently is not much space on the sofa, saying “I Hope I’m not intruding”¹⁰ to the clear amusement of Mr Knightly. Another ironic situation occurs at the apartment of Miss Bates to whom Emma takes Harriet to recover from the shock that Mr Elton is not in love with her and that he proposed to Emma. Paradoxically, Miss Bates starts to read a letter informing the two ladies about how Mr Elton is admired by all the women in Bath where he escaped after his embarrassing proposal. Furthermore, the new Mrs Elton becomes a source of ironic situations throughout both the novel and the 1996 adaptation. Apart from her selfishness and the general disagreeable manner of behaving, she looks down on the society of Highbury. She even says to Emma, “I was astonished that [Mrs Weston] was so ladylike, was she not your governess?”¹¹ As if a governess could not behave well and marry well. Mrs Elton is bound by the conventions of the day and thinks it is surprising one can marry above his or her own rank, yet she herself married Mr Elton who is a poor village preacher. Moreover, in the McGrath’s adaptation, the comic nature of her character is highlighted by her silly commentaries such as, “Well, I myself don’t call [my talent for music] great, I only know that my friends think so”¹² or by calling her husband Mr E. Consequently, In the 1996 *Emma*, Mrs Elton’s character becomes a source of irony while being laughed at by Emma and Mrs Weston: Emma declares, “Frank has just told me the most fascinating thing, he has heard about Mrs Elton and he still wants to meet her”¹³.

Moreover, both Mrs Elton and Miss Bates are characters as Ariane Hudelet mentions, “whose voices seem to be associated more with the body than with the mind”¹⁴. Implicitly, not only the words they pronounce but the way they speak – their body language – makes them perceived as ironic or humorous by the reader and consequently the viewer. In other words, as Hudelet puts it, “A disjunction between body language and actual meaning or intention can also be seen as another manifestation of Jane Austen’s irony.”¹⁵ Miss Bates is notorious for her extremely long monologues¹⁶, which in the novel are only interrupted by

¹⁰ *Emma*, 1996, 36 min. 40 sec.

¹¹ *Emma*, 1996, 65 min. 50 sec.

¹² *Emma*, 1996, 65 min. 19 sec.

¹³ *Emma*, 1996, 73 min. 22 sec.

¹⁴ Hudelet, “Beyond Words, Beyond Images” 59.

¹⁵ Hudelet, “Beyond Words, Beyond Images” 65.

¹⁶ “Oh! yes—Mr. Elton, I understand—certainly as to dancing— Mrs. Cole was telling me that dancing at the rooms at Bath was— Mrs. Cole was so kind as to sit some time with us, talking of Jane; for as soon as she came in, she began inquiring after her, Jane is so very great a favourite there. Whenever she is with us, Mrs. Cole does not know how to shew her kindness enough; and I must say that Jane deserves it as much as any body

series of dashes. Her nervous mind is jumping from one theme to another not stopping to avoid the embarrassment of a silence. Moreover, her long speeches rather discourage other speakers from participating in the discourse and thus her monologues become even longer, which causes the reader as well as the characters in the novel to stop perceiving the meaning of what she says and her voice becomes a mere continuous sound. In contrast, Mrs Elton¹⁷ does not annoy by the length of her speeches but by the ignorance and despising manner with which she speaks. Her monologues are pretentious and superficial making the listeners despair at the shallow mind of the speaker who, however, thinks herself superior to everyone. It is no longer important what Mrs Elton says but the effect it leaves on the listener.

Lastly, Mr Woodhouse, Emma's father, cannot be omitted when analysing the ironic figures in *Emma*. While lamenting on the sad fate of Mrs Weston, whom he constantly calls by her maiden name, ("Poor Miss Taylor!—I wish she were here again. What a pity it is that Mr Weston ever thought of her!") he reveals his inability to understand the changes made in his life. Yet, he seems to be happy for Mrs Weston who finally found a life companion. Therefore, his complaints may be regarded mere preferring of stereotypes over novelties and not a real ignorance.

Sense and Sensibility

In *Sense and Sensibility* and the Ang Lee's 1995 adaptation of the same name, we may also find crucial differences in the manner of expressing humour and irony. From the variety of ironic characters or those who use irony in their discourse, we may begin with Fanny Dashwood whose duplicity is revealed while she is deluding her husband by her conversational skills in the matter of to what extent he should help his sisters after the death of their father. Both in the novel and the 1995 adaptation resonates Fanny's final ironic comment in the discussion: "I am sure I cannot imagine how they will spend half of it;

can. And so she began inquiring after her directly, saying, 'I know you cannot have heard from Jane lately, because it is not her time for writing;' and when I immediately said, 'But indeed we have, we had a letter this very morning,' Austen, *Emma* loc 1976.

