

# Jane Austen's Work as Popular Culture Phenomenon

---

**Bartolović, Ana**

**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2012**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:142:699412>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-02-20**



*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[FFOS-repository - Repository of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek](#)



Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku  
Filozofski fakultet  
Diplomski studij povijesti i engleskog jezika i književnosti

Ana Bartolović

**Jane Austen's Work as Popular Culture Phenomenon**

Diplomski rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

Osijek, 2012.

## Summary

Jane Austen is considered to be one of the most brilliant British writers. Although she wrote only six novels, they are all highly praised and very popular. They are so popular that today one can find numerous film adaptations and fan fiction novels based on them. The first chapter deals with Austen, her life, family, relationships, and work. The second chapter is about her six novels, arranged here in the order in which they were published: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, and *Northanger Abbey*. The third chapter reviews every film adaptation based on each of the novels. The fourth chapter deals with numerous novels written in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries that are sequels, prequels, variations, or adaptations of Austen's novels. There is also an extensive list of all those novels divided into categories according to the title of the book on which they are based on. The fifth chapter discusses the novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* by Karen Joy Fowler and its role of linking Austen with the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first two chapters describe Austen and her work, and they can be interpreted as explanations of her popularity in today's culture, while the last three chapters describe other people's work that was inspired by her, which is a proof of her being a popular culture phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Jane Austen, Jane Austen's novels, film adaptations, fan fiction, popular culture

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction.....   | 1  |
| 1. About Jane Austen.....                                     | 2  |
| 2. About the Novels.....                                      | 7  |
| 2.1. <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> .....                       | 7  |
| 2.2. <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .....                         | 9  |
| 2.3. <i>Mansfield Park</i> .....                              | 12 |
| 2.4. <i>Emma</i> .....  | 15 |
| 2.5. <i>Persuasion</i> .....                                  | 17 |
| 2.6. <i>Northanger Abbey</i> .....                            | 20 |
| 3. Film Adaptations.....                                      | 24 |
| 3.1. <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> .....                       | 25 |
| 3.2. Looser Adaptations of <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> ..... | 27 |
| 3.3. <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .....                         | 28 |
| 3.4. Looser Adaptations of <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .....   | 31 |
| 3.5. <i>Mansfield Park</i> .....                              | 32 |
| 3.6. <i>Emma</i> .....  | 34 |
| 3.7. Looser Adaptations of <i>Emma</i> .....                  | 38 |
| 3.8. <i>Persuasion</i> .....                                  | 38 |
| 3.9. <i>Northanger Abbey</i> .....                            | 41 |
| 4. Literature Inspired by Jane Austen's Work.....             | 44 |
| 4.1. <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> .....                       | 46 |
| 4.1.1. Sequels.....   | 46 |
| 4.1.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings.....        | 46 |
| 4.1.3. Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....       | 46 |
| 4.2. <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .....                         | 46 |
| 4.2.1. Prequels.....  | 46 |
| 4.2.2. Sequels.....   | 46 |
| 4.2.3. Different Points of View and/or Retellings.....        | 50 |
| 4.2.4. What-ifs and/or Re-imaginings.....                     | 50 |
| 4.2.5. Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....       | 52 |
| 4.3. <i>Mansfield Park</i> .....                              | 53 |
| 4.3.1. Sequels.....   | 53 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 4.3.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings.....                            | 53 |
| 4.3.3. Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....                           | 53 |
| 4.3.4. Alternative Endings.....   | 53 |
| 4.3.5. Plays.....   | 53 |
| 4.4. <i>Emma</i> .....  | 54 |
| 4.4.1. Sequels.....   | 54 |
| 4.4.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings.....                            | 54 |
| 4.4.3. Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....                           | 54 |
| 4.4.4. Sequels from Other Points of View.....                                     | 54 |
| 4.4.5. Retellings of Parallel Stories.....  | 54 |
| 4.5. <i>Persuasion</i> .....  | 55 |
| 4.5.1. Sequels.....   | 55 |
| 4.5.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings.....                            | 55 |
| 4.5.3. What-ifs and/or Re-imaginings.....   | 55 |
| 4.5.4. Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....                           | 55 |
| 4.6. <i>Northanger Abbey</i> .....  | 55 |
| 4.6.1. Sequels.....   | 55 |
| 4.6.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings.....                            | 55 |
| 4.6.3. Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....                           | 56 |
| 4.7. Jane Austen's Fans Re-living the Novels/ Novels Inspired by Jane Austen..... | 56 |
| 5. <i>The Jane Austen Book Club</i> by Karen Joy Fowler.....                      | 57 |
| Conclusion.....   | 60 |
| Works Cited.....  | 61 |

## Introduction

In this paper I will try to prove that Jane Austen is highly popular in modern culture. She was not as successful when she was alive, but after some time, people recognised her talent, her elegant style, her wit and irony, her deep knowledge of the human nature, and her beautiful and timeless stories. She wrote about ordinary people, which is always a good choice of topic since people love to identify themselves with interesting characters and see that other people have problems too. However, that is not the thing that sets Austen's novels apart from anybody else's. What makes her special is her dedication to her stories and characters, her attention to details that gave life to her novels, her subtle commentary and criticism of her society, and the ever-present humour in everyday situations.

Her life was never extraordinary, she was a daughter of a priest, without much connections and money, she never married and took care of her brothers' children. But she was more than extraordinary on the inside, with her brilliant and perceptive mind, and a kind heart. Her novels are one of the greatest works of art and it is no wonder that they achieved such success and became inspiration not only for other artists, but for ordinary people who read her stories over and over again.

The first two chapters entitled "About Jane Austen" and "About the Novels" briefly chronicle her life and describe each of her six novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, and *Northanger Abbey*. Those two chapters are the foundation of this paper's hypothesis – they prove that her work is something to be admired and worthy of attention it gets in popular culture. The third and fourth chapters both deal with adaptations of Austen's novels made in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, either in film ("Film Adaptations") or in literature ("Literature Inspired by Jane Austen's Work"). The last chapter, entitled "*The Jane Austen Book Club* by Karen Joy Fowler", explains on one example of fan fiction how Austen is connected to the popular culture.

The aim of this paper is to prove that Jane Austen's work is timeless because it deals with ordinary people and their lives. Her work is especially important because she uses irony and wit to indicate all the wrongdoings of her society. When considering how her novels are such great works of art, her popularity and influence on the modern culture is not very surprising.

## 1. About Jane Austen

It is a truth universally acknowledged that one must be familiar with the life of an author to understand his/her work of art. This applies to Jane Austen as well because her work is art and readers should recognize her as one of the most important authors that have ever lived. To a less informed person, her work may seem superficial and completely disconnected from real life, but any closer look into it would prove them wrong. Things that are known about her life only make her seem a genius in disguise and her work can no longer seem trifle but brilliant and exceptionally insightful.

Jane Austen was born 16 December 1775 to Reverend George Austen, rector of Steventon, and his wife Cassandra Austen (nee Leigh). She was one of eight siblings, all brothers, except a sister named Cassandra, who later became her best friend and person of confidence. Austen's correspondence with Cassandra represents the most important and valuable source of insight into her life.

The family lived a quiet life socializing with a few other families that belonged to the same social circle. Her father tried to give them all a good education – all her brothers eventually succeeded and found a career, and she and her sister attended boarding school as long as the family could afford it. They were a tight-knit family that often had home amateur theatrical performances organised by her eldest brother James. Austen herself began writing after her return from school:

For the next six years she wrote a number of comic essays, skits and short stories, some of them no more than a page in length and some left unfinished, which she dedicated jokingly to the various members of her family. She later copied out these short pieces into three manuscript books which she called simply Volumes the First, Second and Third. The collection as a whole is referred to as her *Juvenilia*; nothing of it appeared in print in her lifetime, but nowadays it can be found published separately from her adult novels. (La Faye, 20-21)

Although some considered her plain and whimsical as a child, she became a very pretty young girl when she came out to society at the age of seventeen. However, she was not as other girls; she was intelligent, witty and had an ironical sense of humour which seemed silly and affected to more traditional ladies of their circle. She enjoyed assembly balls while she was at

home and made many new acquaintances when she was visiting her brothers and their new families. Everything that was happening around that time became part of her work. At first she had no intention of ever publishing her stories and she wrote for her own pleasure and the amusement of her family, to whom she read them out as evening entertainment.

Austen started writing longer works in the mid and late 1790s. Her father was so pleased with *First Impressions* (today known as *Pride and Prejudice*) that he wrote to a London publisher and tried to sell him her manuscript. The publisher was not interested but she was not discouraged as she did not know that he would be the first of many who discarded her work. She sold her first manuscript named *Susan* in 1798 (it will later become *Northanger Abbey*) but it was not published even though it was advertised in the press. She continued writing but nothing she wrote was published for more than a decade.

In 1801 her father decided to move them to Bath so that his son James could take over the parish. Also, both Jane and Cassandra were unmarried and their relatives thought that it would be easier for them to find husbands in the city than barely populated countryside, while at the same time their parents could restore their health in Bath's hot springs. During what is today known as her "Bath years" Jane Austen regularly travelled with her family to visit her brothers and other numerous relatives. Though busy, she was not happy – she could no longer dance at the assembly balls but had to socialize with other widow or spinster genteel families.

There were no eligible young men for her or her sister. Only 3 men are mentioned in the whole course of her life. In the winter of 1795-6 there was Tom Lefroy and later, on one of the summer holidays there was an unnamed gentleman that died suddenly before there could be any serious relationship. She was engaged only once, to Harris Bigg-Wither, but only for one night, since she cancelled the engagement the very next morning. It is considered that she could not make herself marry only for friendship and gratitude and without love, and certainly not only for social and financial wellbeing.

In 1805, her father died and it changed her life and the lives of her mother and sister. It was decided that they would relocate from one brother's family to another's during the summers and they would reside in Bath during the winters. They were unsettled for over a year, visiting many family members and various relatives. In 1806 they finally settled in Southampton at the suggestion of her brother Frank and resided there for the next two years. In 1808 her sister-in-law died and left her brother Edward with eleven children so he turned to his mother and unmarried sisters for help. The Austen women moved in 1809 to Chawton Cottage, only five minutes away from Chawton Great House, the manor where Edward brought his large family to spend summers. The manor became the focal point of their family because Edward lent it to his



brothers whenever he was not there and they were on leave from their naval duties. All Mrs Austen's sons lived in towns very near and the family was close once again.

Around 1810 her family encouraged her to try to publish something new. She also tried to get her *Susan* manuscript back but she did not have 10 pounds the publisher gave her when he bought it over ten years ago. She offered *Sense and Sensibility* to another London publisher who agreed to take it for publication upon commission (at the author's expense). It was hard to persuade her to do it because she was sure she could not repay the expense of publication. The novel appeared in 1811 and sold out in two years with very favourable reviews. She polished her earlier novel *First Impressions* and renamed it to *Pride and Prejudice* and sold it to the same publisher. It was published in 1813 and was so immensely popular that in a few months second edition was required. Her name did not appear on either novel: the cover of *Sense and Sensibility* said it was written "By a Lady", and *Pride and Prejudice* "By the Author of *Sense and Sensibility*". Austen wrote her next two novels in a very short time. She had to go back to publishing on commission for *Mansfield Park* in 1814, but it sold well because it said it was written "By the Author of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*". *Emma* was published the very next year, also on commission.

Her family was very proud of her success, especially her brother Henry who mentioned her name whenever he heard her work praised, so even though she never published under her own name while she was alive, her authorship was an open secret. She was even invited to a royal palace by the Prince Regent who was a great fan of her work.

She started writing *Persuasion* shortly after finishing *Emma*, but in 1816 she became susceptible to infection and had little strength to write as fast as earlier. It seems probable that she was suffering from Addison's disease, a form of kidney failure that can be caused by tubercular infection. She was also revising her *Susan* manuscript, which Henry had bought back. Because it was written almost twenty years earlier, she considered it to be out of date. Also, a novel called *Susan* was published during those years and she did not want them to be mistaken for one another. She switched the heroine's name to Catherine but she was displeased with the story and put it aside. Around the New Year of 1817 she went into a remission and started to write a new novel called *Sandition*, but it was left unfinished as she died 18 July 1817. *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were published posthumously.

Some believe that her public image was constructed by various family members after her death. They wanted to portray her as simple and religious, especially her brother Henry. It can only be speculated that this happened because they wanted to preserve or not give any further damage to her reputation. Many books are written about Austen, but nobody can fully

understand her or know what she was like because so much evidence has been destroyed, perhaps on purpose. That is probably why all Austen biographers have different pictures and conclusions about her. Adams, Buchanan and Gesch in their book *The Bedside, Bathtub & Armchair Companion to Jane Austen* agree with Kathryn Sutherland in her claim that Austen's family controlled her image for future generations:

Kathryn Sutherland describes the partiality of the family record as “a mix of careful policing, rivalry, and absence of information.” She points out how long it was that the family itself controlled what was said and thus what was known about Jane Austen. They weren't hesitant to rewrite some letters, omit references to her “wild” writings as a young person, and otherwise create a sainted individual. They were subject to forgetfulness, family rivalry, and the pressure of the times. They were the first not only to layer over one Jane Austen with another, more palatable, one but also to generate conflicting tales and descriptions, depending upon which one of Jane's siblings they descended from. (37)

Austen's letters are the only source of facts about her. Her brother Henry described how she behaved during the last couple of months of her life:

She supported, during two months, all the varying pain, irksomeness, and tedium, attendant on decaying nature, with more than resignation, with a truly elastic cheerfulness. She retained her faculties, her memory, her fancy, her temper, and her affections, warm, clear, and unimpaired to the last. (La Faye, 38-39)

Many things can be concluded from those words, but mainly that she was an exceptional woman, humorous and intelligent, selfless and brave. She devoted her life to her family and her work. She was, as all other women of that time, limited by the social conventions that expected women to stay at home and obey their fathers and husbands. Her work was considered frivolous and unimportant and only later recognised as something very unique and special:

If Jane Austen had been a man it would be said that he ingeniously picked new ways to illustrate political topics, for instance, portraying the effects of wartime on civilian populations (*Pride and Prejudice*), a brief hiatus between wars

(*Persuasion*), and the effects of colonization on England (*Mansfield Park*).

(Adams, Buchanan, and Gesch, 202)

She never received official recognition for her work (not even her tombstone acknowledges her as an author) as it was somewhat scandalous to be a woman writer. She had to hide from the public her literary genius, her intelligence and observance of human relationships, especially her quick wit and humorous nature. However, she fought for her work and was an enterprising person whenever it came to publishing:

Her letter indicates how closely she was involved in the entire business of publishing. We see that Jane wanted more for the copyright. (...) When Austen gets her first copy, she refers to it as “my own darling Child,” and notes the price. (...) Austen was concerned with how the book is presented, how it is responded to, how much it costs, and how it will be advertised. Later she will note in a letter the misprints she finds in one of her books. She was intimately involved and interested in all aspects of her books’ publication. (Adams, Buchanan, and Gesch, 65)

She never hesitated to scold her publisher or to switch them when they posed a threat to her “career” and further earnings. That was the one aspect of her life where she could take initiative and act like only men could. It can be concluded that Austen was bound by the social rules and expectations of those who surrounded her, but even with those obstacles (or perhaps because of them) she became one of the most popular women writers of all time.

## 2. About the Novels

### 2.1. *Sense and Sensibility*

According to the Austen family records, the novel known today as *Sense and Sensibility* was first written in the 1790s as an epistolary novel entitled *Elinor and Marianne*. Austen revised the novel in 1809 and 1810 and had it published in 1811. It earned only £140. Her contemporaries gave her good reviews but completely failed to find the novel's true meaning. It was seen as a good example of what women should do and how to conduct. The reviewers did not comment on Austen's use of irony and they treated the novel as an offering of a simple and satisfactory moral.

