Wit & Visualisation

Visualising Jane Austen

by

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Preface

Jane Austen has for me been one of those life changing literary discoveries. Having grown up in Norway I was not forced to read Jane Austen at school, but was allowed to discover her during my early days at university. Almost fifteen years later I can still remember my first reactions to reading *Pride & Prejudice*. The novel was tacked on to the end of the reading list for a course in the Romantic Period. *Pride & Prejudice* may not have enlightened me much as to the characteristics of the Romantic Period, but it certainly was a vehicle of literary enlightenment for me. It is a bit embarrassing now to recall that I think I might have managed to get through almost a quarter of the book before its true nature was revealed to me. Who were these silly women who seemed to be completely obsessed with marriage and money? But then, of course, it hit me: irony!

My discovery of Jane Austen happened in the autumn of 1995, when the BBC initiated an avalanche of Jane Austen adaptations with its hugely popular six-part adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*. It was probably fortunate that I had got all the way through the novel before I saw a single episode. I tend to shy away from anything that gets too much media exposure. But again, living outside the UK, I was allowed to feel I had made my own way. By the time I realised what a phenomenon these adaptations were I was completely addicted.

As I am writing this ITV has just presented a season of a new generation of Jane Austen adaptations, and the BBC are rumoured to be nurturing a project of their own. Last year a big screen adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* was released in the cinemas to great critical acclaim. In addition, a film based on Jane Austen's early years, *Becoming Jane*, was released in Britain in early March. Whether the great Jane will create the same kind of commotion this time round remains to be seen, but a certain amount of interest seems to be guaranteed.

I have previously written two term papers on the adaptation of Jane Austen's novels:

- '*Jane Austen's Emma* – Fra bok til fjernsyn' [From book to television] for the course MEVIT051 – TV-analyse [TV analysis], part of Medievitenskap mellomfag [Media Studies, Intermediate subject, Undergraduate level], in the spring of 1997.

- '*Sense & Sensibility* – To diskurser - én historie?' [Two discourses - one story?] for the course MEVITH510 – Film og litteratur [Film and literature], part of Medievitenskap hovedfag [Media Studies, Main subject, Graduate level] in the spring of 1998.

I have borrowed freely from these papers in my thesis. I have also drawn on some aspects of my essay 'Wit & Vivacity – The Comedy of Jane Austen', presented as part of the course 'The Early English Novel' in the spring of 1997, a main subject for the same graduate studies in English of which this thesis is also part.

The completion of this thesis has been a long time coming. My original idea was hatched all the way back in the spring of 1997, and my original plan was to hand it in a year later. In January of 1998, however, a burst water pipe put my thesis on a very definite hold, and it has been a stalking shadow in my life ever since. I did manage to return to it on a couple of brief occasions over the years, but as I have said to anyone enquiring about its progress; life kept getting in the way. Most of this thesis has consequently been written over a few weeks in the spring of 2007. The result might not be everything I once dreamt it would be, but completing the thesis has been as much enjoyable as stressful.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to a few people I feel have been instrumental to the initiation and completion of this thesis. First of all I would like to thank my upper secondary English teacher Anne-Marie Aass for opening my eyes to the wonderful world of the English language. I would also like to thank all my former colleagues at the Jane Austen Centre in Bath for turning me into a true Janeite. I would like to thank everyone I came across while I was still a full-time student at my old institute, the Institute for British and American Studies (IBA) at the University of Oslo. Special thanks obviously go to my supervisor Einar Bjorvand, especially for his willingness to always give of his time on those rather erratic visits I have paid him over the years. His help during my final push to get this thesis done has been beyond the call of duty. Finally I would like to thank Huseby kompetansesenter for being a very understanding employer and letting me take the time off that I needed to complete this thesis.

Toril Bache-Wiig Midtskogen

Oslo, April 2007

Chapter 1 Introduction

The genius of Jane Austen has for me always been intrinsically linked with her brilliant use of irony. There are many other things one could praise in Jane Austen's writing: Her perfectly crafted plots, her deep understanding of human nature, her true-to-life depictions of everyday society, but I still think it is her use of irony that makes her great, and which also contributes to making these other aspects of her writing so praiseworthy.

It might be said that the characteristics that make her such a good writer also make her an attractive writer to adapt onto the screen. Film thrives on a good plot and memorable characters. And a well established name like Jane Austen's is also seen to influence the box office. But what about the irony? How easy is that to translate onto the screen? And if it gets lost on the way are we then really left with a successful adaptation of Jane Austen? Is she then being done a disservice by being promoted through all these screen adaptations? These were some of my questions when we were hit by that great wave of Jane Austen adaptations a decade ago, and what I wish to investigate in this thesis.

1.1 AUSTENMANIA

1995 and 1996 saw the event labelled by some as Austenmania. Its instigation must, I think, be credited to the six part adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* based on Andrew Davis' screenplay and initially broadcast by the BBC in the autumn of 1995. A two-hour adaptation of *Persuasion* had been shown on television earlier in the year, but it was probably the success of *Pride & Prejudice* that enabled it to also enjoy success in the cinemas. The teenage film *Clueless*, released in 1995, reached a large audience as it became known that it was based on *Emma*. *Sense & Sensibility* also hit cinemas in 1995. 1996 saw a more literal Hollywood adaptation of *Emma*, and also a television adaptation called *Jane Austen's Emma*.

Jane Austen's books sold like never before. Tie-in versions of the novels sold so well that 'prices [were] rocketing as Hollywood realise[d] how much it can charge for an actor's photograph from publishers who had regarded classic tie-ins, with no copyright payments due to

authors, as easy money.'[1] A 'battle' even broke out between the competing covers from *Emma* and *Jane Austen's Emma*, featuring Gwyneth Paltrow and Kate Beckinsale respectively.

The flood of interest in her life and works in the mid 1990s must at least partly be deemed a coincidence. Several high profile and high quality adaptations just happened to hit the mass audience over a short period of time. *Sense & Sensibility* (1995) did, however, not benefit from Austenmania when still in pre-production. It struggled to find a film studio that was willing to put up the money, and was eventually made on a relatively small budget in Hollywood terms.[2] The initial idea for *Pride & Prejudice* (1995) came in the 1980s after its producer saw a BBC adaptation of *Northanger Abbey*, but time was not deemed right until nearly a decade later.[3] That both these slow starters were released and successful in the same year must be seen as a piece of good luck for Austen fans, old and new.

Austen adaptations came to a screeching halt with Miramax's failed adaptation of *Mansfield Park* in 2000, an adaptation that seemed bent on scaring away Janeites everywhere. Fanny had been turned into something that was meant to resemble Jane Austen herself, and slavery and lesbianism featured heavily. Apparently, the overt sex scene I as a member of an English audience was treated to had been cut in the US. Miramax had planned a new adaptation of *Northanger Abbey*. They had even gone to the lengths of buying and burying a script by Andrew Davies in order to secure their audience.[4] But all plans were cancelled after *Mansfield Park* flopped. Andrew Davies' *Northanger Abbey* script is only now preparing for the light of day as it was finally filmed for television in the autumn of 2006, and shown on ITV in March 2007. ITV's new Jane Austen season also includes an adaptation of *Mansfield Park*.

This ebb and flow of the entertainment market was certainly assisted by factors that were much less a matter of chance. A major factor in the frenzy following *Pride & Prejudice* (1995) must also be said to be a certain element of reinterpretation of a 'safe' classic. Jane Austen had managed to become sexy. Mr Darcy stripping down to his underwear and diving

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[1] Richard Brooks, '"Emma" cover girls set for battle of the bookshelves', *Observer*, 15 September 1996, NEW, p. 11.
[2] Per A. Christiansen, 'Hollywood – Pengekarusellen løper løpsk', *Aftenposten* (Morgen), 2 December 1995, p. 38.
[3] Sue Birtwistle & Susie Conklin, *The Making of Pride and Prejudice* (London etc.: Penguin Books/BBC Books, 1995), pp. v-viii.
[4] This information was obtained from Andrew Davies during a talk he gave at the British Library 12 September 2000, 'Adapting the Classics'. He was kind enough to send me a copy of his screenplay for *Northanger Abbey*, but I have yet to find out if this is the version commissioned by ITV to be broadcast in March 2007.

into a pond to emerge in a dripping wet and white shirt was tabloid material.[5] This was a very deliberate move from Andrew Davies. He would talk about sex in Jane Austen's writing in every interview about the up and coming adaptation. When I quizzed him about his obsession with sex during a meeting in early 1998 I got the distinct impression that it was not so much the sex that tantalised him as the opportunity to tease Jane Austen admirers. That this focus on sex also made his adaptation into a bit of a phenomenon was probably just a bonus. Sex might sell, but not everyone was too pleased: '[T]here can be no reason except literary perversity for painting in lurid colours what [Jane Austen] preferred to draw in pastel shades.'[6]

Toby Young points to another factor for the renewed interest in Jane Austen, and especially her conquest of America:

> Sitting in the audience at the premiere of *Sense and Sensibility* on 13 December, 1995 it suddenly struck me that the reason for the glut of Jane Austen adaptations […] was because of the overwhelming similarity between early-nineteenth-century rural England and late-twentieth-century urban America. […] The world Austen depicts – a world in which ambitious young women compete with each other to attract the attention of rich, eligible men – is uncannily like contemporary Manhattan. Both societies are rigidly hierarchical, with power concentrated in the hands of a plutocratic elite, and the swiftest route to the top is through marriage.[7]

And is that not why Jane Austen has never lost her relevance? Society then and society now is not as different as we might like to think.

Jane Austen adaptations are often accused of perpetuating cultural elitism, but Jane Austen herself blurs the boundaries between high and low with her enthusiasm for burlesque novels, and Austenmania straddled the divide between high and low culture, between academia and the masses.

1.2 THE CHOSEN TEXTS: *EMMA* AND *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*

The main focus of this thesis will be *Emma*. It has several advantages in the context of both irony and adaptation. It is generally considered to be Jane Austen's most accomplished novel, to a great extent, I believe, due to its pervasive use of irony. And it provides me with the most interesting collection of adaptations. Available on video/DVD are four adaptations made under a

[5] Roger Sales explores this phenomenon at some length in the 'Afterword' to the 1996 paperback edition of his *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 1996), pp. 227-239.
[6] Roy Hattersley, 'Sensation and the Austen sensibility', *Guardian*, 27 October 1990, FEA, p. 27.
[7] Toby Young, *How To Lose Friends & Alienate People* (London: Abacus, 2001, 2002), pp. 129-130.

comprehensive variety of production conditions. *Emma* (1972) is a traditional BBC Classical Serial, *Jane Austen's Emma* (1996) was made for commercial television, *Emma* (1996) is a traditional Hollywood film and *Clueless* (1995) is a different kind of adaptation all together.

I will also have a look at *Pride & Prejudice*. This is by far the most adapted of Jane Austen's novels, but my focus will be rather narrow. Inherent in the story of *Pride & Prejudice* is a comment on the uses and abuses of irony. Elizabeth can be seen as a character who strives to keep her ironic balance, and who succeeds in the end. While Mr Bennet is irony gone awry, with disastrous consequences for the people around him. I believe these two characters present us with an insight into Jane Austen's view of irony, and it is therefore interesting to look at how this comes across in the many adaptations.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Chapters two and three constitute the theoretical basis of the thesis. Chapter two deals with media theory and chapter three with irony. Both chapters aim to give a general introduction to the theoretical material as well as to provide some tools for the case-studies. The case-studies begin with an in-depth look at four adaptations of *Emma* in chapter four, which is followed by a more limited investigation of seven adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* in chapter five. A conclusion will take both sets of adaptations into consideration. Are adaptations of Jane Austen's novels a case of Irony Lost or Irony Regained? And does it matter? I hope to find that it does.

Chapter 2 Adaptation

What *is* the good of the arts if they're interchangeable?[1]

2.1 FILM, TELEVISION AND LITERATURE

The novel, or literature in general, has been used as a resource for filmmakers ever since film's infancy. To a new medium trying to find its form, the novel represented examples of narrative storytelling filmmakers could learn from. A shortage of original material was also a problem as the industry strove to satisfy an ever increasing mass of audience for a medium with low prestige, and which consequently did not automatically attract talented writers. Another important reason for literature's influence on film can be found in the filmmaking industry's commercial structure. The aim was, and still is, to attract as large a paying audience as possible, and the adaptation of well known novels could involve the novels' readers as an already interested audience.

Many comments have been made about the disadvantages of the close relationship between film and literature, for instance that it inhibited the film's growth as a distinct and unique medium. One of the most common concerns or criticisms voiced in relation to literary adaptations is that the film, or TV-series, might supplant the novel it is based on. Douglas Adams and John Lloyd have even seen the need to create a new word to describe this phenomenon:

> **Bathel** (vb.) To pretend to have read the book under discussion when in fact you have only seen the TV series.[2]

But there is no getting around the fact that adaptations make up a substantial part of the films produced every year, and that they will no doubt continue to do so in the future.

Literary adaptations seem to have gained an improved reputation in recent years, possibly as it has become increasingly apparent that the film medium, or indeed television, does not compete directly with the book. Tie-in editions of the novel now seem to be a mandatory part of any publicity strategy in connection with a new release of an adaptation. The film

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[1] E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (New York etc.: Bantam Books, 1910, 1985), p. 29.
[2] Douglas Adams and John Lloyd, *The Deeper Meaning of Liff – A Dictionary of Things That There Aren't Any Words for Yet* (London: Pan Books and Faber & Faber, 1990), p. 9.

medium has also achieved the status it once craved as an art form in its own right, and must even be said to enjoy the privileged position of an art form with mass appeal. Any threats to this position is rather from within, from its commercial structures, and not from comparisons with other art forms.

Television has perhaps struggled more than film to gain respectability. While the film medium has managed to develop a close relationship with the intellectual elite and high culture, television has been the object of scorn, and even fear. One of the most famous manifestos warning us of the dangers of television is perhaps Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* from 1985. One quote should suffice to sum up his point of view: '[…] I believe the epistemology created by television not only is inferior to a print-based epistemology but is dangerous and absurdist.'[3] Postman's views came as a reaction to commercial television, and American commercial television in particular. The BBC in Britain has probably enjoyed a more positive reputation. None of the television adaptations studied in this thesis have been specifically made to suit the American television marked, even though two have received financial support from an American company.

In this chapter there will be a lot of talk about film. Much of what can be said about film also applies to television drama. The distinction between film and television will only be highlighted when this is found to be important. There is a separate section on television adaptations towards the end of the chapter.

The term 'adaptation' can have many uses. In this thesis it will be used exclusively to denote a film or television series based on a novel. The BBC has in the past used 'dramatisation' for the same purpose.

2.2 ADAPTATION THEORY

In spite of the close and long relationship between film and literature mentioned above, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the phenomenon of adaptation within film theory.[4] The interest is growing, but it remains one of the least structured areas of film theory. Many of the studies conducted have come from university departments of literature rather than

[3] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (London: Methuen, 1985, 1987), p. 27.
[4] Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film – An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 3.

departments of media studies. Most books written on the subject are consequently dominated by case-studies, often with only a brief introduction. Despite the lack of an overall theoretical approach, there are aspects of several theoretical approaches that are useful when discussing adaptations and these will be presented in this chapter.

All adaptations can be approached as independent works of art, but this is rarely the case. Most adaptations must withstand the scrutiny of comparison. Those who are lucky enough to escape might actually stand to gain in critical acclaim.[5] It is a far too common point of view that an adaptation always will be inferior to the original piece of writing it is based on. It is often claimed that bad books make good adaptations, while good books make bad adaptations. 'Some commentators believe that if a work of art has reached its fullest artistic expression in one form, an adaptation will inevitably be inferior.'[6] Personally I think it can also be argued that the better the source material the better the adaptation could potentially be. Why should not excellence inspire excellence? The quality of an adaptation is often linked to the relationship between the film and its original source, but also to the filmmaking process itself. In the end '[a]dequacy of vision and talent are […] the determining factors of the quality of an adaptation from literature into film.'[7]

Both book and film deserve to be judged on its own merits. But when a film claims to be based on a book it has also invited comparisons with the original. And 'a film that is based upon a novel – though it may be artistic in its own right – also serves as a critique of that novel.'[8] Such a comparison has the potential of increasing our understanding and appreciation of both:

> Readers of adaptations, in common with mass-media fans, can become more conscious of their active role as critics by evaluating both literary text and its adaptation, looking beyond issues of success or failure and considering, among other things, the choices made by the adapter, the conditions of those choices, other possible options and their possible effects.[9]

Having read the book before seeing the film based on it does affect the viewing experience. Some comparison is unavoidable, and at the very least you compare your reading of the book

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[5] Gabriel Miller, *Screening the Novel – Rediscovered American Fiction in Film* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), p. x.
[6] Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, Chapter 9 'Literature' (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), p. 362.
[7] Michael Klein, 'Introduction: Film and Literature' in *The English Novel and the Movies*, ed. by Michael Klein and Gillian Parker (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), p. 12.
[8] C. Kenneth Pellow, *Films as Critiques of Novels – Transformational Criticism* (New York etc.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), p. 1.
[9] Imelda Whelehan, 'Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas' in *Adaptations – From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, ed. by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 17.

with the reading presented to you on the screen. Or rather your reading of the film. This dialectic experience can lead to disappointment as well as enthusiasm, but is always interesting.

Adaptation has been likened to translation. In both cases it is usually a question of achieving equivalence. One strives to engender the same response from the reader of the adaptation/translation as was produced by the original text. This is a challenge as the transfer from book to film involves many changes. In the process of adapting a novel into a screenplay Kenneth Portnoy focuses on seven key changes: Change in characterisation, elimination and addition of characters, character emphasis, structure, beginnings, endings and finally character growth.[10] The specific problems of adaptation can be summed up as the following:

> [T]he question of objective and subjective viewpoints; the presence or absence of a narrator; time - past, present and future; verbal and visual descriptions; and literary and visual imagery. In addition, sociological issues such as the methods of production, distribution, and consumption of the novel and the film are relevant, as well as consideration of the effects of film and television adaptation upon the understanding and appreciation of the original novel […].[11]

2.2.1 FIDELITY

The question of 'fidelity' seems never to be far away in any discussion of literary adaptations:

> Fidelity of adaptation is conventionally treated in relation to the letter and to the spirit of the text. […] The skeleton of the original can, more or less thoroughly, become the skeleton of a film. More difficult is fidelity to the spirit, to the original's tone, values, imagery, and rhythm, for finding stylistic equivalents in film for these intangible aspects is the opposite of a mechanical process.[12]

Brian McFarlane dedicates some effort to dismissing this approach:

> Fidelity criticism depends on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the film-maker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with. […] the fidelity approach seems a doomed enterprise and fidelity criticism unilluminating.[13]

McFarlane also goes on to present different suggested adaptation categories as a way to move away from questions of fidelity. The problem with this is that each set of categories contains one that seems to invite the fidelity approach, for instance Geoffrey Wagner, whose first category is

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[10] Kenneth Portnoy, *Screen Adaptations – A Scriptwriting Handbook* (Boston and London: Focal Press, 1991), p. 76.
[11] Robert Giddings, Keith Selby and Chris Wensley, *Screening the Novel – The Theory and Practise of Literary Dramatization* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1990), p. 23-24.
[12] Dudley Andrew, 'The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory' in *Narrative Strategies – Original Essays in Film and Prose Fiction*, ed. by Syndy M. Conger and Janice R. Welsch, (Illinois: Western Illinois University, 1980), p. 12.
[13] McFarlane, pp. 8-9.

called 'transposition': 'in which a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference'.[14]

I agree with McFarlane that discussions of adaptations might easily strand on the issue of fidelity, but I do not think it is appropriate to use words like 'doomed' and 'unilluminating' in an attempt to dismiss the subject completely. Like so many other things in life it is a matter of balance. Fidelity will always be an issue when discussing an adaptation, but should be tempered by other considerations and seen in a wider context. For example: 'The "fidelity" debate […] takes a different form insofar as production values of film adaptations are seen to smother the potentially radical critiques embedded within the original text.'[15]

Fidelity certainly should never be used as a stamp of quality, or lack thereof. There can be no doubt that a film named *Jane Austen's Emma* does invite questions of fidelity, and I consider this to be a problem only if one thinks that objectivity is actually possible in the reading of any text.

2.2.2 TYPES OF ADAPTATIONS

Adaptation theory presents us with several sets of categories for the classification of adaptations. Usually the sets contain three categories. Michael Klein and Gillian Parker use these categories: 'the literal adaptation', where the aim is 'to give the impression of being faithful', 'the critical adaptation', which 'retains the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting or, in some cases, deconstructing the source text', and 'the relatively free adaptation', which 'regards the source merely as raw material, as simply the occasion for an original work'.[16] Geoffrey Wagner has a similar set of categories: 'transposition', which is similar to 'the literal adaptation', 'commentary', 'where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect […] a re-emphasis or re-structure', and 'analogy', 'which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making *another* work of art'.[17]

Dudley Andrew uses a slightly different set of categories, and he is among those who

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[14] Ibid., p. 10.
[15] Deborah Cartmell, 'Introduction' in *Adaptations – From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, ed. by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 24.
[16] Klein, 'Introduction: Film and Literature' in *The English Novel and the Movies*, pp. 9-10.
[17] Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (London: The Tantivy Press, 1975), pp. 222-227.

complain about the constant focus on 'fidelity' to the original text: 'unquestionably the most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation […] concerns fidelity and transformation'.[18] In addition to the category of fidelity Andrew has 'borrowing', which conforms with 'the relatively free adaptation' and 'analogy', and 'intersecting'. 'Fidelity of transformation' 'assume[s] that the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about the original text. Here we have a clear-cut case of film trying to measure up to a literary work, or of an audience expecting to make such a comparison'.[19] 'Intersection' is defined by Andrew as adaptations where you purposely preserve the unique aspects of the original text without attempting to assimilate it into the film. 'The cinema, as a separate mechanism, records its confrontation with an ultimately intransigent text.'[20] Personally I would say that this is something that rarely can be said of a whole film, but is rather an element found in other types of adaptations.