¹⁷ The very first subject after being seated was Maple Grove, "My brother Mr. Suckling's seat;"—a comparison of Hartfield to Maple Grove. The grounds of Hartfield were small, but neat and pretty; and the house was modern and well-built. Mrs. Elton seemed most favourably impressed by the size of the room, the entrance, and all that she could see or imagine. "Very like Maple Grove indeed!—She was quite struck by the likeness!—That room was the very shape and size of the morning-room at Maple Grove; her sister's favourite room."— Mr. Elton was appealed to.—"Was not it astonishingly like?— She could really almost fancy herself at Maple Grove." Austen, *Emma* loc 3509.

and as to your giving them more, it is quite absurd to think of it. They will be much more able to give you something.”¹⁸ Actually, she is convinced that the four women will be able to live upon a low income, whereas for her son she imagines more than the mother and sisters Dashwood will get together. Obviously, the Dashwoods cannot find any comfort in the woman who comes so soon after their father’s death to deprive them of their home. In the 1995 film, Marianne says ironically to Fanny, “How did you find the silver? Was it all-genuine?”¹⁹ picking thus on her sister-in-law’s selfishness. Fanny seems not to be able to understand the grief of the Dashwoods when claiming to Edward, “They’re all exceedingly spoilt, I find.” / “My dear Fanny they’ve just lost their father, their lives will never be the same again.” [replies Edward] / “That is no excuse.”

Moreover, when they arrive to Norland, Fanny and John plan on having the walnut trees knocked down to build a greenhouse (which is tellingly changed to a Grecian temple in the 1995 film) and they also plan on other additions to the house. This is similar situation as in *Mansfield Park*, where Sotherton is to be rebuilt by the selfish and blind Rushworth and with the help of Crawford. In both cases the nature of the ones who want to reconstruct the wilderness of their estate proves to be superficial.

Quite a different character seems to be that of Margaret who is not supposed to involve in cynical dialogues like Fanny but rather in the lighter and simply humorous scenes especially in the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility*. Exemplary is the scene added to the film in which Elinor and Edward pretend to be ignorant of the position of the Nile to persuade Margaret to come out from her hiding, although they actually know the position of the river themselves. This scene belongs to the series of lightened scenes that should make the Ang Lee’s adaptation humorous. Other such are the fencing scene or the talks about piracy. The following conversation about the options of employment between Edward and Elinor is one of the several that portray Elinor craving for economical independence, which is quite contrary to the depiction of her character in the novel, and it also hints at the Margaret’s wild notions of piracy: [Edward:] “Our circumstances are therefore precisely the same.” / [Elinor:] “Except that you will inherit your fortune. We cannot even earn ours. / “Perhaps Margaret is right.” / “Right?” / “Piracy is our only option. --- What is swapping exactly?”²⁰ Elinor and Edward appear together in another comic and almost absurd discourse which

¹⁸ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (Kindle Edition: Public Domain Books, 2006) loc 291.

¹⁹ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 8 min. 24 sec.

²⁰ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 17 min. 10 sec.

reflects the embarrassment of Edward's secret engagement to Lucy Steel about which he tries to tell Elinor while she is leaving Norland. He speaks about her horse, "Cannot you take him with you?" / "We cannot possibly afford him" / Perhaps he can make himself useful in the kitchen? ... Forgive me"²¹

Mr and Mrs Palmer become one of the Austen's ways of presenting a typical marital idyll. Charlotte is a silly character constantly annoying her husband by her pointless questions and he seems to fight her by his rudeness and indifference. When we first meet the Palmers in the 1995 film, we may perceive the irony with which Mrs Jennings describes her daughter's husband: "imagine my surprise when Charlotte and her lord and master... appeared with our cousin Lucy, the last person I expected to see."²² Mr Palmer is automatically regarded as an authoritative husband; however, it is more than likely that he has no choice than to appear so to have some integrity and peace from his wife and mother-in-law. In the following dialogue with Mr Palmer, his wife shows her gossipy dullness,

"My mother has talked of nothing else in her letters. Are they [the Dashwoods] the creatures she describes?" / "Nothing like." / "You are quite rude today. He used to be an M. P. It's fatiguing, for he's forced to make everybody like him. He says it's quite shocking." / "I never said anything so irrational." / "Mr Palmer is so droll. He's always out of humour."²³

This dialogue from the film effectively summarizes, in the almost exact wording, all the episodes of marital squabbling that take place in the novel. Generally, the dialogues conceived by the screenwriter Emma Thompson are subtler than those of Douglas McGrath in the screenplay for *Emma* 1996. Even though Thompson sometimes diverts from the Austenian dialogues to comment in greater detail on the socioeconomic position of women of that time, she is able to keep the ironic hyperboles to reach a perfect fluency. She also sticks to the original ironic dialogues more than the McGrath film succeeding thus in keeping with the Austen's notion of a comic scene.

Even though the characters of Mr and Mrs Palmer seem to be attractive for the reader and viewer mostly because of their bickering, they still do not produce the dumb kind of humour as the silly jokes of Mrs Jennings and Sir John Middleton. Picking on the name of

²¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 24 min. 49 sec.

²² *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 55 min. 15 sec.

²³ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 55 min. 48 sec.