The story itself follows the lives of the Dashwood women (Mrs Dashwood and her daughters Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret), who are forced to leave their home of Norland Park after Mr Henry Dashwood's death, when his son John from his first marriage inherits everything. John's wife Fanny is in complete control of her husband and manages to leave the Dashwood women almost penniless, while also jealously keeping her brother Edward Ferrars from Elinor, whom he obviously falls in love with. The women move to a cottage on the Barton Park estate owned by Mrs Dashwood's cousin Sir John Middleton. There they meet a variety of people, among whom is John Willoughby, the man that appears to be the man of Marianne's dreams, and Colonel Brandon, who falls desperately in love with Marianne. Complications arise, secrets get out, and through the course of a few years everything ends happily for both Elinor and Marianne, around whom the plot is centred.

However, as simple as the plot sounds to be, there is much more to the novel. The story itself is not as important as is Austen's intention to explore the world of women. The story is very interesting and pleasing to read, but what lies beneath it is what gives the novel value. It is a story that explores relationships among women, their position in the world of men, their character and their conduct. Since the two main characters and their happiness depend on money (which they have no way or right to earn for themselves), the novel is mostly a comment on women's rights:

Jane Austen is very interested in the condition of females who are subjected to the loss of home. As a clergyman's daughter, she knew that her home depended only on her father's life. (...) Austen, however fond she was of her brothers, was fully aware, as her novels show, of the dangers and difficulties inherent in relying on

the kindness of male relatives. (...) Both Elinor and Marianne (and their younger sister Margaret too) are taught by society the importance of a man to the comfort of a woman, not because men are good and lovable in themselves but because they are the means to money and houses. (Doody, ix-xi)

The novel can also be read as a criticism of patriarchal world which leaves women helpless and trapped by social conventions and oppression: “*Sense and Sensibility* holds no brief for the patriarchs, or for a system ensuring that women are deprived of house, lands, money, and control over their own lives, as well as of professional interests” (Doody, xxiii). Another important theme of the novel is motherhood, especially mothers’ treatment and education of female children. Austen is very critical towards mothers who indulge their daughters and eventually raise them to be superficial, spoiled, and unable to take care of themselves or their offspring, as Doody points out several times:

Motherhood is one of the novel’s themes – motherhood critically and un sentimentally treated. (...) The treatment of children in *Sense and Sensibility* is an indicator of what has gone wrong in society in general, that is, in that cultural world in which Elinor and Marianne have only just grown up. (...) The indulgencies offered merely treat woman as physical and trifling, and collude in her weakness. (...) Austen’s satiric wit examines what is wrong with motherhood, with the Mothers. (xix-xxiii)

What makes the novel so beloved among readers is the fact that it is realistic even in its romantic plots and themes. Those who read the novel can relate to it, especially women who have had a rough life of struggle and difficulties. It is realistic because Austen gives the characters her own experience. She herself was a woman who never had financial stability, and, being a younger daughter, was submitted to the will of her seniors:

In her position as the younger of two sisters, as in her tastes in poetry and music, Marianne strongly resembles Jane Austen, who had to play second to her beloved elder sister Cassandra, who seems to have been somewhat prim, and who did not lack some elder-sisterly bossiness. (Doody, xv)

A less careful and unobservant reader might mistake the novel's ending to be a typical happy ending of a soppy story. However, a perceptive reader might ask many questions some of which could be: What kind of life would submissive Edward and bossy Elinor have?; How does Marianne feel knowing that she is the exact image of Colonel Brandon's old love Eliza?; How would she react to Brandon's care of younger Eliza and Willoughby's child or how would she stand to be in the neighbourhood of Willoughby and his elitist wife. With a past like that, it does not seem that their lives will be easy in the future, and it actually looks like they will live somewhat dysfunctional lives, regardless of their true love (whether it comes to Elinor and Edward, or Brandon and Marianne). Deirdre La Feye asks exactly those questions in her book *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels*:

Fairy tales are always supposed to end with: 'And they all lived happily ever afterwards' - but Jane's novels are far too true to life for such a careless summing-up to sound credible, and this novel in particular seems to presage many ironies and difficulties. (177)

When it comes to creating something people love, Jane Austen is one of the first persons who comes to our mind. She knew how to write an interesting and captivating story that people will like, but she also knew how to shape her characters and plots to send a message to a society that she was very critical of. *Sense and Sensibility* is a novel that has all of those components. It is a story of ordinary people with ordinary lives and problems, but most of all it is a realistic story from a woman to women about women, and a serious comment on a society which she believed had to change. Modern literature recognises and appreciates that more than any of her contemporaries could, and that is the reason why *Sense and Sensibility* is one of the most popular novels of all time.

## 2.2. *Pride and Prejudice*

Second of Austen's novels to be composed was *Pride and Prejudice* and it was written between October 1796 and August 1797. The action covers fifteen months, from the autumn of one year to the Christmas of the next and it was probably envisaged as happening in 1794-5. Its original title was *First Impressions*, and the Austen family enjoyed it so much that Mr Austen thought it worthy of publication. However, the letter Mr Austen sent with the manuscript was short and vague and the manuscript was probably never read by the publisher, so it was returned

to him. Only when Austen successfully published *Sense and Sensibility* did she return to the novel to revise it. It seems that she revised the text during 1811-12, as the action can be seen to fit in general terms the calendars for those years. She changed the title because a novel entitled *First Impressions* had already been published in 1800 and she also found a phrase 'pride and prejudice' in a novel called *Cecilia* which she probably liked for its alliteration. She submitted the manuscript to a different publisher who bought the copyright for £110 and published it anonymously in January 1813. The novel was an instant success and since then, it became her most popular novel with its title and opening sentence becoming catchphrases in everyday life.

The plot begins with the Bennet family, Mr and Mrs Bennet and their five daughters (Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia), talking about Mr Bingley, a rich and single young man settling near their home of Longbourn House. Mrs Bennet is determined in her mission to marry all her daughters as soon as possible because they will inherit nothing after her husband dies and will be forced to move out of their home. She sees an opportunity in Mr Bingley's arrival and pushes herself and her family into his company. With him also comes his friend Mr Darcy, who, unfortunately, is not as pleasurable a company as Bingley is, even though he possesses a larger fortune. Jane becomes Bingley's love interest, and Elizabeth Darcy's, but there are many complications, misunderstandings, and arguments until everything is cleared after solving the problems that ensued after Lydia's elopement with Mr Willoughby, a man of questionable morality and a murky past.

Most people consider *Pride and Prejudice* to be their most beloved of all Austen's novels. Its success can be attributed to many things – engrossing plot, superb and elegant style of writing, its playfulness, ironic wit, complexity, but most of all lovable characters that can never be easily forgotten. Fiona Stafford, too, shares the same opinion:

There seems no danger of the novel ever having delighted us long enough, as continuing sales, new editions, adaptations and continuations demonstrate. However interesting the contemporary context, *Pride and Prejudice* has the capacity to attract readers in very different circumstances, who interpret its truths according to their own experience. (xviii)

The plot seems to be a simple one, a romance that includes husband-hunting and marrying off to rich and desirable young men. However, while it is being read, the book cannot be put down, for the eagerness to see what happens next and how it might affect the central characters: “The complexity of the novel is such that almost every scene is capable of throwing up questions which are no sooner answered than a new turn of events reopens them to further consideration” (Stafford, xxi). The reader is constantly being drawn in the narrative by being put

in the same situation as the main character Elizabeth Bennet – the story is seen through her point of view and even though there is a third-person narrator, the reader knows as much as she does and changes alliances and opinions whenever she does:

One of the many attractions of Elizabeth Bennet is her ability to assume the position of the reader in the text, observing and diverted by the behaviour of those around her, keen to assess their characters and confident in her judgements. An important part of this appeal is her tendency to misinterpret and misrepresent. (Stafford, xxii)

It may be said that Elizabeth Bennet's appeal is what makes *Pride and Prejudice* so popular. Morgan even goes so far as saying: "*Pride and Prejudice* is about Elizabeth Bennet. To say so seems redundant to the point of superfluity. We haven't been reading eagerly the story of Mary or Kitty Bennet for nearly two hundred years" (Morgan). She is the most beloved of all Austen's characters because she is so out of the ordinary and free-spirited. One could even say that women want to be her because of her intelligence, wittiness, conduct, and most of all, because of her happy ending with a deserving and wealthy man. Her path is not so much different than any other heroine's – she misinterprets behaviour, clings on to mistaken first impressions, and puts trust into deceitful people – but her character is the thing that makes her stand out. Never afraid to say what she really means and what she knows to be right, regardless of what is proper or what her place in society may be, Elizabeth becomes inspiration to women across the globe. In that respect, she is very much like her creator, Jane Austen, who expressed her opinion through her work in a very funny yet subtle manner. It can even be argued that Elizabeth is Austen's way of living a life she wanted for herself. This likeness of Austen and Elizabeth is what gives life to Elizabeth and makes her seem real, and this is what gives the novel something it stands out for.

Regardless of how popular the novel is, many criticize Austen's exclusion of historical events in it, especially when there is such a strong presence of militia in the plot. The critics argue that she completely disregarded all she knew about important events of her time, and wrote only about superficial themes. It is well known that she was aware of Napoleonic wars and wrote about it in her letters, but critics do not understand why she purposely decided not to mention war topics in her work. Even though the militia is present in the novel, "the regiment billeted at Meryton seems designed to provide dancing partners for the local community, rather than protection against a foreign foe" (Stafford, xiii). Readers may only guess her motives for putting



emphasis only on the characters and not the bigger picture; maybe she wanted to engage “directly with a matter of the greatest contemporary significance by examining the character of an English soldier in her fiction” (Stafford, xiv), or maybe she wanted to write about the life of ordinary people with ordinary problems, or she just wanted to entertain her readers so they would forget the hardships around them, but in the end, nobody can know for sure.

What is known for sure is that readers of *Pride and Prejudice* can easily

be absorbed in a fast-moving narrative, filled with acute observations, fascinating characters, jokes, and sexual tensions, but all leading to a denouement utterly satisfactory in its humour, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In such a context, the traditional comic ending of multiple marriages and the traditional promise of children, suggests new hope in a future generation. At the same time, the ironic tone prevents the novel from lifting off into a fantasy golden world. (Stafford, xvi)

Every word written above can be proven by the novel’s enormous popularity among readers ever since its publication. Many have recognised its outstanding qualities and praised its ingenuity. *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the best known love stories of all times and even if someone has never heard of Jane Austen, they will certainly know who she is when this title is mentioned.

### 2.3. *Mansfield Park*

*Mansfield Park* is considered to be Austen's most dramatic and disturbing work. Unlike *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* that were written in the 1790s, *Mansfield Park* was written in the 19th century (between 1811 and 1813) when Austen was in her late thirties. The maturity of the work is evident in the way in which she combines a series of tense domestic scenes with the bigger picture of a nation in transition. However, as in all her other novels, she places emphasis on family conflicts rather than on the international events, which she places off-stage yet within earshot.

The novel begins with its heroine, ten-year-old Fanny Price, moving from her humble home in Portsmouth to her cousins of Bertram family in Mansfield Park. She has to adjust to her new family: her aunt and uncle Lady and Sir Thomas Bertram, her cousins Tom, Edmund, Maria, and Julia Bertram, and her other aunt Mrs Norris, who lives at the expense of her sister Lady Bertram. Some years later, Fanny is treated poorly by the Bertram family, always being reminded that she is worth less than her cousins. Her only real friend is her cousin Edmund with whom she falls in love. Things are put in motion when the Crawford siblings, Mary and Henry, come to live near Mansfield and Sir Thomas is away in Antigua to take care of his plantation.

With Sir Thomas absent, everybody is free to do what they please and things get out of control, especially when they decide to put on a play called *Lovers' Vows*. He eventually returns and stops the madness, but finds his children and Fanny changed. Tom gets seriously ill after too much partying, Maria's husband leaves her after her affair with Henry Crawford, Julia elopes with a friend of Tom, and only Fanny stays true to her ideals. She helps the Bertrams immensely during all the scandals even though she was banished after refusing Henry Crawford's proposal. Edmund sees her true value, falls in love with her and marries her.

In her third novel, Austen decided to explore many new topics. She comments on women's rights, slavery, inequality of different social classes, and family management, but, as always, only implicitly. The center of everything is the heroine, Fanny Price, who observes the world around her without having much chance to live fully in it. Always reminded of her inferiority, she obediently does what she is told, and rarely rebels against her oppressors. She is a heroine whom many would disregard because she is too plain, too meek, and compliant to the point of being mistaken for a foot rug. However, even though her words of protest are never as loud as they should be, they still exist, and the reader witnesses a mind determined to do what is right and a heart that follows only its true wishes:

Just as it is wrong to write her off as the physical weakling of the novel, it is equally erroneous to see Fanny as silent, meek, and abject throughout. This view misses the potency of her inner feelings and desires. (...) But even before she risks the wrath of her uncle by refusing Henry's offer of marriage, she produces a surprising number of verbal outbursts, corrections, and resolutions directly contradicting her social superiors. (Stabler, xvii)

This becomes more obvious in her continuous refusal of marriage to a man she does not love and whom she mistrusts, even when that means being left to live in poverty and misery of her Portsmouth home:

In this light, her steady refusal of him far surpassed the spirit Elizabeth shows in declining Darcy and Mr Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, because Fanny's act of resistance entails a rejection of both commercial power and paternal authority. Fanny consciously rejects the possibility of being immured in marriage like

Maria; she insists on the liberty of choice and her own notion of value. (Stabler, xxxii)

She is a heroine unlike any other, perhaps less easy to like for her being a pushover, but certainly respected for being a constant throughout every difficulty that shakes her world.

Perhaps because she is less noticeable, Fanny can be the observer and commentator of her surroundings. She becomes Austen's tool for criticizing men's treatment of women and their picture of being the weaker sex without a sharp mind able to make decisions. Describing what Fanny sees shows the readers true picture of early-nineteenth century: the issue of improvement, the gap between the social classes, the abolition of slave trade, and the problems of family life. It can be said that slavery has a central position in the novel - not only references to the actuality of the business in Antigua, but also Fanny's metaphoric slavery in the Bertrams' home. By giving her an education and a better chance in life, the Bertrams give themselves the right to exploit Fanny. This is seen best in Aunt Norris' behaviour who "like the cruellest of slave owners devises physical and mental punishments for Fanny, sending her backwards and forwards on menial errands in all weathers and humiliating her in public whenever possible" (Stabler, xxxii). Therefore, Austen's novel is to be seen not only as a criticism of true slavery, but also of denying individuals their basic human rights in their own home, which is still a problem even in today's society.

"This novel also offers Austen's largest and most socially diverse *dramatis personae*. Associated respectively with Mansfield Park, fashionable Regency town life, and Portsmouth docks, the Bertram family, the Crawfords, and the Prices represent lower aristocratic, upper middle, and lower professional class life" (Stabler, ix). The gap between the social classes can particularly be seen when comparing the lives and homes of the Bertrams and the Prices. The Bertrams have everything, they are spoilt and uncaring, and the Prices live in poverty, barely managing all their children. But, however different they seem and are, this division is only caused by money. Their lifestyles are diametrically opposed, but there are similarities that prove they are still blood relations – the absent father, the incapable mother, and the disobedient children. Austen proves that the problems of family life are same everywhere and affect all social classes. It is not the money that shapes their lives (even though it means a lot), it is their personalities and decisions that are the key to building healthy relationships and living happily ever after. That is why every character has an ending worthy of their previous actions – the deserving find happiness, the undeserving are punished.

The romantic plot of *Mansfield Park* is not as important as the serious social criticism of it, but it does not mean it is not interesting. A less observant reader might miss all the signs of Austen's comments on the world and be engrossed in this story of a timid but opinionated young woman. However, the appealing story is not enough to make a great novel. *Mansfield Park*, like all other Austen's novels, is very true to life, especially with its characters being so well shaped and with its criticism of social and gender inequalities so strongly expressed. But, the beauty of it is not in its important social message or the story itself, but in sophisticated intertwining of those elements in a unique novel written elegantly enough to be appealing to every generation and time.

