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## **Bakalářská práce**

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Humor a realismus ve filmových adaptacích románů Jane  
Austenové

Humour and realism in film adaptations of Jane Austen's novels

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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vlastnoruční podpis

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although Jane Austen is considered an author of the age of romanticism, she cannot be fully associated with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century romantics and sentimentalists. Her work shows signs of early realism where she portrays the characters and the settings of the story in detail. Her heroines are mostly immature girls who develop into adult women due to a gentle guidance from male heroes who influence their perception of the world. Austen also comments on society wittily and satirizes character flaws. Her novels are still popular nowadays and all were made into successful films. The film adaptations form a valuable resource in foreign language teaching in many aspects.

## INTRODUCTION

Watching film adaptations of literary classics is popular among students for various reasons. The obvious argument is the aspect of time: reading a large book can be highly time-consuming, that is why students often resort to literary adaptations of required reading. There are several reasons, however, why teachers are opposed to students only watching a film adaptation instead of reading the book. The common idea of film is usually connected with passive entertainment, whereas reading a book evokes an activity that develops human brain in many aspects: above all it stimulates imagination, but also expands vocabulary, improves memory, and brings knowledge. Similar effects can be attributed to films when we choose the right educational approach. Apart from a sought-after pastime, teachers should see film adaptations as a valuable resource in English classes.

Jane Austen's novels inspired many filmmakers and the aim of this thesis is to examine the film adaptations of Austen's novels from the point of view of humour and realism and their possible employment in English classes. The thesis looks closely at the adaptations of all six novels and analyses the approach of the filmmakers. Although the films are relatively true adaptations of the novels, some minor changes in the scripts can be traced. Specifically, the aim is to answer the following questions:

- What do the screenwriters and directors concentrate on?
- To what degree do their adaptations remain true to the original Austen's novels?
- How can film adaptations be applied in English language classes?

Film adaptations of Jane Austen's novels belong to the so-called heritage films, which makes them a perfect learning material in teaching a foreign language. Despite repetitive plots and some stereotype characters, Austen's adaptations form rich source of information and a decent base for discussion.

## 1. Jane Austen

Jane Austen is regarded one of England's greatest female novelists. Her depicting everyday life of the 19<sup>th</sup> century society still attracts readers after more than two centuries (Austen 1993, p.1).

Jane Austen was born on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1775 in the village of Steventon in the county of Hampshire. She was the seventh of eight children of Reverend George Austen and Cassandra, née Leigh. Jane Austen had six brothers and one sister. Her father was a country rector and, to increase the income of the family, he gave lessons at the rectory (Todd 2006, p. 2).



*Portrait of Jane Austen by her sister Cassandra<sup>1</sup>*

In 1783 both Austen girls, Jane and Cassandra, were sent to Oxford where they were tutored by Mrs Ann Cawley; from 1785 to 1786 their education by Mrs La Tournelle followed at Abbey School in Reading (Todd 2006, p. 3). Later the parents educated their two daughters at home. “George and Cassandra Austen were cultivated people. [...] George, with his library of

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<sup>1</sup> AUSTEN, Cassandra. Jane Austen. In: *National Portrait Gallery* [online]. London: National Portrait Gallery, 1999 [cit. 2019-04-20]. Dostupné z: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw00230/Jane-Austen>



over 500 books, was ‘a profound scholar’ with ‘most exquisite taste’, and Cassandra composed skilful comic verse on local people and events, a common pastime within her community” (Todd 2006, p. 2). It was only natural that little Jane Austen became interested in reading books as well as writing her own comic stories to amuse her family. “Jane Austen’s oldest brother, James, had turned to poetry and essay writing, and edited, for a time, a weekly magazine [...] in which the whole family took a keen interest. It is not surprising then [...] that Jane, early in her teens, should try her hand at writing too” (Shields 2001, p. 25).

Jane Austen’s first sketches, the so called juvenilia, appeared as early as in 1786. They consisted of comic verse, riddles, parodies and farce, were published in notebooks and supplied with drawings and dedications to her sister Cassandra and friends. The stories include ‘Love & Friendship’, ‘Catherine or The Bower’ and ‘Lady Susan’. These early writings were intended to be read by or to her family and friends; the dramatic pieces rehearsed and performed in front of an audience.

The success of juvenilia encouraged Jane Austen to devote herself to writing and so in her twenties she started composing real novels. One of them, ‘First Impressions’ (later ‘Pride and Prejudice’) was offered by her father for publishing, but unsuccessfully. Not discouraged, Jane Austen continues with ‘Elinor and Marianne’ (‘Sense and Sensibility’) and ‘Susan’ (‘Northanger Abbey’).

In December 1795 Jane Austen met an Irish law student Thomas Langlois Lefroy who was visiting his aunt near Steventon. They attended balls, danced together, and shared interests in books. Their relationship was very close and many had anticipated their union in marriage. However, after one month in the country Tom Lefroy returned to London to continue his studies. It is very likely that Lefroy’s family were against this marriage and Tom was sent away to marry advantageously (Boyle 2011).

Lefroy’s departure may have broken Austen’s heart but on the other hand she most probably found love and could communicate her feelings and enjoyment in her writings. We can only guess what her literary career would look like without this experience.

In 1801 the Austen family moved to Bath in order to improve the state of health of Mrs. Austen. In 1802, on a visit back to Steventon, a young man, Harris Bigg-Wither, proposed to

Jane Austen and she accepted. However, the next day she rejected his proposal. Back in Bath Austen revised and rewrote some of her sketches in order to offer them for publication. And indeed, in 1803 she sold her novel 'Susan' for £10 to a publisher from London. Nevertheless, the novel was not published (Copeland 1997, p. 6).

After George Austen died in 1805, the Austen women had to depend on contributions from the young Austen men. They also left Bath in 1806 settling down in Chawton eventually where Edward Austen offered them rooms in his cottage after his wife died leaving him with eleven children. The women were visited here by other relatives and also made trips and visits themselves. The members of this large family were a great inspiration for various characters in Jane Austen's novels (Todd 2006, p. 8).

At that time young women had very few opportunities to find occupation, which made them dependent on their families while waiting to get married. Jane Austen, having no suitors, was aware of her situation. With no prospects of finding a husband she concentrated on her writing career so as to contribute to the income of her family. In Chawton three more novels were created – 'Mansfield Park', 'Emma' and 'Persuasion' (Todd 2006, p. 10).

Onset of an illness slowed Austen's writing and confined her to bed in 1817. Her sister Cassandra took her to Winchester for treatment. Austen tried to continue writing a new work but was too weak. Her last novel, 'Sanditon', remained therefore unfinished. Austen died on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1817 and is buried in Winchester Cathedral (Todd 2006, p. 13).

## **2. Jane Austen's novels**

Mastering the novel of manners, Austen deals with relationships for which she finds inspiration among her large family. We encounter analysis of the characters' manners and values, their scrutiny and judgement. However, Austen chooses her own style of criticism by way of irony. Sharp dialogues reveal the qualities and thoughts of her heroes and let readers form their opinions on the characters.

### **2.1. Topics**

Austen's choice of topics for her work comes from the close observations of her environment and they are repeated in all her novels. As Dick (2001, p. 70) puts it, "[t]he main factor limiting her scope is her preference for the familiar." From her own experience Austen knew well women were economically dependent on men – and indeed, all heroines (except for Emma) are dependent on their parents or the good will of their better-off relatives. The father and brothers had to provide for them before they found a suitable husband; after the marriage women were again dependent, but this time on their husbands. Prospective suitors were therefore judged not only by their qualities, but by their annual income as well. Austen presents stereotypes as humorous or even absurd and she uses satire to entertain as well as educate her readers.

#### **2.1.1. Courtship**

The topic of matchmaking can be found in Austen's novels repeatedly and indeed, can be regarded as the main topic of her work. Carter and McRae (1995, p.122) write about 'Pride and Prejudice': "[...] during the novel the characters learn about themselves and, in reaching self-awareness, they realize what they want from life and the novel reaches its happy ending with their marriage" – but it can certainly be applied on most of Jane Austen's work.

In Austen's novels (apart from Emma and Persuasion) the male and female protagonists are introduced to each other at a ball or during a visit to relatives. The heroines are adolescent girls, some of them naive, and all inexperienced in love which makes the novels a kind of contemplation on courting and marriage. As a woman and a man could not be alone without a chaperone, the characters get to know each other from their behaviour in larger society. They

also hear or read about each other from various relatives and mutual friends. Such information need not necessarily be true and the heroine as well as the reader has to form their opinions and revise them eventually when a new piece of information appears. As the stories progress, the heroines attain self-knowledge, learn from their mistakes and finally, all novels end with the marriage of at least one couple. We can assume that finding a husband was the highest goal in a woman's life because only a marriage could secure the future of a woman and sometimes of her other relatives as well.