Elinor's love, they develop a series of hints for names starting with an F. Moreover, this shortcut made from the name of a suitor becomes typical for the Austenian comic as it corresponds to the humorous element in *Emma* where Mrs Elton calls her husband Mr E. In addition, due to their loudness of expression Mrs Jennings and Sir John become also subjects of nonverbal irony. As Ariane Hudelet explains, "their peals of voice and laughter mix with the barking of their dogs in boisterous cacophony. Likewise, the high-pitched voice adopted by Imelda Staunton in playing Charlotte Palmer often blends with the ceaseless mewling of her baby."²⁴

Considering Sir John, he proves to be the more silly and comical when being asked a serious question demanding a contemplative answer. When Marianne inquires about Willoughby, "But what is he like? / "Like?" (Sir John) / "What are his tastes, his passions, his pursuits?" Sir John answers: ---- "Well, he has the smartest little bitch of a pointer"²⁵. However, we do not lack irony in the Sir John's character, he is perfectly able to conceive a critical commentary: "Why [Willoughby] visits [lady Allen] every year for he is to inherit"²⁶. In this way Willoughby's fortune hunting is mentioned to make the viewer suspicious of his character. Similarly, Lucy Steel's duplicity is revealed in the line of Mrs Palmer who comments on Lucy's desire to go to Delaford, "You sly thing. It was the Dashwoods she wanted to see, not Delaford,"²⁷ Lucy of course wants to meet especially Elinor to be able to hurt her by the revelation of her own engagement to Edward Ferrars. Her duplicity can be detected particularly in the nonverbal – her gestures and looks. Although she strives to appear polite in her verbal communication, in her body language we can trace indications of meanness. When she discloses her secret engagement to Elinor in the Ang Lee's film, she picks up a handkerchief with the embroidered initials of Edward, identical to the one Elinor received from Edward herself, and she displays it to her companion so ostentatiously that it is clear she does it on purpose to see Elinor's reaction. As Hudelet points out Lucy's eyes become a proof of her malignancy. When she learns that Elinor will not be in London for the season we read the following contradictory line of hers, "'I'm sorry for that,' returned the other, while her eyes brightened at the information."²⁸

²⁴ Hudelet, "Beyond Words, Beyond Images" 68-69.

²⁵ Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* loc 691 or *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 45 min. 15 sec.

²⁶ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 46 min. 27 sec.

²⁷ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 55 min 32 sec.

²⁸ Hudelet, "Beyond Words, Beyond Images" 66.

Not only the characters who seem obvious wellsprings of the comic but also the thoughtful ones such as Elinor and Marianne give us the pleasure of Austen's irony. Especially the typically English topic of weather seems to be the driving force in several scenes in the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility*. Marianne becomes notorious by her favour of taking walks when it is certain that there will be a heavy rain, which we may comprehend from the following quote, "I'm taking you for a walk" / [Margaret]: "No, I've been to walk. / "You need another." / "It's going to rain." / "It is not going to rain" / "You always say that and then it always does."²⁹ Consequently, Margaret, when being reproached for disclosing the initial letter of Elinor's love, Edward Ferrars, to Mrs Jennings and Sir John Middleton she is told by her mother: "If you cannot think of anything appropriate to say, you will please restrict your remarks to the weather."³⁰ This command comes to practical use when Edward at the end of the film comes to the Dashwoods' cottage to propose to Elinor. Margaret senses the embarrassing silence and declares: "We've been enjoying very fine weather." Her sisters and mother look at her with astonishment, so she reacts after a pause, "Well, we have." Luckily, Edward seizes the opportunity, glad to be able to talk at all in this tense situation, and continues to comment on the weather, "Well, I'm glad to hear it. The roads were very dry."³¹

The sisters have also several scenes together in which they are being ironic to each other for example when Marianne tries to persuade Elinor to reveal her feelings for Edward in the Norland bedroom scene or later in Barton cottage when Elinor reproaches Marianne for her easy manners throughout her first conversation with Willoughby,

"Good work Marianne, you've covered Shakespeare, Scott, all forms of poetry. Another meeting will ascertain his views on nature and romantic attachments. Then you will have nothing left to talk about." / "I suppose I have erred against decorum. I should've been dull and spiritless and talked only of the weather." / "No, but Mr Willoughby can be in no doubt of your enthusiasm for him." / "Why should he doubt it? Why should I hide my regard?" / "No particular reason." / "Time alone does not determine intimacy. Seven years would be insufficient to make some people acquainted... and seven days can be more than enough for

²⁹ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 40 min. 10 sec., as well as 39 min 32 sec. repeated

³⁰ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 35 min. 2 sec.

³¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 2 h. 7 min. 45 sec.

others.”/ “Or seven hours in this case.”/ “I feel I know Mr Willoughby already. If I had more shallow feelings, I could perhaps conceal them as you do.”³²

To conclude, there is yet another ironic theme in *Sense and Sensibility*, which concerns the social status of the Dashwoods. After the death of their father they are poorer than they used to be and therefore their opportunities for marriage become uncertain. Their new house in Barton becomes a source for scorning remarks of Fanny Dashwood as well as her brother Robert. Similarly, in the 1995 film at a ball in London where Marianne meets Willoughby and his new rich fiancée, Miss Grey, we are present to the following conversation of Miss Grey and Willoughby, “Do you know them?”/ “Acquaintances from the country.”/ Indeed. Wearing their country fashions, I see.”³³

Pride and Prejudice

Mr and Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* are similar to the Austen’s depiction of Mr and Mrs Palmer in *Sense and Sensibility* except for the fact that they get much more space for their marital bickering in the novel as well as the 1995 and 2005 films. For instance, the following notoriously known excerpt reveals Mr Bennet’s cynicism displayed on his silly wife whose only design is to marry her five daughters,

“Netherfield Park is let at last. Do you not want to know who has taken it? As you wish to tell me, my dear, I doubt I have any choice in the matter.” / “Mr Bennet, how can you be so tiresome? You know he must marry one of them.” / “That is his design in settling here?” / “Oh, Mr Bennet, how can you tease me so? Have you no compassion for my poor nerves?” / “You mistake me, my dear. I have the highest respect for them. They’ve been my constant companions these twenty years.”³⁴

Mr Bennet does not hate his wife, as it might appear, his satire pointed towards her is only a kind of defensive game to be able to live through her hysteric fits. Interestingly, she is also never angry with him for his teasing, which despite all the cynicism proves to connect the couple. Therefore, Mr Bennet seemingly ignoring his wife’s appeals is actually the same

³² *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 49 min 50 sec.

³³ *Sense and Sensibility*, 1995, 1h. 22 min. 40 sec.

³⁴ *Pride and Prejudice*, prod. Focus Features, Universal Pictures, dir. Joe Wright, 2005, 2 min. 53 sec. or Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Kindle Edition: Public Domain Books, 2006) ch. I-II, loc 1-35.

as she is – anxious for the good prospects of his daughters. His remark to his wife’s art of matchmaking is thus only picking on her love for their daughters, “If Jane does die it will be a comfort to know it was in pursuit of Mr Bingley.”³⁵

In the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* by Joe Wright, some of the characters are portrayed in a newly conceived joking style, which, however does not appear in the Austen’s text at all. When a butler at Netherfield Park comes to introduce the visit of the Bennet ladies we hear him say, “a Mrs Bennet, a Miss Bennet, a Miss Bennet and a Miss Bennet, sir,” to which Caroline Bingley annoyingly exclaims, “For heaven’s sake, are we to receive every Bennet in the country?”³⁶ Mr Bingley himself is transformed to a shy and fearful character throwing at us embarrassing lines such as when he parts with Jane Bennet who just spent her illness in Netherfield, “I don’t know how to thank you. You’re welcome any time you feel the least bit poorly.”³⁷ Another such scene is when he talks to Darcy of his strategy of proposing to Jane, “We were going to walk in and she was going to say, ‘Sit down.’ So, I feel... Oh, it’s a disaster, isn’t it? It’s been... - Miss Bennet.” / [Darcy] “Mr Bingley.” / “I’ll just go in and I’ll just say it.” / [Darcy] “Yes, exactly.”³⁸ Although Joe Wright diverts from the Austen’s portrayal of these situations, Bingley’s character is closer in this way to the expectations of the contemporary audience, as they are perfectly able to imagine these kinds of embarrassments in real life.

In the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* Mr Collins in his conversation with Mr Bennet and Elizabeth, (which in the novel is only Mr Collins and Mr Bennet’s dialogue) becomes the subject of their ridicule, paradoxically, however, he does not realize it,

[Mr Bennet] “How happy for you, Mr Collins, to possess the talent for flattering with such delicacy.” / [Elizabeth] “Do these attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment or are they the result of previous study?” / [Collins] “They arise from what is passing at the time. And though I do sometimes amuse myself with arranging such little compliments, I always wish to give them as unstudied an air as possible.” / [Elizabeth] “Oh, believe me, no one would suspect your manners to be rehearsed.”³⁹

³⁵ *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005, 16 min. 9 sec.

³⁶ *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005, 22 min. 39 sec.

³⁷ *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005, 24 min. 3 sec.

³⁸ *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005, 1h 38 min. 34 sec.

³⁹ *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005, 26 min. 34 sec. or Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* loc 751.

In this excerpt, the hypocrisy or duplicity of Mr Collins can be comprehended. He does not flatter truthfully, however, with the aim to be accepted by the people from higher society such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh, her daughter or Mr Darcy. In another scene we perceive the ridicule of Mr Collins trying to shout at Mr Darcy to be able to get acquainted with him, "Mr Darcy. Mr Darcy. Mr Darcy. Good evening..." to which we again hear the commentary of the snobbish Caroline Bingley, "What interesting relatives you have [Miss Elizabeth]."⁴⁰ Consequently, Mr Collins's love for Elizabeth may be considered hypocritical as well, as he firstly asks for of Jane and then he marries Charlotte Lucas. Moreover, as the purpose of his marriage he states the wish of lady Catherine for him to settle and live as a good example for his parish. Thus, his intention to marry is false itself.