#### 2.4. *Emma*

Jane Austen started composing *Emma* on 21 January 1814, while she was still correcting the proofs of *Mansfield Park*, and finished it on 29 March 1815. The story covers fourteen months, from September of one year to November of the next, and it seems likely that she envisaged it as taking place in 1813—14. In the late summer of 1815 Jane went to London, taking the manuscript with her, so her brother Henry could, as before, negotiate with publishers on her behalf and this time the book was published on commission. It appeared at the end of December 1815, but as there had been delays in the printing, the title page ('by the Author of "Pride and Prejudice", &c. &c. ') was dated 1816. It came out in the usual three volume format, and Jane sent a specially bound and dedicated pre-publication copy to Carlton House for the Prince Regent.

The novel begins with Emma Woodhouse, a beautiful, witty, and privileged twenty-year-old girl, returning home from her governess' wedding to Mr. Weston, and Emma's conclusion that she should become a matchmaker because their marriage would never have happened without her help. She lives a quiet and uneventful life with her hypochondriac father, enjoying everyday visits from their neighbour Mr. George Knightley, who is also the brother of her sister Isabella's husband. She becomes friends with socially inferior Harriet Smith, convinces her against marrying a respectable farmer Mr. Martin, and decides to match her to the local vicar Mr. Elton, who actually proposes to Emma and finds himself refused. Soon, secretly engaged Jane Fairfax and Mr. Frank Churchill come to the neighbourhood and he starts openly flirting with Emma to conceal this fact from the public. However, Emma decides that he would suit Harriet more than her and tries to match them, but it is also a flop as Harriet admits that she is in love

with Mr. Knightley and believes he requites her love. This fact makes Emma realise that she loves Mr. Knightley and they soon marry as he was in love with her all along.

Upon its publication, *Emma* got mixed reviews – it was praised for its characters being very true to life, but accused of having no story whatsoever, as Pinch writes that “the story seemed to be buried by the novel’s unaccountable wealth of details” and that “the novel’s striking ability to seize the details of everyday life flourished at the expense of its narrative interest, or story” (viii). Also, according to a family tradition, Austen announced that for this book she was going to create a heroine “whom no one but myself will much like” (Austen-Leigh, 158). Even though her intentions are never bad, to the reader, Emma seems a spoilt and conceited girl who thinks too highly of herself, her abilities and social position. Never having heart not to indulge her father’s fears, she lives too sheltered a life to be truly interesting, even to her, so she meddles into things she should not. Being so rich, privileged and self-confident, she does not have to fight for her rights or depend on an advantageous marriage like Austen’s other heroines, and thus she cannot easily be identified with. With such a heroine, and with so little plot to look forward to, it may seem that there is no reason to read or even like *Emma*. It may all be so, however, modern readers consider it to be Austen’s finest and most representative novel.

What can be admired in *Emma* are Austen’s techniques and style of writing. For example, her using of free indirect discourse gives her characters really authentic voices:

Austen makes voices stick in the mind through her use of free indirect discourse, which makes a character’s voice seem indelible, capable of soaking into other beings. But she also uses the same technique for representing thought. Her cultivations of this mode of representing her heroines’ minds has made her novels crucial to the history of the English novel, markers of a moment when the novel as a literary genre perfects its inward turn, and begins to claim human psychology as its territory. Above all it creates the feeling of intimacy with her heroines that many readers prize. (Pinch, xvii-xviii)

Pinch also goes as far as saying that *Emma* can serve as a study of Austen’s techniques as a novelist, which are more varied and more sophisticated there than in any of her previous novels.

However, for ordinary readers, the exploring of techniques and style is simply not enough and is certainly not the reason to start reading any book. There has to be something to occupy them and make them love the book. In *Emma* it is the world that she created for her characters to

live in. Simple observing of Highbury can show that it is an interesting place to be in, if not for anything but for gossip, which is the most spread way of communication there: “The community of Highbury is a community formed, as some recent critics have noted, through gossip. Gossip is the everyday noise of the novel; it is the social form of knowledge” (Pinch, xv-xvi). It is also a place that seems to be cut out of the real world and everything there seems to function perfectly:

Some have praised Highbury for its cosy intimacy, its unanimity, its coherence that seems both aesthetical and social. There is a distinctly hierarchical social order, to be sure. (...) Everyone, according to this view of the novel, knows their place, more or less, and is united by bonds of respect and obligation across class differences. However, while some readers have criticized Highbury’s class politics, seeing it as an insular hamlet that reeks of conservative nationalism, others have argued that Highbury is not as tidy a place as it might seem; not so much a place where everyone knows their place, it is a place of status ambiguities. (Pinch, xiv)

As one of the rare settings in which the plot of *Emma* occurs, the readers are bound to know Highbury as much as they know their own home. They can get close to that world they know so much of, get immersed into it and learn to love its inhabitants and their little eccentricities.

In conclusion, it may be argued that there is “a lot of nothing in *Emma*, but the novel reminds us that reading fiction is about ‘aery nothings’ – words on a page – and turning them into something that feels real. It is the nothing that turns our heads, and keeps us turning pages” (Pinch, xxix). Precisely for that reason, for leaving the real world for the fictional one, *Emma* is the novel to read, and for its ingenious style it is the novel to admire. Its popularity has not fallen since it was published and because it is still a great story (regardless of complaints that there is not any), it probably never will.

## 2.5. *Persuasion*

Jane Austen began *Persuasion*, the last novel she was to complete, on 8 August 1815, but its composition must have been hindered by Henry Austen's illness in the autumn of that year and his firm's bankruptcy in the spring of 1816, which caused financial losses to several members of the Austen family. In the spring of 1816 also began Austen's own terminal illness. It

may be that for those events *Persuasion* is shorter than her other works and also of a more sombre tone. Jane first finished it on 18 July 1816, but she was not satisfied with the original version of it so she rewrote the ending and completed it on 6 August 1816. However, she was never in a hurry to offer her books for publication, which meant that both *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* ended up being published posthumously, with their titles probably chosen by her brother Henry. According to Austen family tradition, Jane had referred to this last book as *The Elliots*. The two stories were published by John Murray, and appeared together in a four-volume set (two volumes for each work), at the very end of December 1817, with the title page actually dated 1818. This novel, perhaps more than any of the others, is based very much on Austen's personal knowledge of places and events.

The action of *Persuasion* covers nine months — from the summer of 1814 to the spring of 1815. *Persuasion* is itself a sequel to a novel she never wrote, of the romance between the young naval officer Commander Frederick Wentworth, at a loose end in the Somerset countryside during his shore-leave in the summer of 1806, and the lonely girl Anne Elliot who is ignored and neglected in her rich, but unloving home. However, Anne's father, Sir Walter Elliot, and her godmother, Lady Russell, disapproved, and she was persuaded to end their engagement and Wentworth disappeared back to sea angry and resentful. Eight years later, the story opens in the summer of 1814, at Anne's home, Kellynch Hall, the ancestral home of the Elliot baronets, which now has to be rented to Admiral Croft and his wife due to Sir Walter's extravagant lifestyle that led them to indebtedness. Mrs Croft is Wentworth's sister, and soon he comes for a visit, which awakens old feelings in both him and Anne, who went to live with her sister Mrs Mary Musgrove, not far from Kellynch. During many events that happen in Lyme and Bath, Wentworth discovers that he is still in love with Anne and has forgiven her, so they marry.

*Persuasion* is different than Austen's other novels. It seems more realistic, the reader gets a better glimpse of the history, it is more serious, the heroine is older and more mature, and most of the male characters have a job that earns them a living, as opposed to the landed gentry that her other novels revolve around:

Austen's glowing depictions of the country houses of Pemberley and Donwell Abbey, in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, glorified a social order made stable by the gentleman's inheritance of landed property. But *Persuasion*, valuing the activities of the professional classes more than the traditions of the country house set, recognizes relocation as a way of life. (Lynch, *Persuasion* viii)

More than any of Austen's other novels, *Persuasion* is a comment on social order and inequality of the sexes. She gives preference to the Navy men over the non-working gentry and glorifies their lives that have meaning and are of use to the nation. Aristocracy is openly criticized in the characters of Sir Walter and Lady Dalrymple - the former considers himself better than anybody else, is vain, extravagant, and foolish, and the latter does not have anything extraordinary to commend herself and cannot give people a reason to desire her company other than her high rank. The inequality of the sexes is strongly criticized in the novel on several occasions. The heroine, more than anybody, understands women's inferior position and their inability to set free from whatever shackles that hold them. Anne speaks her mind in a conversation with Captain Harville where she defends the honour of all women and "she proposes that if, as Harville asserts, men and women have different natures it must be because the sexes are granted unequal opportunities, because social codes put men and women in different relations to occupation and change" (Lynch, *Persuasion* xxviii). She also quietly proposes that the picture of women as weak, incompetent, and fickle is projected mainly by men, who are the writers of books and history, and who hold all the power: "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands" (*Persuasion*, 188).

Those explicit comments in *Persuasion* give the reader the real picture of early nineteenth-century society. The novel in itself is an observation of Austen's society and individuals' psyche and it is the reason why it is darker than her other works. However, like in her other novels, nothing is explicitly said about the real dangers outside the family circle (even though many of the characters survived war), but there is a sense of danger throughout the novel – Anne's nephew Charles falls from a tree and Louisa Musgrove is injured after jumping from a great height in Lyme:

*Persuasion* generally keeps a guarded silence about the fact that wounding and killing have for two decades represented the vocation of the Captain Harvilles and Wentworths of this world. But that discretion about wartime carnage is offset, all the same, by the fact that security of life and limb is a precarious thing even under the peace that has brought the surviving sailors home. (...) There seem almost to be as many storms to weather on shore as at sea – as much likelihood there, as in



the theatre of war, that time will cut young lives short, and as many testimonies to the frailty of bodies housing those lives. (Lynch, *Persuasion* xiv)

The events of the novel seem closer to the reader because the plot is exactly determined in time and by “pointedly situating the action of *Persuasion* within time, insisting that it matters where we are in history, Austen proposes that large-scale historical processes help determine how private individuals work out their destinies” (Lynch, *Persuasion* xviii). For example, Captain Wentworth’s prospects have changed during the eight years of war, he has become rich and could choose to do anything when it finished. Other characters are also very much affected by historical events and Austen uses it to prove how times have changed and how people should change their ways too.

The critics were not thrilled with *Persuasion* upon its publication, and even today it is hardly a favourite of all of Austen’s novels. However, its value is unquestionable and its greatness appreciated around the world. Like her other works, the point of *Persuasion* is not to find a morale in it (like Austen’s contemporaries always did), but to find a picture of society as a whole, to recognize its criticism, and to understand the mechanisms of an individual’s heart and mind. This novel not only has all of it but is a pleasure to read and the story is nothing less than a timeless classic.

## 2.6. *Northanger Abbey*

*Northanger Abbey* was written in 1798-9, with the action meant to be contemporary, and was originally called *Susan*. In 1802 Austen slightly updated it, and with her brother Henry's assistance, sold the manuscript and its copyright for £10 to a London publisher, Benjamin Crosby & Co., in 1803. Crosby advertised it that year but never brought it out. In 1809 Austen wrote to the firm, reminding them of the delay, and suggesting she could either provide them with a spare copy of the manuscript if the original had been lost, or else that she would wish to publish it elsewhere. This brought a rude response, threatening to take legal action to stop any other publisher buying the work, and offering to return her manuscript for the £10 original payment. This sum was evidently beyond her limited means, so she had to let the matter rest. In about 1815 or 1816, when Austen had published four novels successfully, she asked Henry to contact Crosby on her behalf, and he bought *Susan* back. She went through the text again, changing the heroine's name to Catherine, because another novel called *Susan* had been published in 1809. After her death in July 1817 Henry Austen took over this manuscript and that

of her last completed novel, *Persuasion*, and, as they were both shorter than her other works, arranged for them to be published together in four volumes in 1818. She had apparently left both stories untitled, so it was presumably Henry who called them *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. *Northanger Abbey*, though still amusing today, would have been amusing in a rather different way to its first readers, because it was written as a deliberate parody of the very popular novels of the period, what today would be called 'thrillers'. However, by 1816 these novels had proliferated to such an extent as to become commonplace and were beginning to go out of fashion, which is evidently why Austen had concerns that her parody of them might also seem outdated. The main part of the action happens during February, March and April 1798, when Catherine is seventeen and her marriage to Henry Tilney takes place when she is eighteen.

The story begins with presenting the Morland family and the heroine Catherine as pretty unremarkable and ordinary people. One February, their neighbours, Mr and Mrs Allen, invite Catherine to come with them to Bath where she meets two families, the Thorpes – Mrs Thorpe and her children John, Isabella, Anne and Maria, and the Tilneys - General Tilney and his children Frederick, Henry and Eleanor. Catherine soon realises that she prefers the company of smart and elegant Henry and Eleanor over the pushy and intrusive John and Isabella. Soon, General Tilney invites Catherine to their home of Northanger Abbey and she happily accepts. What she does not know is that General Tilney heard that her family is very rich, so he decides to marry her to Henry (the false story actually came from John Thorpe who was boasting to the General). The Tilneys' home is not what Catherine expects, it has been redecorated and modernised, but her imagination still runs wild and she sees danger, murder, and dark past everywhere she looks. When she tells Henry all about her suspicions he scolds her for her foolish ideas. The General is very kind to her during her visit, boasting of the luxury and elegance of his estate and house. He travels to London a few days later and after he returns, he promptly turns Catherine out of the house without any explanation. Henry follows her as soon as he can, to ask her to marry him and to explain the reason for his father's behaviour and they marry the following year.

*Northanger Abbey* belongs to Austen's earlier works and it can be seen through the voice of the narrator, who explains "artistic positions and processes her other novels tend to relegate to the background" (Johnson, vii). This exploration of novels and their worth, which Austen decisively defends, is typical of a young, budding novelist. She imagined it to be a satire or a parody of gothic novels, and a defence of novels in general as a form of literature:

Clearly, though she pokes a lot of fun, Austen is not simply disavowing gothic. To be sure, all parody denaturalizes the conventions of what it is parodying, and so in its very nature is demystifying: after reading *Northanger Abbey*, cabinets, tapestries, and crumbling manuscripts will never cast quite the same spell. But at the same time, parody reaffirms and reconstitutes what it is parodying. (Johnson, xiv)

Austen voices firm opinions about many topics, but her study of novels is the most prominent one in *Northanger Abbey*. Her “narrator, with astonishing and unprecedented self-assurance, ridicules the literary establishment of reviewers and arbiters of taste who by complaining again and again about the ‘trash with which the press now groans’ show themselves duller than the novels they decry” (Johnson, vii-viii).

Another topic stands out in the narrator’s chatter – the position of women and the picture of them as inferior to men. By making ironic statements of women’s wit she comments on the position of smart and resourceful women like herself who are not desirable as life companions. In the novel she says that “a woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing any thing, should conceal it as well as she can” (81). Such a witty sentence actually opens a serious topic of educated and smart women who hide their intelligence under a veil of ignorance for the fear of being rejected as unfeminine and unwelcome of male attention. This topic is still as fresh as in Austen’s time, as men are still considered smarter and more capable than women. In the light of modern pop culture, when every day a new reality show emerges celebrating the stupid and undeserving of this world, the question may arise whether human race has evolved at all in the last two hundred years while Austen’s words resonate loudly in readers’ minds proving that her critique of society is well observed.

The main heroine Catherine is also an interesting part of the novel. By describing her and the events around her, the narrator comments on other heroines and novels. Catherine’s transformation from a naïve girl to a more realistic young woman (which is the central plot of *Northanger Abbey*) is the narrator’s (or more accurately Austen’s) instrument of commenting other novels, the literary market-place, the standards of heroinehood, the handling of plot, and characterization. Johnson describes her as “Austen’s sweetest and most ingenious heroine, so inexperienced that everything common and uncommon strikes her as ‘strange’”(xi) and says that “she endures all the hilarious and humiliating reversals the novel continually sets her up for with such good nature that she is undeterred by them” (xi). Her youth makes her a great student,

especially when she meets Henry, a good and willing teacher, a teacher she would, for once, listen with interest and make steps toward becoming an adult. Under his ‘tutoring’ she realises her own immaturity, “renounces the grandiose in favour of the diminutive, and she turns from the intense but improbable ‘alarms of romance’ to the smaller but actual ‘anxieties of common life’” (Johnson, xii) and starts “revaluing gothic fiction as figural rather than literal representation that illuminates and dignifies the ambiguous distress, dangers, and betrayals of ordinary life” (Johnson, xxiii). By making it so, Austen proves that even in the common events there is some gothic flavour hidden under the mask of pretensions and cultural and social conventions.