### **2.1.2. The role of women in English society**

The economic situation of women concerned Jane Austen personally and the financial dependency was depressing for her. As Rowbotham (2001, p. 83) put it, "the position of women in society was largely dictated by strict codes of expectation." Middle-class women could not inherit the family property and they could not earn money or had very limited possibilities to do so. Their only hope and purpose was to get married advantageously. All Austen heroines seek and find true love, they all reach it in their own way, and the financial situation of them all improves due to marriage. Those less fortunate who could not get married like Jane Austen herself were dependent on their wealthier male relatives. (Dick 2001, p. 97 and Rowbotham 2001, p. 83)

Austen's novels are always narrated from the omniscient point of view but with the insight of the heroine's thoughts and as if seen through the heroine's eyes. This technique is called 'free indirect speech' and Jane Austen was the first distinguished author to use it for revealing the characters' mind (Dick 2001, p. 114). In 'Persuasion' Anne Elliot explains to Captain Harville: "We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately" (Austen 2012a, p. 229). Austen releases the heroine from being the captive of the society. Wiltshire (2006, p. 45) observes that "Jane Austen has found a way that gives her heroine the initiative, and gives her, finally, the heroine's place. Anne is now at once the woman through whose consciousness the world is seen and organized, and the speaking subject of the text."

The subtle emancipation of female characters is a sign of feminism. Austen's heroines are allowed to pursue their happiness and know their own minds. Although their primary object is

to marry, they do not wait at home passively for a prince to rescue them. Rather they go for an adventure as far as the kindness of richer relatives allow. They have a right to choose; as well as Austen had herself when she decided not to marry. Instead, she embarked on writing novels, which was a strong declaration of feminism in her time. However, “Austen’s career was unusual, and only just becoming respectable, so she took the precaution of publishing her work anonymously” (Dick 2001, p. 98).

### **2.1.3. Education**

The topic of education plays a significant role in Jane Austen’s novels. In the broad sense, education is represented by the genre of the novels, the so-called Bildungsroman. Baldick (2008) says that the German word can be translated as educational novel, and the English equivalent is coming-of-age novel. Young heroines of Austen’s novels, still adolescent, gradually become women; they learn through experience and discover the world around them. A male character often turns out to be an important figure in the process and acts as a guide. Wiltshire (2006, pp. 31) points out that “the relationship of Emma Woodhouse and Mr Knightley resembles the pupil/tutor pattern that is discernible in Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney, Fanny and Edmund, and even Elizabeth and Darcy.”

In the narrow sense, reading books and writing letters as well as musical education in singing, playing an instrument and dancing represent the sort of education that a woman could obtain from her parents or a governess. Books are a valuable source of information, which Austen knew well from her own experience. She shows high respect for reading books and self-education by letting her heroines read. In fact, all her characters are literate, which was not a commonplace for all people in those days.

There is another aspect regarding reading that is worth mentioning. Austen shows that there has to be a balance between reading books and making your own judgement. In the hands of Elizabeth Bennet in ‘Pride and Prejudice’ books are a beneficial companion in her development. Darcy characterizes an accomplished woman with “the improvement of her mind by extensive reading” (Austen 1994, p. 33). The opposite is Elizabeth’s sister Mary, who is portrayed as silly and who does not fully understand the books she reads. That does not discourage her from displaying her ‘knowledge’, though. Mary’s style of speaking is rather arrogant and her choice of words, often repeating difficult passages from books, sounds

improper and moralising to her audience. Another example of unsuitable attitude towards reading books is the naive Catherine Morland in ‘Northanger Abbey’, who likes reading Gothic novels. Austen suggests these stories can be fairly misleading in the education of a young woman because the world is not portrayed realistically. As unhealthy is seen Catherine’s wild imagination based on her reading and leading to misunderstandings in real life.

#### **2.1.4. Social status**

Jane Austen’s family belonged to the social class of landed gentry. They were landowners who earned their living from renting a property. The title *gentleman* defined the rank, but Austen also related it to their manners. According to Wiltshire (2006, p. 3) “the term gentleman is not and should not be tied to a particular social category; it is for [Austen] an honorific title, earned through the possession of personal qualities.” A conversation in ‘Persuasion’ illustrates the different notions of the word: “You misled me by the term *gentleman*. I thought you were speaking of some man of property” (Austen 2012a, p. 23). Mr Elliot and Mr Shepherd were discussing Captain Wentworth, who was a gentleman by the rank of a navy officer and also by his genteel manners. What Mr Elliot was insinuating was Wentworth’s lack of fortune some years ago.

#### **2.1.5. Manners**

Austen’s novels are primarily comedies of manners. The follies of the characters are satirized, the morals of the society ridiculed. The objective is learning from mistakes: a lesson not only for the characters but also for the reader. Wiltshire (2006, p. 118) is convinced that “[w]hat makes Austen’s work unique is that the process of self-formation I have singled out – which Austen conceives of as an ongoing sequence or cascade of moral decisions, minor and major – is both observed, and participated in, by the reader.” Austen aimed to amuse as well as educate the readers with her satire.

The style of Austen’s writing is unique with its focus on conversations either between two characters or in the form of free indirect speech. These dialogues or interior monologues often relate to morality with words such as *agreeable*, *careless*, *selfish*, *amiable*, *polished* occurring repeatedly. For the purpose of study Wiltshire (2006, p. 5) suggests “to underline and note

these recurrent words where they occur and to consider how they are used on different occasions. If you do this, you find that many of the novel's most important words are adjectives or adverbs that have to do with manners.”

### **2.1.6. Religion**

The topic of religion appears to some extent in every Austen's novel although not in the form of preaching or church-going, but as characters leading moral lives, rejecting sinful thoughts and mending their ways. “Austen clearly wants the reader to see, as Mr Knightley does, that Emma is redeemable” (Rowbotham 2001, p. 67). The example from ‘Emma’ can be applied on most of Austen's heroines. Also, in every Austen's work clergymen play an important role though we hardly ever encounter them in church. There is no doubt that clerics played an important role in her own life – her father and brother Henry Austen were clergymen. Mr Collins in ‘Pride and Prejudice’ and Mr Elton in ‘Emma’ are the object of Austen's satire, though. Since they were not first-born and could not inherit family trades, they became vicars but both hope to gain better social status through advantageous marriage (Rowbotham 2001, p. 74).

### **2.2. Plots**

The stories in Austen's work are fairly limited as well as their setting. She places her narratives into English villages and countryside. As Wiltshire (2006, p. 87) puts it, “[t]he plot of a young woman from the country, who must find her way within a more sophisticated society, negotiating its unexpected challenges and steering clear of predatory males, surviving to marry, handsomely, into the patrimony, is echoed in almost all of Austen's novels.” Rather than writing about something invented and unknown to her, Austen concentrates on depicting everyday life of her characters most of which she probably experienced herself. Allen and Smith (1999, p. 176) mention activities such as reading, writing letters and diaries, attending balls, making new acquaintances and receiving marriage proposals, that are depicted with accuracy and a great sense of detail. Dick (2001, p. 96) also suggests, that “[t]he visits to stay with distant relatives and friends, or local trips to neighbours, were a central part of Austen's life, as they are for many of her characters.”

Apart from this realistic aspect, we can trace elements of fairy tales in Austen's novels. Jeffares and Bushrui (1998) point out that Austen retells the stories of fairytale heroines set in her time and dealing with contemporary issues. Most appealing was obviously the story of *Cinderella* as we encounter her in most of Austen's novels. Fanny Price in 'Mansfield Park' is a prototype of Cinderella: as a girl she has to live with relatives, who treat her like a servant, and her two vain cousins represent Cinderella's stepsisters. With time the patient and quiet Fanny grows into a pretty adult woman and finally wins the love of her Edmund. Anne Eliot in 'Persuasion' also resembles Cinderella in having two annoying sisters, being sensible and taking care of the household. 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Northanger Abbey' may both be seen as the stories of Cinderella in the same way. Elizabeth Bennet comes from a rather poor family, meets Mr Darcy at a ball, and after several difficulties marries the wealthy and socially superior gentleman. Catherine Morland, of humble origins, is introduced to Henry Tilney at a ball, too, and the novel ends with their marriage. The protagonists of 'Pride and Prejudice' also correspond with those of *The Beauty and the Beast*. Elizabeth is beautiful, amiable and well-read; Mr Darcy is a beast, who is turned down, whose nature shows in the course of time, and who becomes the prince in the end. Emma Woodhouse in 'Emma' resembles the *Sleeping Beauty* – a beautiful princess from a wealthy family who is woken up by Mr Knightley's gentle guidance. All heroines find their Prince Charming and live happily ever after like the princesses in the fairy tales. (Jeffares and Bushrui 1998, p. 61)

One of the reasons why Austen's work is still so popular nowadays may be her avoiding broad historical context. Although militia and navy officers appear in some novels, they are not explicitly connected to a specific historical period. Carter and McRae (1995, p. 121) declare "[s]he does not write about the Napoleonic wars or the social or political issues and crises of her age, but her observations of people apply to human nature in general."