Silence in the beginning of Elizabeth and Darcy's meeting is supposed to conceal Darcy's real nature; he is supposed to look indifferent. Silence as a driving force of irony here because the inability to communicate often creates misunderstandings as it conceals real meanings. We may feel the satire of their dialogue when Elizabeth tries to make the silent and grave Darcy converse while they dance together at the Netherfield ball,

"[Lizzie] I love this dance." / [Darcy] "Indeed. Most invigorating." / "It is your turn to say something, Mr Darcy. I talked about the dance. Now you ought to remark on the size of the room or the number of couples." / "I'm perfectly happy to oblige. What would you like most to hear?" / "That reply will do for present." / "Perhaps by and by I may observe that private balls are much pleasanter than public ones. And for now, we may remain silent." / "Do you talk as a rule while dancing?" / "No. No, I prefer to be unsociable and taciturn. Makes it all so much more enjoyable, don't you think?"⁴¹

Mansfield Park

In the beginning of *Mansfield Park* 1999, Mrs Norris comments on Fanny's countenance: "Now, let us have a look at you... Well... I'm sure you have other qualities."⁴² From her speech we can immediately recognize her ignorance of the feelings of others and her prejudice towards Fanny being from a lower social sphere. She reminds one of the behaviour of Fanny Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*. Similarly, Mrs Bertram, even though

⁴⁰ *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005, 40 min. 17 sec.

⁴¹ *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005, 37 min. 33 sec.

⁴² *Mansfield Park*, prod. BBC, HAL Films, dir. Patricia Rozema, 1999, 6 min. 39 sec.

she does not behave to Fanny with such a scorn as Mrs Norris, uses her as a servant, which automatically makes Fanny inferior. After Maria gets married in the 1999 film, Lady Bertram holds onto Fanny speaking to her thus, "It is a comfort to think you will never leave us, Fanny."⁴³ In this way she absolutely rejects the idea that Fanny will be able to find a husband.

If we compare the character of Fanny in the novel and in the Rozema's adaptation, it is clear that the latter is more daring. However, sometimes Rozema's dialogues create not only excesses but even contradictions with the Austen's novel. For example, when Fanny is riding a horse with Edmund she declares, "Yes, I'm a wild beast! I'm sure Sir Thomas would agree." This line sounds really ironic in consideration of Austen's claim for morality and sticking to conventions, especially when we know Fanny fears her uncle in the novel. Obviously, Rozema rather concentrates on the minor theme in *Mansfield Park*, which is slavery. Seemingly, abolitionism appears to her more connected with the Women's rights movement and woman's independence as such. Still, it is quite paradoxical to recreate any of the Austen's heroines in to a "wild beast" because when the original Austen's characterization and irony are omitted, there remains the mere shallow plot of a love story. In the following abstracts from both the novel and film, we may compare the way Edmund talks to Fanny after Sir Thomas pays compliments to her figure,

"Your uncle thinks you very pretty, dear Fanny—and that is the long and the short of the matter. Anybody but myself would have made something more of it, and anybody but you would resent that you had not been thought very pretty before; but the truth is, that your uncle never did admire you till now—and now he does. Your complexion is so improved!—and you have gained so much countenance!—and your figure—nay, Fanny, do not turn away about it—it is but an uncle. If you cannot bear an uncle's admiration, what is to become of you? You must really begin to harden yourself to the idea of being worth looking at. You must try not to mind growing up into a pretty woman."⁴⁴

"It's just a silly ball" / "I'll not be sold off like one of your father's slaves Edmund!" / "Don't be an imbecile!" / "But imbecility in women is a great

⁴³ *Mansfield Park*, 1999, 44 min. 02 sec.

⁴⁴ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Kindle Edition: Public Domain Books, 2006) loc 2549.

enhancement to her personal charms!" / "You're being irrational! Fanny, you really must begin to harden yourself to the idea of...being worth looking at."⁴⁵

In the novel Fanny is kindly reproached for her shyness and Edmund seems not to fear to compliment her. In the abstract from the film, however, a monologue becomes a dialogue from which we can sense Fanny's dominance of both words and thoughts as well as her daring suggestion of Sir Thomas likening her to slave girls whose bodies he could admire in Antigua. Moreover, Edmund does not even manage to tell Fanny the gist of his speech. Paradoxically, he seems shy to compliment her but not a bit shy to call her "imbecile".

Unfortunately, it seems, Rozema takes from Austen only the dialogues that are most suggestive of vice such as the Mary Crawford's line of acceptance of the role in the Mansfield theatrical staging, "I wish to play Amelia. But which gentleman am I to have the pleasure of making love to?"⁴⁶ or the Henry Crawford's description of his preference of Maria to Julia Bertram,

"Well...? - I like them both exceedingly. But I like Julia best." / "Why?" / "Because her Aunt Norris advised me that it must be so!" / "She seems very ready to be fallen in love with." / "Though Maria is most agreeable." / "Though her choice is made." / "Yes...And I like her the better for it. An engaged woman is always more agreeable than a disengaged. She is satisfied with herself. Her cares are over, and she may exert all her powers of pleasing without suspicion. All is safe with a lady engaged. No harm can be done."⁴⁷

Rozema's strategy in picking these dialogues is not incompetent as such, however, it becomes meaningless when not contrasted by the more cultivated themes of Mansfield Park such as Fanny's love of nature and the peace of the country. Consequently, the film relies on the constant dramatic twists rather than on the satire of discourse.