*Northanger Abbey* is different from all other Austen’s novels as it is clearly an exploration of writer’s process and style and of novels in general. What makes it similar to her other works is this inevitable critique and commentary of social inequality and an observation of contemporary manners and morals. The narrator, who addresses the reader directly, becomes an important part of the novel – through the narrator, Austen voices her perspectives on various topics, which is of great consequence when the reader is faced with the fact that very little is known about her, and whatever could be known was lost by her family reinventing her character. On top of it, she was always indirect and subtle in her writing, irony being the crown of her style, so it becomes hard to determine when she is serious and when she is joking. As there is an obvious deficiency of facts about her, her personality can only be discerned from her work. That is why *Northanger Abbey*, being the one novel where she is direct, is of greatest value to the modern investigator of Austen’s person and life.

### 3. Film Adaptations

It is easy to understand why somebody would want to film an Austen adaptation. Her novels are timeless classics and the stories are very interesting and appealing, especially to women. Except being love stories, Austen's novels are complex works of art which deal with various topics, which separates them from other similar works. Also, people love to hear about the past and those novels give them a glimpse of good old days when things were simpler. However, nothing is more important than the money – the filming is low cost because nobody owns the right to the novels, “it requires no expensive special effects, no exotic locations, and only a small cast” (Parril, 3).

The only question that may arise is whether the films were a success because the novels were famous or whether the novels are famous today because the films popularized them among greater public. The answer is that both those statements are true. Regardless of Austen’s hardships during her lifetime when she earned next to nothing for her work, her novels were popular and received mostly positive critics even then. There is an abundance of critical studies of Austen, both positive and negative, that have come to life in the last two hundred years, and despite all, she still continues to be an attractive topic:

A typical year now sees the publication of more than 150 articles and fifteen critical books on Austen’s life and works, and every critic who discusses the English novel as a genre has to account for her achievement. She has therefore played a part in virtually every wave of literary criticism. She has been subjected to New Critical investigations of irony; she has been put on the couch by Freudians; she has been critiqued for her class consciousness by Marxists; she has been interrogated by disciples of feminism, queer studies, and gender studies. (Blackwell, 37)

Her work is obviously an inexhaustible source of studies, explored and written from numerous angles, but it seems that making film adaptations expanded her audience, that “these adaptations have brought new generations of readers to the Janeite cult” (Blackwell, 46) and that “they have inspired discussion of both the novels and the films, and discussion keeps a novelist alive. After the release of these films, the membership of the Jane Austen Society of North America almost doubled” (Parril, 8).

What becomes a problem for Austen's hard core fans is the adapting itself. In the process of making a movie that is based on a book there is bound to be a lot of changes. The readership often does not understand that process. It is true that there are bad film versions of the novels, but it is also true that there are magnificent ones. Some of the readership, however, does not believe that Austen could ever be faithfully adapted to film. It is true, but only to a point. There is not a movie in the world that can do justice to the book it was based on, but it does not mean that it cannot be a good film. An avid Austen reader can complain that the adaptation completely missed the point of the novel (and be right about some of them), or that the screenwriter kept very few original lines, or that the casting ruined characters, or hundreds of other complaints. However, those claims can also be missing the point that the filmmakers work with a totally different medium, that they are also artists just as Austen was, and that they want to show their vision or interpretation (which may or may not be the same as everybody else's). When dealing with book adaptations, people (especially those who have read the original) have to understand that changes are bound to happen and that those changes are not necessarily bad, on the contrary, they can make the movie more interesting and give great value to the final product.

### 3.1. *Sense and Sensibility*

There are several adaptations of *Sense and Sensibility*. First of them appeared in 1950 when NBC's *Philco Television Playhouse* featured a live hour long adaptation based on a screenplay by H. R. Hays and directed by Delbert Mann. The film won Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor (Ernest Borgnine). It had three acts and was presented on three sets: a living room in the Dashwoods' cottage (Act I), an outdoor set (Act I), and an elegant drawing room (Acts II and III). Since it was very short in length, the plot needed to be simplified and many characters like Margaret, Mrs. Jennings, Nancy Steele, and Sir John Middleton and his family had to be omitted. It can be assumed that without having read the novel, the ordinary viewer would have difficulties following the story.

In 1971, the BBC presented a version of the novel, directed by David Giles, with a screenplay written by Denis Constanduros. "This production, recorded in color, was shown (probably in 50-minute episodes) on four consecutive Sunday nights (...). The shooting script indicates that this version follows the novel closely, but it has omitted Margaret" (Parril, 22-23). Except for a few scenes and some transition shots showing moving carriages, this adaptation was shot exclusively on studio sets. However, neither this version nor the 1950 one is available for viewing and therefore cannot be analyzed in depth.

Third adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* is the one from 1981. The screenplay was written by Alexander Baron and Denis Constanduros, it was directed by Rodney Bennett, produced by the BBC, and first shown serially, in seven thirty-minute episodes. “Perhaps because Constanduros, who wrote the screenplay for the 1971 adaptation, was co-author of the 1981 adaptation, this version differs only slightly in incident and dialogue from the 1971 adaptation. The main differences lie in on-location shooting and the greater use of outdoor scenes in the later serial” (Parril, 23-24).

The most famous adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* is the one from 1995. It was produced by Columbia/Mirage, the screenplay was written by actress Emma Thompson (who won the Academy Award for the Best Screenplay Adaptation for 1995), and it was directed by Ang Lee. The film was a major success, praised by the critics and popular with the public:

The film was nominated for six Oscars, including Best Picture, Thompson for Best Actress as well as for Best Screenplay (not original), Kate Winslet for Best Supporting Actress, Best Cinematography, and Best (Original) Music. The British Academy of Film and Television Arts gave it the award for the Best Film, gave Thompson the award for the Best Actress in a Leading Role, and gave Winslet the award for the Best Actress in a Supporting Role. The film also won two Golden Globe awards for Best Film and Best Screenplay. (Parril, 24)

Although many things were changed in the process of adapting it to the big screen, this version is still faithful to the story, and those changes only make the film more believable, more comprehensible to modern viewers, and more suited for the film format. For example, many characters were changed in order to make the story more appealing and even realistic. Elinor was shown as more sentimental than she is in the novel and Edward’s and Brandon’s roles were expanded and their characters made more romantic and charming. Margaret’s role was completely reinvented as she became a tool for several purposes:

She is the primary critic of the status quo and advocate of equal opportunity for women. (...) By her protests, she also is the occasion for her elders' explaining, for the edification of the viewer, the reasons for their predicament. Further, she practices a kind of freedom of action and speech that her sisters cannot. (...) In

addition to being a feminist, Margaret serves to reveal appealing aspects of Edward's character. (...) Margaret is also a prime source of humor. (37-38)

This is a great change in comparison with the novel, where she does not have such a big role, and the BBC versions, where she is completely omitted. Changes like that and the ones like giving hints of Robert's eventual marriage to Lucy or deepening Brandon's relationship with Marianne are what makes this adaptation a truly remarkable piece of art. Fine acting, stunning soundtrack, and beautiful scenery make it even more special as they serve the purpose of telling an already heard story into something new and exciting.

In 2008 a new adaptation came out, in form of another BBC television miniseries. The screenplay was written by Andrew Davies and it was directed by John Alexander. It was aired in three parts in January 2008. In some aspects, it can be interpreted as an adaptation of the 1995 film adaptation or it can at the least be said that it was greatly influenced by it. The resemblances are many and the adaptation only profits from it: the inclusion of Margaret as a useful tool of humour, explanations, and of making other characters more agreeable, characterising Edward and Brandon as more charming and handsome than they are in the novel, use of spectacular scenery as an instrument of interpretation, and many more. The adaptation does, however, differ greatly from the 1995 film, especially in the very beginning which opens with a sex scene, unimaginable in Austen's always subtle work. The miniseries is praised for its dialogue which is characterised as cleverly written, even though, when compared with the 1995 version, it is considered not as funny. All things considered, this adaptation is very well made and serves its purpose of retelling and reinventing Austen's novel. However, this version, as probably all others that will be made in the future, will be compared with Ang Lee's film, which became the 'official' adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* for many people.

### 3.2. Looser Adaptations of *Sense and Sensibility*

*Kandukondain Kandukondain* is a 2000 romantic musical in Tamil language directed and written by Rajiv Menon. It gained positive reviews and was commercially successful. The film was featured in international film festivals and gained notable awards.

In 2008 came out a romantic comedy *From Prada to Nada* written by Luis Alfaro, Craig Fernandez, and Fina Torres, and directed by Angel Garcia. It is a Latino version of *Sense and Sensibility*, where two spoiled sisters are left penniless after their father's death and forced to move in with their aunt in East Los Angeles.



### 3.3. *Pride and Prejudice*

*Pride and Prejudice* is the most popular of all Austen novels and, consequently, the most adapted one for film and television. The first adaptation was released by MGM in 1940. It was directed by Robert Z. Leonard and the screenplay was written by MGM screenwriter Jane Murfin and British novelist Aldous Huxley. Parrill states that “the collaboration of Murfin (*Alice Adams*, 1935; *The Women*, 1939) and Huxley (*Jane Eyre*, 1944) represents the meeting of opposite minds” (49). It seems that Huxley “struggled to maintain the essence of the novel while having to compress the story and defend against efforts to sensationalize it” (Parrill, 50) while Murfin (as an experienced Hollywood writer) was in charge of determining the structure and pace. Considerable changes were made in order to make the film in the genre of screwball comedy which was very popular between the early 1930s and early 1940s. Screwball comedy is characterized by fast-talking, witty repartee, ridiculous, farcical situations, gender power reversal, with plot lines that involve courtship and marriage and depict social classes in conflict. As a result, the tone of the film differs greatly from the novel in many aspects. There is an accentuated class difference between Darcy and Elizabeth, characters are noticeably altered, especially the Bennet sisters who all “lack decorum and restraint” (Parrill, 52) and the story is even placed later in time “than the time of the novel so that the costumes might be more opulent than those of Austen's time” (Parrill, 55). The last of those is made in service of screwball comedy because the visual style associated with it includes “elaborate costumes and scenes of the wealthy at play” (Parrill, 55) so as to achieve a glamorous and comic effect. Even though the film had both popular and critical success, it failed in capturing the novel's essence. The “overall simplification of the plot and compression of the events of the novel so that its main events fit into a 117-minute time frame” (Parrill, 53) affected the story's credibility and plausibility of characterization.

The next adaptation appeared on NBC's *Philco Television Playhouse* in 1949. It was a live black and white one-hour teleplay. It was directed by Fred Coe and the screenplay was written by Samuel Taylor. “The most distinctive aspect of this version is the use of an actor playing Jane Austen to supply character analysis, transitions, and ironic perspective” (Parrill, 57). As it is the case with the previous version, much has been omitted. Important characters like Charlotte Lucas, Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mary and Kitty Bennet, Mrs. Philips, Georgiana Darcy, Colonel Fitzwilliam, the Forsters, and Captain Denny do not appear at all. The greatest strength of this adaptation seems to be the witty dialogue, much of which came from the novel itself.

In 1952 and 1958, the BBC presented live black and white televised versions, each in six thirty-minute episodes. The 1952 version was directed by Campbell Logan and the 1958 version by Barbara Burnham. Both were written by Cedric Wallis, and it can be presumed that they were much alike. Neither is available for viewing.

A new BBC adaptation came out in 1967, based on a screenplay by Nemone Lethbridge and directed by Joan Craft. It was also divided into six thirty-minute episodes and recorded in black and white prior to transmission, primarily on studio sets, although some exterior scenes were recorded on location. There were some changes made in the plot, so as to speed up the story, but nothing too major that would completely transform the essence of the novel.

In 1980 BBC-2 presented a new version in form of another miniseries. It was divided into five parts that lasted 226 minutes when put together. Fay Weldon wrote the screenplay and Cyril Coke directed it. In 1995 there was a new version by BBC/A&E and it was highly popular in England and in the USA. It was directed by Simon Langton and the screenplay was adapted by Andrew Davies. It is a 300 minute miniseries divided into six parts. Those two are the only BBC versions currently available for viewing, and are mostly similar in many aspects. Both are faithful to the novel, but there are differences in the way in which the screenwriters handled the cutting of the novel to fit the screen. Parrill states that “both drew much of their dialogue from the novel, but they often changed the speaker or the circumstance in which the dialogue is spoken” (61) so as to influence the characterization or development of the story. Since the 1995 adaptation is considerably longer than the 1980 one, it is to be expected that “the order of events and scenes in the 1995 adaptation is closer to that of the novel than is the order of the 1980 adaptation, and the 1995 adaptation also shows more variety and imagination in the way information is presented” (Parrill, 63). When considering casting choices, it seems that both actresses that play Elizabeth (Elizabeth Garvie in 1980 and Jennifer Ehle in 1995) are well chosen because they both convey the characters intelligence, wit, stubbornness, confidence, outspokenness, sense of humour, and love of physical activeness. However, when the casting of Darcy is in question it seems that Colin Firth in 1995 adaptation is everybody’s favourite choice. Davies’ script shows him as an outdoorsy, physically active, and (gentle)manly in every possible way, which is probably the reason for the ‘Darcymania’ that swept over England after the miniseries appeared on television. The reason why the 1995 adaptation was so immensely popular is not only the choice of actors (although it was a big factor since those are the two most beloved Austen characters and Ehle and Firth did a great job picturing them), but also the beauty of sets and locations in the English countryside and great houses where it was recorded. The scenery plays a big role in telling of the story and helps in characterization. The 1980 adaptation

probably had budget issues that compelled them to record almost everything indoors and thus lacks the clear sense of the passage of time and the seasons which is obvious in the 1995 version.

The 1995 adaptation was considered to be the best of all, but in 2005 came out a new version, this time in film format. Although it is natural that the details were changed in order to fit the two hour time frame, the director tried to capture the true spirit of the novel. The screenplay was written by Deborah Moggach and it was directed by Joe Wright. It was so beautifully made that it received not only positive reviews from the public and the critics, but it also gained a number of awards and nominations, among which are four Academy Award nominations (Best Actress, Best Original Score, Best Art Direction, and Best Costume Design). Stewart-Beer explains the enormous popularity of this adaptation by characterizing it as a film for our time:

British director Joe Wright's *Pride & Prejudice* never fails to be visually engaging. Photography is lush and fluent, art design is impressive, and the musical score from Dario Marianelli is enchanting. Cinematographically, narrative is moved along at a brisk and efficient rate. Every frame is chock-full of ideas, action, and momentum. Joe Wright also demonstrates a wonderful choreographic talent for organizing space and people.

In addition, there are some other differences that modernise the novel, like showing the Bennet family as a loving and happy one, as opposed to the dysfunctional one described in the novel, and characterising Elizabeth as even more feisty and rebellious, by which “she is removed from Austen’s original Elizabeth, who has a greater sense of grounded maturity, even though both Elizabeths have an occasional inclination to fluster, fun and giggles” (Stewart-Beer). Wright also chose, unlike any director of *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations before, to set the film in 1797, when Austen wrote “First Impressions”, and “thus we see in this production a generational shift, with the younger (and more fashionable) characters reflecting a sort of proto-Regency style of hair and dress, and the older generations still dressing to an earlier, mid-eighteenth-century mode” (Tandy). The casting of the two main actors was obviously a hard choice, since many people believed that nobody could do better than Ehle and Firth. However, Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen as Elizabeth and Darcy proved everybody wrong. Their portrayal of the characters is superb: Knightley captured Elizabeth’s energy, playfulness, intelligence, and wittiness, and Macfadyen showed a different side of Darcy, more insecure and sensitive (as opposed to the dashing Firth of the 1995 miniseries). The film also has the problem of explaining

the depth of Elizabeth and Darcy's love, since it seems they had no time even to meet properly, but it is solved with unspoken chemistry between the lead actors:

Elizabeth's romance with Darcy, however, is not hailed here as a meeting of minds, a chance for Elizabeth to find her intellectual equal. Instead, and unsurprisingly perhaps for a visual-oriented, two-hour film, it is their mutual sexual attraction that is most strongly emphasized by the filmmakers. This emphasis is notably at the expense of many of the super-charged verbal battles for which this literary couple is justly famous. Sexuality is thus deployed here as a mainspring of narrative action. (Stewart-Beer)

It is obvious that this adaptation focuses mostly on Darcy and Elizabeth and the development of their relationship (even though other major plots are included and well constructed). Ailwood calls it "an insightfully Romantic interpretation of Austen's novel" meaning that Wright foregrounds the romantic aspect of the novel and presents the novel as a Romantic text.