Austen's novels are set in the time she lived, but may as well, with a few adjustments, take place today. This is evident mainly in looser adaptations of her narratives. According to Watson (2019) and Liberty W. (2018) the following belong to popular adaptations: 'The Jane Austen Book Club' (book and its film adaptation) tells a story of a group of people in contemporary California who start a book club to discuss Jane Austen's novels and in time, their lives resemble those stories. 'Austenland' is another book as well as a film adaptation of Jane Austen's stories. Fans of Austen's novels meet in a Jane Austen theme park, experience life as if in Austen's era, and eventually find romance. 'Bridget Jones' Diary' was inspired by



Jane Austen's novel 'Pride and Prejudice' retells the story of Elizabeth and Mr Darcy in modern-day England. For younger audience, the fantasy romance 'Twilight' will be of interest, whose narrative is loosely based on 'Pride and Prejudice' (Bailey 2012), as well as the vlog series 'The Lizzie Bennet Diaries', a "retelling of 'Pride and Prejudice' for the web generation" (Welsh 2013).

### 3. Realism

The term realism implies real life is presented in the work of art faithfully. Authors try to represent reality objectively without trying to smooth out or conceal the imperfections. The characters are portrayed with all their faults, the commonplace scenes are depicted in detail and the setting corresponds with its characters. We witness ordinary people of various ranks in everyday situations, each of them acting according to their social background.

#### 3.1. Social realism in Jane Austen's novels

Austen's work is usually classified as romantic even if she did not want to be associated with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century romanticism. As a consequence of revolutions and reforms, romantics turned to nature, old traditions, middle ages and human feelings for inspiration (Allen and Smith 1999, p. 143). Austen expressed her dislike for romanticism by mocking the popular romantic genre of Gothic novel in 'Northanger Abbey'. Her style is also far away from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sentimentalism when emotions controlled the characters' actions. Unlike sentimentalists Austen decided to concentrate on the qualities of landed gentry and portrays their manners and relationships most accurately. The main object of her attention is the society, the common people of her age and social status. (Rowbotham 2001, p. 7)

Austen's style of writing can be described as realistic with respect to her choice of motifs. Jeffares and Bushrui (1998, p. 39) claim that "[t]he task she sets herself is to elicit significance from a realistic depiction of a small group of people living ordinary lives like her own. Unlike Scott and many of the great Victorian novelists, she does not set her novel in the past and she does not deal with significant social and political events. She is ironic but not usually satirical; only in *Northanger Abbey* has she one specific target which she intends to ridicule." With regard to the simple plots of her novels, Austen's style can be also described as domestic realism. Many domestic scenes and commonplace activities are portrayed in detail. In 'Mansfield Park' and 'Emma' most of the narrative takes place at the heroine's home: inside or around the manor.

It is true that "Jane Austen is different from other writers of her time, because her main interest is in the moral, social and psychological behaviour of her characters" (Carter and McRae 1995, p. 121). Eagleton (2005) mentions that Austen believed that actions are more

important than emotions, or we can say that realism is more significant than sentimentalism. Nevertheless “the conclusion of the novels remain romantic: marriage of the correct couple against odds or opposition” (Todd 2006, pp. 25-26).

Another reason why Austen’s novels still appeal to readers and filmmakers after 200 years is the realistic depiction of the characters. Jeffares and Bushrui (1998, p. 48) call it “her own kind of realism.” Austen describes her characters as if they were familiar to the reader. She consciously uses vague characteristics and lets the reader picture the scene as he pleases. “Jane Austen sets herself the deliberate limit of asking the reader to recognise in her fiction places, people and experiences he knows; if she makes a mistake the reader can perceive it through his own experience” (Jeffares and Bushrui 1998, p. 43). Austen’s characters are ordinary people with flaws. Their vices and faults remind the readers of their own imperfections. And it is definitely easier to identify oneself with an imperfect character than with a faultless one.

Sutherland (2014) argues that Austen was neither a pure romanticist nor a realist (since literary realism was not defined as an art movement until the mid-nineteenth century) but rather a combination of both. “To say that Austen is a realist as a writer is not quite the same as saying she describes society as it really is. Her novels are also romantic comedies. In novel after novel, love and good fortune win out and the future looks perfect for the handsome young couple whose union is finally confirmed in the closing pages. This happens despite the fact that many married couples are portrayed as ill-suited or ridiculous (think of Mr and Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* or Mr and Mrs Elton in *Emma*).”

#### 4. Humour

Longman Dictionary defines humour as “the ability to understand and enjoy what is funny and makes people laugh” (Longman 1998, p. 650). Austen definitely understood that, as she often wrote stories to be read out to her family for amusement. Seeing her writing makes people laugh, she decided to work on and improve her literary style.

The main source of humour throughout all Austen’s novels is elaborate conversations. Various couples meet and interact, and their dialogues are full of wit and irony. Dick (2001, p. 71) writes that “Austen’s characters tend to be defined by their conversation at least as much as by description and action.” These interactions, through which the reader learns about the character, form the framework of the novels. Such witty comments and ironic reprimanding help the heroes realise one’s mistakes and develop. Austen observed that “moral improvement is better secured by good-humoured satire than moralistic hectoring” (Eagleton 2005, p. 107). The novelist not only wanted to entertain, but also educate. Dick (2001, p. 117) argues that satire “is usually morally censorious, using laughter as a means of attack.”

Austen decided to fight against stereotypes with irony, i.e. using “words which are clearly opposite to one’s meaning [...] in order to be amusing or to show annoyance” (Longman 1998, p. 695). Irony is often used in Austen’s satire of society where she ridicules foolish behaviour of the characters or the rules of society, but still with the aim to amuse her audience or the readers of her novels. In her work Austen alongside with “many women novelist [...] mocked the impoverished training in accomplishments (dancing, sketching, music, and fancy needlework [...] ) provided for middle- and upper-class girls by governesses and boarding schools and aimed primarily at catching a husband” (Todd 2006, p. 23).

Amusing characters often appear in Austen’s novels as caricatures. Wiltshire (2006, p. 48) argues that a caricature “is a figure which does not interact with others and thus does not develop, does not deepen in interest to the reader, but merely goes on displaying the same traits in different circumstances.” Examples of caricature figures are the hypochondriacs Mrs Bennet, complaining about her poor nerves, and Mary Musgrove, feeling ill all the time, or the chatty Miss Bates from ‘Emma’.

## 5. Film

The beginnings of film, also called motion picture, date back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the term motion picture suggests, film is a series of pictures projected on the screen that make the audience see a moving scene. Although film appeared as a new medium, similarities with other artistic forms can be noticed. The evolution of the early films was inspired by theatre, dance and fiction. Films imitated stage plays and retold novels. (Mast and Kawin 1996, p. 1)

### 5.1. British cinema

The tendency of adapting a literary work can be seen in the British cinema in the 1980s when the so-called ‘art cinema’ developed with a special category of the ‘heritage’ films. Hill (2009, p. 15) defines these types of films as artistic, borrowing “high art [...] from literary or theatrical sources.” Hall (2009, pp. 47) further distinguishes several categories of heritage films, such as film adaptations of classic literary works (Austen, Dickens, Forster etc.), costume dramas, films from colonial India, historical dramas portraying various historical figures and Shakespeare adaptations. These period or literary films aim to present British history, culture and traditions to the audience with a nostalgic feeling for the past. In this way heritage films create a kind of ‘national’ cinema that focuses on depicting British past, often idealised. Typical features of heritage films are period costumes, British landscape, aristocrats and their manor houses. (Hall 2009, pp. 47)

Apart from heritage narratives British cinema is also distinguished by the use of language. McFarlane (2009, p. 367) argues that “[t]he adaptation was never the only manifestation of the literary in British films. The sheer value set on the verbal, the concern for language to do its part in narrative, could often make British films seem talky, as if they were too little reliant on the imagistic power of *mise en scène*.” In British films the verbal is at least as important as the visual. Mast and Kawin (1996 p. 420) explain, that “[t]he mainstream British film keeps its roots in theatre for the simple reason that British actors, directors, and playwrights remain expert delineators of a lengthy English-language tradition.”

## **5.2. Film adaptations**

Dercksen (2015) argues that adapting a narrative means retelling it through another medium. And creating a new medium is also producing a new piece of art. Since film is a visual medium, an adaptation will differ from the original literary work in various ways. The filmmakers have to find a means how to translate the language of the book into the actions of the film. Novels, especially Austen's, take place in the characters' heads and the screenwriter and director have to adapt it for the screen visually. (Dercksen 2015)

Naremore (2014, p. 45) is convinced that "film adaptations of novels are in fact digests or condensations of their sources." That is true with regard to two aspects: time and the number of characters. The novel commonly spans a longer time interval whereas a film usually only lasts up to two hours. To squeeze the storyline of a novel into a film adaptation will cause the narrative to be condensed. As for the characters involved, some insignificant will always be omitted with no impact on the story.