McFarlane claims that 'there is a distinction to be made between what may be *transferred* from one narrative medium to another and what necessarily requires *adaptation proper*.'[21] He defines 'transfer' as 'the process whereby certain narrative elements of novels are revealed as amenable to display on film,'[22] while 'adaptation proper' is 'the process by which other novelistic elements must find quite different equivalences in the film medium'[23].

The categories for types of adaptations are not absolutes but tools that can tell us something about the adaptation's relationship with its original source as this can be a difficult area. There is no consensus about how the adaptor should relate to the original text.[24]

2.2.3 DOES ADAPTATION AFFECT THE BOOK?

English examiners apparently always dread the effect a new adaptation of a set text will have on the papers they mark at the end of the term following its release on video/DVD.[25] It seems many students think the book and its film version are interchangeable:

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[18] Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, Chapter 6: 'Adaptation' (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 100.
[19] Ibid., p. 100.
[20] Ibid., p. 99.
[21] McFarlane, p.13.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Peter Reynolds, *Novel Images – Literature in Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 9.
[25] John Mullan, 'Inside Story: Fanny's Novel Predicament', *Guardian*, 28 March 2000, p.16.

> [Adaptations] become, for many viewers, indistinguishable from what those authors actually wrote. A mass audience confronted with novel images that they do not, for whatever reason, find satisfactory may never subsequently find reason to turn back to the original and discover it for themselves.[26]

And if many only become acquainted with a great novel through its adaptation, it can potentially affect their perception of both the novel and its author. Andrew Davies is used to hearing such concerns voiced. The many rumours of a sexed up *Pride & Prejudice* circulating before its initial broadcast certainly had many worried:

> 'It's an interpretation,' he says. 'I would say it's very faithful to the spirit of the book – but if you don't think it is you can always read the book. You know, the book's still there. I've never been able to understand people saying, "Oh you've destroyed the book." If we don't do it well, it's not really going to affect people's perceptions of the book very much. If we do it very well, we're going to influence how people see the book, I guess.'[27]

Peter Reynolds thinks the problem is the passivity of the film viewer:

> Many consumers of texts in performance absorb what they consume without having digested it because they are critically constipated by the predominantly illusionistic conventions used in their making. […] Illusionism deliberately masks the subjective nature of the performance text and presents it instead as an objective reality.[28]

He stresses that viewers need to learn to become active readers in order to get something substantial from viewing a film. Unlike English teachers he saw great potential in the mass production of inexpensive video cassette recorders. Today he must be even more excited about DVDs. Personally I belong to the growing number of film viewers who rarely go to the cinema, but instead choose to buy the DVD. You can view the film whenever it suits you, and as many times as you like.

I agree with Reynolds that this change in viewing habits could potentially increase reader activity, but I am not so sure they were that passive to begin with. The prevalence of film programmes on television and film magazines at the newsagent suggest otherwise. I am sure the growing video/DVD market encourages an increased interest in comparing the film with the original, though. Such a comparison can potentially increase the understanding and enjoyment of both the original novel and the film adaptation. It also decreases the risk of readers confusing the two.

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[26] Reynolds, p. 10.
[27] Catherine Bennett, 'Hype and Heritage', *Guardian*, 22 September 1995, G2T, p. 2.
[28] Reynolds, p. 1.

2.3 NARRATIVE THEORY

The theory of choice when discussing adaptations is narrative theory, borrowed from literary theory. Narrative theory is based on the assumption that there is a difference between what is being communicated and how it is being communicated. This divide in narrative theory can be traced all the way back to Aristotle, but it is perhaps Seymour Chatman who should be credited with introducing the concept to adaptation theory. His book *Story and Discourse – Narrative Structures in Fiction and Film* (1978) certainly presented a narrative theory that has established itself as central to adaptation theory.

The novel, film and television are all narrative media, only with different manifestations of the narration. An investigation of narration in the different media, and a comparison between them can shed useful light on their relationship.

2.3.1 STORY AND DISCOURSE

Chatman's two main terms 'story' and 'discourse' are extremely useful both when looking at a single narrative and when comparing two narratives that seemingly try to communicate the same story:

> [E]ach narrative has two parts: a story […], the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse […], that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated.[29]

I should stress that the story is not the same as the plot. Plot can also sometimes be defined in a way that makes it more or less the same as the discourse. I will use plot about explicitly presented events in the narrative. 'We create a story in our minds on the basis of cues in the plot.'[30] These cues can refer to events and existents not explicitly presented in the plot, and a full definition of story must therefore include inferred elements.

So how can two different discourses, specific to different media, produce more or less the same story? Or seen from a different point of view, how does film and television's different discourses influence the original story of a novel? Seymour Chatman looks at it this way:

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[29] Seymor Chatman, *Story and Discourse – Narrative structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978, 1993), p. 19.
[30] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art. An Introduction*, 4th International Edition (New York etc.: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), p. 68.

'Narrative translation from one medium to another is possible because roughly the same set of events and existents can be read out.'[31]

2.3.2 EVENTS AND EXISTENTS

The 'events' in a story constitute the plot. 'Events' become plot in the discourse. Chatman divides 'events' into 'kernels' and 'satellites'.[32] 'Kernels' are the main events in a narrative. They decide how the plot is to develop, one after the other in a horizontal perspective. 'Satellites' compliment and support 'kernels', all the minor events that fill out the narrative vertically and that can initiate 'kernel' actions. Both can be transferred from one medium to another, but it is the transfer of 'kernels' that is supposed to ensure the highest level of 'fidelity'.

'Existents' are a story's characters and those elements that constitute the setting, the film's mise-en-scene. Chatman has this to say of a character's role in the narrative:

> A viable theory of character should preserve openness and treat characters as autonomous beings, not as mere plot functions. It should argue that character is reconstructed by the audience from the evidence announced or implicit in an original construction and communicated by the discourse, through whatever medium.[33]

2.3.3 AUTHOR, IMPLIED AUTHOR AND NARRATOR

One apparent difference between many novels and their adaptations is the obvious presence of a narrator in the first and the seeming lack of the same in the latter. It certainly is noticeable in Jane Austen's writings as all her novels have an intrusive narrator. Some of the adaptations based on her work use voice-over to create a similar effect, but is never the same dominating presence. It is nevertheless important to stress that by saying a film lacks a narrator, I do not mean that it is not narrated. Chatman introduces the concept of the nonnarrated film in his *Story and Discourse,* but dismisses this notion in his later work *Coming to Terms – The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (1990). At this point I would just like to clarify the term 'narrator', and point to some useful definitions.

First there is the concept of the author. The author of a novel is usually easy to define. It is the person who wrote the novel, and in this case Jane Austen. Often there might be an editor

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[31] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 42.
[32] Ibid., p. 53.
[33] Ibid., p. 119.

involved, but the final published work is perceived to be all by the author. When it comes to film, however, this is rather complicated. Many people are involved in the process of making a film, usually hundreds. Is the scriptwriter the author, the director, the producer? 'Relative to a novel, film is art-by-committee.'[34] Although the screenwriter might seem to be the closest thing to an author in a film, the screenwriter's role varies immensely from film to film, often depending on the attitude of the director.[35] Screenplays can be modified by the actors who play the characters. The American studio system also has a long tradition of multiple authorships of screenplays.

The closest film theory comes to a concept of an author is the *auteur*. This is a term that was coined in French film theory after the Second World War to describe a certain type of filmmaker, one that retained so much control over the final product that it could be seen as a distinct fingerprint on the film. *Auteur* theory does not, however, represent a coherent approach to the concept of author in film, and does not necessarily see the author of a film as a person.[36]

A more useful term in the context of this thesis is 'implied author'. There is not a universal definition of this term, and to avoid getting lost in a rather complicated discussion I have chosen to lean on Chatman's definition:

> [M]y position lies halfway between that of some postconstructionalists, who deny the existence of any agent […] and that of Booth, who has spoken of the implied author as 'friend and guide'. For me the implied author is neither. It is nothing other than the text itself in its inventional aspect.[37]

Chatman goes on to say:

> The narrator, and he or she alone, is the only subject, the only 'voice' of narrative discourse. The inventor of that speech, as of the speech of the characters, is the implied author. That inventor is no person, no substance, no object: it is, rather, the patterns in the text which the reader negotiates.[38]

And this should then give us a clear definition of what is meant by 'narrator', and one that works well for both literature and film.

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[34] Pellow, p. 7.
[35] Giannetti, p. 336.
[36] Peter Wollen, 'The *Auteur* Theory' in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 589-605.
[37] Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms – The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990, 1993), p. 86.
[38] Ibid., p. 87.

2.4 SEMIOTICS

Different media can be seen as having their own 'language', and the field of semiotics has been used to demonstrate this. Semiotics is a method that sets out to identify 'signs' in language. These signs are not meaningful in themselves, but are given meaning through social conventions and become 'codes'. The total sign system that can be identified in a film becomes the film's language. Semiotics is an important part of film theory, originally developed for literary theory but almost better suited for visual media. '[S]emiotics does not favour verbal signification over non-verbal/pictorial signification, yet still offers a valid theoretical vantage point for the study of literature.'[39] Semiotics has been important in the process to identify and describe what makes film and television distinctive as media of communication,[40] and its introduction was a conscious attempt to counteract the tendency to view film as a stepchild of literature.

Dudley Andrew considers adaptation's distinctive feature to be 'the matching of the cinematic sign system to prior achievement in some other system'.[41] 'The analysis of adaptation […] must point to the achievement of equivalent narrative units in the absolutely different semiotic systems of film and language.'[42] Both film and literature contain signifiers that produce signifieds. These signifiers might be different in the two media, but capable of producing the same or equivalent signifieds. The signifieds again lead to denotations, connotations and associations. 'The denotative material […] may change from novel to film without affecting the connotations of the […] motifs themselves.'[43] Again we are talking about the concept of equivalence rather than reproduction. Chatman suggests that narrative structures imparts meaning in three ways:

> [T]he signifieds are exactly three - event, character, and detail of setting; the signifiers are those elements in the narrative statement (whatever medium) that can stand for one of these three, thus any kind of physical or mental action for the first, any person (or, indeed, any entity that can be personalized) for the second, and any evocation of place for the third.[44]

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[39] Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited – Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 58.
[40] Ellen Seiter, 'Semiotics, Structuralism and Television' in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, ed. by Robert C. Allen, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 31-66.
[41] Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, p. 96.
[42] Andrew, 'The Well-Worn Muse', p. 14.
[43] McFarlane, p. 25.
[44] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 25.

Film seems to work from perception towards signification while literature works the other way around. The two signifying systems of literature and film differ significantly: 'the verbal sign, with its low iconicity and high symbolic function, works *conceptually*, whereas the cinematic sign, with its high iconicity and uncertain symbolic function, works directly, sensuously, *perceptually*.'[45] The distinction is not absolute, but important to keep in mind. How does the visual representation affect the viewer's reading of the film?

'In film and television, iconic and indexical signs predominate, with the symbolic – the codes, and "grammar" of film and television – secondary. In prose, the symbolic sign is used exclusively.'[46] There is a close relationship between the signifier and the signified in film and television, while the relationship between the two is arbitrary on the page of a book.

2.5 FILMIC DISCOURSE

So far we have looked at some of the similarities and differences between literature and film from the point of view of literary theory. It is now time to change to the point of view of film. We will look at some of the important ways in which films communicate.

A film has trouble expressing thoughts and ideas in a way literature does not, but that does not mean it is incapable of depth and complexity. Film has it own discourse that can convey information in a way literary discourse cannot:

> The screen image can establish diverse relationships between a variety of characters and objects which enable the viewer to make simultaneous judgements on the action and relationships shown; in addition, a great deal of information can be conveyed almost instantaneously by presenting a character or event against a background which can establish a complex of secondary information. The close shot of a character's face […] and the use of sound to emphasize, prepare, or undercut the screen images are also features which can greatly enhance the narrative.[47]

If the film image becomes too complex there is of course the possibility that the viewers will not be able to read the image properly. The filmmaker might put in visual clues the viewer does not pick up, especially because film narrative tends to be fast moving and unstoppable.

The potential for complexity in films is not always used. The visual aspect can be overnurtured to the extent that the film is predominantly decorative in its expression, 'if there is a

[45] McFarlane, p. 26-27.
[46] Giddings, Selby and Wensley, p. 5. An icon represents an object by its similarity to it, an index points to another object and the symbol can only be understood by convention.
[47] Giddings, Selby and Wensley, p. 20-21.

conflict between issues and spectacle, spectacle usually wins.'[48] There is a great temptation to make choices in the discourse that look good on film.

Dialogue can be used to good effect in films, and in a more spectacular way than in literature. Not only does intonation and pronunciation add more depth and forcefulness to the dialogue, it can be used to compensate for exposition not easily transferred from the book and also as an inherent part of the filmic discourse:

> Good dialogue serves many purposes. It develops you character, tells your story, develops the issue of a story, and adds conflict. A good tag line, a concluding line at the end of a scene, puts a nice finish on the scene. Good dialogue can also be used to connect one scene to the next.[49]

The dialogue can work in collusion with iconic information. Film can bring out what is written between the lines of a book. For instance, the ability of an adaptation to be more overtly sexual was commented on as early as in the 1940 adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*:

> [T]he visual medium can easily convey the contradiction between [Elizabeth's and Darcy's] tart verbal repartee on the one hand, and the glances and gestures that on the other hand suggest the underlying sexuality of their relationship. […] Garson's and Olivier's performances illustrate the enormous gain of sensuality in a story transformed from the narrative to the cinematic medium.'[50]

A good adaptation must make some use of the media characteristics that differentiate film from literature. Different media characteristics are differences that make a difference. Stanley Kubrick thinks that the success of an adaptation 'depends not upon the quality or otherwise of the original novel, but upon the film's ability to find its own style'.[51]

2.5.1 'SHOW, DON'T TELL'

> [Andrew Davies] is a full advocate of the 'show, don't tell' approach to scriptwriting. In other words, the camera can tell you a great deal that a narrator would, but in a different and quicker way. Of course, dialogue is terribly important – and Jane Austen has written some of the most delightful dialogue in literature – but good visual storytelling is at the heart of a memorable film.[52]

The classical concepts of *diegesis*[53] and *mimesis* were originally developed to describe the

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[48] Reynolds, p. 10.
[49] Portnoy, p. 121.
[50] George Lellis and H. Philip Bolton, 'Pride but No Prejudice' in *The English Novel and the Movies*, p. 49.
[51] Giddings, Selby and Wensley, p. 22.
[52] Birtwistle and Conklin, *The Making of Pride and Prejudice*, p. 2.
[53] *Diegesis* is also sometimes used to refer to the total world of the film. The score of a film is almost always a *nondiegetic* element, and so are the credits. See Bordwell and Thompson, p. 67.

difference between telling and showing in a play. The distinction is also useful in the context of adaptations. Literature is obviously all about telling, while film can both show and tell. Showing is therefore often seen as more cinematic than telling. In Emma Thompson's diaries from the production of *Sense & Sensibility*, she says of the director: 'Ang is in heaven. There is no dialogue. "This is pure cinema," he says, pleased'.[54]

Film has to a great extent to show rather than tell, or more specifically 'assert': 'The dominant mode is presentational, not assertive. A film doesn't say, "This is the state of affairs," it merely shows you that state of affairs.'[55] Assertion in a film would require a voice-over, which can be used with advantage, like in *Clueless* (1995), but is rarely favoured. This might be because a voice-over undermines a feeling of reality. You want your audience to be involved in the story, and a voice-over might make it more difficult to lose yourself in the story. Voice-over is also often seen as uncinematic as it 'is not cinematic description but merely description by literary assertion transferred to film.'[56]

The presentational mode of film can, for instance, make it difficult to control the effect of appearance. 'When it comes to external features […] film can *show* them with sovereign conviction.'[57] This is perhaps especially problematic when it comes to charm, like in the case of Mr Wickham of *Pride & Prejudice*. A reaction shot of Elizabeth can tell us that she finds him charming, and she can even tell us herself in a later conversation with her sister Jane, which is done in the 1995 adaptation. The problem is that while Jane Austen does not really allow us to make up our own minds about the merits of Mr Wickham, and we as readers generally tend to have no other choice but to be deceived along with Elizabeth, the film lets us see him uninfluenced by Elizabeth's pride and prejudice. And you know the moment you see Mr Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) that this is not Prince Charming. One could blame the actor, or the casting director, for this, or even the scriptwriter, but there is also the general issue of how to present Mr Wickham on screen. There are aspects of Mr Wickham even in the book that should have put Elizabeth on her guard. He is not so much a charming man as a man who

[54] Emma Thompson, *Jane Austen's* Sense and Sensibility. *The Screenplay and Diaries by Emma Thompson* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), p. 253.
[55] Seymour Chatman, 'What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (And Vice Versa)' in *Film Theory and Criticism*, p. 408.
[56] Ibid., p. 408.
[57] Jakob Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film – An Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 86.

dedicates himself to flattering Elizabeth. A diligent reader might discover this, but we are so involved in Elizabeth's emotional world that it eludes us like it eludes her. So by playing Mr Wickham too much like Mr Wickham in the book the adaptation would give too much away. The same denotation could lead to different connotations.

Film is assertive in the sense that it robs the spectator of the opportunity to create her own images. The fact that film discourse presents us with a complete visual representation of the story means that the film version of the story also is perceived as having a higher level of realism than that of literature. But the heightened sense of realism is also due to film and television history: 'Film, and even more especially, television, matured at a time when naturalism and realism were the dominant modes in Western European and North American culture.'[58]

A focus on realism produces fertile ground for the many derogatory remarks of heritage television and quaintness levelled at adaptations of classic novels: '[W]hen engaged in translating classics of the past, particularly of the last century, the tendency has been (albeit unconsciously) to translate nineteenth-century literature into a synthetic "historical" realism in which everything must seen authentic and true to period.'[59] Characters tend to be dressed too accurately in that they do not wear the stylistic range of clothes present in any period. Everything is too clean, from clothes to teeth. '[W]e are only projecting on to the "past" the assumptions of the present.'[60]

We might be better at accepting a novel as a piece of fiction than a film. A film might easily seem more real than a novel. But film is not real life. It is a carefully constructed piece of fiction, just like a novel.

2.5.2 NATURAL SELECTION

When it comes to both events and existents it can be a matter of survival of the fittest when a story is transferred from the book page to the screen. Even with a six episode television adaptation there tends to be less time for the story to play itself out in the discourse. With most

[58] Giddings, Selby and Wensley, p. x.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p. xi.

adaptations running to around two hours we are talking about a significant reduction, and this obviously impacts the alternative discourse of film greatly.

In addition to running time there is the matter of economics. How many actors can you afford to pay, how many locations are within your budget and so on. Reception studies will tell you that the reader of the film, i.e. its audience, also weighs in as a significant factor: 'The viewer of the film, unlike the solitary reader, is involved in a collective experience, in which the action presses relentlessly on'.[61] A chain of cause and effect drive the plot forward, and kernel has to follow kernel in fairly rapid succession.[62] When you are reading a book you have the time and opportunity to stop and reflect, you can go back and reread something, or you can just take your time and study single sentences. This enables books to indulge in intricate plots and rich character galleries. In a film these things present a problem. Each shot in a film can contain a wealth of information which the viewer must filter to get at the information he or she needs to be able to piece together the story. This is further complicated by the fact that the image up on the screen is only available for a fixed, often short, period of time. The speed with which you read is decided in the discourse. With a video or a DVD there is the opportunity of pausing or rewinding, but the film is not made with this in mind. In a cinema you certainly have no choice but to follow the discourse as it moves unstoppably and irreversibly forward.

The consequence of this is that the story often needs to be simplified. Not all events make it, some kernels must be sacrificed and many satellites, and of the existents it is usually the minor characters that get the chop. Even a major character is working against the clock to establish itself on the screen, and if you have too many characters it can become difficult to tell them apart and to remember what their relationship is to each other.

To minimise the fallout from such restrictions it is common to fuse plotlines and characters, so that important aspects of the original story are not lost. A character might have to be removed, but that character's main contribution to the story in terms of personality or actions can be transferred to characters that have survived. The chronology of the plot can be altered as a time-saving device, but this does not necessarily affect the story in any major way. 'The discourse can rearrange the events of the story as much as it pleases, provided the story-

[61] Ibid., p. 4.
[62] 'Cause and effect' is taken from Bordwell and Thompson, p. 68.

sequence remains discernible.'[63] Important information revealed in the dialogue of a scene in the book that does not make it to the screen might be incorporated into dialogue or scenes that do.

It is not very often that a writer is given the opportunity to adapt his or her own novel. The reason for this is not only that writing a screenplay requires a different set of skills than writing a novel. But rather that writing a screenplay based on a story you have previously written in a different format means having to make some hard choices: '[A]pparently one of the dangers of a writer's adapting his own work is an inability to let go of some of his creations.'[64] 'Kill your darlings' is an important commandment in all filmmaking.