#### 3.4. Looser Adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*

In 1995, there was an episode of children's television series *Wishbone* called "Furst Impressions" which is based on *Pride and Prejudice*. The series' main character is the talking dog Wishbone who daydreams about being the lead character of stories from classic literature. Only the viewers and the characters in Wishbone's daydreams can hear him speak and see him as whatever famous character he is currently portraying and not as a dog. In this episode Wishbone plays the role of Fitzwilliam Darcy.

In 2001 came out a romantic comedy called *Bridget Jones's Diary* based on Helen Fielding's novel of the same name. The screenplay was written by Andrew Davies (who also worked on 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* miniseries, 1996 *Emma* TV series, 2007 *Northanger Abbey* TV drama, 2008 *Sense and Sensibility* TV serial) and Richard Curtis, and it was directed by Sharon Maguire. The movie borrowed some basic plot elements from the novel, but the most interesting fact is the main protagonist's love interest Mark Darcy. Not only was the character named after the famed Fitzwilliam Darcy, but they also cast Colin Firth (as the "ultimate Mr. Darcy") to play him. Renée Zellweger was nominated for Academy Award for Best Actress for her role of Bridget Jones.

Another looser adaptation of the novel is *Pride & Prejudice: A Latter-Day Comedy*, a 2003 film whose characters are Latter-day Saints. It was directed by Andrew Black, written by Anne K. Black, Jason Faller, and Katherine Swigert, and even credits Jane Austen as one of the screenwriters. The film received largely negative reviews outside Mormon enclaves. Some of the humor and plot devices derive from and require an understanding of Mormon social and religious mores.

In 2004 something completely different appeared: a Bollywood-style romantic musical *Bride and Prejudice*, directed by Gurinder Chadha, and written by Paul Mayeda Berges, and Gurinder Chadha, and it also credits Austen as the writer of the novel. It was primarily filmed in English, with some Hindi and Punjabi and was well received by film critics.

In 2008 came out a four-part television series *Lost in Austen* written by Guy Andrews and directed by Dan Zeff. It is a fantasy adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that loosely follows the plot of the novel. The protagonist is Amanda Price, a fan of Austen's work, who discovers a portal in her bathroom that transports her into the events of the novel, while Elizabeth is trapped in real 21<sup>st</sup>-century London.

### 3.5. *Mansfield Park*

As *Mansfield Park* is not as celebrated as Austen's other novels (some believe that because Fanny Price is not a lovable heroine, and is very unappealing both outside and inside, that she poses a problem for modern readership and viewership), there is bound to be fewer adaptations, only three, to be more precise. The first one came out in 1983 and it was a television mini-series, which ran serially for about 261 minutes. It was based on a screenplay by Ken Taylor, directed by David Giles, and produced by ITV for BBC television. Though it is true to the novel, this adaptation is a "torture" (Parrill, 84) to watch because the actress Sylvestra Le Touzel, who plays Fanny, is plain, even ugly, and has no grace. Even though Fanny is described as physically unattractive in the novel, the reader can forget that fact, and not be bothered by it for the rest of the book. This is, however, impossible while watching television. Parrill goes as far as to say that "the choice of Sylvestra Le Touzel for the role of Fanny was fatal to the success of this adaptation" (84). However, other characters were well cast, the storyline is closely followed, and a lot of attention is given to the costumes and manners of the times, and period decor. It is a rich production, where a lot of money was spent on interior design and filming outdoors, so as to be as close as possible to the description of the places in the novel.

The next adaptation of *Mansfield Park* is a film released in 1999 by Miramax, written and directed by Canadian director Patricia Rozema. It received mixed critical reviews and was a financial failure in spite of some rather sensational subject matter, mostly because Janeites believed Rozema took too much liberties with the novel and because they “were horrified at the very thought of this most moral of novels being made into a film which exhibited nudity and emphasized slavery, drug use, and madness“ (Parrill, 84). Rozema, however, believes that she has reinterpreted the novel and pointed out social and political realities like slavery and the oppression of women that are not as obvious to modern viewers as they were to Austen's contemporaries. Changes are great when the film is compared to the novel, the most important of them is characterisation of Fanny Price. She becomes a beautiful, outdoorsy and intelligent young woman, “with a head full of romance novels and an eye for the absurd” (Parrill, 88), a writer, a young Jane Austen. Shyness and high moral standards are the only traits that she has in common with Fanny from the novel. Also, omission of Fanny’s brother William is one of the greatest differences between the film and the novel, and a character of Fanny’s sister Susan is introduced as a tool for giving information to the viewer through Fanny’s correspondence with her. Some characters are presented differently than they are in the novel, like Tom, who becomes a deeply troubled young man and eventually his father’s conscience, or Lady Bertram, who becomes a laudanum addict, or Sir Thomas, who is even more of a ferocious despot. The issue of slavery pervades the whole movie, as does the position of women in the family and society in general, and it is inevitable to see how women’s situation is similar to those of captive slaves. Rozema also disregarded authenticity as she modernises the costumes in order to suggest qualities of character through them, and by using an imposing, but cold and aged Elizabethan mansion for exterior and some interior scenes the film is given a darker tone. This new approach to adapting Austen did not go well among Janeites, but it is a film for modern times, and its reinterpretation brings us closer to Austen’s times, if not to her novel, which is completely different in almost every aspect.

In 2007, came out an ITV adaptation of *Mansfield Park*, as part of the *Jane Austen Season*. It was written by Maggie Wadey and directed by Iain B. MacDonald. As it is a ninety-minute film, there are many changes and deviations from the novel, and it is not at all faithful to the original message or close to the greatness of the novel. The original story is there, but it is simplified, and the characters do not have the depth. The most important parts of the novel, Fanny’s fight for her rights, moral convictions, and values, her withstanding of oppression and abuse, are not well explored. Fanny is presented in the similar way as Fanny from 1999 adaptation – beautiful, playful, and physically active, almost tomboyish, and many critics state

that Billie Piper is the wrong choice for the role. Most of the other roles are considered to be well cast, but the critics disapprove of how Mrs. Norris' character was turned into being only annoying, without her showing her significant role in Fanny's psychological development. The plot is fixed in only one location without the visit to Sotherton or Fanny's 'exile' to Portsmouth. The whole film is made in a very light tone, and does not deal with political or social topics as the 1999 adaptation does. Judging by how these three adaptations were made, a great and true adaptation of *Mansfield Park* is yet to be seen.

### 3.6. *Emma*

The first adaptation of *Emma* was made by the BBC TV in 1948. It was a 105-minute long, black-and-white live television broadcast. The screenplay was written by Judy Campbell, who also plays Emma in this version, and it is supposed that the producer Michael Barry directed it, since there is no credited director. The adaptation was shot on two studio sets: Studio A showed the interior of Hartfield, Mrs. Bates's parlour, Mrs. Ford's shop, a street in Highbury, and a grotto with two oak boughs while Studio B showed Donwell, a roadside grotto, and the Crown Inn. It seems that this adaptation attempted to represent many of the settings mentioned in the novel. Like many other live broadcasts, this one also had limitations, so the story had to be compressed – the John Knightleys are omitted, there is no trip to Box Hill, and the gypsy attack on Harriet happens offstage – but the essentials are still there.

In 1954 came out a new adaptation, this time in the US, but also a black-and-white live performance, presented by NBC's *Kraft Television Theatre*. The adaptation is divided into three acts, with advertisements appearing between the acts. It was dramatized by Martine Bartlett and Peter Donat. The most interesting aspect of this adaptation is the expansion of the role of Mr. Elton, and the actor Roddy McDowall, who played him, is considered to have the best performance in the show. The expansion of his role is the result of the only subplot in this adaptation – Emma's effort to match him to Harriet. Every other subplot, connected with Miss and Mrs. Bates, Robert Martin, Mr. Churchill, Jane Fairfax, the John Knightleys, and the gypsies, is excluded since all those characters are omitted. However, it introduces the character of William Larkins, a gentleman farmer, who becomes a replacement for Robert Martin. This adaptation is typical of American productions of that time in several aspects, one of which is emphasis on grandeur and elegance, probably influenced by the 1940 *Pride and Prejudice*. This is especially seen in the women's costumes, which unlike men's, are nowhere close to be from the Regency period. Since this was a studio-bound adaptation, it was limited in setting, but it still

gave the viewer an impression of elegance and wealth. But, richly adorned settings and flashy costumes cannot make up for the superficiality of this adaptation - it fails to show the novel's core ideas and makes mistakes in characterisation:

The introduction of William Larkins as a country bumpkin makes for an incongruous kind of low comedy that is typical of American television of that time. A peculiarly American twist to the handling of Larkins' character resides in the emphasis on his cultural and intellectual inferiority, rather than class difference. Larkins, however, reveals no sense of his inferiority nor shows any marked deference to either Emma or Mr. Knightley. As for Harriet, there is no reference to her being of low origins. Her inferiority resides in her silliness and her lack of polished manners. (Parrill, 114)

There were two adaptations in the 1960: the American one, presented by CBS's *Camera Three*, directed by John Desmond and based on a screenplay by Clair Roskam, and the British one, made by the BBC TV in six half-hour instalments, written by Vincent Tilsley, and produced/directed by Campbell Logan. There are also some omissions in this adaptation, like exclusion of the John Knightleys and merging of strawberry picking at Donwell with Box Hill, but this adaptation, like all the early BBC adaptations, does not take any serious liberties with the novel's storyline or characters.

In 1972 appeared a new adaptation on BBC-2 TV written by Denis Constanduros and directed by John Glenister. It is a 257-minute long mini-series divided into six parts and is the version "closest to the novel in its inclusiveness of the scenes and characters described in the novel. If what the viewer wants is a literal translation, unencumbered by superior acting, imaginative staging, or on-location shooting, the 1972 BBC version is the way to go" (Parrill, 123). The two main characters are played by Doran Godwin and John Carson - Godwin seems superior and stiff in her role, while casting greying Carson as Mr. Knightley emphasises the age difference between them, so the dramatisation is not particularly romantic. Harriet is depicted as a round and silly girl dressed in frilly caps and pastel colours, who is almost always smiling. Very few scenes appear to have been filmed outdoors since the series was shot primarily on sets created at the BBC either for this film or recycled from sets made for others. It appears that "economy was the driving force behind the reluctance to go on location, and economy was the byword for production of the BBC Classic Serials in the sixties and seventies" (Parrill, 142).



Costume design was carefully thought out and all the ladies' dresses were made appropriate to their characters and in keeping with the season of the year. Dancing is also very important in this version, since the filmmakers try to "convey ideas through the choreography and the type of music chosen" (Parrill, 147). Even though it seems that this adaptation is not a great one, it still has its appeal for those who want the novel unchanged in their film version.

1996 was also a year with two adaptations of *Emma*. The first of them was released by Miramax in the summer of that year, written and directed by Douglas McGrath. It runs for 121 minutes. It had two Academy Award nominations, for Best Costume Design and Best Original Score for a Musical or Comedy, the last of which it won. The greatest strength of the movie is certainly the lead actress Gwyneth Paltrow, whose beauty and charisma make Emma (who is usually easy to dislike) more appealing and easy to forgive. Mr. Knightley's (Jeremy Northam) role is more romanticised in this version because even though he is strong enough to be Emma's match, he is not an authoritative figure, and seems sensitive. The role of Harriet was given to Toni Collette, who portrays her as stupid and with a tendency to excess her emotional outbursts, so it becomes hard to understand why Emma would even consider her as a friend. When it comes to class difference, this version downplays it "by having Mr. Knightley call Robert Martin 'a good friend,' and by having Emma refer to the object of her charity as a "poor lady'" (Parrill, 133). There are few servants seen on screen, and the film mostly shows how beautiful people live comfortable lives in their luxurious homes. To top it all, it seems there is no passage of seasons, except for the snow during the Christmas party – everything seems so bright and sunlit, and the women's costumes are almost all short sleeved. It is probably because the film was shot in forty one days during the summer, and all outdoor scenes are very warm and sunny, even though some of them are supposed to be in autumn, winter, or spring. The general tone is the one of beauty and lightness, which makes the film easy for the eye. The movie mostly follows the story and stays true to the novel's essence, but its brightness and the presence of Gwyneth Paltrow is what sets it apart and makes it an enjoyable viewing experience.

The second 1996 version is a 100-minute Meridian-ITV/A&E television movie directed by Diarmuid Lawrence, and written by Andrew Davies, the same one who had created A&E's *Pride and Prejudice* the previous year. It won two Emmy Awards: for its production design team and for costume design. This version is less romanticised than the Miramax one, because everything is much plainer, and it also comments on the social structures of the early nineteenth century, while other versions disregard that aspect: "whereas the other films appear to accept the social environment of the early nineteenth century, the Meridian/A&E *Emma* contains fairly explicit critiques of it" (Parrill, 132). The casting of the two main characters is considered to be

good, with Kate Beckinsale's beauty, intelligence, and self-confidence, and Mark Strong's maturity and vigour. Beckinsale, however, even though with perfect qualifications to act Emma, does not possess Paltrow's charisma, which is the most important thing to make Emma more likeable. This film has the best portrayal of Harriet – actress Samantha Morton conveys the nuances of Harriet's developing character: “we see Harriet progress from fearful worshiper of Emma, to confident companion, to assured recipient of Mr. Knightley's attentions. Her Harriet never appears stupid, (...) only slightly dense” (Parrill, 125-126). The character of Robert Martin is very interesting in this adaptation, since he is portrayed as obviously critical of Emma, and is reluctant to hide his resentment. The production had the luxury to film the scenes on-location, and they “sought out country houses, countryside, gardens, ruins, and a real village to use as their settings” (Parrill, 142). There is also a clear sense of passing of the seasons, in costume design and in uses of the settings, so it seems more real and closer to the novel than the Miramax film. Through its costumes and settings, the film succeeded in showing the luxurious lifestyle, but it also shows at what cost it is maintained, and it automatically makes it more of a social critique than the other adaptations. The costumes are designed to correspond the Regency period and each of the women is dressed in a style that suggests her personality. This version is also mostly true to the novel, but what makes it interesting is the filmmakers' sociological approach.

The last adaptation of *Emma* came out in 2009, as a four-part BBC television drama serial written by Sandy Welch and directed by Jim O'Hanlon. It is four hours long, which is good for fitting the entire plot without many omissions. It received mixed reviews, like every other Austen adaptation, simply because there is no way to please everybody. However, some things are agreed on, especially when it comes to costumes and settings. The series was recorded on beautiful locations, so it is delightful to watch, and the costumes, even though not completely accurate to the period when the colour is concerned, were always coordinated with the rooms, so the effect was stunning. However, very little of Austen's language was used in the script, only a few quotes here and there: “By employing a hybrid narrative technique that implants segments of Austen's text into invented descriptions and dialogue, the script dismantles Austen's irony” (Kaplan). Director Jim O'Hanlon used Austen's story but gave it a different tone and updated it to fit the modern times - it is a bright, colourful, and vivacious, but still intended to fit the period. However, by modernising it too much, it fails in showing the real social manners of the times since there are many “shocking breaches of the early nineteenth-century codes for decorous behavior” (Kaplan). The beginning is surprisingly different from the novel and all the other adaptations: it shows the stories of young Emma, Jane, and Frank, who all lost their mothers, but only Emma was fortunate enough to stay in her home. What is also surprising is the use of a

male narrator (Mr. Knightley), which “destabilizes the point of view and leads to some confusion in the story-telling” (Kaplan). When casting is concerned, it is mostly agreed that Romola Garai as Emma was not a good choice, as her overacting and exaggerated facial expressions were very distracting, while Jonny Lee Miller was great as Mr. Knightley, and could easily be imagined as an ideal partner, mostly because of his chemistry with Garai. As for the other roles, the actresses for Harriet and Miss Bates are considered to be well chosen, since Harriet seems to be sweet-natured, but slightly dim, and Miss Bates, although irritating, deserving of pity and charity. However, healthy and vigorous Michael Gambon is nowhere near portraying Mr. Woodhouse as a sickly hypochondriac, and the casting of Christina Cole as the vulgar Mrs. Elton missed the mark completely. All things considered, this adaptation is worth watching, and although not needed after several admirable adaptations of the same novel, it is still interesting to see how different people envisioned the small world of Highbury.