Persuasion

Although in *Persuasion* appear several selfish and ignorant characters such as Sir Walter Eliot and his daughters Elizabeth Eliot and Mary Musgrove each of them comic in his or her personal way, the irony as well as emotion of this novel and its 1995 film adaptation

⁴⁵ *Mansfield Park*, 1999, 37 min. 10 sec.

⁴⁶ Austen, *Mansfield Park*, loc 1882, or *Mansfield Park*, 1999, 29 min. 22 sec.

⁴⁷ Austen, *Mansfield Park*, loc 582, or *Mansfield Park*, 1999, 21 min. 11 sec.

by Roger Michell is rather hidden in its looks and sounds than in its dialogues. For example, while Sir Walter Eliot snobbishly remarks on Wentworth, “Oh, Wentworth the curate. You misled me, Shepherd, by the term gentleman. Wentworth the curate is nobody, quite unconnected! Nothing to do with the Strafford family!”⁴⁸ Anne Eliot’s reaction to his line in the 1995 adaptation is the restlessness with which she puts down a cup of tea when hearing Wentworth’s name. In this way, as Hudelet suggests, “the treatment of sound sometimes manages to reveal these feelings or thoughts that were not supposed to be voiced or shown according to the rules of early nineteenth-century society.”⁴⁹ In the novel, on the other hand, we comprehend Anne’s disconcert over hearing the name only at the end of chapter III, “Anne, who had been a most attentive listener to the whole, left the room, to seek the comfort of cool air for her flushed cheeks; and as she walked along a favourite grove, said, with a gentle sigh, ‘A few months more, and he, perhaps, may be walking here.’”⁵⁰

Consequently, the Musgroves – Mary’s mother and father-in-law, their daughters Henrietta and Luisa and even Mary herself – remind one of the silly noisiness of Mrs Jennings and Sir John Middleton from the Ang Lee’s *Sense and Sensibility*. Especially the scenes when Mary’s son falls from a tree and when Luisa Musgrove jumps from the wharf in Lyme, we encounter their mothers’ hysteric screaming after they learn about these accidents. *Pride and Prejudice* is also not short of the noisy and misbehaving characters such as Lydia and Kitty Bennet as well as Mrs Bennet herself. We read about them yawning, laughing or sighing, which are the noises most connected with vulgarity and thus with opposing the conventions of that age.

Not only noise and loudness, however, become the means of irony in the 1995 *Persuasion* but also whispering. When Anne arrives to her sister in Uppercross, she is forced to listen to the complaints of each of her relatives. Usually, the account of one, related in whisper, ironically contradicts the views of another,

[Mrs Musgrove:] “My dear, I never interfere in my daughter-in-law’s concerns.

But I have to tell you, I have no very good opinion of the way Mary curbs her

⁴⁸ *Persuasion*, 1995, 6 min. 45 sec. or in Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Kindle Edition: Public Domain Books, 2006) “Wentworth? Oh! ay,—Mr Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term gentleman. I thought you were speaking of some man of property: Mr Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common.” loc 285.

⁴⁹ Hudelet, “Beyond Words, Beyond Images” 58.

⁵⁰ Austen, *Persuasion* loc 304.

children. Oh, they are fine, healthy boys. But, Lord bless me, how troublesome they can be!”⁵¹

[Mary:] “Mrs Musgrove’s forever advising me on the care of little Charles and Walter. Yet she feeds them sweet things and they come home sick. Moreover, how can I keep them in order when their father spoils them so much?”⁵²

[Charles Musgrove:] “I could manage the boys, were it not for Mary’s interference. I wish you could persuade her not to always fancy herself ill.”⁵³

[Mrs Musgrove:] “It is a very bad thing, to be visited by children whom one can only keep in tolerable order by more cake than is good for them.”⁵⁴

[Mary:] “When you have a moment, speak to Charles, and persuade him that I am very, very ill.”⁵⁵

As Anne Eliot in *Persuasion* overhears, hopes, listens and takes care of the characters around her, Austen also perceived the voices and conversations of people she knew and that perhaps lead her to writing. Sounds and noises allow us to feel what the characters feel even if it should be the most intimate or contradicting thoughts. The irony of whisper or quiet gossiping appears also in *Mansfield Park* in the conversations between Fanny and Mary or in *Emma* between Emma and Frank. Not only irony, however, but also intimacy is the driving force of the scenes in whisper such as when Jane and Elizabeth chatter in the bedroom scenes in *Pride and Prejudice* 2005.

3.3. Dramatic Irony

David Lodge aptly observes that the fact that Emma is destined to fall is clear from the first sentence.⁵⁶ Again, like in *Pride and Prejudice*, the first sentence of the novel could be used as a motto to which the rest of the text relates. In other words, the rest of the novel is an exemplification of the introduction. Similarly in *Mansfield Park*, the initial sentence⁵⁷ of the novel becomes crucial for the whole plot, as we are present to discovering the gradual

⁵¹ *Persuasion*, prod. BBC Films, Millésime Productions, WGBH, dir. Roger Michell, 1995, 21 min. 19 sec.