2.5.3 RANGE AND DEPTH OF STORY INFORMATION

Bordwell and Thompson talk about the range and depth of story information presented by the plot.[65] When it comes to the range of story information, an unrestricted narration allows the viewer to know more, to see and hear more, than any or all of the characters. This can create suspense because the viewers can anticipate events that the characters cannot, and also allows for filmic irony as the viewer's superior knowledge allows her to read the situation differently than a character. An omniscient narration is, however, seldom complete. Neither is a restricted narration which will create greater curiosity and surprise for the viewer. Unrestricted and restricted narration are two ends of a continuum, and any film may go back and forth between these two types of presentation of story information.

Depth of story information deals with the continuum between objectivity and subjectivity. How much does a character's psychological state affect the discourse? A plot might confine us to the character's external behaviour, and thus be a fairly objective narrative. A more subjective narration could utilise perceptual subjectivity: The point-of-view shot, which is a shot taken from the character's optical standpoint, and sound perspective which is hearing sounds like the characters would hear them. There is also the possibility of mental subjectivity: a voice-over revealing a character's thoughts as an inner commentary, inner images like memory, dreams

[63] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 63.
[64] Miller, p. xi.
[65] Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 75-79.

and fantasy, and these two can also be combined. Elizabeth's reading of Darcy's letter in *Pride & Prejudice* (1995) is an example of this.

Range and depth of story information are independent values and can vary in degree in any film. Subjectivity can create a greater identification with a character, while objectivity can effectively withhold information. '[M]ost films take "objective" narration as a baseline from which we may depart in search of subjective depth but to which we will return. […] Any choice about range or depth has concrete effects on how the spectator thinks and feels about the film as it progresses.'[66]

2.6 OTHER FACTORS OF INFLUENCE

The categories for types of adaptations only highlight how an adaptation relates to its original text. It does not tell us anything about all the other influences working on the film. A look at narrative structures and possibilities is also only a part of the picture.

An adaptation is affected by the cinematic style of the period it is made in and the role of the medium. Even what is deemed necessary alterations of the original is affected by these factors.[67]

The expectations of an author's fan base might indirectly influence an adaptation. They represent an important market and it might be economically advantageous to please them. Or a director might feel a need to purposely provoke them, which might have been the case with *Mansfield Park* (2000). Sometimes there is a need to be controversial for controversy's sake, and sometimes a literary critic might leave a fingerprint. Again *Mansfield* Park (2000) is a case in point. The screenwriter/director seems to have been heavily influenced by Edward Said, who had created a certain amount of outrage with his take on slavery and *Mansfield Park* in the book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

All in all, there is probably an overwhelming number of influences at work when a novel is adapted to the screen. Michael Klein provides us with this summary:

> When a literary work is translated into film, it is metamorphosized not only by the camera, the editing, the performances, the setting, and the music, but by distinct film codes and conventions, culturally signifying elements, and by the producer's and

[66] Ibid., p. 79.
[67] Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, p. 104-106.

> director's interpretations as well. […] Cultural factors […] affect adaptations in significant ways, especially when an English novel is transposed into an American film or a film primarily intended for an American audience.[68]

2.7 TELEVISION ADAPTATIONS

With British independent television establishing itself as a rival to the BBC as a provider of adaptations, and television adaptations using filmic methods, the borders between film and television and commercial and non-commercial television are becoming blurred. The distinction is becoming less apparent in the finished product. But film and television do present an interesting dynamic. As was apparent with the whole Austenmania phenomenon, they feed off each other to produce major entertainment industry events. It is therefore interesting to take a quick look at the history of television adaptation.

There are several reasons why the adaptation of literary classics has made its way onto the television screen. In Britain its roots can partly be traced back to a trend of stage adaptations of great literary works towards the end of the nineteenth century.[69] The classic adaptation first found its way onto BBC Radio, in line with what was then perceived to be the role of a public broadcaster. The old BBC radio adaptations were broadcast 'when family members could be supposed to be gathered together and thus able to share in the infusion of morally uplifting doses of their cultural heritage.'[70] These adaptations were often produced in serial form and began in 1938.

When television finally got going in Britain after World War II is was only natural that such a successful concept be transferred to the new medium. Like so much early television the drama was transmitted live to its audience, and very few of these early adaptations remain. The BBC Classic Serial established itself as an important part of BBC's overall production. The fact that adaptations of classical novels have found their way into commercial television despite its relatively high production costs is probably mostly due to the genre being so well established in Britain and that it has been much loved by viewers from all layers of society.

The dynamic between show and tell has undergone quite a change when it comes to

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[68] Klein, 'Introduction: Film and Literature' in *The English Novel and the Movies*, p. 5, 10.
[69] Monica Lauritzen, *Jane Austen's Emma on Television – A Study of a BBC Classic Serial* (Göteborg: Acta Gothoburgensis, 1981), p. 16.
[70] Reynolds, p. 4.

television adaptations. While adaptations by the BBC in the 1970s were mainly shot on a studio set and contained more dialogue than found in the source material, 1995 saw *Pride & Prejudice* recorded in scenic locations with film cameras. Adaptations for television have now developed a discourse that is almost indistinguishable from film. An adaptation of *Persuasion* for the BBC in 1995 ended up doing a tour of cinema screens worldwide. Television adaptations are now also commissioned out to external production companies rather than produced by the television companies themselves.

The biggest difference between film adaptations and television adaptations these days is perhaps that television adaptations still can run over several episodes while an adaptation for the cinema should not exceed three hours, preferably not more than two.

2.8 ADAPTING JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen is ideal adaptation material in many ways. Her well crafted plots are strongly character driven, and much information is communicated through dialogue. Despite the presence of an intrusive narrator, there is a distinctly dramatic mode to her storytelling.

Jane Austen wrote around 200 years ago, but her writing has a very modern feel. Fay Weldon points to her 'dramatic scene-setting' and how she allows her audience to breathe in just the right places before new information is presented.[71] She seems to have a consciousness of audience and audience reaction, probably learnt through her habit of reading her stories aloud to family and friends.

Jane Austen does not paint many pictures of landscapes. Her focus is on the characters and the structures of society, and not the scenery. This can be both a relief and a challenge. It gives a certain freedom to the filmmaker, but might also make it easier for the filmmaker to lose his way. Many of the adaptations from the mid 1990s and onwards are extremely scenic. Some of them have been major contributors to the financial security of the British heritage industry. This can easily take a lot of the focus away from the story and the characters.

Despite Jane Austen's focus on characters we are not told all that much about their appearance. This can make casting a bit of a minefield, especially because Jane Austen has so

[71] Fay Weldon, *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishing, Inc., 1984, 1990), p. 77.

many passionate fans with firm opinions about what some of these characters look like. In order to make a successful adaptation it is necessary with a certain amount of detachment, both from the expectations of fans and one's own reading of the text: '[R]ecreating her work is only possible when the reader has moved away from, overcome an early form of love which is characterised by identification. For this to happen, identificatory love must be replaced by recognition that the other, exactly, is other.'[72]

However modern Jane Austen's writing might feel, it is still written at a time when quite a few things were different from what they are now. '[T]ranslations too faithful to the books cannot achieve broad enough appeal for the movie industry, even if we could agree what "faithfulness" to Austen might mean.'[73] Information that Jane Austen's contemporaries took for granted might need to be added, or aspects of the story that require that kind of information might be left out of the adaptation.

Despite the dramatic feel of Jane Austen's novels there is also a certain psychological emphasis and much interior action that prove challenging in any adaptation of her work.[74] This information must somehow be imparted through an often very alternative discourse, be it facial impressions, voice-over, additional dialogue or dream sequences.

Most of the difficulties involved in adapting Jane Austen are the same difficulties filmmakers face when adapting any novel. But her use of irony does present a more particular problem, especially because much of it is introduced through an intrusive narrator. We will now move on to have a closer look at the concept of irony.

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[72] John Wiltshire, *Recreating Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 11.
[73] Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield, 'Introduction – Watching Ourselves Watching' in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, ed. by Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), p. 6.
[74] Sue Parrill, *Jane Austen on Film and Television – A Critical Study of the Adaptations* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002), p. 14.

Chapter 3 Irony

Jane Austen's use of irony with its satire and its comedy is what creates depth beneath her love stories. Without it Jane Austen's genius would be reduced to a mere shadow of its true magnitude. If we did not pay attention to her irony we would be left with well written and entertaining romantic plots, which can of course be pleasant enough, but it would be cheating ourselves out of the full enjoyment of reading her stories. Before considering Jane Austen's use of irony it might be helpful to first take a look at the concept of irony itself.

3.1 THE CONCEPT OF IRONY

Irony is not an easy concept to define. Many attempts have been made in literary theory and philosophy to come to grips with it. And different attempts have resulted in different definitions, as they often do. It seems to me, however, that some common denominators have been found, and I will attempt to focus on these. A main obstacle must be said to be to define the outer limits of irony, to decide upon its range. It will not serve the purpose of this thesis to get too deeply into any such discussion, but I will try to decide upon some sort of range before I go on to make a selection of types of irony suited for the interpretation of *Emma*.

There is one aspect of irony that is universally agreed upon. I doubt anyone would protest if I claimed that irony's most striking feature is that it is created through a discord between what is overtly stated and what is really meant. This has led to a very broad usage of the term, where all literature can be said to be ironic because literature usually invites us to infer covert meaning from what is overtly stated. Such a usage of irony would make it indistinguishable from most other types of literary devices, such as metaphor for instance, and consequently does not really tell us all that much about what irony really is. Wayne Booth in his *A Rhetoric of Irony*[1] is concerned with this problem and tries to distinguish irony from other rhetorical devices in literature. He, for one thing, points out that the test of irony is not found in the text we read but in the critic's definition.

[1] Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974).

D. C. Muecke divides irony into two principal forms; verbal irony and situational irony.[2] Verbal irony requires an ironist, a person who is being ironical about someone or something. This is a linguistic phenomenon but can be achieved in different media because each medium can be seen as having its own 'language', as defined by semiotics. Verbal irony has a tendency to be satirical, its purpose being to expose to ridicule the vices or follies of a society or a person, often with a view to making us stand up against something or even effect a change. Verbal irony can also be employed as a rhetorical device, which is what Booth is mainly concerned with in his book, or used for solemn foolery. I will come back to situational irony at the end of this subchapter.

I would like to first turn my attention to the ironist. Irony can be a way of seeing things. It can be seen as a way of dealing with the many incongruities of our existence, as irony is primarily born out of the contrast between appearance and reality. The victim of irony is unaware of this contrast and confident in his or her belief in the reality of what is really only appearance. The ironist is of course aware of what is reality, even though in some instances the ironist may pretend not to be, mimicking the ignorance of her victim. What the ironist sees as reality may not necessarily be what someone else sees as reality, with the result that the ironist is not invulnerable to further irony from a new vantage point. The ironist needs only be convinced that her view of reality is valid, however, and that a contrary view is not. Our existence is full of these contradictions. For instance, the fact that we seem to live only to die. On a smaller scale there is the contrast between what our moral standards set up for us as ideals and the way we actually behave and live. An ironist can be seen as using irony to somehow reconcile herself to these contradictions. Irony allows you, in a way, to transcend these predicaments and rise to the level of the unconcerned observer. Muecke states that the ironic observer's

> awareness of the victim's unawareness invites him to see the victim as bound or trapped where he feels free; committed where he feels disengaged; swayed by emotions, harassed, or miserable, where he is dispassionate, serene, or even moved to laughter; trustful, credulous, or naïve, where he is critical, sceptical, or content to suspend judgement. And where his own attitude is that of a man whose world appears real and meaningful, he will see the victim's world as illusory or absurd.[3]

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[2] D. C. Muecke, *Irony* in *The Critical Idiom*, gen. ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen, 1970), p. xiii.
[3] Ibid., p. 37.

This kind of detachment is probably also helpful for the ironist who wishes to use irony for satirical purposes. By seeing society in the splendour of all its ironic contrasts it might help call attention to areas in need of change.

The reader's awareness of a contrast between appearance and reality is, of course, also necessary for the recognition of irony, be that a contrast between text and context or a contrast within the text. But as I have indicated earlier, there is more to verbal irony than this lack of congruence. How do we know, for instance, that we are expected to infer a different meaning than the one overtly stated, and how do we know that we are dealing with irony and not with a metaphor? And how can we know that our inference is correct?

The greatest problem in recognising and interpreting irony is that it seems rather a subjective process. Our recognition of irony depends on our definition of what irony is, and our interpretation depends on our frames of reference. Booth chooses to deal with this problem by dividing his discussion of irony into two parts; stable irony and unstable irony. The first category is 'a specific kind of literary fixity, a "stable irony" that does in fact present us with a limited set of reading tasks – regardless of the breadth or narrowness of our conception of irony in general.'[4] Booth sees stable irony as a type of irony that is intended, 'deliberately created by human beings to be heard or read and understood with some precision by other human beings', it is covert, 'intended to be reconstructed with meanings different from those in the surface', it is stable 'in the sense that once a reconstruction of meaning has been made, the reader is not invited to undermine it with further demolitions and reconstructions', and it is often also finite in application, although not necessarily so.[5] It seems a sensible form of irony to focus on as it might be less existentially threatening to approach than unstable irony, or irony that is more susceptible to personal interpretation. It also makes sense to focus on stable irony with finite or at least restricted application in order not to wander astray into complicated discussions of the nature of truth. Stable irony operates within the sharable common sense, while unstable irony belongs to the less sharable 'private' sense. As an example of stable irony Booth cites a passage in Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice*. The passage is a statement made by Mr Bennet to Elizabeth towards the end of the novel; '"I admire all my three sons-in-law highly," said he.

[4] Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony*, p. 3.
[5] Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

"Wickham, perhaps is my favourite; but I think I shall like *your* husband as well as Jane's."'[6] It is impossible from any attentive reading of the novel, or even halfway attentive, not to see the irony here. For one thing, Mr Bennet has explicitly stated his disapproval of Wickham earlier in the novel.

Booth identifies four steps in the transformations of meaning experienced in reading any passage of stable irony:

Step one: The reader is required to reject the literal meaning […] recognizing either some incongruity among the words or between the words and something else that he knows […] the route to new meanings passes through an unspoken conviction that cannot be reconciled with the literal meaning.

Step two: Alternative interpretations or explanations are tried out […]. The alternatives will all in some degree be incongruous with what the literal statement seems to say.

Step three: A decision must […] be made about the author's knowledge or beliefs […] It is this decision about the author's own beliefs that entwines the interpretation of stable ironies so inescapable in intentions. […] No matter how firmly I am convinced that a statement is absurd or illogical or plain false, I must somehow determine whether what I reject is also rejected by the author, and whether he has reason to expect my concurrence. […] Our best evidence of the intentions behind any sentence […] will be the whole [work] […] it [can] thus make sense to talk […] of the *work's* intentions […].

Step four: Having made a decision about the knowledge or beliefs of the speaker, we can finally choose a new meaning or cluster of meanings with which we can rest secure. […] the reconstructed meanings will necessarily be in harmony with the unspoken beliefs that the reader has decided to attribute to [the author/speaker].[7]

Booth points out that these steps are usually more or less simultaneous, but that they 'can be isolated by anyone who challenges the reading of a point'.[8] Booth has chosen to refer to this process as 'reconstruction' rather than 'interpretation' or other similar terms because it entails breaking down overt statements to create covert meaning.

One important thing in this context remains. Irony needs to be differentiated from other literary devices that say one thing and mean another, like the metaphor mentioned earlier. As with irony you are required to go beyond the surface meaning when you encounter a metaphor, but not necessarily to enter into a process of repudiation or reversal. We are not required to see incompatibilities and choose among them, but rather to enter into a process of exploration or extension, to add meanings. There is no moment of conscious decision about the author's beliefs thrust upon us either. The same can be said of allegory and fable. Decisions on meaning

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[6] Jane Austen, *Pride & Prejudice*, ed. By R. W. Chapman, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932; repr. 1988), p. 379 (Volume III, Chapter XVII). All references to *Pride & Prejudice* are to this edition and will be given in the text.

[7] Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony*, pp. 10-12.

[8] Ibid., p. 12.

do of course happen even though we are not forced to make them, as they probably do in all communication, but 'irony dramatizes each moment by heightening the consequences of going astray'.[9] Booth refers to the moment of 'shock' when we first recognise irony which is more or less absent when we recognise other types of literary devices. And also the fact that you can, for instance, read an allegory without realising it is an allegory and still obtain an experience close to the one intended. Both metaphors and allegories can be ironic, although not necessarily so, and the effects produced can then be very much like the effects of stable irony.

Muecke points out that there also seems to be a comic element in irony. He sees the comic as possibly inherent in the formal properties of irony;

> [T]he basic contradictions or incongruity coupled with a real or a pretended confident unawareness. No man wittingly contradicts himself […]; consequently, the appearance of an intentional contradiction sets up a psychic tension which can only find a resolution in laughter.[10]

Perhaps laughter is a kind of defence mechanism where we protect ourselves against the sympathy or pain we might feel for a victim of irony, or against the pain we might feel when an ironic comment strikes home. And it cannot be denied that we do like to laugh at other people's expense. It probably renders our own situation less bleak. Besides, when faced with some of the incongruities of our existence there seem to be only two options; we must either cry or laugh. The latter is certainly the pleasanter of the two.

Finally there is also an aesthetic element in irony. Not all attempts at irony are equally successful. Irony needs to be well formed and well told. Its effect depends on how it is constructed, its timing and its tone. Muecke also sees it as a matter of economy. One should try to produce as much effect as possible through as small means as possible. Booth concurs by stating that 'perhaps no other form of communication does so much with such speed and economy'.[11]

All in all we can sum up by saying that there are five basic features for all irony:

① a contrast between appearance and reality
② a confident unawareness that the appearance is only an appearance
③ an element of detachment
④ a comic element
⑤ an aesthetic element.

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[9] Ibid., p. 23.
[10] Muecke, p. 34.
[11] Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony*, p. 13.

I have so far been looking at verbal irony, and would now like to take a look at Muecke's other principal form of irony; situational irony. Situational irony is the irony of a state of affairs or an event seen as ironic. Primarily, situational irony is dominated by the main feature of irony, when someone in the narrative is not aware of the true situation while we as readers are, and possibly also another character in the narrative. Like verbal irony, situational irony is dependent on a lack of congruence between appearance and reality. Often the victim of the irony is confident in his or her own version of the truth. The effect can be greatly enhanced when the victim's words are appropriate to the real situation without his or her knowing it. It involves the idea of an outer meaning for the persons concerned, and an inner meaning for the privileged observer. It may also have a moral purpose, but can be presented purely for its entertainment value. And I should also mention that in a work of fiction any situational irony must also involve an ironist as all situations obviously have been created by someone. I have dedicated most of this chapter to verbal irony, but situational irony is present at the very core of *Emma* in the fact that Emma mistakenly thinks she can read everybody else's hearts while she is not even capable of reading her own.

A special type of situational irony is dramatic irony. In *Emma*, much of the situational irony only becomes apparent with hindsight. To my mind, this is what makes Jane Austen's novels so re-readable. Many situations or comments only become ironic in view of later events and are therefore only apparent on second reading. With dramatic irony a character's words can 'recoil' upon him or her.[12]

There are other types of irony in addition to Muecke's two main categories. Some of the same problems obviously crop up here as in the attempt to define irony itself. There will be varying types with varying definitions. For the purpose of this thesis it will therefore be practical to select the types that will be most useful in dealing with Jane Austen, and decide on one definition to be used throughout.

One type of irony frequently employed by Jane Austen is the irony of self-betrayal. Here the ironist creates characters who unconsciously ironise themselves and then the ironist withdraws. In *Emma* Mrs Elton is such a character. Her behaviour is generally loud and vulgar,

[12] This second kind of dramatic irony is taken from J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1992).

but she still manages to proclaim that she is 'a great advocate for timidity' when speaking of Jane Fairfax to Emma.[13] The narrator can of course also intrude and make ironic comments on such characters as Austen does with Miss Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice*; 'Miss Bingley was left to all the satisfaction of having forced [Mr Darcy] to say what gave no one any pain but herself.' (*Pride* 271)

Such comments very often appear as impersonal irony. This is a way of being ironical where the ironist's character does not come into play, usually characterised by a dryness or gravity of manner frequently in the form of understatement. The words alone can create the irony, or it can be created in the contrast between the words and the context.

More generally we might talk about an irony of tone, where the narrator's dry tone gives an ironic flavour. We can also talk about literary irony. In *Emma*, for instance, part of the irony is that real life is not like the life portrayed in romantic literature. Emma seems to be oblivious to this in her dealings with Harriet. All in all we can also distinguish between light irony where the ironist is more amused than concerned, and heavy irony where moral values and principles are at stake. This is where irony can become part of the larger structure of satire.

Irony very often, although not always, includes a victim, and satire always does. The presence of the victim has a tendency to be stressed in discussions of irony, and has probably contributed to irony's reputation of being 'elitist'. The element of detachment mentioned earlier certainly has an air of 'looking down one's nose' about it. But even in satire with its necessary victims, irony is just as much about inclusion and bonding as about exclusion, perhaps even more. Booth states that 'every irony inevitably builds a community of believers even as it excludes, […] it is often a larger community, with fewer outsiders, than would have been built by non-ironic statements'.[14] Irony will inevitably victimise those readers who do not grasp it, and this is perhaps partly why we take so much pleasure in deciphering it; we, as readers, can feel we belong to those who understand as opposed to those who do not understand. In this way a certain amount of enthusiasm and loyalty is created, we and the ironist become partners in wit.

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[13] Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed. By R. W. Chapman, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933; repr. 1988), p. 283 (Volume II, Chapter XV). All references to *Emma* are to this edition and will be given in the text.
[14] Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony*, pp. 28, 29.