### 3.7. Looser Adaptations of *Emma*

*Clueless* is a 1995 American comedy written and directed by Amy Heckerling. It is set in the late 1990s in Beverly Hills, and the plot follows Cher, a 16-year-old high-school girl, rich, spoiled, self-assured, and fashion-obsessed. The main elements of the novel are retained, with the emphasis on Cher's meddling in other people's love lives and her growth and realisation of her wrongdoings. However, almost everything else is changed and simplified. The most interesting aspect of the film is Cher's voiceover narration, which can be compared to Austen's ironic third-person narrator. The film was highly successful and well received by the critics, mostly because it succeeded in transforming a classic into something fresh and modern, appealing to the younger population, while being smartly and humorously written, with a perfectly cast lead actress Alicia Silverstone.

In 2010 came out *Aisha*, an Indian modern adaptation of the novel, directed by Anil Kapoor, and written by Devika Bhagat and Manu Rishi Chaddha. It is a comedy of manners, set in the upper class society of Delhi, simple and light in tone. It received mixed reviews, and was not very successful at the box office.

### 3.8. *Persuasion*

*Persuasion* was adapted only four times. The first adaptation was made by the BBC in 1960. It is a black-and-white miniseries in four parts written by Michael Voysey and Barbara

Burnham and directed by Campbell Logan. It is possible that it was destroyed when the BBC cleaned out their closets in the 1970s. Daphne Slater stars as Anne Elliot, and Paul Daneman as Captain Frederick Wentworth.

Next adaptation was made in 1971 by ITV/Granada. The screenplay was written by Julian Mitchell, directed by Howard Baker, and it has five episodes that last 225 minutes when put together. As this version is the longest, it is to be expected that fewer liberties are taken with the plot and more of the story of the novel is told. The role of Anne Elliot is played by Ann Fairbank, who does not change throughout the series. She is always appropriately and well-dressed, and is never shown as an old maid. The actress was also unable to show Anne as a person with intense but hidden feelings. Captain Wentworth is portrayed by Bryan Marshall, who is mostly dressed as a civilian. When costumes are concerned, all the minor characters, the Elliots, the Musgroves, the Harvilles, and Captain Benwick, are well dressed in the style of the Regency. The settings too, give out the air of wealth and elegance, although it was not possible to film more outside, as is the case with other 1970s and 1980s adaptations.

In 1995, came out a new BBC adaptation, written by Nick Dear and directed by Roger Michell. Sue Parrill believes that this film is one of the best Austen adaptations:

The 1995 film captures far better the spirit of the times and is more sophisticated in its visual style. Unlike most other cinematic versions of Austen's novels, this film presents a world in which the heroine is not beautiful, the hero is roughhewn, men often go about in worn and dirty clothes, and some of the characters live in grubby-looking houses. This film could hardly be disparaged, as others have been, as a pretty piece of "heritage" promotion. (...) For a film of theatrical length—in this case 107 minutes—Nick Dear's screenplay manages to include all of the important actions of the novel, to include most of the characters (omitting only Colonel Wallis), and to develop the main themes of the novel. (150-151, 167)

The main role is played by Amanda Root, who undergoes a change of appearance as the film progresses. In the beginning she looks plain and older than she is, with simple dresses, and behaving almost as a servant of the family. Later, her looks improve and she wears more elegant clothes and her hair is stylishly dressed. Her behaviour changes as well: from distracted, quiet,

and lonely, she becomes more confident and ready to fight for what she wants. Captain Wentworth is played by Ciaran Hinds, an actor very appropriately chosen to play a self-made man of action. Both actors very well convey the depth of their hidden emotions, and the script is made in such a way that there is no need for a narrator, because everything is shown in actors' faces and actions. As it is done in the novel, other characters are used to furnish contrast to Anne and Wentworth, in appearance as well as in personality, for example: Harville and Benwick are unattractive, Sir Walter elitist, Mary hypochondriacal, Elizabeth snobbish, etc. What is interesting is that some characters are made even worse than they are in the novel: Elizabeth, Mary, and Sir Walter are not only mean-spirited, but also bad-mannered, and William Elliot is more of a villain. The filmmakers tried hard to picture everything very realistically and deglamourise the life-styles of the characters – Anne rides in a farmer's cart, there is mud on actors' clothes when they are outside, there is noise and disorder because of the Musgrove children, and the adult Musgroves are depicted as simple and warm. The adaptation benefited greatly from on-location shootings in great houses, Bath, Lyme, and the English countryside – it is more realistic, and the settings are used for symbolism and creation of mood. The plot is firmly set in historical context, which becomes very important for development of relationships between characters. This version is an excellent adaptation, which is confirmed not only by good reviews from the film critics but from Janeites too.

The last adaptation of *Persuasion* is an ITV1 television movie that lasts 94 minutes. The screenplay was written by Simon Burke and it was directed by Adrian Shergold. The reviews are mixed when this film is concerned, and most Janeites are displeased with this version. They resent the script, hand-held camera, and actors speaking to the camera, but most of all they resent the way Anne was (mis)portrayed. However, most people are pleased with Anthony Head who plays Sir Walter, and consider his role to be the best part of the film. When two main roles are concerned, opinions are also split, because Sally Hawkins as Anne is considered to be a good choice (even though some believe the script did not do her character justice), and Rupert Penry-Jones is sometimes considered too young and pretty to play Wentworth, but still with great acting abilities. What unites everybody is the appreciation of on-location shooting and choice of costumes, which gave the film a fine period look. However, that alone is not enough to make it a great film, since many things seem out of place, like the ending with Wentworth buying Kellynch for Anne, or Anne's running through Bath to catch Wentworth, and many other details concerning Anne's behaviour which are completely out of character. This adaptation does not have much to offer when compared with the 1995 one, only the actors who are easier on the eye

and give good performances. The film as a whole did not capture the essence of the novel, nor does it find a new angle to tell the story from.

### 3.9. *Northanger Abbey*

There are several reasons why *Northanger Abbey* has only two film adaptations:

In many respects the slightest of Austen's completed novels, *Northanger Abbey* is also the least typical. It is heavy-handed in its satire—on the gothic novel, on the picturesque, on hypocrisy—and very little happens in the course of the novel. Its seventeen-year-old heroine is the least complicated of Austen's protagonists, and its minor characters are not memorable. (Parrill, 169)

All those qualities put together do not make a solid foundation for a successful movie, so the first adaptation appeared in 1986. It was produced by BBC/A&E, the script was written by Maggie Wadey, it was directed by Giles Foster, and it lasted only ninety minutes. This adaptation is considered to be an anomaly among other 1980s adaptations (the 1970s and the 1980s adaptations were made cheaply, were hardly ever filmed outdoors, were boringly faithful to the novels, and were meticulous in their attention to period detail) because it “anticipates the adaptations of the nineties. It takes irreverent liberties with the novel and with historical accuracy, it introduces a modern psychological approach to the heroine, and it uses its on-location settings effectively” (Parrill, 173). Stovel believes this film to be a disappointment because “a good deal of screen time is taken up by Catherine’s morbid, gruesome, erotic fantasies, which marry Ann Radcliffe’s text and images to a B-movie soundtrack, complete with heavy sighs, synthesizer moans, and eerie choral chants” (236-237). The filmmakers decided to compensate the lack of external action by focusing on the Gothic aspect of the novel, heightening it and using it in a different way than it was used in the novel, only to make it more sexual in order to appeal to the new generations. They did it by connecting Catherine’s sexual awakening with her reading of Radcliffe's Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The role of Catherine was given to Katharine Schlesinger, who is considered to be a good choice for the role, and Peter Firth was playing Henry Tilney. Both characters were changed in the film – Catherine is even more naïve than in the novel, and does not progress in mental as she does in sexual maturity, and Henry is “a great deal more smug, more priggish, more lacking in sympathy and comic awareness when he rebukes Catherine” (Stovel, 241). General Tilney is also changed,

and is much more villainous and exotic with his gambling and mercenary schemes. The film introduces a new character, the Marchioness, a friend (and possible mistress) of General Tilney, who except for being an additional source of Gothic element, becomes an instrument of setting the date of the events of the film around 1794. Costumes were primarily chosen to suggest character and it was less important to reflect the period fashion, so only Catherine and Eleanor are dressed appropriately in pale colours and simple hats, while other women's clothes tends to be extreme. In their attempt to make the film as Gothic as possible, the filmmakers used a castle with circular towers and a moat to represent Northanger Abbey, which is completely opposite from the novel, where it is emphasized how modernized the Abbey is. Parril concludes that:

Ms. Wadey had a difficult task in visualizing a novel which depends primarily on language for its appeal. The satire which is such a prominent element in the novel has given way to emphasis on character and incident. The introduction of the gothic early in the film helps to tie together the two halves of the plot, which in the novel appear almost to belong to two different books. The visualizations of Catherine's fantasies and dreams effectively suggest the inner life of a rather ordinary girl, and the merging of dream and reality in the figure of General Tilney creates an interesting villain. This adaptation is not great cinematic art, but it at least attempts to break out of the confines of the novel. (187)

The next adaptation came out in 2007, but the script appeared in 1998. It was reported that Miramax would co-produce a film adaptation of *Northanger Abbey* based on Andrew Davis' script. However, the project was put on hold due to poor critical and popular reception of Miramax's adaptation of *Mansfield Park*. Parrill describes this earlier script:

It heightens the rivalry between Henry Tilney and John Thorpe, makes clear that Isabella is sexually involved with Captain Frederick Tilney, and permits Catherine to see Henry Tilney naked. Like the 1987 adaptation, Davies' screenplay introduces erotic fantasy scenes and dreams. Davies develops the notion, which Austen introduced early in the novel, that Catherine had been a tomboy. He shows her racing her horse against Henry Tilney, shooting arrows, and (in a fantasy) hitting a villain with a bat. This Catherine would be more like

Davies' Elizabeth Bennet in her physicality, and she would be quicker to catch on to Henry's irony. Austen's Catherine frequently seems unbelievably slow on the uptake. (171-172)

A decade later, it finally came to life in ITV's production and under Jon Jones' directing. It was changed during time, but it still kept highly sexual undertone. Like the 1986 version, this one too uses Catherine's visualisation of gothic fantasies to "dramatize the theme of sexual desire that is held back in the subconscious of Austen's novel" (Cook). The gothic is not parodied in this version, it is used to heighten the drama for contemporary viewers. Inequality between the sexes is deliberately heightened in this adaptation and it changes the characters – Henry is more powerful and intimidating and Catherine is even more guileless, vulnerable, and culturally ignorant than she is in the novel. The actors, however, are well chosen. Felicity Jones is well cast as Catherine as she captures perfectly her youth and naïveté, and J. J. Fields is quite skilful at portraying Henry as sarcastic but well-natured at the same time. Other casting choices are also well made, with great praise for Carey Mulligan as Isabella Thorpe. The costumes were made to suggest character, not unlike they were in the 1986 version, and they fit the period of early 1800s, instead of late 1790s. The filmmakers decided to modernise the novel to bring it closer to modern viewers, and in the process they lost the things that made the novel special – Austen's parody and irony are flattened, her language rarely used, her characters changed, and her story altered into one of a young girl's suppressed sexual longing and sexual awakening.



#### 4. Literature Inspired by Jane Austen's Work

When researching literature inspired by Austen's novels, one could start believing that this work has no end. In just a year's time, the list compiled in this chapter will be outdated and in need of refreshing. This was not always so. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were some sequels to Austen's novels, and some were even made by descendants of her family in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they were not as numerous as they are today. After the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice* miniseries there was a flood of literature inspired by Austen, and it was a flood that never ended. It could even be said that the root of this today's cult is not in the novels, but in the film adaptations – the novels are what is being rewritten and continued, but it is the films that inspired people to write them.

There are two reasons why Austen fan fiction will always be present: money and nostalgia. The first one is obvious. Everything remotely connected with Austen will always have its audience even if it is badly written. The name itself is a brand that sells well. The second reason, the nostalgia, is ever-present with Austen fans. She was a great writer who lived a very short life and left only six completed novels. Those novels are all works of a genius who understood people and gave them life on paper. Her stories are easy to connect to, timeless, always interesting and compelling. Many people fall in love with them and cannot help but want more, so they write their own versions or sequels of them. Most of those writers try to capture the spirit of Austen's novels:

The overwhelming majority of Austen sequels preserve Austen's comedy of manners and reduce it to a formula: take 'three or four families in a country village' somewhere in the south of England, some time during the Regency; arrange for strangers to arrive in that neighbourhood, marriageable young men whose ways are vexingly inscrutable; add narrative twists and turns by sending your heroines to balls or Brighton; end with at least one marriage. (Lynch, *Jane Austen in Context* 161)

However, they almost always fail in writing something extraordinary. They can follow the formula, they can succeed in portraying the characters as they are, their plots can be interesting, but they can never write something of consequence that would match the brilliance and the wit

of Austen's novels as they "often feel, in their sensationalism, strangely pre- rather than post-Austenian" (Lynch, *Jane Austen in Context* 165).

As it can be presumed, *Pride and Prejudice* proves once again to be the most popular of the six novels. The number of fan fiction novels concerning *Pride and Prejudice* by far exceeds the number of all fan fiction novels concerning other five Austen novels put together. Some of them even do not retell or continue the novel, but are about Austen's fans who find themselves in her world, or are transported into her novels, or have her as companion or inner voice. The combinations and ideas are endless. The first proper sequel, however, was exactly that – an ordinary sequel. Sibyl Brinton's *Old Friends and New Fancies* that appeared in 1914 was a novel that intertwined the characters from all six novels and continued their plots to give them new happy endings. Actually, fan fiction literature consists mostly of sequels, while there are only several prequels. The other categories are: novels written from different point of view and/or retold novels (e.g. *Pride and Prejudice* written from Darcy's point of view), re-imagined novels and/or what-if novels (e.g. the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* is changed so as to explore what would have happened if Darcy and Elizabeth met earlier), novels with plot happening in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but resembling the plot from the original, sequels from other points of view, retellings of parallel stories, alternative endings, and even plays.