There are various kinds of adaptations. A useful pattern was suggested by Geoffrey Wagner. He suggests classifying them as follows: "A transposition' follows the novel closely; a 'commentary' alters the novel slightly, with a new emphasis or new structure; and 'analogy' uses the novel as a point of departure." (cited in Emma Formatted to Fit Your Screen 2011)

Rachel Brownstein (cited in Cohen 2005) suggests that a key to successful adaptation may be the use of irony with which the director can detach himself from the literary work without being criticised for deviating from the novel. Irony gives the filmmakers a kind of freedom in their approach to the narrative. (Cohen 2005)

## **5.3. Film adaptations of Jane Austen's novels**

Austen's novels have been a huge inspiration for many film adaptations and TV series. Rowbotham (2001, p. 6) is convinced that "film and period drama makers enjoy continued success with her novel. As love stories, they never fail to provide the sense of romantic justice and calm moral balance which restores the order to the world and composure to the heart." A lot of adaptations appeared in the last two decades.

In 1995 a very well received BBC TV series 'Pride and Prejudice' was released, starring Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet and Colin Firth as Mr Darcy. The series was directed by Simon Langton. It was awarded an Emmy for costume design and Jennifer Ehle won a BAFTA Award for best actress.

In 1995 also 'Sense and Sensibility' appeared, scripted by Emma Thompson, directed by Ang Lee and starring Kate Winslet and Emma Thompson as Marianne and Elinor Dashwood. The performance brought Emma Thompson several awards.

Another film appeared in 1995, namely 'Persuasion'. The adaptation was directed by Roger Michell; Amanda Root played Anne Eliot and Ciarán Hinds played Captain Frederick Wentworth.

'Emma' follows in 1996, directed by Douglas McGrath and starring Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma Woodhouse and Jeremy Northam as Mr Knightley.

In 1999 'Mansfield Park' appeared, directed by Patricia Rozema. Frances O'Connor plays Fanny Price and Jonny Lee Miller her cousin Edmund Bertram.

Another adaptation of 'Pride and Prejudice' appeared in 2005. The film was directed by Joe Wright and starred Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet and Matthew MacFadyen as Mr Darcy.

In 2007 a BBC adaptation of 'Persuasion' was released, directed by Adrian Shergold. Sally Hawkins plays Anne Eliot and Rupert Penry-Jones plays Captain Wentworth.

'Northanger Abbey' appeared in 2007, directed by Jon Jones and starring Felicity Jones as Catherine Moreland and JJ Feild as Henry Tilney.

Austen also inspired contemporary authors to write books based on her novels and create loose adaptations of her narratives. They were often made into successful films.

The plot of 'Pride and Prejudice' – two men longing to win one woman, initial mutual aversion of the hero and heroine – is the basis of Helen Fielding's 1996 novel 'Bridget Jones's

Diary'. The book was famously adapted for the screen in 2001, starring Renée Zellweger as Bridget, Colin Firth as Mr Darcy and Hugh Grant as Daniel Cleaver.

The same plot was also inspiration for Stephenie Meyer's 2005 fantasy 'Twilight'; which was made into a film in 2008. The adaptation stars Kristen Stewart as Bella, Robert Pattinson as the vampire Edward and Taylor Lautner as the werewolf Jacob.

'The Jane Austen Book Club' was written by Karen Joy Fowler in 2004 and its film adaptation was shot in 2007.

Shannon Hale based her 2007 novel 'Austenland' on the plots of Austen's narratives. The book was successfully adapted for the screen in 2013 starring Keri Russell, JJ Feild, Jennifer Coolidge and Jane Seymour.

The adaptations of Austen's novels, whether faithful or loose, attract filmmakers and audience all over the world. The popularity of the narratives is evident as Carpenter (2007) points out that "[i]n recent years Jane Austen has become the It girl of the film industry. She has graduated from BBC drama – Colin Firth's Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* being the pinnacle – to Hollywood stardom, culminating in last year's Oscar-nominated *Pride & Prejudice* starring Keira Knightley."



## 6. Film adaptation analysis

To transfer a whole literary work into a film adaptation must be very challenging. When we think of all the characters that appeared in Jane Austen's novels, it seems almost impossible for the filmmakers to include every single member of a large family, or even to portray their development. Rather than reproducing them precisely, the film adaptations usually only draw inspiration from the novels and concentrate on the plot and a few main characters.

Different screenwriters have different notions and attitudes towards the novel on which the film is based, that is why there are several diverse adaptations. According to International Movie Database (IMDb) the most popular is 'Pride and Prejudice' with around ten adaptations including films and TV series followed by 'Emma' with eight adaptations.

The realistic depiction of the characters is more or less successful for two reasons – thanks to a good choice of both the actors and period costumes. The setting also plays an important part in the film adaptations since the turning point seldom happened at the heroine's home. Bath, Northanger Abbey, Peak District, Pemberley, or Lyme are captured plausibly and add to the authenticity of the story. Wiltshire (2006, p. 112) points out that “[i]f we conceive of Austen's novels as promoting, unconsciously or deliberately, a specifically English world – as proposing, in effect, that England is the world – then the appeal of her work for educators promoting 'British', or English, culture becomes clear.”

Detailed analysis of the six film adaptations follows. The titles are dealt with in the order they were written by Jane Austen.

## **6.1. Northanger Abbey**

Although 'Northanger Abbey' was Austen's first book, it was only published by her brother Henry after her death in 1818. 'Northanger Abbey' is a satire of the romantic genre popular in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Gothic novel (Allen and Smith 1999, p. 176).

Catherine Morland is an ordinary girl whose favourite pastime activity is reading Gothic novels. Her life changes when she is invited by Mr and Mrs Allen to accompany them to Bath. At a ball she is introduced to a young clergyman Henry Tilney. Seeing that Catherine naïvely believes everything she reads in her Gothic novels and even applies her knowledge in real life, Henry teases her and mocks her inexperience. Later Catherine makes two more friends – a young vain girl Isabella and her brother John. The heroine is eventually invited to stay with the Tilney family at Northanger Abbey. General Tilney upon finding out about Catherine's economic situation drives her out of Northanger. Despite his father's disapproval of Catherine Henry proposes to her and they get married.

### **6.1.1. The topics**

'Northanger Abbey' can be described as a Bildungsroman or the coming-of-age novel. Allen and Smith (1999, p. 313) point out that this genre concentrates on the psychological development of the main character. At the beginning of the story Catherine is a young, ordinary girl living a quiet and not very interesting life. In the course of the narrative she goes on an adventure that changes her life. At the end Catherine matures into a woman, accomplished not only by reading books but also by spending time in the instructing company of her acquaintances Eleanor and Henry Tilney.

Another topic, which can be found in all Austen's novels, is the finding of the right man. Catherine is presented into large society properly and has to learn how to accept compliments, who is true to her and who only plays with her innocence. As the heroine grows we see her attracted to the pleasant Henry Tilney, who also likes her. Their relationship unfolds into love as they spend some time together and get to know each other mainly through conversation. It might be difficult to marry for love, though. The obstacle to their happy marriage is Catherine's economic situation – as perceived by Henry's father, General Tilney.

As mentioned before, 'Northanger Abbey' is a satire of the so called Gothic novel. Catherine is obsessed with reading "stories set in lonely frightening places" (Longman 1998, p. 570) and is dreaming constantly about being part, or even heroine of such narratives. Her imagination is vivid and her dreams are portrayed in detail, as was usual for Jane Austen. The author however mocks her heroine's fantasies and punishes her for being so foolish and naïve. After Catherine confesses to Henry that she fears his father might have murdered Mrs Tilney, Henry is angry but merely with Catherine's inability to distinguish between fiction and reality. Catherine is humiliated but acknowledges real life does not correspond with the stories depicted in novels.

### **6.1.2. Humour and realism in the film adaptation**

Andrew Davies scripted 'Northanger Abbey' in 2007 and made it a faithful adaptation. However, there "there is a certain amount of liberty that you can take. You can't change the actual story, but there's always some hidden scenes in the book that Austen didn't get around to writing herself, and it's nice to fill in some of the little gaps." (Davies 2001)

In the film adaptation of 2007 we may trace two types of humour – one situational, the other conversational that need not to be especially adjusted. Matano (2008) writes that Davies said: "Prop the book up and copy out the best bits of dialogue. The best thing is to trust Jane Austen. She gets most things right." There are several humorous situations in the film resulting from the heroine's naivety which makes her an easy victim for the more experienced and worldly Henry Tilney. Conversational humour appears in 'Northanger Abbey' mainly in the interactions between Catherine and Henry who form the main characters of the film. Henry often teases Catherine because she is too gullible and does not distinguish between fiction and reality. Another couple whose conversations are mostly humorous is Mr and Mrs Allen. He – wealthy and educated – teases his wife, who is rather plain but good-humoured.

The character of the good-natured Mr Allen can be defined as humorous. And although he is a minor character, we often hear him utter a witty comment. Mrs Allen even explains to Catherine (and to the audience) after some of his remarks: "Mr Allen is so droll. He always says the opposite of what he means" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:05:48). He teases his wife and Catherine as they are preparing themselves for an evening at the ball: "I entertain high hopes of our arriving at the rooms by midnight" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:07:06). Austen

obviously mocks here the stereotype of women taking a long time to get ready and men waiting for them impatiently.