3.2 JANE AUSTEN AND IRONY

Jane Austen's six novels can be said to make use of several elements from the comedy of manners, a genre in which the main subjects and themes are the behaviour and manners of men and women living under specific social codes.[15] The genre tends to be preoccupied with the codes of the middle and upper classes and is, among other things, often marked by wit. The comic novel has long traditions in England, and Jane Austen is regarded as the first woman to have written great comic novels in the English language.

The most dominant aspect of Jane Austen's comedy is, without a doubt, her irony. Unfortunately, there are many readers over the years who have failed to recognise the contempt hidden behind her polite tone. One example can be found in one of her more famous critics, Sir Walter Scott, who belongs to a long line of readers who have mistakenly labelled Elizabeth Bennet as mercenary in the failure to see through a sentence of light irony. The sentence is, of course, the one expressed by Elizabeth in *Pride & Prejudice* when her sister Jane demands to know how long Elizabeth has loved Darcy; '[...]I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.' (*Pride* 382) These readers have taken the statement at face value and as their conclusive evidence. To me this would be entirely out of character for Elizabeth, there is incongruity between the words and something else that I know (Booth's *step one*), and there seems to be rather a critique of the mercenary aspect of marriage making in her words (Booth's *step two*). As Jane Austen focuses on the importance of love and respect in marriage it is likely that this is her intended meaning (Booth's *step three*). It is for the reader then to conclude that Elizabeth is in fact being ironic and fires a pre-emptive attack on accusations that might well come her way (Booth's *step four*). For those of another opinion it should be sufficient to go to the next line in the book where Jane actually entreats Elizabeth to be serious. An inability to see Austen's irony has contributed to her reputation as a 'light' writer, and given her labels such as 'quaint' and 'charming'.

As mentioned before, irony demands involvement and co-operation from the reader. The reader must make connections. And this may give rise to what, at times, seems like rather incongruous interpretations of Jane Austen's work. What type of involvement and what type of

[15] Robert M. Polhemus, 'Jane Austen's Comedy', in *The Jane Austen Handbook*, ed. by J. David Grey (London: Athlone, 1986), pp. 60-71.

connections which are made depends on the reader's personal experience and, I will have to say, abilities. It is here the importance of Booth's *step three* becomes obvious, where a decision must be made about the author's knowledge or beliefs, and the subject of Jane Austen's knowledge or beliefs is by no means one of general consensus. Henry James is often referred to by critics in connection with Jane Austen. He is at the forefront of those claiming that Jane Austen was an unconscious writer. The image he wants to draw is that of the harmless spinster who was not aware of the deeper meaning of her writing. Marvin Mudrick seems to second this view and says about *Emma* that

> […] no other of Jane Austen's novels offers so pleasant and comfortable an atmosphere, so much the effect of an uncomplex and immediate art. […] The story tells itself, and nothing seems more superfluous than inquiry or deep thought about it.[16]

He sees the novel as a the triumph of surface. Irony is, of course, dependent on the reader's ability to recognise it, and it is an irony in itself that this inability seems to a certain extent to exist in a critic who has written a whole book on the subject of irony in Jane Austen.

Wayne Booth easily rejects the view of Jane Austen as an unconscious writer by turning our attention to the fact that *Emma* is a novel with a very fine balance, a novel that could very easily fail without proper attention from its writer. A delicate balance needs to be upheld between Emma's faults and the reader's sympathy for her:

> If we fail to see Emma's faults as revealed in the ironic texture from line to line, we cannot savor to the full the comedy as it is prepared for us. On the other hand, […] – if we fail to love her more and more as the book progresses – we can neither hope for the conclusion, a happy and deserved marriage with Knightley following upon her reform, nor accept it as an honest one when it comes.[17]

To be able to uphold this fine and important balance Austen must have been very conscious indeed of what she was doing. It also takes a conscious writer to be able to carry off a novel of approximately 400 pages with relatively very little plot. Mudrick is aware of this last fact, and he also praises the complex ironic structure of the novel by quoting Reginald Farrer:

> [W]hile twelve readings of *Pride and Prejudice* give you twelve periods of pleasure repeated, as many readings of *Emma* give you that pleasure, not repeated only, but

[16] Marvin Mudrick, *Jane Austen: Irony As Defence and Discovery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 181.
[17] Wayne Booth, 'Control of Distance in Jane Austen's *Emma*', in *Jane Austen: Emma - A Casebook*, ed. by David Lodge, rev. edn (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 138.

> squared and squared again with each perusal, till at every fresh reading you feel anew that you never understood anything like the widening sum of its delights.[18]

Mudrick seems to me a little confused. Or, at least, I become a little confused by his claims about *Emma*. And his support of the claim about *Pride & Prejudice* in this quote does make you wonder about his ability to detect dramatic irony. I think that we must be allowed to assume that Jane Austen did indeed know what she was doing when she wrote *Emma*, especially as she revised the work several times before releasing it for publication.

My own impression of Jane Austen is that she was a very intelligent woman, a view subscribed to by recent biographers.[19] She can be seen to have led a rather uneventful and confined life. Although she had an affectionate family they did not belong to the more affluent classes, and life in general was very limited for women of the middle and upper classes as they often had very few occupations open to them. Austen is often considered to be conservative, but it should be evident from her novels that she was critical of the idle and frivolous nature of many women's lives. She certainly must have felt the frustration of it herself with her active and alert mind. I am quite convinced that she wanted to use irony and comedy as an outlet for these frustrations in an attempt to reconcile herself to traditional faith and conventional society by releasing doubts and resentment with a minimised risk of repercussions. In this way she fits well into the picture of the ironist drawn earlier. For Jane Austen there must have been a very real incongruity between who she was and who society took her to be or expected her to be. All Jane Austen's novels contain some satire of the boring mindlessness to which an intelligent woman could be subjected.

Jane Austen was also poised between the decorous rationalism of eighteenth century society and religion and the restless energy and ambition of nineteenth century individualism. Although reckoned to belong more to the former than the latter, she may have been striving for a form of creation that would preserve the best of the past, but would allow for change and development. And she tried to achieve this through the means of irony. At the end of her, at times, satirical portrait of her own times Austen 'offers a good marriage as the hope of intimacy

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[18] Reginald Farrer, 'The Book of Books', in *Jane Austen: Emma - A Casebook*, ed. by David Lodge, rev. edn (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 65-69 (p. 65) (from 'Jane Austen, ob. July 18, 1817' first publ. in *Quarterly Review*, ccxxviii (July 1917), 24-8). Quoted in Mudrick, *Jane Austen*, p. 202.

[19] E.g. Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London: Penguin, 1998) and David Nokes, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London: Forth Estate, 1998).

and a potential remedy for the incompleteness of personality in an individualistic age.'[20] It also offers a comic compromise between self-gratification and social responsibility. Love and marriage signify the control of egoism and misperception and the regenerative merging of the self with the ongoing community. Irony is under proper control. But as Mr Knightley himself says; 'I love an open temper' (*Emma* 237), and an 'open temper' or a lively mind is exactly what he finds in Emma.

Jane Austen saw humour as a liberating mechanism, but she also felt it could be an irresponsible license. She strove in her fiction to create a union of comic and moral imagination.[21] In *Pride & Prejudice* her attitude seems to be pronounced through Elizabeth: '"I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can."' (*Pride* 102) Having a well developed sense of humour and a sharp wit does not mean that you do not think some things should be taken seriously. Irony requires detachment, and there is the danger of becoming too detached. The example of irony gone wrong is personified in Mr Bennet in *Pride & Prejudice*, and the consequences for those relying on him are only too plainly shown. Jane Austen does not want to fall into that trap herself. It seems to me that in the characters of Elizabeth and Mr Bennet Jane Austen wants to establish just what part irony should play in her fiction. Elizabeth is checked at the end of the novel by her marriage to Mr Darcy but is also allowed to retain her wit and vivacity. The similarity between the solutions for the two independent-minded heroines of *Pride & Prejudice* and *Emma* strongly suggests that this was an issue that Jane Austen must have been preoccupied with.

An important aspect of Jane Austen's narrative style is dialogue. Speech often reveals character and informs us of the speaker's quality of mind, and it creates a lot of her comedy. Speech is the most dominant element when Jane Austen employs irony of self-betrayal, although behaviour and appearance also contribute. Silly characters often expose themselves and become victims of irony through their monologues. Mr Collins is a prime example in *Pride & Prejudice*, and Sir Walter Elliot another in *Persuasion*. Miss Bates' rambling monologues cover page after page in *Emma* and ironise both herself, the action in the novel and society, but the

[20] Polhemus, p. 68.
[21] Ibid., p. 63.

irony at Miss Bates' expense is easy and simple. Jane Austen makes it quite clear that anything else is unacceptable, but I will return to this point and Miss Bates later.

In spite of Jane Austen's weariness of irony's element of detachment she obviously had to put some distance between herself and her subject to be able to use irony in her writing to the extent that she did. With Austen irony is not so much a literary device she resorts to from time to time as a habitual point-of-view or style of writing. She often uses an intrusive narrator who is given an ironic flavour by her dry irony of tone: 'Frank Churchill was one of the boasts of Highbury, and a lively curiosity to see him prevailed, though the compliment was so little returned that he had never been there in his life.' (*Emma* 17) This irony of tone can be felt to sound through most of the narrative.

Jane Austen has often been criticised for the limited scope of her novels. Her world is often regarded as restricted. It is, however, common for the satirist to attack on a narrow front.[22] The important point is to have a chosen target that is sufficiently representative to give the satire universality. Jane Austen did this by choosing to work with the limited circle of family and friends that to many people constitutes reality. And as is well known from her letters, she was conscious enough about her chosen range to recommend it 'as the very thing to work on' to her niece who also wanted to be a writer.[23] In other words, Austen has chosen an ideal frame for her irony and satire. Her moral values are not often directly stated. They are rather stated through her sympathy for certain characters with the right moral values, their characters often revealed through their speech as mentioned above, or through her ironic satire.

Irony allows Jane Austen to feel an attraction towards things she really censures while keeping a safe distance. It also gave her a safe way of venting, of expressing her true feelings: 'In part, Jane Austen's "freedom" took the form of indulging in mild malice, or "pleasant contempt", to use the phrase which she herself coined in *Persuasion*.'[24] Jane Austen's habitual irony allows her to take a step back from the appearances and the behaviour of her society. At the same time it draws the reader in and allows us to feel that we are part of an intellectual conspiracy:

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[22] Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*.
[23] Letter to Anna Austen 9 September 1814, *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. by Deirdre Le Faye, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p 275.
[24] Oliver MacDonagh, *Real and Imagines Worlds* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 109.

> Irony is her mind's bridge between what is and what may be or ought to be, and at times it spans and supports alternative interpretations of reality, none of which she is ready to discard. […] The verbal irony liberates by suggesting different options in assessing life and different strategies for coping with it. […] It implies that the mind is free to proceed hypothetically in its practical search for understanding and gratification as long as it recognizes its own fallibility and the inherent confusion between seeming and being; it must retain its flexibility toward the future. For Austen, life itself is the principle ironist, the meanings of which can and do change with the passing of time and the flux of perception.[25]

To conclude it is generally felt, I think, that Jane Austen uses irony to demonstrate the irony of our existence. She uses irony to attract our attention to the discrepancies between appearance and reality, the very field of tension in which irony itself is born, and offers irony as a flexible perspective through which we can deal with our existence in a constructive way, seriously yet with a sense of humour. Nowhere in her work is this stronger than in *Emma*.

3.3 IRONY IN *EMMA*

Emma is possibly the Jane Austen novel about which readers are most likely to disagree. It is certainly easy to make this assumption when dipping into the vast body of literary criticism dedicated to the novel. Adena Rosmarin might remark on the 'consensual blandness' of this criticism,[26] but even with important common denominators there is still room for a good share of disagreement. Most critics seem, nevertheless, to be able to agree on one central point; that *Emma* contains an intricate and complex web of ironic comments and structures. A reading or interpretation of *Emma* relies heavily on the reading and interpretation of this irony. I think it is safe to assume that much of the disagreement surrounding the criticism of the book is caused by this source of potentially limitless interpretations.

I cannot possibly attempt to do justice to the many diverse and interesting interpretations of *Emma* here. I will not even pretend to be acquainted with them all. Instead, I will restrict myself to sampling from a few selected critiques to supplement my own reading of the book. I will also have to focus on certain parts of *Emma* while neglecting others. No attempt will be made to exhaust the ironic content of *Emma*. My selection will be guided by what I deem to be of particular interest in my later analysis of the four adaptations.

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[25] Polhemus, pp. 66-67.
[26] Adena Rosmarin, '"Misreading" *Emma:* the Powers and Perfidies of Interpretive History', in *Jane Austen: Emma - A Casebook*, ed. by David Lodge, rev. edn (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 213.

Rosmarin criticises the dominance of mimetic readings in the critical history of *Emma*.[27] Mimetic readings cannot fully explain all aspects of *Emma*, and those aspects the model leaves unexplained have traditionally been discarded as shortcomings on Jane Austen's part or attributed to instances of her genius. Interestingly in the context of this thesis, Rosmarin also points out that 'irony flouts the fundamental commitments of mimesis, to a reality independent of text and reader; to a medium transparent to that reality.'[28] Rosmarin therefore chooses to apply the methodology of 'affective stylistics', a shift from what we read to how we read, to the novel instead, and carries out a disturbingly convincing interpretation which manages to show the necessary function of all aspects of the novel which mimetic models fail to explain. The basic idea is that Jane Austen lays out the same trap for us as she does for Emma. We are to learn the same lesson as she does in the most effective way, very much through Austen's clever use of irony. Rosmarin criticises the tendency to see *Emma* as a novel about Emma, rather a mimetic approach, but that is not to deny Emma's importance in *Emma*. She dominates the narration and our reading of the novel, and she will also be the focus of a film or television adaptation of the novel. She is a good place to start our investigation of the irony of *Emma*.

Robert M. Polhemus goes as far as staking the whole of Jane Austen's reputation as a comic genius on the existence of Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse.[29] He sees them as comic heroines in three different ways:

> [A]s a central figure of the romantic plot ending in marriage; as a possessor of a fine and irrepressible sense of humour very much like the author's; and as a subject of comic irony – Emma especially is often laughable and ridiculous. Like their creator, they assert their individuality through comedy, and they use their humour to try to distinguish themselves from the mediocrity, triviality, and male pride that can swallow up women's lives.[30]

The comparison between Emma and Jane Austen is interesting in relation to what I have said earlier about Austen and irony. Also, in the novel one of its most crucial events is when Emma's humour misfires during the Box Hill scene (*Emma* Vol. III, Chap. VII). There is no real use of irony here by the definitions set earlier. Emma's wisecrack might not be intended to be taken too seriously, but there is no mistaking its literal meaning. Although Emma certainly is intelligent

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[27] Rosmarin; p. 213-241. Rosmarin is supported in this view by Booth when he stresses that *Emma* is not a realistic portrayal, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, p 264.
[28] Ibid., p. 218.
[29] Polhemus, p 64.
[30] Ibid.

enough to be a skilful user of irony, she is much too encapsulated in her own delusions to manage the detachment required. This very fact does on the other hand make her an ideal subject of comic irony. The many discrepancies between Emma's perception of the world around her and actual reality just scream out for ironic treatment. In Volume I of *Emma* (Chaps 1-18) the ironies at the expense of Emma are generally easy to detect. This is due to the author's rather generous sharing of information. This is done with a great deal of help from the plain-speaking Mr Knightley. It becomes, for instance, relatively clear to the reader that Mr Elton's amorous intentions are directed towards Emma and not Harriet, despite Emma's determination not to see this. This determination creates a fertile breeding ground for situational irony, as when Emma comments on Elton's assumed attentions to Harriet: '"Hitherto I fancy you and I are the only people to whom his looks and manners have explained themselves."' (*Emma* 56) In fact, the absolute opposite of Emma's claim is the truth. Emma and Harriet are the only people who have misunderstood Elton's manners.[31] Volume I has plenty of these instances of situational irony at Emma's expense.

In Volume II the irony becomes rather more complex. *Emma* is from then on much more narrated from its heroine's point of view, and the readers' knowledge is consequently that much more confined. Even information available to Emma is held back. The increased dominance of Emma's voice in the narrative should function as a warning signal to the reader, but because Jane Austen blends it so smoothly with the objective narrator's voice to create what Graham Hough labels coloured narrative, it is easy to overlook this.[32] Rosmarin points out that our interpretation of events is further clouded by the confidence the reader gains while deciphering the relatively overt irony in Volume I. Much like Emma herself, we are lulled into a false sense of security. If indeed Rosmarin is right about the novel's intention of letting the reader share Emma's lesson, we as readers then inevitably also become subjects of irony.

Some ironies are impossible to detect on a first reading of *Emma*, and others, while detectable, are extremely obscure. Sometimes there can obviously be suspicion, but we might

[31] The fact that it is not only the reader who understands Elton's intentions, but also other characters in the novel, is revealed in conversations with Mr John Knightly and Miss Bates later in the narrative.
[32] Graham Hough, 'Narrative and Dialogue in Jane Austen', in *Jane Austen: Emma - A Casebook*, ed. by David Lodge, rev. edn (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 169-203. Graham Hough identifies five kinds of discourses in *Emma*; (1) the authorial voice, (2) objective narrative, (3) coloured narrative, (4) free indirect style and (5) direct speech and dialogue.

have to wait a long while for confirmation. Our main source of clues in Volume II is Miss Bates. Buried in her streaming monologues is information potentially very useful to the most observant of readers. But they are easy to miss. Just like Emma, we are likely to find her ramblings very tedious and pay her little attention. We are also given a few hints by the objective narrator that we are not getting the full story. Already in Chapter II of Volume II we are told that Jane Fairfax' letter to her aunt and grandmother 'contained nothing but the truth, though there might be some truths not told.' (*Emma*, 166)

There is, in fact, a conflict in Volumes II and III in which Jane Austen has to make some crucial choices. 'On the one hand she cares about maintaining some sense of mystery as long as she can. On the other, she works at all points to heighten the reader's sense of dramatic irony [situational irony in my usage], usually in the form of a contrast between what Emma knows and what the reader knows.'[33] To maintain Emma's status as a comic heroine and an object of irony – indeed, to maintain the ironic structure and tone of the novel – Jane Austen's hand is somewhat forced once we enter Volume III.

The mystery of *Emma* is introduced along with Frank Churchill at the beginning of Volume II (Chap. V). The irony then predominately rests with this character. As Emma suspects and accuses him of towards the end of the book (*Emma* 478), Frank Churchill takes some pleasure in duping his surroundings. He is the only character we as readers establish any kind of relationship with, who is also acquainted with the nature of the novel's greatest mystery; the secret engagement between himself and Jane Fairfax. The only other character in the know, Jane herself, is kept at a safe distance, both by her own reserve and also by Emma's unfair treatment of her. Had Emma been the friend to Jane she should have been, she would have been a lot less likely to have made some of her most unfeeling blunders. This is something Emma realises herself when the main mystery is revealed (*Emma* 421). Frank Churchill's love for speaking what is the truth in the context of his own superior knowledge of the actual state of affairs, while knowing that this same statement leads others (mainly Emma) to construct meanings very far from the truth, constitutes the focus of his emergence as the main producer of irony. One of the most pointed instances of this occurs when several of the characters are

[33] Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, p 255.

assembled in the Bates' house to hear Jane Fairfax' new piano. The piano has been sent her anonymously. Emma thinks it is a gift from the married Mr Dixon whom she suspects Jane of having some sort of romantic entanglement with, a suspicion she has imparted to Frank. The piano is, in fact, from Frank, and he uses Emma's delusions to direct attention away from himself. While doing so he can speak the truth plainly for Jane to understand. In reference to the gift he says: '"True affection only could have prompted it."' (*Emma* 242) Emma, anxious not to have Jane realise her suspicions, rebukes Frank: '"You speak too plain. She must understand you."' But Frank knows what he is about: '"I hope she does. I would have her understand me. I am not in the least ashamed of my meaning."' (*Emma* 243) Austen is careful not to let her readers gain any insight into his thoughts to maintain the mystery and keep Frank Churchill's irony dramatic rather than situational. Wayne Booth chooses to see this choice by Austen as 'perhaps the weakest aspect of the novel'.[34] Rosmarin, on the other hand, takes the opposite view. The mystification is essential to our education, from a heuristic point of view it is a 'potent tutor'.[35] The ironies created in Volume II are also very complex. Emma is generally a sharp observer of external facts, but she is a hopelessly imaginative interpreter. The above scene is complicated for the reader by having access to Emma's interpretation of Jane's behaviour, and here and elsewhere there is seldom the simple incongruity between surface and the truth hidden underneath.

As the novel is building up towards what is generally considered the first of its two climaxes; the expedition to Box Hill (*Emma* Vol. III, Chap. VII),[36] Frank Churchill seems to lose his control of irony. This coincides with his increasing loss of control of his secret relationship with Jane. She is finding it more and more difficult to endure both the guilt of knowing that she has acted wrongly by consenting to the secret engagement and the irresponsibility of Frank's behaviour. The day before the outing to Box Hill they even have a heated quarrel, something we are not told about until later in a letter from Frank. As Frank becomes more emotionally unstable he becomes less able to distance himself enough from the situation to be ironic. His lively behaviour goes from being controlled and ironic to becoming frantic and silly. To compensate

[34] Ibid., p 255.
[35] Rosmarin, p. 225.
[36] The second climax is Mr Knightley's proposal.

for this Jane Austen reverts to giving the reader greater access to information. Miss Bates' role as informant is very much diminished, and as before she uses the character of Mr Knightley to provide a corrective to Emma's deluded perception of what is going on. In Volume III, Chapter V we are told of Mr Knightley's suspicions regarding Frank and Jane. We are even given the instances which are most suggestive to his suspicions in detail and from his point of view. We are, however, permitted to reject Mr Knightley's observations. For one thing, he distrusts his own imagination. But also, when he puts his suspicions to Emma she completely rejects them. If we have become sufficiently submerged in the character of Emma, we might also easily decide to do the same. Five chapters later there is no getting away from acknowledging the real state of affairs. Frank reveals the engagement to Mr and Mrs Weston as it is the only way to save the relationship, and Mrs Weston surprises Emma with the information in Volume III, Chapter X. Emma, and the novel's readers, can no longer avoid looking back at previous events and try to reinterpret them. The dissolution of one mystery does, however, bring to the foreground another mystery; the significance of some of Mr Knightley's behaviour, specifically in relation to Frank Churchill, but also increasingly in relation to Emma. This is again resolved with his proposal in Volume III, Chapter XIII. In light of the nature of Mr Knightley's true feelings and motives we are then able to appreciate some of the dramatic irony produced by his previous behaviour.