⁵² *Persuasion*, 1995, 21 min 39 sec.

⁵³ *Persuasion*, 1995, 21 min 55 sec.

⁵⁴ *Persuasion*, 1995, 22 min. 06 sec.

⁵⁵ *Persuasion*, 1995, 22 min. 42 sec.

⁵⁶ David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Viking Press, 1993) 5.

⁵⁷ “About thirty years ago Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet’s lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income.” Austen, *Mansfield Park*, loc 1-36.

process of elevation of Fanny Price both in status and manners throughout the novel. However, these first sentences do not speak to us directly, the meaning which is hidden behind the Austen's wording is yet to be revealed. Therefore, the first sentences of Austen's novels can be considered as perfect examples of her use of dramatic irony.

As we observed in the previous chapter⁵⁸, even though film seems to convey new meanings, these meanings are narrowly bound by the filmmaker's scheme of the scenes. The 1999 adaptation of *Mansfield Park* diverts from Austen's text as much as possible, especially by taking up the topic of slavery, Sir Thomas's supposed business in Antigua, as its main theme together with the more feminine depiction of Fanny. Patricia Rozema, the director, has taken several autobiographical features from Austen's life to supplement Fanny's character. For instance, the Austen's acceptance of a proposal of marriage and her later refusal the day after is used in the film as opposed to the novel, in which Fanny waits for the love of Edmund to the last moment and she never consents to marry Mr Crawford. Moreover, in the adaptation Fanny becomes a writer, in contrast to the book where she writes letters merely. She composes, as originally Austen did, *The History of England* and some of the Austen's critical authorial commentaries are narrated (in the form of writing to her sister Susy) by Fanny herself. Therefore, the obstacle of transferring Austen's dramatic irony on screen is successfully solved in this adaptation as Rozema imposes on Fanny the role of a commentator. Even though these Fanny's commentaries are not exactly taken from the novel, they try to appear to be instances of Austen's irony,

Dear Susy, Maria was married on Saturday. In all important preparations of mind, she was complete. Prepared for matrimony by a hatred of home, disappointed affection and contempt of the man she was to marry. The bride was elegantly dressed and the bridesmaids were duly inferior. Her mother had her salts, expecting to be agitated, and her aunt tried to cry. Marriage is indeed a manoeuvring business.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ 2. Theory of adaptation 17.

⁵⁹ *Mansfield Park*, 1999, 43 min. 21 sec. Another such critical commentary appears elsewhere: "Dear Susy, news items...Sir Thomas has dragged Tom to the West Indies to...protect our interests there. Maria has found herself a fiancé, a Mr Rushworth, who Sir Thomas has approved by post. Everyone seems delighted with him, except Edmund, who says, 'If he had not £1 2,000 a year, we'd think him prodigiously dim.' Consequently, there's an urgency for Julia to search for a suitor. And Mrs Norris' husband died...which did not seem to inconvenience her at all." *Mansfield Park*, 1999, 17 min. 32 sec.

This commentary reveals to the viewer what is hidden in the actions of characters who may appear quite rational and conventional, yet, their corruption is already in process or it is awaited. Therefore, Maria who insisted on a hasty marriage to be able to boast with it and forget Mr Crawford in its luxuries and Mrs Norris who claims to have the credit for the initial meeting of the married couple, not surprisingly end up living together after Maria's elopement with "their tempers becoming their mutual punishment"⁶⁰.

In the 2007 *Northanger Abbey*, on the other hand, we hear a voice of a narrator in the beginning and in the end reading simply the lines from the novel while we see the actions on screen that correspond to what the female, as if Austen's, voice describes. Again the first sentence of the narrator becomes significant for the whole plot, "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her."⁶¹ Catherine's prospect of being a heroine is of course alluded to because as we are about to realize she loves to read gothic novels. Throughout the novel as well as the film adaptation of it, her character is tested until she is able to admit that the heroines from her books are not real and the created fantasies in her mind can cause gross misunderstandings. Thus, Catherine realizes she indeed is not born to be a heroine but rather a girl who is able to encounter the realities of life such as General Tilney's abuse of his wife and children or the insincere nature of her friend Isabella and her brother John. Therefore, we may conclude that the first sentence of the novel actually indicates the reader to what should interest him and what hints he or she should try to trace throughout the novel or film adaptation. In fact, this indication oscillates on the edge of irony because it not only tells us the truth about Catherine, which she has yet to discover, but it also tries to mislead us into wishing and supposing together with her that she indeed is a heroine.

The rest of the adaptations that we consider in this work including *Persuasion* 1995, *Sense and Sensibility* 1995 and *Pride and Prejudice* 1995 and 2005 rely especially on two ways of transforming the dramatic irony of the authorial commentary on screen. Either the filmmakers project Austen's narrator to the dialogues or more conspicuously to the visual metaphors that usually reveal the character's inner feelings described by the narrator. For

⁶⁰ *Mansfield Park*, 1999, 1 h. 23 min. 9 sec.