The male hero Henry Tilney represents another type of humour. He mostly makes fun of Catherine's immaturity and naivety. When they first meet at a ball in Bath, Henry understands that Catherine has not been out in such large society before and tries to explain the common rules to her. However, the way he does it is amusing: while they are dancing, he says: "We must do our duty" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:12:59) by which he means a small talk. Henry also teases her after Catherine believed the dishonest John Thorpe and consented to a ride although she previously promised Henry and Eleanor to go for a walk with them. Henry pretends to humble her and makes her apologize and explain her mistake. When he forgives her, we see he was again ironic: "Miss Morland is not to blame, she was abducted by force" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:33:00).

The film 'Northanger Abbey' satirises the Gothic novel mainly through Catherine's wild fantasies which appear as her dreams. Also Henry Tilney criticises her taste for Gothic novels when he remarks in one conversation: "Ah, Mrs Radcliffe..." (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:35:12). The disapproving tone of his voice puts him in the role of censoring authority. Catherine starts to understand his criticism and admits for the first time that "the real world is different from the world in the stories" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:35:45).

Upon arriving to Northanger Abbey, the castle reminds Catherine of those manors from her novels. Henry mocks her fancy for Gothic novels: "Are you prepared to encounter all of its horrors?" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:55:59). He even exaggerates his ridicule by talking about skeletons and dungeons. But this time Catherine understands and returns his mockery: "And vampires? Don't say vampires. I could bear anything, but not vampires" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:56:18). Henry is now pleased with the way Catherine grows up when he laughs: "Miss Morland, I do believe you're teasing me now" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 0:56:25).

Austen's satire of Gothic romance pervades the whole film. During a walk around Northanger Abbey Henry suggests Catherine should write her own Gothic romance about her dreary fantasies and name it 'Northanger Abbey'. "Now you're mocking me" (*Northanger Abbey* 2007, 1:09:02) is Catherine's answer.

The realistic portrayal of the characters is achieved among others with proper period costumes and hairstyle. Dick (2001, pp. 95) suggests that ladies “constantly risked chills, since the neoclassical style adopted was typically a loose, flimsy, light-coloured dress, caught in below the breast.” The decent dresses of Catherine Morland and Eleanor Tilney show their modesty and good manners. On the other hand the provocative style of clothing of Isabella Thorpe refers to her vanity and shallowness. The choice of locations adds to the plausibility of the film. Bath, as the site of meeting new people, is vivid and the ballrooms even crowded. The streets are busy, but on the other hand, when Henry and Eleanor go for a walk with Catherine to a lake, they are on their own. Later in Northanger Abbey Catherine imagines some horrors that must have taken place in such a vast castle. This large but quiet place represents a contrast to the lively Bath.

Character flaws and imperfections belong to the features of realism. In fact nobody is perfect, not even the heroes and heroines of Jane Austen. However, “[g]ood looks are never so important for Austen’s heroines as qualities of spirit and understanding” (Dick 2001, p. 51). But it is easier for the audience to identify oneself with such characters because they may remind them of themselves or someone they know. Catherine and her brother James are sincere and too gullible, Isabella Thorpe is vain and her brother John is dishonest. Mrs Allen is plain and only interested in clothes and shopping.

The activities of the characters seem ordinary – dancing at a ball, going for a walk, visiting sights in Bath, writing letters and keeping a diary. Most of them are accompanied by everyday conversations that show the routine of the heroes. A routine that we may imagine was Jane Austen’s as well.

## **6.2. Sense and Sensibility**

'Sense and Sensibility' is Austen's second novel and tells a story of two sisters and their finding true love using both sense (reason) and sensibility (feelings). Elinor, the older Miss Dashwood, representing the 'sense', according to Austen (2012b, p. 6) "possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgement", whereas Marianne symbolises 'sensibility' and is depicted as "eager in every thing; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation" (Austen 2012b, p. 6).

After Mr Dashwood dies, his widow and three daughters have to leave Norland Park and move to Barton Cottage to a distant cousin, John Middleton. Elinor becomes attached to Edward Ferrars, but his family is not inclined to their union and separates them; Colonel Brandon pays court to Marianne, but she does not return his feelings and is attracted to the handsome John Willoughby instead. Their relationships are tried by fate and in the end Elinor and Edward find a way to each other again, they become engaged and marry, as well as Marianne starts to understand Colonel Brandon and the couple marries too.

### **6.2.1. The topics**

The topics of Austen's novels are repetitive in most of her work. Of all the themes we may stress the looking for the right partner and doing so by reason as well as heart. Young women, especially those less fortunate with family economic situation, had to think properly who they wanted to marry. A wealthy husband secured the position not only for them but also for their whole family. The struggle to marry for love as well as advantageously pervades this narrative in the example of Elinor and Edward. However, it was not only women who thought of property when they were looking for a husband. Men, too, aspired to gain wealth, better social position or the family inheritance. Their snobbery might have brought them unhappiness like it did for Willoughby.

The film also illustrates the relationship between the two sisters, Elinor and Marianne. Although they differ from each other, they come to the conclusion that a good heart and manners weigh more than the passing self-important looks and money.

### 6.2.2. Humour and realism in the film adaptation

The screenwriter and actor Emma Thompson did a good work in adapting this Austen's piece of work. She worked five years on the screenplay and won an Oscar for it. She endowed the characters "qualities they either didn't have in the novel or didn't have to the same degree: egalitarian attitudes toward women, an affection for children, and emotional sensitivity. In other words, *Sense and Sensibility* used updated versions of early 19<sup>th</sup>-century heroes to sell emerging ideals of manhood to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century" (Looser 2016).

Although 'Sense and Sensibility' is a story about women, Thompson refines the characters of men that appear in the film. She gives them more positive emotions and makes them more contemporary. Looser (2016) mentions Edward's love of children and Colonel Brandon's sincere affection for women. And so, thanks to Thompson and Lee, the film's title now relates to men's qualities as well as women's. (Looser 2016)

Thompson also added sequences of the two girls falling in love. Elinor and Edward are often seen walking around the house in Norland Park, which was not the case in the novel. Laity (2011) explains that Thompson "wrote the part especially for Grant, and it shows; he gets amusing lines, delivered in the stumbling, aren't-I-adorable way that was already becoming his trademark."

'Sense and Sensibility' is rather a serious drama, but some humorous features can be found as well. The chatty Mrs Jennings is partly a caricature figure, but she is also kind and good-natured. On the other hand, Fanny Dashwood presents the stereotype of a greedy and self-important woman, as she is enumerating reason why not give the Dashwood women any money.

The realistic depiction of the period drama succeeded due to fitting costumes as well as the excellent performances of the actors, many of whom were nominated for Oscars and BAFTA. The film was awarded several prizes, mainly for the excellent screenplay.

### **6.3. Pride and Prejudice**

‘Pride and Prejudice’ is Jane Austen’s third book, published in 1813. It is the most popular work of this writer and the story has been an inspiration for many filmmakers. As Gleiberman (2005) observes, “We’ve all seen a jillion of these scenes: the heaving bosoms, the group dances so stylized they’re like an 18th-century version of speed dating, the glimmers of scandal whenever someone gets too...forward. All of that is here, yet the director, Joe Wright, a veteran of British television, makes the past feel as swirling and alive as the present.”

The novel tells a story of the landed gentry family of Bennets from Longbourn, who have five daughters. Unfortunately, women in Austen’s time could not inherit, did not own anything and were completely dependent on men. So their only effort was to find a husband, preferably a rich one. The arrival of two wealthy gentlemen in the area changes the lives of all the girls. Jane and Mr Bingley fall in love soon, but Elizabeth and Mr Darcy take a longer way to their happiness. Mr Darcy gradually abandons his pride for the sake of love and Elizabeth corrects her prejudices towards him. They are both strong characters and at the end of their learning path they are a perfect match for each other.

#### **6.3.1. The topics**

The main topic of the novel may be deduced from its opening sentence: “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” (Austen 1993, p.5). Finding a husband was a task for every woman who did not want to face loneliness and poverty in the old age. Practicality was the rule. Not everyone could marry for love; the income of the suitor was an important aspect, too. If love and wealth were combined, the girl was lucky – like our heroines Jane and Elizabeth Bennet.

Other marriages from this story are of a different nature. Charlotte Lucas marries Mr Collins for practical reasons. She is older, not very pretty and dependent on her parents. Marrying Mr Collins secures her future and she is happy to run her own household. On the other hand Lydia elopes with Mr Wickham for romantic reasons and not thinking of the economic situation at all. His financial position and rank are only improved by Mr Darcy’s intervention – who does so for Elizabeth’s sake.



Another topic is also obvious: money and wealth. There is a big difference in the property of the Bennet family and of Mr Darcy or Mr Bingley. For wealthy men it was difficult to distinguish if a woman wanted to marry them for love or because of their property. The other way around, i.e. a poor man marrying a wealthy woman, it was hardly possible among the middle class since women usually had no property. Such marriages could only occur in aristocratic circles.