The next chapter brings Frank Churchill's explanatory letter. The letter has been much criticised and seen as a serious 'flaw'. It halts the narrative, and consequently presents a major problem for any would-be adapter of the novel. But as Rosmarin points out, it 'occasions an intense retrospective tutoring.'[37] It is thus necessary to open up the rest of the novel's dramatic irony to the reader. It does also provide another stumbling block at a point when we feel our lesson has been learnt. The letter and Emma's reaction to it clouds our judgement yet again. And again we are put right by Mr Knightley. Jane Austen hammers her point home until the very end. But then, in the last sentence, the authorial voice[38] intervenes and puts an end to our educational journey by assuring us of the happiness of Emma and Mr Knightley's union. We are no longer called upon to interpret. Force of habit have made critics such as Marvin Mudrick

[37] Rosmarin, p. 231.
[38] See note 32 in this chapter.

interpret the ending as ironic, though.[39]

At the very beginning of *Emma* Jane Austen is kind enough to warn us of the perils ahead:

> The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of her self; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. (*Emma* 5)

She then goes on to make one of her many dry, ironic comments: 'The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.' (*Emma* 5-6) One inference that can be made is that Emma avoids the kind of personal insights that will disturb her present happiness. Another instance of verbal irony in *Emma* is found in the discussion in Highbury of Frank Churchill's inevitable visit to his new stepmother: 'There was not a dissenting voice on the subject, either when Mrs Perry drank tea with Mrs and Miss Bates, or when Mrs. and Miss Bates returned the visit.' (*Emma* 17-18) There are obviously more than three residents in Highbury. Austen is here making fun of gossiping village women. A potentially more lofty ironic comment is made by the authorial voice in connection with Harriet's book of riddles: 'In this age of literature, such collections on a very grand scale are not uncommon.' (*Emma* 69) A collection of riddles hardly constitutes a collection on a very grand scale. The ironic comment could possibly comment on the exaggerated seriousness with which Harriet views her collection. It could comment on the fact that Emma chooses to encourage Harriet in this endeavour rather than more useful studies. Or Austen could be mocking the literary situation of her day.

These dry, ironic comments from the authorial voice crop up from time to time throughout the narrative of *Emma*. But it is by far the situational and dramatic ironies that are allowed to dominate.

3.4 IRONY IN *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*

Pride & Prejudice will not be subjected to any in depth analysis of its irony. It is included in this thesis for a very specific reason already mentioned earlier in the chapter. Elizabeth is often

[39] Mudrick, p. 206.

seen as the character in Jane Austen's writing most like her creator. What Elizabeth has to say about the uses of irony is therefore interesting.

Elizabeth is also very much like her father. She is his favourite daughter because he sees so much of himself in her, much that he has lost himself. The balance of these two characters in the way they affect the story, and also each other, is a story in itself, a story of irony. And its central themes are the human need for a feeling of control and detachment in life:

> The inability to grasp a situation has irony as problem and solution. The ironic distance enables us to rise above it all. […] The same distance might mean the loss of experiences of significance. When there is no difference, the risk is that everything becomes indifferent. Irony as rhetoric and behaviour is related to sedatives. It is a question of dosage before the solution becomes the problem.[40]

Elizabeth and Mr Bennet reflect the defensible and indefensible use of irony when navigating through life's many difficulties.

The young Mr Bennet was a man of intelligence and talent, but a rash marriage to a pretty and vivacious girl sours his outlook on life when she proves to be rather simple minded. His reaction to this disappointment is to create an ironic distance between himself and most of the world around him. The only people he takes any real pleasure in are his two eldest daughters Jane and Elizabeth. The other three he ridicules like his wife. The consequence of this detachment is the failure to act responsibly towards those who are his responsibility. He does not make provisions for the uncertain future of his wife and children who will be left with very little on his death. Mrs Bennet is more conscientious in this respect with her mercenary and often embarrassing hunt for husbands for her daughters. Mr Bennet does nothing to teach his daughters proper social behaviour, which does nothing to increase their eligibility as marriage material. This turns out to be pivotal for the happiness for the two eldest daughters. And it all culminates in Lydia's disastrous elopement.

Lydia's elopement is seemingly a turning point for Mr Bennet. He becomes painfully aware of his shortcomings as a father and husband. This is especially brought home by the fact that he ignored the advice of Elizabeth not to let Lydia go to Brighton, and that her dire

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[40] Finn Skårderud, *Uro – En reise i det moderne selvet* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1998), p. 21. My translation. (Mangelen på oversikt har ironien som problem og løsning. Den ironiske distansen gjør at vi kan heve oss over det hele. […] Den samme distansen risikerer at vi mister opplevelsen av betydning. Når alt blir like gyldig, er det en risiko for at det blir likegyldig. Ironi som retorikk og atferd er i slekt med beroligende medikamenter. Det er spørsmål om dose før løsningen blir problemet.)

predictions of what would come to pass if he let her go came true. Mr Bennet is unfortunately only compelled into action by the initial shock of the event. As soon as his brother-in-law allows him to he sinks back into inertia and detachment. Mr Bennet is too far gone to be able to rediscover the proper balance of irony and involvement.

The hope of the book lies with Elizabeth. Her ironic detachment is fertile ground for both pride and prejudice. Mr Darcy hurts her pride and she seeks refuge in her prejudice, helped by a domineering ironic point-of-view. Elizabeth still is capable of feeling deeply for the people close to her, though. She loves her father very much, but is very aware of his failings. It does feel like Jane Austen is speaking through Elizabeth in many of her ironic comments on the life going on around her. But before Elizabeth (and Jane Austen with her) crosses the line she is checked by her humiliation of having her prejudices revealed to her, especially towards Mr Darcy. Mr Darcy's much too solemn take on life is to be the stabilising force in Elizabeth's life, but her wit and vivacity is also predicted to be a softening influence on him. It is often claimed that their marriage is meant to completely subdue Elizabeth, but Jane Austen clearly indicates otherwise in her summing up of everybody's post wedding lives.

How these two existents fare in their relocation on the screen is a good indication of the success of the adaptation. With Elizabeth and Mr Bennet lies much of the essence of *Pride & Prejudice*.

3.5 IRONY IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Irony must be said to belong to the representational arts in so far as it can be seen to refer to something other than itself.[41] Representational art, which intends to remind us of phenomena outside its own structure, involves connotation as well as denotation, and irony can be one feature that adds depth to what is represented in the surface. We can therefore establish that not only literature but film and television also, both being representational arts, have the potential to be ironic. Irony is perhaps generally regarded as mainly a literary feature, or at least as a linguistic phenomenon. But even if we disregard film and television's use of dialogue or other more obviously linguistic features, the potential is still there. What a novel can tell

[41] Muecke, p. 4.

ironically, a film can show ironically.

Semiotics gives us the opportunity to include film and television in a definition of irony that describes it as a linguistic event. The film semiotician is interested in the signification coming from the raw material of film. J. Dudley Andrew identifies five channels of communication in film that constitute a film's raw material:

① images which are photographic, moving and multiple
② graphic traces which include all written material we read off the screen
③ recorded speech
④ recorded music
⑤ recorded sound or sound effects[42]

Irony can be created through any of these channels, with the exception of channel ⑤, or in the interaction, or conflict, between them. Channels ① and ② represent raw material the film has in common with other visual media such as photography and painting, but when the images move and in the transition between them (i.e. through dissolve, wipe or montage) something specifically 'filmic' is created. And it is in this area pure 'filmic' irony can be created.

Örjan Roth-Lindeberg has in his doctoral dissertation *Skuggan av et leende - Om filmisk ironi och den ironiska berättelsen* [*Shadow of a Smile - Filmic Irony and the Ironic Narrative*] tried to say something about the nature of irony in film. Although the term 'filmic irony' has been used earlier, his is the first attempt to identify its nature, and as far as I know the only attempt to date. Roth-Lindeberg's efforts have resulted in a brick of a book with detailed analysis, identifying, among other things, 28 devices having specific properties and functions in narrative irony. I will restrict myself to including what seem to me to be some useful definitions of irony in film. He sees irony as a linguistic event, 'verbal, visual or verbo-visual. It arises as a result of particular devices of, or approaches to, either the phrasing, or the construction of the image or the transition between the images'.[43] Roth-Lindeberg identifies three fundamental structural principles:

❶ the principle of verbal dominance - verbal irony
❷ the principle of the filmic or filmic-visual expression - pure filmic irony
❸ the principle of dynamic interaction, when words and picture influence, support or cancel out each other - verbo-visual irony[44]

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[42] J. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 218.
[43] Örjan Roth-Lindeberg, *Skuggan av et leende - Om filmisk ironi och den ironiska berättelsen* (Stockholm: T. Fisher & Co, 1995), p. 420.
[44] Ibid., p. 158.

Principle ❶ finds its expression through raw material ③, recorded speech, and is constituted by irony in the dialogue or the speech from a voice-over narrator. The latter can either be a character in the narrative, or a non-character who is often omniscient. In *Emma* (1996) such a narrator is used in the opening and closing sequences. Dialogue is used in *Pride & Prejudice* (1995) to convey the novel's famous ironic opening line. Ironic dialogue can also be directly transferred from the novel to the screen. Raw material ②, written material on the screen, exists in somewhat of a grey area between principles ❶ and ❷ being both visual and verbal, but is perhaps closer to the latter and this is where Roth-Lindeberg chooses to place it.

Principle ❷ represents visual irony, but also incorporates what distinguishes visual irony in film from visual irony in pictures, or still images. A picture can create irony through its composition. It might, for instance, be an exaggeration of a conventional composition, a caricature, or its elements may question or negate each other. The last type of composition is an important one when dealing with filmic irony. Irony depends on a discrepancy between appearance and reality, and an image where the different elements come into conflict with each other makes us question what is what. Negation is in this way an important element of irony in film. A picture can also be explicitly representational and can therefore depict ironic situations. This can also be done in a film. But a potential for a specific filmic irony exists in the editing between the images, both in the logical narrative montage and in the dialectic montage. An image or a scene can be followed by a negating image or scene, and thereby make us question the validity of its reality. We are here invited to take Booth's *step one* from Chapter 3.1 because we recognise incongruity between the images we are presented with, and will automatically go on to the other steps because we have been taught by the conventions of narrative media to search for meaning.[45] Some specifically filmic aspects of time and space can also be used ironically. There are ironic time laps and ironic extensions of time. Time in film becomes psychological time between the images, or between the scenes. An abrupt removal from one room to another with time laps in the transition is used in several of the adaptations of *Emma*.

The greatest ironic potential in film, however, lies in principle ❸, the verbo-visual irony, as principles ❶ and ❷, and all five channels of communication, interact to create an ever fuller

[45] See Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 2, pp. 41-63.

potential. Often the verbal element is in a privileged position of expression, its ironic charge activated through the visual action, often the visual action negates what is being said by the characters. The verbal element does not have to be dominant, though, a fairly evenly balanced dynamic interaction between speech and image can be an effective means of creating irony in a manner not possible in other media. A good example of this can be found in the second scene of Emma Thompson's adaptation of *Sense & Sensibility* (1995).

In the first scene of that film John Dashwood makes a promise on his father's deathbed to help his stepmother and half-sisters who will be left with very little to live on after Mr Dashwood's death. The Norland estate in its entirety is left to John by law. Scene two opens with a cut to the exterior of a very fashionable house in London, John's house, with a well-to-do carriage in front and a voice-over by his wife, Fanny: 'Help them!? What do you mean, help them?' A cut is made to John looking at himself in a large mirror: 'Dearest, I mean to give them 3000 pounds.' His wife's tone of voice and economy with words makes him uncertain however, and the segment ends with John saying: 'Of course, he did not stipulate a particular sum.' There is then a cut to their carriage, drawn by four horses, driving through the streets of London. Inside the carriage John says: '1500 pounds - what do you say to 1500 pounds?' Fanny: '[T]he question is what you can afford.' Cut to the carriage driving through a town with the less well-to-do villagers trading or working in its centre. Next they are leaving a roadside inn with the landlord hovering, waiting for a tip at their side. John: '100 pounds a year to their mother while she lives […].' He displays some coins in his hand. Fanny removes one and says: '[…] People always live forever when there is an annuity to be paid them.' The landlord is paid and someone shakes out the dust of a jacket from a window above them. In the carriage again John says: '20 pounds now and then will amply discharge my promise, you are quite right.' Fanny: 'Indeed! Although to say the truth, I am quite convinced within myself that your father had no idea of you giving them money. […].' Cut to the carriage as it drives through the countryside towards Norland with a voice-over from Fanny: '[T]hey will be more able to give you something.' In the next couple of scenes the sorrow and unhappy situation of the widow and her three daughters is made apparent.

The irony here is created in several ways. The dialogue itself is ironic, as it is in the original novel, with its rationalisation and justification of their meanness. Extra irony is created, however, in the dynamic interchange between the verbal and the visual elements. Generally the images create a contrast to the dialogue that makes us question how well their assertions are rooted in reality. It is quite clear from the images that John and Fanny can well afford to help the Dashwood girls out of their difficult situation without much inconvenience to themselves. This is perhaps most strongly suggested in the cut from Fanny's remark about what they can afford to the poor villagers. There can be no doubt about the fact that their financial situation is very comfortable indeed. When we come to the end remark by Fanny it is already clearly ironic, but its irony is heightened by the following scenes from Norland. There can be no doubt that the Dashwood women's situation is quite different from the one Fanny has conveniently convinced herself of. The incident where a jacket is shaken out of a window over their heads can perhaps be seen as an ironic comment by the implied author. The time laps between scenes one and two is also ironic. There is an abrupt cut from the sombre scene at Mr Dashwood's death bed where John in a brief moment of sincerity makes the promise to his father, to the reality of his wife's hypocrisy. In scene one John presents one image of himself, in the beginning of scene two we are presented with his real self, his vanity underlined by the presence of the mirror.

As we have seen, filmic irony is determined by style, how the different channels of communication are constructed and interact. It is, however, also determined by the viewer's relationship to the style, by the form of reception. It is important to be aware of the fact that how well we know and understand the conventions by which film operates affects our perception. It relies upon our ability to infer all the events in the story from the events explicitly presented to us in the plot. It relies upon our ability to understand the film's representation of time and space, and all the other specific narrative conventions present in the medium.[46] This especially affects the reception of irony specific to film.

[46] See Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 3, pp. 64-101.

Chapter 4 Adapting Emma

The main challenge of adapting *Emma* is that the novel is centred around a character that Jane Austen herself famously said was 'a heroine whom no one but myself will much like'.[1] Another great challenge is the intricate ironic structure of *Emma*. Consequently, an adaptation will need to present us with an Emma the audience is willing to get emotionally invested in while simultaneously being able to laugh at her. We must like her enough to become involved in the story, but we must also be able to distance ourselves to a certain extent in order to be able to detect the irony.

The ironic structure of *Emma* also hides complex secrets and intrigues, and an adaptation will have to make many choices as to what to reveal when and how. Irony is used to reveal or to play with the hidden realities in the story. A lot of the success of the adaptation where irony is concerned relies on the portrayal of Mr Knightley and Frank Churchill. The real romantic hero needs to be disguised through most of the story and the apparent romantic hero needs to be believably twofaced.

As shown in the analysis of *Emma* in Chapter 3, the novel's irony is dominated by the situational and dramatic irony created through the many mysteries of the story. Rosmarin sees the story as consisting of a three part structure producing these ironies. Part one takes us from the beginning to Mr Elton's proposal, part two includes the outing to Box Hill and then part three takes us to the end.

In part one the irony is light and should be relatively easy to detect for the reader. Mr Knightley is the main corrective to Emma's delusions, so this character's representation on the screen is crucial to the adaptation's ability to create irony. His importance is heightened by the greater difficulty of including the irony by the intrusive narrator in the novel.

In part two Miss Bates is the reader's main corrective to what seems to be on the surface, while the irony predominantly rests with Frank Churchill. His irony is mostly dramatic rather than situational, but whether it is one or the other depends on the reader's ability to pick

[1] Quoted in J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870) published with Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (London etc.: Penguin Books, 1818, 1965), p. 376.

up hints from Miss Bates and the intrusive narrator. So in part two Frank Churchill and Miss Bates are important characters in any attempt to preserve the irony of *Emma*.

In part three Mr Knightley returns to his role as Emma's main corrective. The lesson Emma learns of humility and self-knowledge is hammered home thorough several revelations that release the dramatic irony of the story.

In order to investigate whether this complex ironic structure survives the transfer from page to screen it is necessary to look at how the whole story plays itself out in the discourse of the adaptations, especially for those who seem to present themselves as literal adaptations.

It is also interesting to analyse to what extent, if at all, the irony of the intrusive narrator has been included and in what way. Do we get instances of literary irony or irony of self-betrayal? How are pivotal scenes in the novel's ironic structure presented: Mr Elton's proposal, Box Hill, the new piano, the revealed secret engagement with Frank's letter and the effect of the revelation of Mr Knightley's true feelings? And not to forget, how is Emma herself presented to us?

4.1 *EMMA*, BBC, 1972

Emma was produced by the BBC in 1972, and is a serial in the established tradition of the BBC Classical Serial consisting of six parts with a total running time of 270 minutes.

This adaptation carries more of the characteristics typical of television rather than film than any of the other *Emma* adaptations. It was filmed with video cameras as opposed to film cameras. Most of the scenes are recorded on studio sets, except when real locations are absolutely necessary, like the Box Hill scene. And there is a lot more dialogue. Sound has been much more important to television than film. The inferior resolution and size of television screens made this a natural development. Modern adaptations of Jane Austen find it necessary to cut a lot of dialogue, which is done to a lesser degree in this adaptation, but it adds quite a bit of original dialogue as well. This must also be seen as pertaining to the adaptation's age. Television was a much slower affair in the 1970s than it is now, possibly due to changing tastes or more likely a greater ability now among

viewers to read the images flicking across the television screen. Nevertheless, already for this 1972 adaptation Lauritzen remarks on the development towards greater dramatic efficiency.[2]

The adaptation makes relatively little use of its filmic potential. That is not to say that filmic discourse has not been well used in some respects. The cutting between scenes is especially effective in tying the plot together, and zooming in on someone's face is used to indicate contemplation or emotional distress.

All adaptations make some changes to the original story, but personally I think these changes should preferably be justified by the differences in discourse. This adaptation of *Emma* is full of little changes I do not understand the necessity for. For instance, when Harriet cannot decide whether to have her new ribbon sent to Mrs Goddard's or Hartfield, Emma intervenes in the book and has it sent to Hartfield (*Emma* 235). In the adaptation she intervenes and says they will take it with them (three:8).[3] And Mr and Mrs Dixon have become strangers rather than connected to the Campbells. These are changes that do not simplify the story or in any other way make the story more easily told on the screen. Other changes are easier to understand. For instance, Frank Churchill's guardians Mr and Mrs Churchill are reduced to Mrs Churchill only. This makes sense as it renders redundant the need to explain how Frank can talk his more amiable uncle into accepting his secret engagement immediately after the aunt's death.

The general impression of *Emma* (1972) is that it is an attempt at a very literal adaptation. It makes some puzzling changes, but mainly tries to cram in as much of the book as possible. It is rather slow from a modern perspective, but never boring. It relies heavily on dialogue, with the image being a secondary consideration. There is also a noticeable absence of non-diegetic music to manipulate our emotions.

Emma is played by Doran Godwin who is obviously older than Emma's twenty-one years. But John Carson who plays Mr Knightley is also obviously older than the thirty-eight years of the character in the novel, so the age dynamic between the two characters is preserved. This casting choice has repercussions, though. I think the effect the age difference between the actors and the characters they play has on the viewer will partly be dependent on

[2] Lauritzen, p. 72.
[3] The number in brackets refers to the segmentation of the adaptation which can be found in Appendix 1 and will be given in the text.

that viewer's age. When I first saw this adaptation ten years ago in my mid twenties I thought Mr Knightley terribly old and a rather unsuitable lover for a young woman, but did not react noticeably to Emma's age. Now in my mid thirties the tables have turned. A Mr Knightley in his forties is not an unappealing romantic prospect. Emma, on the other hand, is now my own age, and there is no doubt that this affects my reading of the character. It is difficult to believe her as innocent in the ways of the world as she is supposed to be. Some of the excuses we make for Emma's arrogant behaviour in the book are connected to her youth. By casting an older actress to play Emma it is difficult to keep Emma's youth in mind, even though we are explicitly told Emma's age in the adaptation. This is an example of how the perceptual nature of the cinematic sign can affect the viewer's reading of the adaptation.