Some of the writers even wrote several novels, whether sequels to one another, or with nothing in common with one another. When witnessing such commitment, one must acknowledge that there is something special in the love and loyalty of those people. And even though it is hard to believe that one author inspired so many people to write so many novels, it becomes much easier when one realizes that this author is Jane Austen:

Jane Austen was a great novelist. We might think of Jane Austen as our best friend, as she seems to understand our own inner feelings so well, but that is because she was a great novelist. We might enjoy many, or all, of the movies and miniseries based on her novels, but that, too, is because she was such a great novelist that filmmakers and screenwriters, actors, and actresses are attracted to her: they want to recreate, reinvent, imitate, or upend her. The novels, however, are the springboard. We might think we can find the novels in her biography or her biography in the novels, but in this we might truly be tricking ourselves. We

think we *know* her, when it is the novels we know. Again, it is because she was such a great novelist. (Adams, Buchanan, and Gesch, 204)

#### 4.1. *Sense and Sensibility*

##### 4.1.1. Sequels

1. Aiken, Joan – *Eliza's Daughter* - 2008
2. Barrett, Julia – *The Third Sister* - 1998
3. Brown, Francis – *Margaret Dashwood or Interference* - 1929
4. Gillespie, Jane – *Brightsea* - 1987
5. Odiwe, Jane – *Willoughby's Return* - 2009
6. Stubbs, Imogen – *A Letter from Mrs. Lucy Ferrars to Mrs. Elinor Ferrars* - 1995
7. Tennant, Emma – *Elinor and Marianne* - 1996

##### 4.1.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings

1. Grange, Amanda – *Colonel Brandon's Diary* - 2001

##### 4.1.3. Adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

1. Rushton, Rosie – *The Dashwood Sisters' Secrets of Love* - 2005
2. White Smith, Debra – *Reason and Romance* - 2004

#### 4.2. *Pride and Prejudice*

##### 4.2.1. Prequels

1. Aidan, Pamela - *Young Master Darcy – A Lesson in Honour* - 2010
2. Grace, Maria - *Darcy's Decision: Given Good Principles Volume 1* - 2011
3. Warren, Kate - *The Bennets* - 2006

##### 4.2.2. Sequels

1. Adkins, Samantha Jayne - *Expectations: A Continuation of Pride and Prejudice* - 2008
2. Aiken, Joan - *Lady Catherine's Necklace* - 2000
3. Altman, Marsha - *The Darcys and the Bingleys* - 2008
4. Altman, Marsha *The Plight of the Darcy Brothers* - 2009

5. Altman, Marsha *Mr. Darcy's Great Escape* - 2010
6. Altman, Marsha *The Ballad of Grégoire Darcy* - 2011
7. Altman, Marsha - *Road to Pemberley* - 2011
8. Aston, Elizabeth - *Mr. Darcy's Daughters* - 2003
9. Aston, Elizabeth - *The Exploits & Adventures of Miss Alethea Darcy* - 2005
10. Aston, Elizabeth - *The True Darcy Spirit* - 2006
11. Aston, Elizabeth - *The Second Mrs. Darcy* - 2007
12. Aston, Elizabeth - *The Darcy Connection* - 2008
13. Aston, Elizabeth - *Mr. Darcy's Dream* - 2009
14. Aylmer, Janet - *Dialogue with Darcy* - 2010
15. Bader, Ted and Bader, Marilyn - *Desire and Duty: A Sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* - 1997
16. Bader, Ted and Bader, Marilyn - *Virtue and Vanity* 2000 - sequel to *Desire and Duty*
17. Barrett, Julia - *Presumption: An Entertainment* - 1995
18. Bebris, Carrie - *Pride and Prescience: or, A Truth Universally Acknowledged* - 2004
19. Bebris, Carrie - *Suspense and Sensibility: or, First Impressions Revisited* - 2005
20. Bebris, Carrie - *North By Northanger: or, The Shades of Pemberley* - 2006
21. Bebris, Carrie - *The Matters of Mansfield: or, The Crawford Affair* - 2008
22. Bebris, Carrie - *The Intrigue at Highbury: or, Emma's Match* - 2010 – includes characters from *Emma*
23. Bebris, Carrie - *The Deception at Lyme: or, The Peril of Persuasion* - 2011 - includes characters from *Persuasion*
24. Becton, Jennifer - *Charlotte Collins* - 2010
25. Becton, Jennifer - *Caroline Bingley* - 2011
26. Becton, Jennifer - *Maria Lucas – A Short Story* - 2011 – sequel to *Charlotte Collins*
27. Berdoll, Linda - *The Bar Sinister: Pride and Prejudice Continues* - 1999
28. Berdoll, Linda - *Mr. Darcy Takes A Wife* - 2004
29. Berdoll, Linda - *Darcy & Elizabeth: Nights and Days at Pemberley* - 2006
30. Berdoll, Linda - *The Darcys: The Ruling Passion* - 2011
31. Birchall, Diana - *Mrs Darcy's Dilemma: A sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* - 2008
32. Bonavia-Hunt, D. A. - *Pemberley Shades* - 1949
33. Brinton, Sybil G. - *Old Friends And New Fancies* - 1913 - including characters from all other five novels

34. Brocklehurst, Judith - *Darcy and Anne: Pride & Prejudice Continues* - 2009
35. Hamilton Burris, Skylar - *Conviction* - 2006
36. Hamilton Burris, Skylar - *The Strange Marriage of Anne de Bourgh and Other Pride and Prejudice Stories* - 2010
37. Caldwell, Jack - *The Three Colonels* - 2012 - including characters from *Sense and Sensibility*
38. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *The Pemberley Chronicles* - 2008
39. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *Women of Pemberley* - 2008
40. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *Netherfield Park Revisited* - 2008
41. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *The Ladies of Longbourn* - 2008
42. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *Mr. Darcy's Daughter* - 2008
43. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *My Cousin Caroline* - 2009
44. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *Postscript From Pemberley* - 2009
45. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *Recollections of Rosings* - 2010
46. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *A Woman of Influence* - 2010
47. Collins, Rebecca Ann - *The Legacy of Pemberley* - 2010  
→ The Pemberley Chronicles Series
48. Dawkins, Jane - *Letters from Pemberley: The First Year* - 2007
49. Dawkins, Jane - *More Letters from Pemberley* - 2007
50. Elliott, Anna - *Georgiana Darcy's Diary* - 2011
51. Elliott, Anna - *Pemberley to Waterloo: Georgiana Darcy's Diary Volume II* - 2011
52. Fafoutakis, Anne - *Mrs. Fitzwilliam Darcy and Other Stories* - 2002
53. Fairview, Monica - *The Other Mr. Darcy* - 2009
54. Fairview, Monica - *The Darcy Cousins* - 2010
55. Fairview, Monica - *The Other Mr. Darcy* - 2009
56. Furley, Phyllis - *The Darcys – Scenes From Married Life* - 2004
57. Gatje-Smith, Norma - *Trust and Triumph* - 2004
58. Gillespie, Jane - *Teverton Hall* - 1983
59. Gillespie, Jane - *Deborah* - 1995
60. Grange, Amanda - *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* - 2009
61. Halstead, Helen - *A Private Performance* - 2005 aka *Mr. Darcy Presents His Bride: A Sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* - 2007
62. Hampson, Anne - *Pemberley Place* - 1997
63. Högstöm, Marie - *Derbyshire: a sequel to Pride and Prejudice* - 2008

64. James, P. D. - *Death Comes To Pemberley* - 2011
65. Jeffers, Regina - *Darcy's Temptation: A Sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* - 2009
66. Jeffers, Regina - *The Phantom of Pemberley: A Pride and Prejudice Murder Mystery* - 2010
67. Jeffers, Regina - *Christmas at Pemberley – A Pride and Prejudice Holiday Sequel* - 2011
68. Jeffers, Regina - *The Disappearance of Georgiana Darcy: A Pride and Prejudice Mystery* - 2012
69. Lathan, Sharon - *Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwilliam Darcy: Two Shall Become One* - 2009
70. Lathan, Sharon - *Loving Mr. Darcy: Journeys Beyond Pemberley* - 2009
71. Lathan, Sharon - *My Dearest Mr. Darcy* - 2010
72. Lathan, Sharon - *In The Arms of Mr. Darcy* - 2010
73. Lathan, Sharon - *A Darcy Christmas* - 2010
74. Lathan, Sharon - *The Trouble With Mr. Darcy* - 2011
75. Lathan, Sharon - *Miss Darcy Falls In Love* - 2011
76. Louise, Kara - *Pemberley Celebrations – The First Year* - 2011 – short stories
77. McCullough, Colleen - *The Independence of Miss Mary Bennet* - 2009
78. Morgan, Frances - *Darcy & Elizabeth* - 2003
79. Morgan, Frances - *Darcy's Pemberley* 2004 – sequel of *Darcy and Elizabeth*
80. Nelson, Kathryn L. - *Pemberley Manor* - 2009
81. Newark, Elizabeth - *Consequence* - 1997
82. Newark, Elizabeth - *The Darcys Give a Ball: A gentle joke, Jane Austen style* - 2008
83. Odiwe, Jane - *Lydia Bennet's Story* - 2007
84. Odiwe, Jane - *Mr. Darcy's Secret* - 2011
85. Park, Victoria - *Pride and Prejudice II: The Sequel* - 2010
86. Pierson, C. Allyn - *Mr. Darcy's Little Sister (Pride and Prejudice Continues)* - 2010
87. Pillow, Michelle - *Pride and Prejudice: The Wild and Wanton Edition* - 2011
88. Sarath, Patrice - *The Unexpected Miss Bennet* - 2011
89. Shapiro, Juliette - *Excessively Diverted* - 2002 aka *Mr. Darcy's Decision: A Sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* - 2008
90. Shapiro, Juliette - *Fitzwilliam Darcy's Memoirs* - 2004
91. Sherwood, Mary L. - *A Marriage Worth the Earning: To Have and to Hold* - 2009
92. Sherwood, Mary L. - *A Marriage Worth the Earning: For Better for Worse* - 2010 – sequel of *A Marriage Worth the Earning: To Have and to Hold*

93. Tennant, Emma - *Pemberley: Or Pride & Prejudice Continued* - 1993
94. Tennant, Emma - *An Unequal Marriage: Or Pride and Prejudice Twenty Years Later* - 1994 – sequel of *Pemberley: Or Pride & Prejudice Continued*
95. Pinnock, Jonathan - *Mrs Darcy versus the Aliens* - 2011
96. Russell, Anne, Russell, Arthur - *The Wedding at Pemberley* - 2000 - one-act play
97. Wallis, Cedric - *The Heiress of Rosings* - 1956 - a three-act play of Anne de Bourgh
98. Wimer, Genevieve Rose - *Honour and Humility* - 2002
99. Winslow, Shannon - *The Darcys of Pemberley* - 2011

#### 4.2.3. Different Points of View and/or Retellings

1. Aidan, Pamela - *An Assembly Such as This* - 2006
2. Aidan, Pamela - *Duty and Desire* - 2006
3. Aidan, Pamela - *These Three Remain* - 2007  
→ trilogy entitled *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman*
4. Aylmer, Janet - *Darcy's Story* - UK 1996, US 2006
5. Fasman, Marjorie - *The Diary of Henry Fitzwilliam Darcy* - 1998
6. Grange, Amanda - *Mr. Darcy's Diary* - 2007
7. Grange, Amanda - *Wickham's Diary* - 2011
8. Grange, Amanda - *Dear Mr. Darcy: A Retelling of Pride and Prejudice* - 2012
9. Hamilton, Maria - *Mr. Darcy and the Secret of Becoming a Gentleman* - 2011
10. Jeffers, Regina - *Darcy's Passions: Pride and Prejudice Retold Through His Eyes* - 2009
11. Louise, Kara - *Master Under Good Regulation* - 2010
12. Miller, Fenella J. - *Miss Bennet & Mr. Bingley* - 2009
13. Slater, Maya - *The Private Diary of Mr. Darcy: A Novel* - 2009
14. Street, Mary - *The Confession of Fitzwilliam Darcy* - 2008

#### 4.2.4. What-ifs and/or Re-imaginings

1. Adriani, Susan - *Affinity and Affection* - 2008 aka *The Truth About Mr. Darcy* - 2011
2. Andrews, D. M. - *Pied and Prodigious* - 2012
3. Baxley, M.K. - *The Mistress's Black Veil: A Pride and Prejudice Vagary* - 2011
4. Dixon, P. O. - *To Have His Cake (and Eat It Too): Mr. Darcy's Tale* - 2010
5. Dixon, P. O. - *What He Would Not Do: Mr. Darcy's Tale Continues* - 2011 - sequel of *To Have His Cake (and Eat It Too): Mr. Darcy's Tale*
6. Dixon, P. O. - *He Taught Me To Hope: Darcy and the Young Knight's Quest* - 2011

7. Dixon, P. O. - *Still A Young Man: Darcy Is In Love* - 2011
8. Dixon, P. O. - *The Mission: He Taught Me to Hope Christmas Vignette* - 2011
9. Dixon, P. O. - *Bewitched, Body and Soul: Miss Elizabeth Bennet* - 2012
10. Grahame-Smith, Seth - *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* - 2009 – a parody novel, mash-up
11. Hahn, Jan - *An Arranged Marriage* - 2011
12. Hahn, Jan - *The Journey* - 2011
13. Head, Gail - *An Unforgiving Temper* - 2011
14. Herendeen, Ann - *Pride/Prejudice* - 2010
15. Hockensmith, Steve - *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: Dawn of the Dreadfuls* - 2010 – parody novel, prequel to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith
16. Hoffman, C. R. - *A Promise* - 2012
17. Jeffers, Regina - *Vampire Darcy's Desire: A Pride and Prejudice Adaptation* - 2009
18. Kelley, Nancy - *His Good Opinion: A Mr. Darcy Novel* - 2011
19. Lilian, Lory - *Remembrance of the Past* - 2011
20. Lilian, Lory - *Rainy Days* - 2012
21. Louise, Kara - *Darcy's Voyage: A tale of uncharted love on the open seas (Pride & Prejudice Continues)* - 2010
22. Louise, Kara - *Assumed Engagement* - 2010
23. Louise, Kara - *Assumed Obligation* - 2010 – sequel of *Assumed Engagement*
24. Louise, Kara - *Something Like Regret* - 2010
25. Louise, Kara - *Only Mr. Darcy Will Do* - 2011
26. Mackrory, KaraLynne - *Falling For Mr. Darcy* - 2012
27. Mason-Milks, Susan - *Mr. Darcy's Proposal* - 2011
28. O' Brien, Sara - *Relations Such As These* - 2009
29. O' Brien, Sara - *Blame It On The Tea* - 2010
30. Raphael, Lev - *Pride and Prejudice: The Jewess and the Gentile* - 2011
31. Reynolds, Abigail - *Without Reserve* - 2007 aka *Mr. Darcy's Undoing* - 2011
32. Reynolds, Abigail - *Impulse and Initiative* - 2008 aka *To Conquer Mr. Darcy* – 2010
33. Reynolds, Abigail - *From Lambton to Longbourn* - 2008 aka *What Would Mr. Darcy Do?* - 2011
34. Reynolds, Abigail - *Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy: The Last Man In The World* - 2010
35. Reynolds, Abigail - *Mr. Darcy's Obsession (Pride & Prejudice Continues)* - 2010
36. Reynolds, Abigail - *A Pemberley Medley: Five Pride and Prejudice Variations* - 2011



37. Reynolds, Abigail - *By Force Of Instinct* - 2011
38. Reynolds, Abigail - *Mr. Darcy's Letter* - 2011
39. Robson, Lynne - *Wait Until...* - 2012
40. Simonsen, Mary L. - *The Perfect Bride for Mr. Darcy* - 2010
41. Simonsen, Mary L. - *A Wife for Mr. Darcy* - 2011
42. Simonsen, Mary L. - *Darcy on the Hudson* - 2011
43. Simonsen, Mary L. - *A Walk in the Meadows at Rosings* - 2011
44. Simonsen, Mary L. - *Darcy and Elizabeth: The Language of the Fan* - 2011
45. Simonsen, Mary L. - *For All The Wrong Reasons: A Pride and Prejudice Re-imagining* - 2011
46. Simonsen, Mary L. - *Mr. Darcy's Angel of Mercy* - 2011
47. Wasyłowski, Karen - *Darcy and Fitzwilliam* - 2011
48. Webb, Brenda J. - *Fitzwilliam Darcy – An Honourable Man* - 2011
49. Wells, Linda - *Chance Encounters* - 2008
50. Wells, Linda - *Fate and Consequences: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice* - 2009
51. Wells, Linda - *Memory: Volume 1, Lasting Impressions: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice* - 2010
52. Wells, Linda - *Memory: Volume 2, Trials to Bear: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice* - 2010 - sequel of *Volume 1*
53. Wells, Linda - *Memory: Volume 3, How Far We Have Come: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice* - 2010 - sequel of *Volume 2*
54. Wells, Linda - *Imperative: Volume 1: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice* - 2012
55. Wells, Linda - *Imperative: Volume 2: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice* - 2012
56. Whelchel, Lewis - *Dearly Beloved* - 2012

#### 4.2.5. Adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

1. Angelini, Sara - *The Trials of the Honorable F. Darcy* - 2009
2. Benneton, Nina - *Compulsively Mr. Darcy* - 2012
3. Caldwell, Jack - *Pemberley Ranch* - 2010
4. Cohen, Paula Marantz - *Jane Austen in Boca* - 2003
5. Eulberg, Elizabeth - *Prom and Prejudice* - 2011
6. Fenton, Kate - *Lions and Liquorice* - 1996
7. Louise, Kara - *Drive and Determination* - 2010
8. Nathan, Melissa - *Pride, Prejudice and Jasmin Field* - 2001