The title of the novel represents the next motif – character flaws. Both pride and prejudice have a negative connotation. Pride can be associated with arrogance and even contempt. This characteristic relates to both the heroine and hero at the beginning of the narrative. Also, they are both prejudiced. Elizabeth judges Mr Darcy as arrogant, while he evaluates the Bennet family as calculating and lacking good manners. Every time the two meet, they learn something new about each other, their mutual aversion fades, and their opinions on each other change gradually.

### **6.3.2. Humour and realism in the film adaptation**

Joe Wright's 'Pride and Prejudice' is a fairly true adaptation of the original piece; there are, however, slight changes from the novel: some minor characters are omitted and the story is simplified, but with no great impact on the plot. The screenwriter Deborah Moggach clarifies her attitude towards Austen's narrative: "I decided to concentrate on **Elizabeth** – in a film you can get into a person's head, with close-ups, and I needed to sift out any scene in which she doesn't appear – e.g. London – and people who weren't essential, e.g. the Collinses. I wanted it to be realistic, the muddy hem version, with the girls really young, no make up, same dresses every day. Not a fluffy period piece" (Moggach 2015).

The 2005 'Pride and Prejudice' is a light-hearted comedy with several witty scenes. The humour is represented by the interactions mainly between two couples, the first being Mr and Mrs Bennet and the second Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, although both differ from each other: Mr and Mrs Bennet equal in property but Mr Bennet is more cultivated than his wife; Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, on the other hand, equal in intellect but there is a huge difference in their financial situation. Elizabeth obviously takes her wit after her father and her ironic remarks stand out in the film.

As in other Austen's novels comical characters can be encountered here as well – for example Mrs Bennet. She is a mother of five daughters and her only desire is to find husbands for them. She tries to stay on top of things but is distracted very often and overreacts in a dramatic way, which leads to humorous situations. When she hears Mr Bingley is a wealthy man, she strives to pair him with one of her daughters. As Mr Bennet is reluctant to go and see the newcomer, Mrs Bennet cries out: “Oh Mr Bennet, how can you tease me so? Have you no compassion for my poor nerves?” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:03:54). Mr Bennet, being the opposite of his wife, i.e. self-composed, answers calmly: “You mistake me, my dear. I have the highest respect for them. They have been my constant companion these twenty years” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:04:00).

The significance of language and puns is showed in a scene when Mr Bingley accompanied by Mr Darcy arrives to the country ball. Elizabeth judges the party very quickly – it is not a surprise that Jane Austen's original title for this piece was ‘First Impressions’. Elizabeth remarks towards Mr Darcy: “He looks miserable, poor soul” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:06:31). Her friend Charlotte Lucas responds: “Miserable he may be, but poor he most certainly is not” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:06:32). Austen indicates the different meanings of the word ‘poor’ – either the opposite of rich or a miserable state of mind. Elizabeth's deductions come from Mr Darcy's gloomy expression.

The next morning at breakfast Mrs Bennet enumerates the dance partners of Mr Bingley. Austen mocks the stereotype of a chatty woman. Mr Bennet first hints there is no need to be so detailed because “We were all there, dear” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:14:18). When she continues, he replies: “If he had had any compassion for me, he would have sprained his ankle in the first set” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:14:29), by which Mr Bennet means that he would be spared his wife's interpretation of the dances.

Later on Elizabeth and her father exaggerate Jane's illness when she has to stay at Netherfield and make fun of it as Mr Bennet points out: “If Jane does die, it will be a comfort to know it was in pursuit of Mr Bingley” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:16:11). After Mrs Bennet objects: “People do not die of cold” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:16:14), Elizabeth replies: “But she may well perish of the shame for having such a mother” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:16:17). According to Elizabeth Mrs Bennet is to blame for Jane's condition because she made her ride to Netherfield and get wet in the rain.

Another humorous figure is Mr Collins (played by Tom Hollander), a dull cousin of Mr Bennet and the heir to his estate. “Hollander gets big laughs and comes close to walking off with the whole film, upstaging every one else on screen” (Bradshaw 2005). He is smooth and his choice of words is overly correct, which gives Elizabeth the opportunity to tease him without his noticing it. When he talks floridly about his patroness Lady Catherine and her daughter, Elizabeth asks him, although this sentence is uttered by Mr Bennet in the book: “These pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment or are they the result of previous study?” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:26:42) The following reply was added in the film: “Believe me, no one would suspect your manners to be rehearsed” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:27:00). Meaning the opposite of what she is saying, Elizabeth triggers an emotional reaction by her sister Kitty.

The scene with Mr Collins’ proposal to Elizabeth is comic in itself. He only acts in a practical way and on the recommendation of his patroness, but without considering their mutual compatibility. His stern proposition without a mention of affection is far away from an ideal romantic proposal. However, his reserved manners do not allow Elizabeth to mock him. Bradshaw (2005) remarks to this sequence: “Director Joe Wright cheekily shoots his excruciating "proposal" scene with Lizzy so that it’s not clear that Collins has gone down on one knee, and he appears to have shrunk to the size of a hobbit.” The opposite attitudes of Elizabeth’s parents towards their union are clear as Mr Bennet observes: “Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr Collins; and I will never see you again if you do” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 0:49:14).

The melodramatic performance of Mrs Bennet after hearing that her youngest daughter had eloped with Mr Wickham is one of the comic scenes. First, lying in bed, distressed, crying and overreacting: “You are all ruined! Who will take you now with a fallen sister?” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 1:29:08) and: “How could she do such a thing to her poor mama?” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 1:29:46). But suddenly, when the couple is to be married and Lydia’s future is secured, she is again fresh and cheerful: “I must put on my things and tell Lady Lucas. Oh, to see her face!” (*Pride and Prejudice* 2005, 1:30:57). In both situations she is only concerned about the reaction of other people and not the actual future happiness of her daughters. Such behaviour is hypocritical and snobbish, and by exaggerating it Austen makes fun of Mrs Bennet’s effort to marry off her daughters.

When Mr Bingley comes to Longbourn unannounced, the Bennet family is absolutely unprepared to receive him. The mother becomes restless and instructs her daughters to behave naturally, which of course has the opposite effect. As Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy enter the room, the whole scene appears very artificial. And again, Mrs Bennet is very chatty, which sounds quite impolite towards the two gentlemen.

The scenes of domestic life of the Bennets are depicted very realistically. We encounter our heroines in the dining room eating several times, getting ready for the balls and resting in the sitting room doing common things – reading or writing. Indeed, a large part of Austen’s novel takes place at home which in a way is a castle with princesses waiting to be rescued by princes. That is Joe Wright’s idea of composing fairytale elements of Austen’s novel into the film adaptation: “What I was playing with was the idea of bringing together the social realist aesthetic with fairytale imagery. I like the way the Bennet house has a moat around it. So you have five virgins living on an island” (Wright 2005).

The director further explains how he remained true to the original literary work: “We tried to stay faithful to the narrative beats of the story, but also the atmosphere and tone of the book. That’s why there are so many close-ups. Jane Austen observes people very carefully and closely: so that was the cinematic equivalent of her prose” (Wright 2005). The rooms and outside of the house are portrayed with utmost detail and with their imperfections: the walls look a bit shabby and the interiors are quite untidy, which is plausible when having five young women living there. Wright (2005) comments on it: “For a start, I like messiness. I think messy is beautiful. I think tidiness is ugly and so that’s just my aesthetic. Through my research I also discovered that life was pretty dirty in those days. It wasn’t all clean and pristine. The Bennets didn’t really have the finances to keep a house like that in the order it should be kept. They would have only bathed once a week. Their clothes would be washed rarely.”

The atmosphere of the balls gives us a good impression of what socializing looked like in Austen’s age. The ballrooms are overcrowded and people are merrily dancing and conversing. There is however a difference in the two balls: the first one is apparently organized by landed gentry and the dancers are dressed accordingly; the second one is held by Mr Bingley at Netherfield and we see more refined costumes – ladies wearing mainly white dresses and men their best clothes or uniforms.

The choice of filming spots also presents nice scenery. The aim is to show how different the world is compared to Elizabeth's home. The countryside in Peak District calms the distracted heroine and we can easily believe the vast and tidy estate of Mr Darcy is as cultivated as himself. We often see Elizabeth walk as it is her favourite pastime activity along with reading. Austen's novels take place indoors; the director wanted to take the heroine outdoors as well (Wright 2005).

Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' is a popular piece of work with elaborate characters, among which Elizabeth Bennet stands out with her sharp humour and wit. The Wright's adaptation shows the realistic approach successfully by depicting both the domestic and social life of Austen's time with accuracy.

## **6.4. Mansfield Park**

‘Mansfield Park’ tells the story of Fanny Price from a poor family who is sent to her wealthy relatives at Mansfield Park. Fanny’s character is meek and obedient and that is why she does not rank among the popular Austen heroines. She is almost perfect and therefore it is hard for young women to identify with her.