The problem is compounded by the loss of other redeeming aspects of Emma's character, most noticeably her conduct towards her father. In the book this is the side of Emma most likely to arouse our sympathy. We understand that her father is no companion for her. He is selfish and difficult, but Emma bears her responsibility towards her father with grace and affection. This is barely visible in the adaptation, if at all. Emma walks away from her fussing father on several occasions. She makes faces that look both angry and bitter, and on those occasions where she does humour him it is with condescension rather than affection.

Emma is also much more impolite towards Miss Bates in the story of the adaptation leading up to Box Hill. Emma's impolite treatment of Miss Bates is made very clear as early as the party for Mr and Mrs Weston (one:3). In the book we hear of her exasperation and many unkind thoughts where Miss Bates is concerned, but it is not until her rude behaviour on Box Hill that she displays her resentment openly in the presence of Miss Bates. The surprise at Emma's behaviour is all the greater for Miss Bates and the reader feels very deeply for her. The sting of this climactic scene is much diminished in the adaptation by the fact that Emma has displayed a generally rather rude attitude towards Miss Bates, and again it makes it difficult to see the more positive sides of Emma's character.

Emma's relationship with Harriet is also different from the book. Harriet is more silly than sweet, and she is more obviously a plaything for Emma than an object of affection. Harriet stays much the same throughout the adaptation, and does not turn into the arrogant girl that shocks

Emma into an even greater realisation of the consequences of her deluded behaviour towards the end of the story in the novel.

Our main incentive to see the Emma in the adaptation as a basically good, even if deluded, young woman is the affection she obviously excites among her family and closest friends. Her jealousy towards Jane Fairfax is also toned down. She comes to her defence in conversations with Frank Churchill almost as much as she criticises her. And Jane is not really shown to have any great beauty or talents like she is supposed to have. She is described as having superior qualities in the dialogue but we do not really see them. Visual assertion undermines the verbal assertion. Emma is also played with a certain amount of vivacity and good humour that shows her more charming qualities.

All in all, it is a different and more unsympathetic Emma in the adaptation, and this threatens her position as our comic heroine. The audience might be more interested in scolding her than to laugh at her. The adaptation does not succeed in the balancing act of Emma's character. The result is a more sombre story than the one in the novel, and Emma's scheming becomes more excruciating to watch than funny or ironic.

The warning we receive at the beginning of the book about Emma being spoilt and unaware of this despite her good understanding is explained to us in the adaptation by Mr Knightley at the party for Mr and Mrs Weston (one:4). He explains quite a few things to Mrs Weston and us in this scene, and thereby compensates for the loss of the intrusive narrator as we are being introduced to the story. Mr Knightley speaks warmly and there is none of the irony from the intrusive narrator in the book.

Mr Knightley is quickly established as a long standing friend of the Woodhouse family and father substitute to Emma. Mr Woodhouse exposes his frail self as soon as he opens his mouth. It is clear that Mr Knightley is the only one who ever tried to correct Emma's behaviour, and also that she rarely listens. He does serve as a corrective to Emma in the first part of the story. But this role is undermined by other aspects of the adaptation.

The first two episodes constitute the first part of the story up to Elton's proposal. It is much more difficult to interpret Mr Elton's behaviour in the adaptation than in the novel. It is difficult to tell whether Mr Elton admires Harriet or not in the beginning, and it is certainly not

clear that he admires Emma. Mr Elton gives the 'court-ship' riddle to Harriet instead of leaving it on the table for Emma, and he does seem to be looking at Harriet from time to time. It is rather difficult to be struck by any other suggestion than the one Emma keeps making, that he is interested in Harriet. In connection with the drawing Emma makes of Harriet the adaptation even omits the book's warning about appearances: 'I never saw such a likeness,' Mr Elton says amid much exaggerated praise (*Emma* 48). This could have been an even more effective warning in the adaptation as we do actually see the drawing and could easily have detected the irony of his comment.

In scene two:8c John Knightley tells Emma that he suspects Mr Elton's attentions are for her just like in the book (*Emma* 112). And not long after Elton's intentions become completely apparent after the Christmas dinner at Randalls (two:10b) shortly before his declaration in the carriage (two:10d).

The situational irony in part one of the story consequently becomes mainly dramatic and less effective. As mentioned earlier in the thesis television and film are more immediate media than the book and do not encourage retroflection, especially not one third through the story. The serial format does however make it easier to reflect on the dramatic irony as it is normally a week before the story presses on. Between episodes two and three in the original broadcast of the adaptation the audience could have found the time to reflect on Emma's delusions. We are, however, not lulled into any feeling of superiority that will make us more susceptible to the rest of the irony in the story if we are just as deceived as Emma.

Besides the dramatic irony of Emma's wrongful interpretation of Mr Elton's intention, there is little other irony present in the first part of the story. Only one instance is really noticeable when Emma persuades Harriet to refuse Mr Martin (one:10). Emma tells Harriet she must write the letter of refusal: 'it shall be your thoughts expressed in your own words', but does in fact go on to dictate the letter. The same situation is presented in the novel: 'though Emma continued to protest against any assistance being wanted, it was in fact given in the formation of every sentence.' (*Emma* 55). But the scene heightens the irony by making it verbo-visual through the support of Emma and Harriet's facial expressions.

In the second part of the story Miss Bates is to be our main corrective to Emma. In the adaptation she rambles on whenever she is on the screen, and is mainly a comic character. She is constantly being shushed when the piano is being played. The constant interruption of Miss Bates trying to read her letter from Jane is certainly comic (two:10b). The feeling one gets, though, is that she is a silly, old woman, and is generally regarded as such. Her good-heartedness is pushed into the background, and there is a general lack of respect shown by Highbury society not present in the book. Almost all her dialogue shows her up as silly, rather than a social, gossiping, well-loved inhabitant of Highbury society. Only on three occasions does she make significant contributions to the irony of *Emma*.

When Emma visits Miss Bates (three:3) Miss Bates talks a great deal to Harriet about what good friends Emma and Jane are, while it is obvious that they are not by their reserved behaviour. The visual undermines the verbal. Miss Bates lets slip that she had suspected Mr Elton was interested in Emma (three:5) and says by way of excuse for her mistake that she is 'not particularly quick at these sort of discoveries'. This verbally presented irony is that even someone that Emma finds simpleminded saw what she did not see herself. And finally there is the scene where Frank Churchill lets slip the information about Mr Perry setting up a carriage (five:8). When Frank tries to dismiss his mistake as a dream, Miss Bates relates that this was news only known to herself, her mother and Jane. It is easy to dismiss this through our perception of Miss Bates as a gossip, but in the adaptation Jane's concerned face is very visible, and in a close-up of Mr Knightley it is obvious that he is looking at her suspiciously. The visual here lends importance to the verbal.

The main producer of irony in this part of the story should be Mr Frank Churchill. And initially he shows some promise. Frank's declaration that Jane's mysterious piano must be an offering of love is included in the adaptation though it is moved from its position in the book (three:10) (*Emma* 219). Unfortunately we are never told that the piano is really from Frank in the adaptation. In the book this is revealed in the important letter from Frank to Mrs Weston (*Emma* 439). The scene where Jane gives a demonstration of her new piano is a very loaded one in the book (*Emma* 240). In the adaptation Frank makes a pointed remark to Jane about Irish songs (four:5), but there is a lot more in the book. And again there is not much potential for dramatic

irony as we are not told the true story of the piano. The viewer might, of course, guess, but I think that would be leaving a bit much to chance for it to be something the filmmakers have reckoned with. An even more questionable change to this scene is that Frank also says that if Jane feels shame it is no fault of his, when Emma chastens him for speaking to plainly. This is simply not true. In the book he does not resort to such blatant falsehoods (*Emma* 243).

Frank's near confession of his true feelings when forced to rush to Mrs Churchill's bedside is kept very much as in the book (four:7) (*Emma* Vol. 2 Chap. XII). It is possible to detect a reaction to the name Jane Churchill, but mainly we are struck by his warm and sincere manners towards Emma, the sincerity being a contrast to his behaviour so far. After he has left the camera pulls in on Emma's concerned face, and we are sucked in with her. It is difficult not to feel what she obviously feels, that he is in love with her. This is so especially since fewer hints of a connection between Jane and Frank are given up to this point in the adaptation than in the book.

It seems the adaptation works hard to deceive us when it comes to Frank Churchill. Small changes are made to make him keener on Emma, and hints about him and Jane are few. We do not even see Jane and Frank singing together. When Mr Knightley informs Emma of his suspicions regarding Frank and Jane (five:10) it is shortly after the scene with Mr Perry's carriage (five:8). We have barely had time to digest this one hint, if we picked it up, before the story lays the suspicion out in front of us. It is easy to be swayed by Emma's conviction that Mr Knightley is wrong. In the next scene Frank Churchill arrives less agitated at Donwell than in the book (five:11) (*Emma* 363-366). There is not much to reinforce Mr Knightley's suspicions. And since the adaptation moves the outing to Box Hill to the same day as the day at Donwell Jane has been axed from this very important scene (five:12). This is probably in attempt to save time in the discourse, and an example of how such considerations can be detrimental to the story.

Box Hill should be an important climax of the story, but in the adaptation it is a rather bland affair. Frank does not display any loss of control, no hints are given as to the real relationship between Frank and Jane, in fact, this mystery is allowed to completely slip from our minds. All that is left of the Box Hill excursion is some room for Mrs Elton to display an instance of irony of self-betrayal, although without the amplifying presence of her caro sposo, and for

Emma to be rude to Miss Bates. Mr Knightley gives her a good talking to, and Emma cries on the journey home. Box Hill is a turning point for Emma's character, but not for the story. As there has not been a real build-up of irony in part two of the story, there is nothing there that can collapse.

The last episode presents the third part of the story where all mysteries are supposed to be resolved. The pace of the discourse is too slow to show Emma's emotional rollercoaster ride through the many revelations of this final part of the story. And the lack of ironic tension in the previous part means there is no real release of dramatic irony.

The only type of irony that really makes it from book to screen is the irony of self-betrayal. Mrs Elton does not appear until episode four, but when she does she makes her presence known. 'I am a great advocate for timidity in a woman,' Mrs Elton declares on Emma's first meeting with her (four:9). She says more or less the same at a later point in the book (*Emma* 283). There is quite obviously nothing timid about the woman Mrs Elton. By including this declaration in our first view of the character, Mrs Elton becomes an instant palpable ironic presence. We have again an instance of verbal-visual irony that is more striking than the verbal irony of the book. The tone of Mrs Elton's voice is delightfully self-important and conceited. Mrs Elton is an ironic foil to Emma both in her exaggerated snobbishness and her treatment of Jane.

Mr Woodhouse is also a character that displays irony of self-betrayal. This is even heightened in the adaptation as he is always fussing over the health of people who look unashamedly healthy. This is hinted at in the book, especially as regards Emma, but the visual negation of his fussiness is more striking and is repeated more often. We also see the characters greedily eying the food table while Mr Woodhouse tries to persuade them how unwholesome the food is and lunging at the table as soon as Mr Woodhouse's attention is diverted (one:4).

A noticeably lost opportunity for irony in the adaptation is the prelude to the dinner party at the Coles. In her obsession with social status Emma is caught in the ironic position of being too high socially to be invited and is therefore not given the opportunity to turn down the invitation to put the Coles in their place. In the adaptation there is none of her ironic deliberations over this and her qualms about actually wanting the pleasure of the invited

company. Emma learns of the party she has not been invited to at Miss Bates' (three:10), and we cut straight to the arrival of the invitation (three:11).

The adaptation generally lacks the comic relief of the novel. The most comic scene can be said to be where Emma tries to call Mr Knightley by his first name (six:10). This scene is, however, not especially comic in the novel (*Emma* 462-3) But this is an exception. The adaptation has a much more sombre tone than the book. Despite some of the serious issues at stake in *Emma* the novel is full of humour, so the adaptation does in this sense not live up to the 'spirit' of the original.

I think much irony has been lost due to little use of the medium's filmic potential, but there also seems to be a lack of interest in the irony of the novel. The focus seems to have been almost completely on fidelity to plot and character. This adaptation is a good example of how it might not always just be a matter of transferring events and existents in order to achieve a translation of a story from book to film. As the adaptation process is always one of selection, the criteria for selection are important. How is the story condensed? And why is one event considered a kernel while another is delegated to satellite? What is the significance of the different elements of the original story? It seems to me that this has not been a very conscious process in this adaptation. Lauritzen mentions that the adaptation team did not want to familiarise themselves with the academic criticism regarding *Emma*, and wanted to rely on their own impressions of the novel.[4] Like Lauritzen I think this might have been a mistake. A greater awareness of the complexity of the novel might have resulted in an adaptation more in keeping with Jane Austen's sparkling novel.

[4] Lauritzen, p. 57.

4.2 *EMMA*, MIRAMAX, 1996

Emma was written and directed by Douglas McGrath for Miramax in 1996. This is a Hollywood film with the fairly conventional length of 116 minutes, though is was made on a relatively small budget and filmed on location in England. According to rumours McGrath had originally planned an update of *Emma*, but changed his screenplay when he heard about *Clueless*.

McGrath is a comic writer who has worked on Saturday Night Live, and co-written an award winning screenplay with Woody Allen. When we also know that the film's musical score won the Oscar for the Best Original Score for a Musical or Comedy, we might suspect what the overall tone of the adaptation will be. A light and happy soundtrack is in the background of almost every scene. This *Emma* is the most humorous of the literal adaptations

At least the adaptation seems to be a literal one. The setting is historic, and the characters are the same as in the book. Despite its historical setting it is a film with a distinctly modern feel, both in the way people speak and in the open way they interact. A lot of dialogue is invented, a noticeable amount of it out of character with the book and what is left of the original dialogue. There is none of the restraint and subtlety of the novel. The film is clearly made in an attempt to attract the average modern viewer, with little faith in that audience's discerning intellectual abilities. Like so many adaptations it distrusts its original source. Nevertheless, it is not easy to make the film fit any of the other categories for adaptations mentioned in Chapter 2. It is certainly not a 'critical adaptation' as it cannot be seen as reinterpreting anything. It is closer to 'commentary' in that it is a re-emphasis and Wagner allows this to be inadvertently done which I suspect is the case with this adaptation.

The film is an example of the many pressures a Hollywood movie is subjected to. It had a limited budget, and the locations are therefore limited. A majority of them are out of doors, which these days are more economical than indoor locations as a simple studio set is no longer sufficient. It is also interesting to note that the finished film deviates quite a bit from its original screenplay.[5] What has been left out is probably due to time restraints as a Hollywood film rarely

[5] The original screenplay is dated 28 March 1994 and was given to me by Andrew Davies in January of 1998. He obtained this copy when he heard there was another adaptation of *Emma* in the pipeline while he was working on his own.

exceeds two hours. Many of the changes also seem to be due a desire for more comedy. The result is a great loss of complexity in the story.

The casting of this *Emma* is more age appropriate than the adaptation from 1972. Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma had barely entered her twenties and Jeremy Northam as Mr Knightley was only slightly on the young side in his mid thirties. The striking beauty of both actors make them altogether too much made for each other, though. When Mr Knightley visits after the wedding he says: 'I am practically a brother to you Emma. It is not a brother's job to find fault with his sister?' (2b) He says nothing of the sort in the novel. I do not know whether this is to counteract what everyone is thinking. This is a statement missing from the original script, and one can not help but wonder what has prompted its invention at a later stage.

Gwyneth Paltrow's beauty radiates from the screen and this undercuts the satire directed against the character she plays.[6] The camera seems to worship Paltrow, and consequently Emma. I have not come across a single review of the film that did not mention Paltrow's long and graceful neck. The film did make Paltrow a star in her own right, but this must be said to have been at the expense of the character Emma, and possibly also her creator Jane Austen.

The Emma in this adaptation is never in danger of being unlikeable. Her manipulations and delusions are all sweetness. And we are told from the very beginning to find her amusing. A voice-over that sounds like Mrs Weston begins at the end of the credits: 'In a time when one's town was one's world and the actions at a dance excited greater interest than the movement of armies there lived a young woman who knew how this world should be run.' Not much of a substitute for the ironic warning at the opening of the book. Emma introduces Harriet to Mr Elton in front of Mr Knightley and makes her intentions quite clear (3a). Mr Knightley's facial expression in reaction to this is one of resigned amusement. When Emma insists she and Harriet hide from Miss Bates and expresses her dislike of Jane Fairfax we have already met a Miss Bates that is more annoying than kind-hearted and find the image of Harriet and Emma hiding in a stall behind pretty umbrellas too picture perfect to take offence at Emma's unkind

[6] Nora Nachumi, 'As If!' Translating Austen's Ironic Narrator to Film' in *Jane Austen in Hollywood* ed. by Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield, p. 135.

words (4a).[7] Emma's manipulation of Harriet's affections from Mr Martin to Mr Elton is done over embroidery in an elaborate sun tent outdoors (5). Again we are presented with a beautiful picture. In the background pretty music is skipping away merrily while the camera is making us slightly dizzy by constantly moving sideways. It is all very candyfloss, and with the same sting. It is a definite case of spectacle winning over issue.

Mr Knightley does function as some sort of corrective to Emma. When he learns of Harriet's refusal of Mr Martin, he speaks his mind quite clearly: 'Better be without sense than misapply it as you do' (9a). The seriousness is, however, undermined by comedy. For some reason Emma and Mr Knightley are engaged in a bit of archery while arguing over Harriet. While Emma is still feeling very much in the right her arrows plant themselves firmly in the target. As she tries to defend herself against Mr Knightley's statements her aim becomes increasingly worse and the arrows end up further and further from the target. Now, this is probably intended as a metaphor of how far off target Emma's treatment of Harriet is, and in this sense it also becomes ironic in stressing the discrepancy between Emma's sense of reality and everybody else's. The potential sting is, however, blunted by Mr Knightley saying with an amused smile: 'Try not to kill my dogs' (9a). His dogs are lying close to the target. It has been mentioned in this thesis that there is a comic element to irony, but this adaptation falls into a habit of rendering harmless any real shock we might feel from the irony. The scene ends on a sour note with Mr Knightley walking out on Emma, which is also what he does in the book (*Emma* 66). But instead of keeping the tension until they make up (14) they socialise and even joke in the very next scene (10b).

The main corrective to Emma's misinterpretations of Mr Elton's behaviour in this adaptation is Mr Elton himself. His attention is always focused on Emma, and he seems often confused by Emma's attempts at manipulation. When Mr Elton finally proposes (17) it creates comic relief rather than creator of ironic tension. Even thought Emma is visibly upset and angry, Mr Elton is all clown. Again casting must be said to play a role in my interpretation of the character. Mr Elton is played by Alan Cumming whom I only knew as a very silly Scottish comedian prior to this film. The iconic nature of this cinematic sign produces personal

[7] In the original screenplay Emma only has them walk by Miss Bates' door when Harriet suggests they should call on her.

associations that influence my reading of it. But it also has to do with how the scene is acted out. At one point Mr Elton is sitting next to Emma and starts whispering so close to her ear that she starts. Up until then things were getting rather serious, and a gag seems to have been put in to break this mood. There is certainly nothing in the original screenplay to suggest the scene was intended to be played out in that way.

The focus of this adaptation is Harriet's love life and eventually Emma's. The intrigues of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are played down to such a degree that there is not much more than a summary. Jane Fairfax is quickly introduced as reluctant to give any real opinion or information of Frank Churchill (22). Frank Churchill is introduced in a most extraordinary way (25). Emma is out driving an open chase on her own. She drives into a pond which has formed on the road and one wheel gets stuck to the bottom. From out of the bushes Frank rides to her rescue. He teases her before he lends a hand, and they introduce themselves to each other.[8] From the beginning Frank is all stylised language and no personality. Frank Churchill is played by Ewan McGregor who seems extremely uncomfortable in this supposedly historic setting, and is not helped by a synthetic wig. The next time we see him is at the Coles where instead of letting Emma create his smoking screen for him, he jumps into a long speech of speculation only interrupted by Emma's encouragement:

EMMA
Why do you smile?

FRANK
I'm smiling because I'm wondering if there's anyone else whom we should suspect of being Miss Fairfax's musical patron. Do you know her?

EMMA
Yes, she's very...elegant...yes...

FRANK
Colonel Campbell's daughter Mrs Dickson was Miss Fairfax's dearest friend, so perhaps Mrs Dixon sent the piano.

EMMA
Mrs Dixon? That makes sense.

FRANK
But not as much sense do you think as Mr Dixon. I cannot help suspecting that after his proposal to Miss Campbell, a sweet, but

[8] The meeting in the screenplay is more along the lines of the book.

rather a plain girl, Mr Dixon fell in love with Miss Fairfax, who is after all...

EMMA
Very elegant, yes, but what makes you say that?

FRANK
Well, she must think so too! That is why she did not go on the holiday with the Campbells. Instead she came here... Do you see? Now that Mr Dixon has married into the Campbells he would have been there. I think, by coming here, Miss Fairfax was telling Mr Dixon that she wanted to forget him, and I think, with the pianoforte, Mr Dixon wasn't allowing it! Of course it's just a theory, let us see how she reacts if we say the name 'Mr Dixon'. (28a)

There is no build-up of mystery here, no creation of irony from Frank Churchill, only lies. And Frank Churchill does not produce irony anywhere else either.