⁶¹ Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Kindle Edition: Public Domain Books, 2006) loc 1. or *Northanger Abbey*, prod. Granada Television, ITV Productions, WGBH, dir. Jon Jones, 2007, 50 sec.

example, in *Sense and Sensibility* after the initial dialogue of Fanny and John Dashwood follows this Austen's ironic commentary:

This argument was irresistible. It gave to his intentions whatever of decision was wanting before; and he finally resolved, that it would be absolutely unnecessary, if not highly indecorous, to do more for the widow and children of his father, than such kind of neighbourly acts as his own wife pointed out.⁶²

If the viewer does not perceive the irony of the dialogue from the lines of Fanny and John in the 1995 adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, he or she may draw to the same conclusion by their appearances as well as their several reflections in mirrors in one of the initial scenes of the film. Fanny, while persuading John conspicuously to refuse to help his sisters, is sitting in front of a mirror; John is standing in front of another each of them eying vainly and proudly his or her own reflection. Moreover, there is a mirror behind them that causes their reflections to duplicate pointing thus in this way on the hypocrisy of their characters.

Similarly, in the *Pride and Prejudice* by Joe Wright the authorial commentary is transformed to the visual. This time Darcy's character, or the non-transparent mask of prudery he seems to wear, is revealed to Elizabeth. Elizabeth's epiphany is reached in the film both in the scene after her refusal of Darcy and in the Pemberley art gallery scene. Elizabeth is standing in front of a mirror and the light of the day behind her gradually changes to dusk. She is contemplating her own countenance until she sees Darcy coming in with his letter. We may perceive that something is breaking in her, possibly her pride. This scene narrowly corresponds with and supplements the one in Pemberley where Elizabeth regards the set of marble statues. One of them is a veiled figure, which seemingly symbolizes Elizabeth's blindness. Later, when she stands in front of the bust of Darcy, her epiphany almost grows to a completion and it is accomplished again with the use of a mirror, when Elizabeth sees through a slit in the door the reflection of Darcy lovingly holding his sister Georgiana.

⁶² Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* loc 309.

4. Conclusion

Adaptations of Austen's novels since the 1990's are so-called fusion adaptations because the Heritage genre fuses in them with the Hollywood commercial attractiveness. Yet, some of these adaptations seem less commercial than others because they are created with the aim to convey meanings rather than simply for the entertainment of the masses. Most of the Austen's novels and the films based on them tend to interconnect by borrowing motifs from each other creating thus a kind of "Austenland" in which the individual aspects of the novels and films join. In the Austen's adaptations that were studied in this work the innovations made in recreating novels for the screen use fall into the second Wagner's category of his division of adaptations – *commentary* – in which the original text is altered but only slightly. Even though the modes of expression when transferring texts to screen are various as we learnt in chapter 2., the means by which characters, atmosphere and location are presented require adaptation to be able to attract the contemporary viewer. Through dialogues, introspective language as well as body language and sounds or noises the various types of Austen's irony are transferred into the audio-visual and Austen's meaning is conveyed to the modern viewer. In this way the audio-visual has proven to be as complicated and challenging for the viewer as Austen's text is for the reader. When the readers and the viewers start to contemplate the allusions of the novels and the intricate mise-en-scènes of the films, they contribute to the interpretation of the director of each adaptation and the connected ideas of the filmmaker and his audience then create specific meanings. As Ariane Hudelet points out, "Austen's narratives have become part of modern mythologies in the sense defined by Barthes, that is 'adapted to a certain consumption, invested with ... a social usage.'"¹

The morality character of Austen's novels, in contrast to the modern expression of independence in the adaptations, becomes a driving force of Austen's irony through which we sense the traces of her typically British humour. Inability of many of the filmmakers to transfer her critical dialogues and the authorial commentary on screen is the reason for the failure of the films to carry the author's message to the wider audience. Yet, some of the adaptations, especially the ones that were released in 1995 (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* miniseries and *Persuasion*) seem to be able to remain faithful to the core methods

¹ Ariane Hudelet, "The Construction of a Myth," *The Cinematic Jane Austen – Essays on the Filmic Sensibility of the Novels* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009) 158.

and ideas of the author, even though they are also strikingly innovative in some other aspects. Thus, we may imply that although viewers may regard some of the films as pretty love stories or as equal to romantic comedies, other adaptations succeed in transferring Austen's ironic morality on screen and to the viewer who might or may not be enlightened by them. Austen's religious tendencies are extremely secularized and not at all bigoted as she is not afraid to criticise and ridicule even if it should concern a character of a priest (for instance Mr Collins). Nevertheless, she still seems to keep pointing her heroes and heroines in the direction of morality and atonement. Perhaps these "underlining principles upon which men live their lives and by which they judge the characters of others"², even though so often ironized by Austen to a kind of social comedy, are the very attraction that subconsciously lures the contemporary audience to appreciate Austen.

² Gary Kelly, "Religion and Politics," *Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 155.

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