9. Reynolds, Abigail - *Pemberley by the Sea* - 2008 aka *The Man Who Loved Pride and Prejudice: A Modern Love Story With A Jane Austen Twist* - 2010
10. Rigaud, Heather Lynn - *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Rockstar* - 2011
11. Roberts, Belinda - *Mr. Darcy Goes Overboard: A Tale of Tide and Prejudice* - 2011
12. Rushton, Rosie - *Love, Lies and Lizzie* - 2009
13. Wells, Linda - *Perfect Fit: A Modern Tale of Pride and Prejudice* - 2012
14. White Smith, Debra - *First Impressions* - 2004

### 4.3. *Mansfield Park*

#### 4.3.1. Sequels

1. Aiken, Joan – *Mansfield Revisited* - 1986
2. Aiken, Joan – *The Admiral's Lady* - 1995
3. Aiken, Joan – *The Youngest Miss Ward* - 1998
4. Atchia, Paula – *Mansfield Letters* - 1996
5. Brown, Francis – *Susan Price, or, Resolution* - 1930
6. Gillespie, Jane – *Ladysmead* - 1982
7. Gillespie, Jane – *The Reluctant Baronet* - 1998
8. Gordon, Victor – *Mrs. Rushworth* - 1989
9. Memoir – *Gambles and Gambols* - 1983
10. Stern, G. B. – *Seven Years Later* - 1949

#### 4.3.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings

1. Grange, Amanda – *Edmund Bertram's Diary* - 2008
2. Terry, Judith – *Version and Diversion* - 1986

#### 4.3.3. Adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

1. White Smith, Debra – *Central Park* - 2005

#### 4.3.4. Alternative Endings

1. Owen, Anne and Allen, Dorothy - *Mansfield Park, An Alternative Ending* - 1989

#### 4.3.5. Plays

1. Hall, Willis – *Mansfield Park: A Play* - 1994

#### 4.4. *Emma*

##### 4.4.1. Sequels

1. Billington, Rachel - *Perfect Happiness* - 1999
2. Finn, Brenda – *Anna Weston* - 2002
3. Gillespie, Jane – *Aunt Celia* - 1991
4. Gillespie, Jane – *Truth and Rumour* - 1995
5. Hill, Reginald – *Poor Emma* - 1988
6. Stern, G. B. – *Seven Years Later* - 1949
7. Tennant, Emma – *Emma in Love* - 1997

##### 4.4.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings

1. Aiken, Joan – *Jane Fairfax* - 1997
2. Cornthwaite, Barbara – *George Knightley, Esquire: Charity Envieth Not* - 2009
3. Cornthwaite, Barbara – *George Knightley, Esquire: Lend Me Leave* - 2011
4. Grange, Amanda – *Mr. Knightley's Diary* - 2007
5. Grey, Charlotte – *The Journal of Jane Fairfax* - 1983

##### 4.4.3. Adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

1. Archer, Juliet – *The Importance of Being Emma* - 2012
2. Rushton, Rosie – *Secret Schemes and Dearing Dreams* - 2008
3. White Smith, Debra – *Amanda* - 2006

##### 4.4.4. Sequels from Other Points of View

1. Birchall, Diana – *In Defense of Mrs. Elton* - 2000
2. Birchall, Diana – *The Courtship of Mrs. Elton* - 2004
3. Birchall, Diana - *Mrs. Elton in America* - 2008

##### 4.4.5. Retellings of Parallel Stories

1. Austen-Leigh, Joan – *A Visit to Highbury* - 1995
2. Austen-Leigh, Joan – *Later Days at Highbury* - 1996 – sequel of *A Visit to Highbury*
3. Delman, Joan Ellen – *Lovers' Perjuries* - 2007
4. Royde-Smith, Naomi – *Jane Fairfax* - 1940

#### 4.5. *Persuasion*

##### 4.5.1. Sequels

1. Gillespie, Jane – *Sir Willy* - 1992
2. Menzies, June - *His Cunning or Hers* - 1993

##### 4.5.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings

1. Grange, Amanda - *Captain Wentworth's Diary* - 2008
2. Jeffers, Regina – *Captain Wentworth's Persuasion* - 2010
3. Kaye, Susan – *None But You (Frederic Wentworth, Captain: Book 1)* - 2007
4. Kaye, Susan – *For You Alone (Frederic Wentworth, Captain: Book 2)* - 2008

##### 4.5.3. What-ifs and/or Re-imaginings

1. Simonsen, Mary Lydon – *Anne Elliot, A New Beginning* - 2010
2. Simonsen, Mary Lydon – *Captain Wentworth Home From the Sea* - 2011

##### 4.5.4. Adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

1. Archer, Juliet – *Persuade Me* - 2012
2. Beckford, Grania – *Virtues and Vices* - 1981
3. Nathan, Melissa – *Persuading Annie* - 2004
4. Rushton, Rosie – *Echoes of Love* - 2010
5. Saunders, Kaitlin – *A Modern Day Persuasion* - 2011
6. Siplin, Karen V. – *Such a Girl* - 2004
7. White Smith, Debra – *Possibilities* - 2006

#### 4.6. *Northanger Abbey*

##### 4.6.1. Sequels

1. Gillespie, Jane – *Uninvited Guests* - 1994
2. Stern, G. B. – *Seven Years Later* - 1949

##### 4.6.2. Different Points of View and/or Retellings

1. Grange, Amanda – *Henry Tilney's Diary* - 2011

#### 4.6.3. Adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

1. White Smith, Debra – *Northpointe Chalet* - 2005

#### 4.7. Jane Austen's Fans Re-living the Novels/ Novels Inspired by Jane Austen

1. Baxley, M.K. - *The Cumberland Plateau: A Pride & Prejudice Modern Sequel* - 2009
2. Baxley, M.K. - *Dana Darcy: The Pride and Prejudice Sequel to The Cumberland Plateau* - 2010 – sequel of *The Cumberland Plateau*
3. Brant, Marilyn - *According to Jane* - 2009
4. Connelly, Victoria – *A Weekend With Mr. Darcy* - 2011
5. Connelly, Victoria – *Dreaming of Mr. Darcy* - 2012
6. Connelly, Victoria – *Mr. Darcy Forever* - 2012
7. Doornebos, Karen – *Definitely Not Mr. Darcy* - 2011
8. Fowler, Karen Joy – *The Jane Austen Book Club* - 2004
9. Hale, Shannon - *Austenland* - 2007
10. Hale, Shannon - *Midnight in Austenland* - 2012 – sequel of *Austenland*
11. Pattillo, Beth – *Jane Austen Ruined My Life* - 2009
12. Pattillo, Beth – *Mr. Darcy Broke My Heart* - 2010
13. Pattillo, Beth – *The Dashwood Sisters Tell All* - 2011
14. Rigler, Laurie Viera – *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* - 2007
15. Rigler, Laurie Viera – *Rude Awakenings of a Jane Austen Addict* - 2010
16. Simonsen, Mary L. - *Searching for Pemberley* - 2009
17. Simonsen, Mary L. - *Becoming Elizabeth Darcy* - 2011

## **5. *The Jane Austen Book Club* by Karen Joy Fowler**

*The Jane Austen Book Club* is one of many books inspired by Austen and her novels, but somehow it stands out. It is a rarity when a book inspired by Austen is highly successful and praised by both the public and the critics. Even the film adaptation of this novel is very good. There is a reason – strictly speaking, this novel is not fan fiction, it is not a sequel, variation, or adaptation of any of her novels.

This novel represents everything Jane Austen is in today's culture and it also illustrates what she means to her readers. When Austen's novels appeared over two hundred years ago, they brought her little fame and almost no money. Today, however, her novels inspired many film adaptations and numerous fan fiction novels. Deirdre La Feye believes Austen's popularity lies in her understanding of the human nature:

She would be utterly amazed to learn that her works are still enjoyed two hundred years after she first wrote them. This enduring popularity is a tribute not only to her skill as an author, but also to the accuracy of her plots in identifying the basic and unchanging truths of human nature. To meet one's ideal marriage partner is still the hope of every young man and woman, even in the twenty-first century, and family background and economic factors still help or hinder the achievement of this hope. (6)

La Feye also believes that Austen's accuracy made her novels more faithful to real life and thus easier to relate to:

The sensation that we are visiting genuine places and joining in the lives of genuine people, whom we get to know and to like or dislike just as we might our next-door neighbours, is part of the endless fascination of Jane Austen's novels, and a tribute to her skill as an author. Such accuracy to real life was of course carefully planned, and it is evident that she worked out her plots beforehand with calendars, maps and road-books, in order that the stories should fit properly into both time and space. (...) And her novels are never sentimental but always ironic and dispassionate in their comedy, creating the characters as normal, slightly

flawed human beings, who have their moral failings as well as their virtues. (149, 151)

When one recognises the reasons why Austen was such a great writer, it is not hard to understand why her work is so popular today. It is witty, ironic, smart, and with timeless stories that will always find its audience. In popular culture, she is present in every form, from books to movies, from journals and magazines to blogs and YouTube. It is no wonder, then, that *The Jane Austen Book Club* became so popular and successful.

The story revolves around six main characters, Jocelyn, Sylvia, Allegra, Bernadette, Prudie, and Grigg, who formed a book club that meets once a month to discuss one of Austen's novels. Each of them is responsible for one book: Jocelyn for *Emma* in March, Allegra for *Sense and Sensibility* in April, Prudie for *Mansfield Park* in May, Grigg for *Northanger Abbey* in June, Bernadette for *Pride and Prejudice* in July, and Sylvia for *Persuasion* in August. The book is filled with characters and plots similar to the ones from Austen's novels: Jocelyn is Emma because she is a matchmaker, Allegra is Marianne because she is driven by her feelings and is very passionate and emotional, Prudie is Fanny because she is always very prim and proper, Grigg is Catherine because of his innocence, good heart and love of books, Sylvia is Elinor because she is everyone's rock and is strong despite the fact her husband left her. During the six months their lives change as they experience pain, loss, betrayal and jealousy, but they overcome it all as they find strength in each other and in Austen's novels.

The novel is interesting because all six of Austen's novels are represented in it in one way or another. The characters are troubled by modern problems, problems that were never part of Austen's world, but somehow those problems resemble the things that Austen's characters are faced with. Austen's plots are in the background of this novel's story and it becomes something of a challenge to find as many things that inspired a certain character or event. Her novels become like a theme song that stretches throughout the novel and gives depth to everything.

The book's success could not be left to stand on its own, and only three years after the book was released, came out a film adaptation of it, written and directed by Robin Swicord. There were bound to be some changes, but it only made the film better, and Fowler herself was very pleased with it. The book itself has a complex narrative – each chapter follows one of the characters (the one that hosts that month's book club meeting) and intertwines the story of their meeting and discussion of the novel with stories of that character's life and past. This kind of narrative is too complicated for the film, so it tells their story chronologically and they speak of their past themselves when they talk to one another. The filmmakers decided to change the

characters and some of the plot as well: some characters host different books (e.g. Sylvia hosts *Mansfield Park*), some of them represent different characters from Austen's novels than they do in the book (e.g. Grigg is a representation of Mr. Knightley), and some new plots are introduced to make the characters more interesting (e.g. Prudie's marriage is crumbling and she gets involved with her student). These changes were necessary for the film and they do not lessen the book, on the contrary, the film is more charming and of brighter tone as it stays true to what the book is all about.

*The Jane Austen Book Club* itself would be enough to demonstrate that Jane Austen is an important part of today's culture. The fact that there is a film adaptation of it only heightens its significance. Fowler's novel deals with people and their relationships, a topic Austen always chose, and a topic that is always relevant. When introducing Austen and her work into a novel, the writers either want to bring her into modern world and share the brilliance of her work with those who have yet to know her or simply earn money without much effort. The second ones rarely succeed, but the first ones do, and it is them that reintroduce her novels into today's culture and remind people of this genius writer called Jane Austen who died almost two hundred years ago, but never failed to amaze.



## Conclusion

When Jane Austen's novels first appeared in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, they brought her little money and no recognition. She was not identified as the writer of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, and *Northanger Abbey* until after her premature death. Today, however, her novels have one of the most recognised names in our culture, and anything connected with her is supposed and does sell well. She lived a modest life, surrounded by her family and friends, and rarely travelled far. Many people say her novels are limited to small places with few people, but those were the things she knew, and she believed one should write only about what one knows. Her novels are special because she was an observer of people, their habits, and life in general, and she wrote about those things with elegance of style, with irony and humour, and with subtle commentary and critique of social relations. This is why her stories, even though they deal mostly with romance, are still read today, and why she is considered to be a literary genius. Her novels are so good that even modern readers can identify themselves with her characters and plots, and that is why they are so popular two hundred years after their publication. There are numerous adaptations of her novels in film and literature, some brilliant as the novels themselves, and some barely worth mentioning. They are all, however, proofs that her name today is spread throughout the world and that she is more popular than ever. She has been an inspiration for many artists, and will without a doubt continue to be an inspiration for many years to come. This is why she will always be celebrated as one of the giants of the written word.

## Works Cited

Adams, Carol, Douglas Buchanan, and Kelly Gesch. *The Bedside, Bathtub & Armchair Companion to Jane Austen*. New York: Continuum, 2008.

Ailwood, Sarah. "‘What Are Men to Rocks and Mountains?’ Romanticism in Joe Wright’s *Pride & Prejudice*". *Persuasions* 27.2. 2007: n. pag. 26 April 2012.

<<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/ailwood.htm>>

Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Austen-Leigh, James Edward. *Memoir of Jane Austen*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1871. *Gutenberg*. Web. 7 March 2012.

<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17797/17797-h/17797-h.htm>>

Blackwell, Bonnie. "Jane Austen: The Critical Reception." *Critical Insights: Jane Austen*. Ed. Jack Lynch. Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010. 37-52.

Cook, Vanessa E. "Seducing the Viewer: Sex, Power and Heightened Drama in *Northanger Abbey* (2007)". 20 May 2012.

<<http://www.jasna.org/essaycontest/2008/graduate.html>>

Doody, Anne Margaret. Introduction. *Sense and Sensibility*. By Jane Austen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. vii-xxxix.

Johnson, Claudia L. Introduction. *Northanger Abbey*. By Jane Austen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. vii-xxxiv.

Kaplan, Laurie. "Adapting *Emma* for the Twenty-First Century: An *Emma* No One Will Like". *Persuasions* 30.1. 2009. n. pag. 9 May 2012.

<<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol30no1/kaplan.html>>

La Feye, Deirdre. *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 2002.

Lynch, Deidre Shauna. Introduction. *Persuasion*. By Jane Austen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. vii-xxxiii.

Lynch, Deidre Shauna. "Sequels." *Jane Austen in Context*. Ed. Janet Todd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 160-168.

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

Pinch, Adela. Introduction. *Emma*. By Jane Austen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. vii-xxix.

Stafford, Fiona. Introduction. *Pride and Prejudice*. By Jane Austen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. vii-xxxii.

Stabler, Jane. Introduction. *Mansfield Park*. By Jane Austen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. vii-xxxvi.

Stewart-Ber, Catherine. "Style over Substance? *Pride & Prejudice* (2005) Proves Itself a Film for Our Time." *Persuasions* 27.2. 2007: n. pag. 25 April 2012.

<<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/stewart-beer.htm>>

Stoner Morgan, Megan. "Pride and Potentiality: Doubling Elizabeth Bennet." *Persuasions* 32.1. 2011: n. pag. 24 January 2012.

<<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol32no1/morgan.html>>

Stovel, Bruce. "Northanger Abbey at the Movies." *Persuasions* No. 20. 1998. 236-247.

Tandy, Ann M. "'Just What a Young Man Ought to Be': The 2005 *Pride & Prejudice* and Transitional Ideas of Gentility". *Persuasions* 27.2. 2007: n. pag. 26 April 2012.

<<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no2/tandy.htm>>