What little we see of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax is mostly to hint at their relationship rather than any attempts to disguise it. At the Coles' Frank stands up to sing with Emma (28c). Mr Knightley is visibly upset, and this could function as a decoy if it had not been for the camera dwelling on Jane looking at them passionately and Frank's eagerness to leave Emma to sing with Jane. This is preceded by Emma remarking on the fact that Frank and Jane are speaking together at the Coles' when Mrs Weston speculates about Jane and Mr Knightley (28b). At the same party it is announced that Frank is taking a house in Highbury, and our only reaction shot is of Jane looking very excited (35b). At the ball at the Crown no point is made of any attention from Frank to Emma, if he shows any lady particular attention it is to Jane (38a-b).[9] The scene where Jane demonstrates her new piano, which is so potent in the novel, is missing from the film.[10]

At one point the adaptation seems to overcompensate for all of this. When Frank is forced to return to his aunt's bedside he comes to say his goodbyes at Hartfield, and comes within a subclause of revealing that he is in love with someone (29). A near confession takes place in the book as well (*Emma* Vol. II Chap. XII), but not in as direct a manner as in the film.[11] His statements are all the more surprising as we have hardly seen Frank with Emma, but Emma

[9] In the original screenplay the plans for the ball are disrupted and Frank engages Emma for the two first dances when he comes back.
[10] The scene is, however, in the original screenplay.
[11] In the original screenplay he is not as explicit.

is certainly convinced of his affection for her as she tells us so explicitly in a voice-over while writing in her diary in the next scene (30).

The Box Hill scene does not present a climax as there has been no building up of tension (41). It does not vary enormously from the book in plot, but the context is altered too much for it to function in the same way. One difference is that Mrs Elton announces that she has found a position for Jane, and again we are given a close-up of Frank in case anyone still has any doubts. Emma's rudeness is still the same, and this is dwelled upon at great length. Miss Bates is much more visibly hurt even for Emma to miss. The portrayal of Miss Bates in the film does not excite much compassion and Emma has been too sweet so far in the story. It is as if the film again tries to overcompensate by prolonging the time after Emma's rude remark. The feeling of the scene is just completely different, also because it has none of the covert dialogue between Frank and Jane.

Miss Bates fairly instantly displays some irony of self-betrayal in the film: 'Quite speechless, I tell you. And we have not stopped talking of it since,' she says of Mr Elton's sermon (2). But she is mostly only a silly and laughable character. She does not supply us with any information we do not already know and that can serve as a corrective to Emma. But then there is not much of a mystery for her drop hints about anyway.

As for Mr Woodhouse, he sets the comic tone of the film in the first scene. He complains of the unhealthiness of rich cake and seeks the opinion of Mr Perry. It is pointed out to him that Mr Perry is at the other end of the room eating cake.[12] Mr Woodhouse looks much too healthy and vigorous to be complaining of ill health. He does not even pass as a hypochondriac with his clear speech and firm movements. And he appears far too intelligent. He does not seem a bad companion for Emma at all. Mr Knightley also loses some of his status as sole corrective to Emma by the fact that Mr Woodhouse is more of an intelligent character in the adaptation than in the book. Mr Woodhouse is lost as a character who displays irony of self-betrayal.

Mrs Elton is her arrogant self in this adaptation, but again a lighter version. Mr Elton is put out by her behaviour instead of reinforcing it. Emma snubs her at one point about going to Bath for her father's health and Mrs Elton seems to feel concern (31). She even seems to feel

[12] This deviates from the original screenplay where Mr Woodhouse expresses his concerns to a child carrying around the cake. Perry is not mentioned so consequently there is no joke.

out of place if they cannot find anything to talk about. Mrs Elton does retain her comment: 'I'm a great advocate for timidity.' (33) And her habitual response to praise in the film is that she does not think herself so, but her friends do. I guess I could be pressed to say there is some irony in this character, but she seems altogether too aware of other people's feelings to be convincing. Emma's judgement of her in the film seems too harsh: 'Is it possible Mr Elton met her while doing charitable work in a mental infirmary?' (32), and I must say completely out of character with anything Jane Austen.

The film lacks the ironic structure of the novel, and there is consequently no release of dramatic irony when Frank and Jane's secret engagement is revealed or when Mr Knightley proposes to Emma. It is a romantic comedy and not even much of a comedy of manners.[13] But the film does excel when it comes to comic montages. Frank's letter to his new stepmother, for example, is made comical by a montage of it being admired by everyone in turn (3c).[14] When Emma is decorating the church with Mr Elton he suggests Emma draw Harriet (6). Emma expresses doubt that Harriet will consent, and Mr Elton says: 'Do you think it would help if I asked her to pose?' We cut straight to Harriet in a fairly strange pose with a harp. The film moves from the ironic manipulations of Emma in the book to light comedy.[15] When we move on to Mr Elton's profusions of praise for Emma's drawing, however, the film is able to increase the irony (7). Mr Elton is enthusiastic about how like the drawing is to the subject as the camera turns and shows us that Emma has got no further than an outline of Harriet's head. So there is at least one instance of good verbo-visual irony.

Amusing cuts are almost a motif in the adaptation. Emma is asked to play at the Coles (28b). When she declares she does not have the talent, Mr Cole suggests they ask Jane. Cut to Emma playing (28c). Dialogue often carries over from one scene to another. When Mr Knightley informs Emma of Elton's marriage she says: 'I don't know what to say, except that I am…'. The next scene is of a drenched Harriet saying: 'In a state of complete shock.' Harriet is talking of her meeting with the Martins, though (23-24).

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[13] Nora Nachumi is nicer and calls it 'a simple comedy of manners.' Nachumi, p. 136.
[14] This is more elaborate in the finished film than in the original screenplay, and is an example of comedy being added in the final product.
[15] In the screenplay Emma suggests the portrait in line with the original novel.

Verbo-visual irony is displayed when Mr Elton sits down between Emma and Mr Knightley at the Christmas party (16c): 'I hope I am not intruding.' He obviously is as both Emma and Mr Knightley must move to make room for him. The shoelace incident is included and when Emma catches up with Harriet and Mr Elton her suspicions that Mr Elton might be proposing is heightened by the scenic setting of the two of them together. Mr Elton is however saying: '…I simply love…celery root.' (13b) This is also verbo-visual irony strengthened by literary irony. Life is not a romance novel.

The invitation to the party at the Coles is given a full comic treatment (27). The social status conundrum is mentioned, but we are basically only impressed with the humour of it all. The montage is excellent in the way it shows how the film medium can contract time and how one shot can comment on another. And the montage ends with a humorous cut. Emma is exasperated at not having been invited (27d) and we cut in the middle of a sentence to see her expressing her gratitude to Mrs Cole at having been invited.

It is not possible to blame the lack of irony in this adaptation on an absence of filmic discourse. There is also attempts at increasing the depth of story information thorough an externalisation of internal elements from the book. The film opens and closes with a voice-over from what sounds like Mrs Weston, and on two occasions Emma pours her heart out to Mrs Weston: After Mr Elton proposes (18) and when she realises she is in love with Mr Knightley (47). Emma writes in her diary with a voice-over on several occasions and we hear her thoughts in several other places throughout the film as well.[16] The film would, perhaps, have benefited from more effort being put into controlling the range of its story information.

The adaptation is somehow the story of the novel *Emma*, but just about every event and existent is altered in some way. The result is that the essence of the original story is lost. It is difficult to say whether this is because the filmmakers wanted a light romantic comedy and chose the novel as a starting point for their own story, or whether they just did not understand what the novel was about.

[16] We are even privileged enough to hear Emma think of Jane Fairfax as a ninny (21).

2.3 *JANE AUSTEN'S EMMA*, MERIDIAN BROADCASTING, 1996

Jane Austen's Emma was produced by Meridian Broadcasting in cooperation with the American A&E Network for the British Independent Television channel (ITV). It was initially broadcast on ITV as a television film in November 1996 and on A&E as a two part mini-series in February 1997. The screenplay was written by Andrew Davies who also adapted the hugely popular *Pride & Prejudice* the year before. Sue Birtwistle also produced both adaptations.

The adaptation has a running time of 107 minutes, and as it was made for commercial television it would have been interrupted several times by television ads. The American commercial breaks are noted in the segmentation.[17] I have not seen a British broadcast of the adaptation, but assume that the commercial breaks coincide with the different parts of the original screenplay.[18] The commercial breaks will affect the structure of the adaptation to a certain extent, but probably not as much as the episode structure of a serial. Andrew Davies did, however, not take the American commercial breaks into consideration when writing the screenplay.[19]

Jane Austen's Emma came at the tail end of the worst of Austenmania. While working on the screenplay, Andrew Davies heard that the production of another adaptation was underway and due to be completed before his own. Understandably concerned he obtained a copy of the screenplay by McGrath. He had not read many pages, however, before he confidently went back to his own screenplay. Andrew Davies had a different adaptation in mind.

This adaptation certainly presents us with a different Emma. Kate Beckinsale's Emma has a lot more edge to her than in any of the other adaptations, and perhaps also than Emma in the novel. She is good looking, as she should be, but not in that Hollywood stunning way. Her good looks are unthreatening in their wholesomeness, and she carries them quite as unselfconsciously as in the book. One of Mr Knightley's rare instances of praise for Emma is that he does not think her vain despite her good looks (*Emma* 39). Beckinsale is also good at

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[17] A recording of the first American broadcast of the adaptation was sent to me by family members in the USA.
[18] The original screenplay is published as part of Sue Birtwistle and Susie Conklin, *The Making of Jane Austen's Emma*, Penguin Books (London etc., 1996).
[19] In January 1998 I met with Andrew Davies at his house for an interview. Any information attributed to Andrew Davies in this section is from this interview unless explicitly stated otherwise.

portraying Emma's open temper, the kind of temper Mr Knightley says 'a man would wish for in a wife.' (*Emma* 288) Emma's speech is direct and honest, and is delivered in straight forward no nonsense tone of voice with a steady gaze.

The adaptation establishes Emma's good character traits first. We see her sad for herself but happy for her friend at Miss Taylor's wedding (2). Mr Woodhouse provides the contrast with his selfish attempts at persuading Miss Taylor not to turn up at her wedding. Home alone afterwards we see how bleak Emma's home life will be now (3). Mr Woodhouse complains like a spoilt child, but Emma is kind and patient with him. We can easily imagine the temptation to live through others when you do not have much of a life yourself. Some archness to Emma's character is introduced with the arrival of Mr Knightley (4). But as opposed to *Emma* (1996) there is no obvious sexual tension. Their relationship is more like that of an older brother and younger sister.

With the introduction of Harriet, however, we become aware of the more unsympathetic aspects of Emma's character. Emma is in complete control of Harriet almost immediately, and her arrogance is strengthened by the arrival of Jane Fairfax. In between Emma has been shown the error of her ways, and we have been shown that she easily forgives herself (18).

As mentioned before, portraying Emma is a difficult balancing act. But I do feel this adaptation succeeds quite well. It is not afraid of showing Emma's darker sides, but has chosen some of the best aspects of her character to counteract her arrogance: Her care for her father and her open temper. These are character traits that can be displayed throughout the story. In maintaining this fine balance the adaptation prepares the ground for an ironic treatment of Emma.

An interesting aspect of this adaptation is how it increases its depth of story information through its many subjective sequences. Andrew Davies imagined Emma to have an artistic sensibility, in some ways similar to that of the novel writer.[20] This resulted in the inclusion of subjective images and dream sequences that show Emma's vivid imagination in action. When Emma is first struck by the idea of matching Harriet with Mr Elton the film uses images of the happy couple at their wedding where they thank Emma for showing them where true happiness

[20] Birtwistle and Conklin, *The Making of Jane Austen's Emma*, p. 9.

lies (6b). The sequence is ironic in its overstatement, in Emma imagining life to be like literary romance. The irony is mainly visual in that the image is in soft focus but becomes verbo-verbal through an exaggerated acting style and the non-diegetic music. We all daydream and these sequences make Emma more sympathetic. We are also privy to her good intentions. It is a potent way of including Emma's subjective universe which is a large part of the original novel. Davies is in line with Wayne C. Booth who claims: 'By showing most of the story through Emma's eyes, the author insures that we shall travel with Emma rather than stand against her.'[21]

The subjective images are also used to show Emma's psychological development. We see that she has nightmares about Mr Knightley marrying Jane (30b). We see that certain things she has interpreted in one way earlier take on their proper colours as new information is revealed. The subjective images play a part in revealing dramatic irony when Emma is told of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax' engagement (50b). And eventually we are given an insight into the process that makes Emma realise that she is in love with Mr Knightley, and that she has not only made a mess of other people's lives but her own as well (52). The director of the adaptation, Diarmuid Lawrence, was well aware of the challenge of communicating Emma's growth as a character, but found advantages in the challenge of condensing a novel of over 400 pages into a two hour adaptation:

> One of the reasons why the dynamic of *Emma* works better for me as a single film is that it helps to reinforce the swings of feelings you have towards Emma – from wanting to smack her at one end to falling in love with her at the other. […] I think it's easier to do that in one film than across several episodes.[22]

But this is at the cost of the story's dramatic and ironic structure.

In direct opposition to *Emma* (1996) *Jane Austen's Emma* skims Emma's manipulation of Harriet and Mr Elton in the first part, and allows more time for the detective story of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax in the second part. The literary irony of Emma's imagination is introduced with her discovery of Harriet. Harriet catches Emma's eye in church (5). A light comes in through the window and makes Harriet glow as if by divine intervention. A change to the original story does however encourage Emma to take on her project. When she asks Mrs

[21] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 245.
[22] Birtwistle and Conklin, *The Making of Jane Austen's Emma*, p. 8.

Goddard about Harriet outside the church she seems to hint to Emma that the Martins are not the best companions for Harriet. In the book no one agrees with Emma's assessment of the Martins, which heightens the irony of Emma's delusions. In the adaptation we have to wait until Mr Knightley is angry with Emma for persuading Harriet to refuse Mr Martin's proposal of marriage (11).

The potential irony of the situation is further undermined by Mr Elton's rather obvious interest in Emma. When Mr Elton first opens his mouth he ends by looking over at Emma (6a). Even though she is sitting with Harriet, there is no doubt the smile is for Emma as she returns it. Mr Elton helps Harriet to some apple tart in a very pompous way, but even then he looks at Emma for approval. We then go into the first dream sequence of Harriet and Mr Elton's marriage (6b). It is clear how Emma interprets Mr Elton's behaviour, but it comes across as more wishful thinking since there is nothing to support Emma's imagination elsewhere.

When Mr Elton praises Emma's drawing of Harriet all his pomposity is drawn out (9). Mr Knightley and Mrs Weston exchange looks of astonishment and amusement. When Mr Elton asks to be entrusted with the commission of taking the portrait to London to have it framed, the next scene is of him riding dramatically through the gates while trumpets are playing in the background (10). Just about everything in the mise-en-scene is telling us that Emma is deluded.

As the Harriet-Mr Elton intrigue is not given much room in the adaptation there is not much room for Mr Knightley to act as corrective either. He makes a few attempts when we first meet him after the wedding (4), and he is allowed a few words at the Christmas party at Randalls (14b). But his main contribution is in his reaction to Harriet's refusal of Mr Martin. We first observe the visual irony of Emma's looking very pleased with herself after she has persuaded Harriet contrasted with Harriet's scared and confused look (10). We then cut straight to Mr Knightley's astonishment: 'She refused him?' (11) He is very angry. Cutting the two scenes together is both an effecting time-saving device and a creator of ironic contrast only possible on film.

This is the last scene in the first part of the screenplay, so Emma and Mr Knightley get to make up in the very next scene. This is done amid the commotion of the arrival of their married

brother and sister John and Isabella Knightley. They make up in a low key and straightforward way, like old friends. We are still far from suspecting the future match of the two of them.

The Christmas party at Randalls prepares the way for the intrigue in the next part before the first is resolved (14). Mr Weston shows the company a picture of Frank Churchill (14b). Emma declares him to be a very handsome man and asks Mr Elton whether he agrees. He says he hardly knows: 'Appearances may often deceive.' This is of course ironic considering Emma's deception in Mr Elton's character, but will become part of further dramatic irony as well since this also becomes the case with Frank Churchill. In front of the picture Emma declares to everyone present: 'As is well known, I intend never to marry – but I confess if I were to change my mind I have always thought that Mr Frank Churchill might be the man, for by all accounts he seems to be the very epitome of manly excellence!' Here Emma actually displays some self-irony, but seems unaware of the offence she causes Mr Elton and Mr Knightley. We see the first signs of jealousy from Mr Knightley as he moves over to contradict her. We cannot be sure where his jealousy comes from, but he does provide an important corrective for events to come when he points out that Frank Churchill's delayed visit does not speak well of him: 'There is one thing a man can always do, if he chooses, and that is his duty.' In the book Frank admits to and apologises for this selfishness (*Emma* Vol. III Chap. XIV), but this is left out of the adaptation. It is uncertain whether anyone will remember Mr Knightley's comment at the end of the film. Emma's retort is: 'Mr Knightley, isn't is very unfair to judge a person's conduct when we don't know his situation?' This is of course what they all will be doing with both Frank and Jane for a better part of the film.

Mr Elton's proposal is dramatic and not comic (16). The event is not surprising, but rather inevitable. Whether this lulls the audience into a confident superiority or not is hard to say. Everything has happened a bit quickly up to now, and the film has perhaps succeeded mostly in creating an ironic distance between Emma and the audience. We are more aware of her fallibility than our own cleverness in picking up the clues that she did not.

The next part of the story really gets going with the arrival of Jane Fairfax. We only learn of Jane's situation from Emma as she and Harriet climb the stairs to the Bates' parlour (19b). Emma's dislike of Jane is apparent and it is easy to be shocked along with Harriet at Emma's

words. Miss Bates jumps immediately into her role as provider of useful information. The actress who plays Miss Bates, Prunella Scales, was very aware of her character's role as a corrective to Emma and carrier of clues, but was disappointed to learn how much the part had been cut.[23] She did however realise that the time available was not enough to allow Miss Bates to be present in all her glory. Despite these cuts this is the only screen version of Miss Bates where she really functions in the same way as Miss Bates in the original story. On our first meeting with Jane Miss Bates tells us all we need to know about her situation and the background for her visit to Highbury (20). Most interestingly for Emma she also tells us of Mr Dixon's gallant rescue of Jane while sailing. Emma's vivid imagination sees it all, as we do in another instance of subjective images.

Jane is a character that is supposed to be in the background of the story, but this adaptation is the only one that actually allows us to make some judgments of her character. From a pale and quiet Jane in her grandmother's home we cut straight to her playing the piano and singing a passionate Italian love song (21a). Anyone who chooses to take an interest in her is able to suspect there is a rather passionate woman behind that controlled façade. Helped by some key scenes later in the story Jane stays visible and part of the story despite her reserve. But we are still shown enough of her reserve to understand that Emma's dislike of her might not primarily stem from jealousy. The scene where Emma tries to obtain information about Frank Churchill from Jane works just as well on screen as in the book (21b).

In this adaptation Emma is introduced to Frank Churchill along the same lines as in the book. Mr Weston has brought his son to Hartfield to show him off (24). This meeting in the adaptation does, however, play with our perceptions in a rather interesting way. Earlier, at the Randalls Christmas party Emma looks at the portrait of Frank alone just before leaving and imagines meeting him (14c). Frank echoes this when they actually do meet, which means that Emma's imagination does not always lead her astray. It could lead us to think that in his case she might not be wrong in her judgement despite her errors in the past. This becomes more important as the story continues. Andrew Daives wanted to give the viewer a fair chance to pick

[23] Ibid., p. 22.

up the clues about Jane and Frank.[24] But he needed to do this without giving too much away. He was in this sense aware of Jane Austen's dilemma in telling her story, and also made very conscious decisions about the range of story information presented in the discourse. The end result is that the dramatic irony potentially becomes situational, but only for the very observant viewer. Emma's first meeting with Frank might counteract some of the more overt hints given to us later in the adaptation.

The most obvious hint about Frank and Jane's relationship in the adaptation is on the day of picking strawberries at Donwell (42e). Jane leaves early and we see that she meets Frank on the way, and that they exchange heated words. This is not seen by any of the characters in the story. We could say that an extra satellite has been inserted to prepare the ground for a later kernel, i.e. the revelation of the engagement. The confrontation between Frank and Jane also takes place in the story of the book, but we are not told of it until Frank's letter. When we get to the strawberry picking at Donwell Emma no longer considers Frank as a romantic prospect for herself, so our interest shifts focus. Frank's blunder about Mr Perry's carriage (42a), the alphabet game and Mr Knightley's suspicions (42b) are moved to Box Hill. When we learn of the secret engagement shortly after it should not come as a complete surprise. A subtle cause-effect chain leads up to it.

Miss Bates is given two main opportunities to key us in. At the ball at the Crown the observant viewer can hear her talking about Frank's gallant reception of Jane (39), and on Box Hill she is heard talking about how only they themselves and Jane knew about Perry's carriage (42a-b). But she is also part of the decoy operation. When Jane first displays her talents at the piano Miss Bates is heard afterwards saying that Mr Dixon would not even allow his fiancé to be Jane's equal (21b). She also lets us know that Jane has no idea where her new piano has come from leaving room for Emma's further speculations about Mr Dixon (30). The adaptation is full of hints going in all directions. There is plausible speculation about Frank and Harriet and about Mr Knightley and Jane. But there are also many looks between Frank and Jane that seem a bit out of place.

[24] Ibid., p. 12.

A few opportunities are given to Frank to contribute directly with irony. He is careful at first, but Emma's open manner gives him room to play in. Jane's piano is made very little use of in the other adaptations. In this one extra focus is put on it by showing its delivery (29). Frank uses the piano's full ironic potential. At the dinner at Randalls Emma pronounces Jane's piano to be an offering of love from Mr Dixon (30). Frank can openly say that he believes the piano to be an offering of love in a purely verbal instance of irony. When they later meet to hear the new piano at the Bates' Frank first talks of Weymouth and Mr Dixon in a way that has completely different meanings for Jane and Emma (32). When Jane takes out some new music Frank comments on them being Irish and that their inclusion betokens true affection. Throughout we are given Jane's facial reactions, which can be interpreted in different ways depending on your knowledge of the true nature of things. This is also mainly verbal irony, but the visual element of Jane's facial expressions can make the irony either situational or dramatic. Frank's main contribution to the story's irony lies nevertheless in his efforts to conceal his engagement by flirting with Emma.