The 1999 adaptation opens with young Fanny travelling to her rich uncle and aunt Bertram in Mansfield Park. She soon finds a friend in her cousin Edmund and gradually falls in love with him. At Mansfield she studies, reads books and even writes stories. Fanny grows into a fine young woman and is courted by a neighbour Henry Crawford while Edmund is attracted to Henry’s sister Mary. Both couples get engaged eventually. When the family finally sees the true characters of Mary and Henry, the engagements are broken. Edmund reconsiders his feelings towards Fanny, declares his love, and proposes to her.

### **6.4.1. The topics**

The themes that appear in ‘Mansfield Park’ are different from other Austen’s novels. The tone of this piece of work is rather serious and thoughtful.

One of the topics is the profession of a clergyman. This occupation really is a noble one and rather secures the future of the man than bring a lot of money. That is why Mary Crawford is shocked that the object of her desire is to be ordained soon. However, there are not many possibilities for Edmund since he only is second born. It was the eldest son that inherits the family fortune and the estate.

We may also emphasize morality and morals as an important theme of the novel. Edmund as the future priest is an example of good morals and so is Fanny. Austen contemplates whether this is due to education and extensive reading or if good morals are innate disposition. The opposites are the snobbish Maria and appealing Henry who have an affair, or the unscrupulous Mary Crawford who wishes Tom would die so that Edmund could inherit his father’s money and estate instead of him.

The topic of slavery is present throughout the film in the form of visual hints. First, we see a ship in a bay and the coachman driving young Fanny to Mansfield Park comments on it: “Black cargo, miss” (*Mansfield Park* 1999, 0:04:08), meaning somebody brought slaves from a colony. All over the house we also encounter various artefacts of colonial style or with colonial motive: masks on the wall, maps, and a serving table. Later Fanny finds Tom’s sketchbook full of ghastly drawings inspired by the Europeans’ doings in the colonies. Slavery is condemned in the film and at the end Sir Thomas changes his mind and leaves the plantations.

#### **6.4.2. Humour and realism in the film adaptation**

‘Mansfield Park’ has a rather serious tone. Patricia Rozema, the director of the 1999 adaptation, explains her motifs when creating the film. In an interview with Schwartz (1999) she says “there’s not that much dialogue in the novel, so I’d use as much dialogue as I could from the novel, and then when I couldn’t, I would go to other Austen sources. And when I couldn’t, I would make it up.” She adjusted and added a lot of scenes, because they simply do not occur in the novel. Fanny is pictured only vaguely according to Rozema that is why she remodels the heroine into a pretty and good-humoured girl. As Rozema puts it, “the Fanny Price on the screen is probably—hypothesis—I mean, is probably more like Jane Austen herself. [...] She had a wicked tongue, so she probably wasn't even quite as innocent as this” (Schwartz 1999). And also the accepting Henry Crawford appears not in the novel and was added by the director, who drew inspiration from the novelist’s life – Austen herself accepted a proposal but withdrew it the next morning. (Schwartz 1999)

Naming of the novel becomes a new meaning when Rozema clarifies that the Mansfield Judgment “was the first judgment that limited slavery in England” (Schwartz 1999). The document was known to public and agitatedly discussed. Although not many allusions to slavery appear in the novel, since Austen successfully avoided any historical and political context, Rozema decided to display the concerns of Austen’s time. Finally she adds that her adaptation will be “a meditation on captivity in all of its forms and the treatment of humans as property.” (Schwartz 1999)

Music constitutes an important part of the film. The music for ‘Mansfield Park’ was composed by Lesley Barber and Rozema was listening to it while writing, which affected her

and the future form of the film. According to Rozema, music “creates the atmosphere. In fact, I’d go so far as to say that in a novel, the atmosphere is created by narrative, by the narrative voice, and in film, the music is doing that. The voice of the director or the voice of the filmmakers comes out through the music.” (Schwartz 1999)

The realistic approach in the film is important for the depiction of the two homes: the poor, dirty and cramped Portsmouth house of her parents and the refined, exotic and large Mansfield Park. The filmmakers intended to show the two different environments from which Fanny should choose one for her future life. Portsmouth meant poverty but freedom, Mansfield wealth and position – on condition she married Henry.

The everyday activities of the characters are only lightly implied – we see the heroes read books, have tea, or ride a horse, but the whole film seems rather stationary. This was the intention of Rozema as she prefers minimalism and wanted to approach Austen’s realism with “documentary quality.” (Schwartz 1999)

To the few humorous scenes belongs the Fanny’s commentary on Maria’s wedding: “Prepared for matrimony by a hatred of home, disappointed affection and contempt of the man she was to marry” (*Mansfield Park* 1999, 0:41:42). After wittily enumerating what other wedding guests did, Fanny observes: “Marriage is indeed a manoeuvring business” (*Mansfield Park* 1999, 0:42:02) – an observation from all Austen’s narratives.

Several comical figures and caricatures can be encountered in ‘Mansfield Park’. Maria’s husband, Mr Rushworth, was a humorous, dull character played well by Hugh Bonneville. Mrs Norris impersonated self-importance and snobbery, whereas Mrs Bertram constantly falling asleep or drinking ‘medicine’ was an object of Austen’s satire.



## **6.5. Emma**

‘Emma’ may be considered another Bildungsroman of Jane Austen: the heroine Emma Woodhouse undergoes a change of character in the course of the narrative. We may observe similarity between ‘Emma’ and ‘Northanger Abbey’: in both novels the heroines are juvenile girls guided and instructed by the heroes into sensible adulthood. ‘Emma’ is also an “optimistic book, coloured by Emma’s ‘eager laughing warmth’, very much conceived of as a comedy, with the cross-purposes, misunderstandings, mistaken identities, tricking, and teasing that are definitive of comedy as a genre” (Wiltshire 2006, p. 24).

The aristocratic and accomplished Emma tries to find herself an occupation. And soon discovers that matchmaking will give her pleasure. She sets herself a task to find a husband for Harriet Smith. She wants to match her with Mr Elton – unsuccessfully – and later with Frank Churchill – without success as well. After this failed matchmaking project Emma promises not to do such mistake again. Instead she realizes her growing attraction to a family friend Mr Knightley. He thinks of Emma himself and his marriage proposal is gladly accepted.

### **6.5.1. The topics**

The main topic is obviously matchmaking, the favourite pastime of Emma. However, she does not consider marriage as a means of gaining financial security or higher status. As Rowbotham (2001, p. 7) puts it, her only interest is the happiness of others. The victim of her romantic schemes is the plain Harriet. Emma tries to find her a husband among her friends, but realizes in the end, that the farmer Robert Martin is ideal match for her. On the other hand, Mr Elton, the local priest, does not conceal his aim in marring for money. After being turned down by Emma, he finds himself a rich but ill-mannered wife.

Social class differences form another theme of this novel. The aristocratic are represented by Emma and Mr Knightley; their language is fairly formal and their conversations witty and elaborate. Their opposites are Harriet and Robert Martin or Jane Fairfax, whose conversational style is very plain. Although Mr Martin and Jane Fairfax are viewed as intelligent by Mr Knightley, Emma snobbishly refuses to mix with them as they are not her social equals.

### 6.5.2. Humour and realism in the film adaptation

'Emma' is a comedy in which Emma and Mr Knightley tease each other in witty conversations. Rowbotham (2001, p. 85) argues that 'Emma' "is dominated by secrets and hidden meanings: the overall irony stemming from Emma, as central character, believing herself fully 'in the secret' when in fact she is always completely oblivious to the reality around her." And as Wiltshire (2006, p. 97) states, "[g]ossip and talk about health [...] is more than a source of incidental humour."

Misunderstandings are also a good source of humorous situations, like when Emma falsely interprets Mr Elton's interest in her as the interest in Harriet. Emma is therefore astonished when Mr Elton proposes to her. At the time of Mr Knightley's proposal the two main characters "are matched in their equal misunderstanding" (Wiltshire 2006, p. 92). Emma is afraid Mr Knightley is going to propose to Harriet; he fears Emma is in love with Frank Churchill. Emma interrupts an attempt to explain himself, but soon regrets being cruel and offers Mr Knightley to listen to him as a friend. This scene is the comic climax of the story: Mr Knightley reveals his feelings and finally proposes to Emma.

Once again the character of chatty women is satirized. Miss Bates, an elderly spinster keeps talking all the time she is in the scene, but hardly ever says something meaningful. The new Mrs Elton is also chatty but in another way: she keeps talking self-importantly and does not let Mr Elton say a word. Another caricature is Mr Woodhouse – he keeps worrying about the health of everybody and constantly pities 'poor Miss Taylor', who got married in the opening passage of the adaptation.

Douglas McGrath, the screenwriter and director of the 1996 'Emma' feels responsible to Austen when adapting her novel. That is the reason why his adaptation is faithful (in Emma Formatted to Fit Your Screen 2011). The realism in the film is represented by scenes from everyday life of the upper class. Most of the sequences take place indoors: we attend banquets and balls, ladies play the piano, embroider and Emma even shoots with a bow! And the whole story is set only in the village of Highbury.

## **6.6. Persuasion**

Austen's last novel 'Persuasion' deals with a couple who were once engaged and now try to find a way to each other again. This time the heroine is no longer immature, on the contrary, Anne Elliot is accomplished, modest, but somewhat older – 27 years old. Jeffares and Bushrui (1998, pp. 45) argue that “[a]lthough ‘Persuasion’ is a moving love story, Jane Austen wants her reader to maintain a certain detachment from it, and to be able to perceive the absurdity as well as the seriousness of romantic love.”

Anne Eliot was once in love with a naval officer Frederick Wentworth but was forced by her family to refuse his proposal because of his insufficient wealth. Eight years later their situation changes: Wentworth is now a rich captain and Anne has to leave her home to repay the debts that her vain family had made. The Elliots' home is rented to Admiral Croft and his wife, who is the sister of Captain Wentworth. The former couple is bound to meet soon. As they do, they find out they are still attracted to each other, but afraid to speak out. After several peripeteias Captain Wentworth writes a letter to Anne declaring his love and proposes to her.

### **6.6.1. The topics**

Social status may be declared the main topic of the novel. At the beginning Anne is not allowed to marry beneath her, in the end she is the one economically disadvantaged. Sir Walter Elliot proves snobbish because he forced Anne to refuse Wentworth when he was an ordinary officer with no property. Eight years later, he returns from the sea a wealthy man. The irony is that the Elliots' fortune diminished due to wasteful lifestyle of the father and the younger sister and Wentworth is now their superior.

Another theme repeated here is the marriage and choosing the right partner. Louisa and Henrietta judge men by their status and looks; the adult Anne knows character is the most important asset. The young girls are pleased with any attention from the men, so is Anne's vain sister Elizabeth. On the other hand, Anne's heart is still, after eight years faithful to Captain Wentworth.

### 6.6.2. Humour and realism in the film adaptation

Austen's last novel is set in a quite gloomy atmosphere. The heroine is in a melancholy mood most of the time and thinking how she ruined her happiness years ago by letting herself be persuaded to refuse to marry the man she loved. The present situation of her family is not cheerful either – the Elliots have to move out and rent their estate because they cannot afford to live there any more.

The only humorous part in the film was the mocking of hypochondriacs, represented by Anne's sister Mary, who was often ill, but also ill-tempered. Her declaration "I am so ill, I can hardly speak" (*Persuasion* 2007, 0:13:48) is only the beginning of her long speech and portrays her as a caricature. Mr Elliot is depicted as a vain and snobbish man rejecting to socialize with anybody under his rank. His vanity is shown in the scene where the new tenants enter a room in Kellynch full of mirrors and observe: "Such a number of looking glasses!" (*Persuasion* 2007, 0:12:50)

The realistic approach can be traced in portraying characters with their flaws. Nobody is perfect here, and those who appear to be are only pursuing their own interests. We encounter vanity, selflessness or folly. The main difference between 'Persuasion' and other Austen's novels is that the heroine does not really change in character. Anne does not have to mature, because she is already 27 years old, and also sensible and contemplating her fate in the form of writing a diary.

The director Adrian Shergold was especially glad to cast Sally Hawkins in the role of Anne. As Carpenter (2007) puts it, "Hawkins gave Shergold the confidence to concentrate on telling the story from Anne's perspective." He likes "that you can read her face even in the moments when she is not saying anything. She has that quality of listening and reacting in a way that tells a thousand stories." (Carpenter 2007) Her wardrobe also increases the plausibility of the adaptation; her simple gowns in dark colours correspond with her stillness. (Carpenter 2007)

'Persuasion', apart from being a romance, is a satire of society, bad manners and habits. Through the witty observations of the narrator the "reader of Austen then is formed into a reflective self" (Wiltshire 2006, p. 120).

## **7. Film adaptations as resource in English classes**

Film adaptations may be a valuable learning material for students of English language. With regard to the topics Jane Austen discussed in her novels, teachers can choose to concentrate on history, geography, literature, civics, or language practicing. It is neither necessary nor desirable to watch the whole film in the course of one lesson. The teacher should rather choose one topic, sequence or character and work on them with the students.

The value for history as well as geography lessons is explained by Rowbotham (2001, p.6): “As observational documentaries, they provide a highly concentrated source of socio-historical information about life in early nineteenth-century England.” These heritage films picture the English countryside and English homes faithfully and form a kind of national awareness.

The topics of manners and morality can be discussed in conversational classes. Austen’s aim was to bring her characters near to her readers, and that is what the filmmakers strived to do as well. The characters may be talked over, since a lot of space is given to them and their development in both the book and the film adaptations. Students may suggest in what ways the characters are timeless, and to what extent they can identify with them. Wiltshire (2006, p. 115) argues that “[i]t is partly true that the novels offer models [...] of girlhood and female presence.” The male characters are usually older than the students, nevertheless can they be considered as role models, too.

When applying film adaptations in English lessons all skills can be practised. Students can work on improving listening skills and comprehension by watching or listening to a sequence of the film. Writing an essay will promote writing skills. Various vocabulary exercises will enhance their use of language which is the base for discussion. Reading skills can also be practised by combining the use of the book as well as the film.

Film adaptations of Jane Austen’s novel are a rich source of linguistic activities in English classes. Her witty comments on society are timeless and it is no doubt that watching a film adaptation promotes the interest of some students to read the original book.

## CONCLUSION

The adaptations of Jane Austen's novels are very popular nowadays. However, the films do not stay completely true to the original. The screenwriters usually leave out some insignificant storyline that has no impact on the actual plot or omit one or two relatives. The important parts remain unchanged as well as the realistic depiction of the heroes and the settings. Some screenwriters, however, deliberately set the narrative in modern society to present Austen's issues to contemporary audience, with the aim to explore how the time setting changes the story and to let the filmgoers identify with the characters easier.

We may assume that Austen draw inspiration for her novels in her own family and background. That is the reason why the characters and settings are portrayed so realistically – we see the connection between Austen's life and her work. She masters realistic depiction of her characters, vivid scenes and captivating scenery and the filmmakers do their best to portray it as truly as possible. Many scenes in the films are plausible owing to the right choice of good actors and engaging skilful costume-makers who understand the importance of accurate reproduction. Music also plays an important part and often sets the tone of the film.

Austen's humour can be traced throughout her work. She mainly incorporates the comedy into a witty conversation or uses a satire or mockery of bad manners, naivety, or even perfectionism. The sharp irony and witty dialogues are skilfully preserved in the films. The directors of Austen's adaptations often use irony to detach themselves from the original in a respectful way. Wiltshire (2006, p.119) is convinced that "Austen fosters the reader's own collaboration with the moral dynamic of the novels [...] through her comedy." The filmmakers invite the audience to participate on the development of self in the same way.

There are several possibilities to use a film adaptation in English classes: to promote British culture and history, to improve comprehension, to practise speaking skills, and last but not least, to inspire student to read.

Since Austen's characters and plots of the stories are timeless, the novels are still popular two hundred years after they were written and keep inspiring filmmakers all over the world.

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## RÉSUMÉ

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na rozbor filmových adaptací románů Jane Austenové z hlediska humoru a realismu. Analýzou jednotlivých děl byly vyzorovány jak podobnosti v tématech, objevující se v dílech Jane Austenové, tak vývoj jejího autorského stylu, jednotlivých postav a dějových linií. Žánry filmových zpracování jsou zpravidla romantické komedie. Filmové adaptace Austenové jsou bohatým zdrojem informací o Anglii počátku 19. století. V hodinách anglického jazyka lze úryvky z filmových zpracování využít jako základ konverzačních cvičení.

## ANOTACE

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Iveta Vašinková
<b>Ústav:</b>	Ústav cizích jazyků
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Josef Nevařil, Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2019

<b>Název práce:</b>	Humor a realismus ve filmových adaptacích románů Jane Austenové
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	Humour and realism in film adaptations of Jane Austen's novels
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Ačkoli tvorba Jane Austenové spadá do období romantismu, její díla vykazují znaky realismu, kdy do detailu popisuje postavy i prostředí, ve kterém se děj odehrává. Její hrdinky jsou často nezralé dívky, které dospívají v ženy díky mužským průvodcům, kteří ovlivňují jejich vidění světa. Austenová vtipně komentuje společnost a odsuzuje špatné charakterové vlastnosti. Její díla jsou populární i v dnešní době a všechna se dočkala úspěšných filmových zpracování. Tyto adaptace jsou bohatým zdrojem aktivit pro výuku cizího jazyka.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	filmové zpracování, heritage film, humor, ironie, román, realismus, satira, společenské postavení, důvtip
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	Although Jane Austen is considered an author of the age of romanticism, her work shows signs of early realism where she portrays the characters and the settings of the story in detail. Her heroines are mostly immature girls who develop into adult women due to a gentle guidance from male heroes who influence their perception of the world. Austen also comments on society wittily and satirizes character flaws. Her novels are still popular nowadays and all were made into successful films. The film adaptations form a valuable resource in foreign language teaching in many aspects.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	film adaptation, heritage film, humour, irony, novel, realism, satire, social status, wit
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	-
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	53
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Angličtina