On Box Hill Frank Churchill loses control in very much the same way as in the book (42). Episodes from other places in the original story have been moved to Box Hill, but they contribute to the build-up to the climax. Frank's flirting becomes a little desperate and Emma is pulled along and into her insult to Miss Bates. The only one who smiles at her cruel joke is Frank. The climax is played out in all its painfulness, and this is the only adaptation that includes Frank and Jane's covert discussion of their relationship by means of Mr and Mrs Elton (*Emma* 372-373).

When we are told of the engagement shortly after subjective images serve both as an educator for Emma and a revealer of dramatic irony for us (50b). Mrs Weston tells Emma the piano was from Frank (50a) and the subjective images show the looks between Frank and Jane in their true light. We also hear Emma and Frank speak of an offering of love and are reminded of the scene where Jane demonstrates her piano. If we did not pick up the irony along the way we are told where we should have seen it.

The last part of the story is heavily condensed. As with *Emma* (1996) it is important not to have an ending that goes on and on if you want to keep the interest of your audience.

Walking home from the shock of finding Harriet in love with Mr Knightley and not Frank Churchill (52a), Emma again provides us with subjective images, this time a series of them which end in the realisation that she is in love with Mr Knightley herself (52f). We are drawn from her final reflection and into Hartfield at night (52g). We understand that Emma has been thinking all day even though the sequence is short. The next day brings Mr Knightley and the final climax (53), which reveals the last of the dramatic irony. Emma's happy reflections that evening are interrupted by the film's third 'Oh Harriet!' (54) The first one comes in the carriage after Mr Elton's proposal (16), the second at the end of Mrs Weston's revelation of Frank and Jane's engagement (50c). This forms an ironic motif in the film commenting on Emma's failure to deal with reality. This final time Emma is let off the hook by Harriet already having accepted a new proposal of marriage from Mr Martin (55). The two climaxes of the story consequently come quite close together, and most loose threads are quickly wound up.

In a departure from the original story Andrew Davies chose to create a completely new final scene. They wanted an event that was not a wedding but would resolve any remaining issues.[25] The result is a harvest supper where all the characters can come together one final time (58). Emma publicly acknowledges Mr Martin in a display of her new maturity (58b), and Frank and Emma have a talk about Jane (58c). In the original screenplay Emma and Jane also make up but this is unfortunately left out of the final film.[26] The result is a rather unpleasant Frank and fears of an uncertain future for Jane. But then Andrew Davies is on record for calling Frank 'a clever, dangerous misogynistic charmer'.[27] Personally I do not find this part of the story's resolution very satisfying, but I do like the final scene from the harvest supper which shows our three couples dancing (58d). This works well as a visual summing up. But before we get to this final scene all irony is over and done with.

The adaptation manages to reproduce the ironic structure of the book to a certain extent. It disappoints when it comes to Mrs Elton, though. Mrs Elton does arrive in all her arrogant glory, and in being an over the top social snob she does function as an ironic foil to Emma's snobbery. Her behaviour is also reinforced by Mr Elton who seems very proud of her. But her

[25] Ibid., p. 57.
[26] Ibid., p. 152-153.
[27] Ibid., p. 11.

direct self-ironising statements are few. Most noticeably she does not declare herself a great advocate of timidity. I consider Mrs Elton an easy character to portray on film, and it is hard to understand why she does not function better in this adaptation. And her accent does not help. It sounds like a bad American accent, but is probably meant to be West Country. I have personally lived a whole year in the West Country without coming across anything like it. The added dimension of spoken dialogue is in this case a negative one.

Among other instances of irony in the film is Mr Weston saying: 'What is right to be done cannot be done too soon' when Frank deliberates whether he should pay his visit to Jane Fairfax now or later (25). Mr Weston does not seem to understand that Frank has not done this in postponing his visit to his step-mother. Mr Knightley displays irony in his reaction to Frank going to London to get his hair cut (28). He directs his anger at the young man's vanity, but is really motivated by jealousy. The cut from Frank saying he needs to go to London to Mr Knightley is funny in its contrast and makes good use of verbo-visual irony.

The strength of this adaptation from the point of view of this thesis lies in its treatment of the second part of the story. It manages to present this part of the story as well as I think is possible on the screen. Though I criticised *Emma* (1996) for being too much of a comedy, *Jane Austen's Emma* could probably have benefited from a bit more comedy. It could have included a bit more of the lighter irony of the novel, the invitation to the party at the Coles for instance, but credit must be given for its fearless portrayal of the darker sides of *Emma*. It includes some glimpses of *Emma*'s social context, with poverty at the sobering end and the commotion which the outing to Box Hill creates for the servants at the more amusing end. It must be said that the adaptation demands a lot from its audience. If you do not pay close attention throughout most of the film you could easily miss important information. It is surprisingly subtle for a film meant for television. But I have to say that that is a large part of its appeal for me personally. There are certain things I wish were different, mainly because I think the adaptation is too short for the original story, and I am not sure we as viewers partake in Emma's lesson, but it is nevertheless my favourite among the three literal adaptations.

2.4 *CLUELESS*, PARAMOUNT PICTURES, 1995

Clueless was written and directed by Amy Heckerling and produced for Paramount Pictures in 1995. This is not only a film made by Hollywood, it can also be said to take place in Hollywood, or rather the upper crust of Los Angeles society, Beverly Hills. The film has a running time of 93 minutes.

As an adaptation of *Emma Clueless* deviates quite radically from all the other adaptations. It is only loosely based on Jane Austen's story, and Jane Austen is not even referred to in the credits.

Clueless belongs to Klein and Parker's category 'a relatively free adaptation', 'analogy' in Wagner's terms and Andrew's 'borrowing'. It was actually marketed with two different audiences in mind, 'the teen film-goer and the Austen reader.'[28] For a film to be a success both with teenagers and readers of Jane Austen is quite a feat. And it could be said that *Clueless* in this way functions along the same lines as *Emma* in having a superficial level which appeals to a broad audience and deeper levels which appeal to a more sophisticated audience. This type of adaptation 'capitalize[s] on the pleasures to be found in the recognition of intertextual citation.'[29]

The modernised version of Emma is called Cher Horowitz, her father is a high-powered lawyer, a litigator, and her mother is dead. This being Beverly Hills she died from a liposuction gone wrong. Cher has a best friend called Dionne. They are named as Cher says herself 'after great singers of the past who now do infomercials.' (1d) The film's immediate parallel to *Emma* is Cher's determined attempt to make her father take care of himself. The father can be seen as an ironic comment on Mr Woodhouse, as Mr Horowitz is Mr Woodhouse's polarised extremity. Where Mr Woodhouse is timid, Mr Horowitz is aggressive. Where Mr Woodhouse is a hypochondriac, Mr Horowitz is more than happy to let his cholesterol level fly through the roof.

Josh is Cher's ex-stepbrother, and he takes on the role as the film's Mr Knightley. The brother and sister theme from *Emma* is given a modern twist. This is poking fun at both the modern family and *Emma's* 'Brother and sister!, no indeed.' (*Emma* 331) Jane Austen's line is actually included in the film more literally than most other elements from the novel. Josh does not want to go home to his mother and her fourth husband for spring break so Cher invites him

[28] Imelda Whelehan, 'Adaptations' in *Adaptations – From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, p. 17.
[29] Ibid.

to stay with them (31). Josh says: 'How much fun would it be having a brother-type tagging along?' And Cher answers: 'Josh, you are not my brother'. Josh is a college student while Cher is fifteen and still in High School, so he is both older and wiser in the ways of the world as anyone aspiring to be Mr Knightley should be. He is also what Cher calls a do-gooder type and is constantly criticising Cher for being too shallow. He is Cher's corrective throughout most of the film and exposes quite a bit of the irony. Cher responds to Josh like any girl would an annoying big brother. It is not until she is in danger of losing some of the many things she takes for granted that Cher realises she is in love with him (40). His interest in her becomes apparent much earlier, though (28).

Cher's career as a matchmaker starts with two of her teachers. Cher's romantic endeavours are a success, and she is inspired to do more good. Enter Tai, a new student at the school from a place a lot less cool than Beverly Hills. Cher decides to take her on as her own Harriet project. Tai's Mr Martin is Travis, a boy she meets in line for lunch. He is a loadie, someone who smokes more pot than what is socially acceptable, and consequently not good enough for Cher's protégée. Tai is given a total makeover, both her appearance and social skills are put through the wringer. This adaptation is consequently the only one that makes an ironic point out of Emma's efforts to 'improve' Harriet in the novel. Josh complains that Cher has 'found someone even more clueless than you are to worship you' (16b), just like Mr Knightley worries Harriet's flattery will do Emma no good (*Emma* 38).

The boy Cher chooses as the proper love interest for Tai is called Elton, the film's most obvious reference to a character in *Emma*. Drawing has lost its vogue with young women of today, so Cher uses photography (18). She takes a portrait of Tai, and Elton asks for a copy that ends up inside his locker. At a party Cher does her best to make Elton take notice of Tai (20). When they leave she tries to contrive things so that Tai rides home in Elton's car. It is not to be. Instead she ends up in Elton's car herself. The inevitable then happens. Elton is convinced Cher has sought his attention for herself (21b). Cher leaves the car, and Elton leaves her behind to be mugged at gunpoint – she is in the Valley – and to ring Josh for help (21c-d).

Frank Churchill enters the story next in the shape of Christian (26). Straight away there are hints available to the observant viewer indicating that this is not the right boy for Cher. He

reads William S. Burroughs (27), listens to Billie Holliday (28), is knowledgeable about art and brings over Tony Curtis films on the evening Cher plans to seduce him (33). He is gay. No secret engagement for this Frank Churchill. But he does get to save his Harriet. Tai is not attacked by gypsies, but rather some boys at the mall hold her down over the railings for a bit of fun (35). Christian runs to the rescue, but it is too late for Cher to fantasise about potential romance.

Tai is also saved by Josh. At a party Cher is dancing with Christian still blissfully unaware of his sexual orientation. She sees Tai not dancing and looking awkward on the sideline, but is happy to find Josh coming to the rescue (29).

Mrs Elton is vaguely present in *Clueless* in the form of Amber. Like Mrs Elton in *Emma* she partly functions as an ironic foil to Cher's character. She does not display any particular amount of irony of self-betrayal beyond that of all the other characters in the story, however. By living the life that these youngsters do they all ironise themselves to a certain degree.

Tai, like Harriet, has kept mementos of Elton, and visits Cher to burn them (39). In Beverly Hills the fireplace is of course lit by a remote control. Tai's affections have switched from Elton to Josh, and Cher is upset without understanding quite why. Tai and Cher fall out, and Tai displays her new nasty side. Cher goes for a long walk agonising over her own feelings and trying to make sense of them, only interrupted by a bit of shopping (40). She is convinced Tai will never do for Josh. Josh needs someone with imagination, and if Cher is anything like Emma as Andrew Daives sees her then Josh needs her. In front of a fountain that suddenly spurts into life Cher realises she is in love with Josh.[30]

For the first time in her life Cher struggles with feelings of inferiority (41). Cher decides to make over her soul and signs up for the Pismo Beach disaster (43). Cher also joins Josh to help her father on a big case (47). Unfortunately she makes a mistake, and one of the other lawyers becomes angry with her. Fortunately for Cher and Josh this turns out to be the icebreaker they both needed to be able to reveal their true feelings for each other.

The ending of *Clueless* is an ironic comment on the perceived typical Jane Austen ending, certainly an ending favoured by many adaptations of her work, namely the wedding. As

[30] This scene is apparently a homage to the film *Gigi* (1958). http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112697/trivia, 12 April 2007.

Josh and Cher kiss, Cher's voice-over says: 'Well, you can guess what happened next.' We cut to a wedding and Cher's voice-over continues: 'As if! I am only sixteen, and this is California, not Kentucky.' (48) The wedding is for her teachers and Cher is a bridesmaid.

Clueless is a modernised and funny twist on the story from *Emma*. But it is also a funny story in its own right. It is, in fact, a social satire quite on the level with Jane Austen's original story. Like the novel was a cultural expression dominated by the upper layers of English society two hundred years ago, the film industry is today dominated by the upper layers of Los Angeles society. The transfer of setting is therefore both legitimate and poignant. *Clueless* was released halfway through the ten year run of the teenage soap opera *Beverly Hills 90201* (1990-2000), a show with a large audience world wide. It made 90201 the most famous postal code in the world, and Los Angeles society became part of a global culture.

Clueless satirises many aspects of modern society and social perceptions. Cher and Dionne's names poke fun at celebrity. They are friends because they 'both know what it's like to have people be jealous of [them].' (1d) A lot of the irony is directed towards the have-alls, their perception of themselves and our fascination with them. Cher picks out her clothes in the morning by using her computer to match her outfits, while her voice-over claims she has 'a way normal life for a teenage girl.' (1a) Cher's high school is a miniature social hierarchy where everyone belongs to a certain group and they interact according to strict social codes, everything exaggerated to a comical yet recognisable degree. The satirical treatment of fashion reaches its climax when Cher is mugged at gunpoint (21c). When the mugger points the gun at her head and orders her to lie down, Cher's main concern is that she will ruin her designer dress. The irony is created in the discrepancy between the real threat of the situation and the threat perceived by Cher.

The modern family is ironically summed up in Cher's complaint to her father when she learns Josh is coming over to dinner: 'But you were hardly even married to his mother' (1b). Teenage culture gets the most thorough treatment by being exposed in all its shallowness. In debate class Cher compares immigration to arranging a garden party for her father (2a). Mobile phones feature heavily in a way that almost satirises today's general youth culture more than ten years ago. But one of the most noticeable features of the film is it language. Amy Heckerling

created her own version of teenage slang that reveals both social prejudices and young people's obsession with their own little world. Many of the young characters in this film are quite clearly bright, but instead of applying that intelligence to their schoolwork or involvement in the world around them, they express themselves through their own complicated language, their clothes and insular social games. There is a wonderfully ironic distance between the real world and the world these young people inhabit.

Clueless does not forget its own intertextuality. When Josh has to rescue Cher from her mugging in the Valley he is with a girlfriend. In the car the girlfriend is intensely involved in an intellectual argument with Josh where she includes a quote from *Hamlet*:

HEATHER (the girlfriend)
It's just like Hamlet said: 'To thine own self be true'.

CHER
No, Hamlet didn't say that.

HEATHER
I think that I remember Hamlet accurately.

CHER
Well, I remember Mel Gibson accurately, and he didn't say that. That Polonius guy did. (21e)

The really interesting aspect of this scene is its double edge. We laugh at Cher for trusting her knowledge of Shakespeare to Mel Gibson, and we laugh with her as she silences the self-important college student. Your own personal vantage-point might influence you to only do one or the other, but the whole film works in this way if you are open to it. We laugh at Cher's efforts to increase the vocabulary of her slang, yet cannot help but admire her verbal skills. Cher's naïve ideas about the world are also at times laughable, yet again we soften to her open heart.

Another similar comment is when Cher is trying to match her teachers. She writes a love note from a secret admirer to Miss Geist (8a), and uses Sonnet 18 by Shakespeare. Dionne is impressed and asks her whether it is her own. Cher responds that it is a famous quote from Cliff's Notes, the American equivalent to York Notes Literature Guides. Adaptations are not the only option available to the student who does not want to read the book.

A major factor in *Clueless* is Cher's voice-over throughout the film. It allows us to see the world much more through the protagonist's eyes than what is usually the case in film. The

voice-over is a constant creator of verbo-visual irony in that there are many discrepancies between what Cher says and what we see. The voice-over emphasises Cher's confidence in her own misguided views.[31] It also ensures our sympathy for the main character despite her arrogance and ignorance. It combines aspects of the intrusive narrator from *Emma* and the insights the book gives into Emma's thoughts. Because the voice-over is so persistent throughout the film is does not seem out of place, the way it can be said to do in *Emma* (1996). It seems a natural part of the film's discourse. It signals the film's genre as satire. Cher comments on her world as the film comments on the world in general.

In updating *Emma* to our present time *Clueless* presents a much more recognisable comment on the world. Its ironic treatment of modern popular culture is more accessible to its modern audience than ironic treatment of two hundred year old social codes. The updating also seems to shift the filmmaker's focus from reproducing an original story to reproducing that original story's true essence, or spirit. The filmmaker seems to have asked herself: 'What did Jane Austen set out to do with her story?', and then tried to do the same with her own story. Heckerling also seems to have tried to find a modern equivalent to Emma: 'What would Emma be like if she lived today?'[32] The fact that the film contains recognisable events and existents from Jane Austen's story is more a nod to the film's inspiration than an attempt at a traditional adaptation. It also adds layers to the discourse and enhances the viewer satisfaction for parts of its audience.

'The genius of *Emma* is that it forces its readers to question the values and expectations they bring to the book.'[33] None of the other adaptation do that like *Clueless* does. Cher's development as a person defies our prejudices of what spoilt, rich teens are like. *Clueless* is perhaps not clueless at all.

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[31] Suzanne Ferriss, 'Emma Becomes Clueless' in *Jane Austen in Hollywood* ed. by Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), p. 124.
[32] Sue Parrill, *Jane Austen on Film and Television – A Critical Study of the adaptations* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002), p. 117.
[33] Nachumi, p. 136.

Chapter 5
Adapting Pride & Prejudice

I will be looking at seven adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* in this chapter. All of them are available on video or DVD either in Europe or in the US. These seven adaptations are very different, and would, I am sure, make a worth while in-depth study. I will, however, restrict myself to an assessment of how the characters Elizabeth Bennet and her father Mr Bennet are represented. Is their original ironic function in the novel preserved when they are brought alive on the screen? However complicated it might be to translate Jane Austen's ironic narration from one discourse to another, I feel these two existents should be able to make the transition without too much trouble.

Does Mr Bennet display the ironic distance to the world around him that we find in the book, and if so are the consequences the same? We also need to see glimpses of the man he used to be in order to fully understand the danger lurking in the future for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth should be seen to view the world around her with a certain amount of ironic distance, but with a lot more of her humanity still present. She is also supposed to have a certain awareness of what went wrong for her father, but still in need of making discoveries about her own character.

5.1 *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*, METRO GOLDWYN MAYOR, 1940

The credits tells us that the screenplay for this adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* is actually based on a dramatisation. When one also takes its age into consideration it is not difficult to guess that liberties have been taken with the original story. It still is a fairly literal adaptation in a costume ball sort of way as the story is definitely recognisably *Pride & Prejudice* with most of its characters and kernel events intact. No great efforts have been made to stay true to the period, but it is still not a modernised adaptation as such. It can perhaps be said to be an adaptation along the lines of *Emma* (1996), but made in a different era of filmmaking. It certainly seems McGrath got his ideas for archery and puppies from this adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*.

Initially Mr Bennet shows a lot of promise. His replies to Mrs Bennet's enthusing over the arrival of Mr Bingley are dry and funny in their contrast. We see how he enjoys teasing his wife, and some of his ironic comments from the novel are included. Occasionally he exchanges knowing looks with Elizabeth. But mainly he is a quiet character who is slightly bemused by his surroundings. He is someone you feel sorry for rather than someone you might blame for his family problems. Elizabeth does not seem to blame him either.

Elizabeth comes across as an intelligent and sweet woman. She is also given some of her ironic comments from the novel in addition to some new ones, but they are mainly playful in character. I would have to agree with George Lellis and H. Philip Bolton that Elizabeth 'is too sweetly beautiful and has trouble putting into her performance the bite of acid scepticism that Austen locates beneath Lizzy's polite exterior.'[1]

The original plug for this film was: 'Five charming sisters on the gayest, merriest manhunt that ever snared a bewildered bachelor! Girls! Take a lesson from these husband hunters!'[2] It is easy to surmise that irony was not a great concern in the making of the adaptation, but Lellis and Bolton think that an effort has been made: '[T]he cinematizing of the novel results in attempts to visualize verbal wit which replace Austen's refined humor with slapstick. […] [T]he visual humor seems to violate the refined spirit of the novel.'[3] So whatever the intention, the result is a light romantic comedy.

5.2 *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*, BBC, 1980

The credits state that this *Pride & Prejudice* – or *First Impressions* – is by Jane Austen and only dramatised by Fay Weldon. So one should expect a very literal adaptation. Fay Weldon herself describes her dramatising as attempting 'to lift *Pride and Prejudice* almost manually from the page […] and place it on the screen, adding and subtracting scarcely a word – just dealing the text out amongst those five useful sisters to declaim'.[4] The latter is very noticeable in that a lot of the intrusive narration from the book is spoken by the characters in the adaptation. The famous

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[1] George Lellis and H. Philip Bolton, 'Pride but No Prejudice' in *The English Novel and the Movies*, p. 47.
[2] Anthony Lane, 'Jane's World', *The New Yorker*, September 25, 1995, p. 107, quoted in Karen Joy Fowler, *The Jane Austen Club* (London etc.: Viking/Penguin, 2004), p. 271.
[3] Lellis and Bolton, 'Pride but No Prejudice' in *The English Novel and the Movies*, p. 50.
[4] Fay Weldon, 'Jane to rescue', *Guardian*, 12 April 1995, G2T, p.2.

opening lines of *Pride & Prejudice* are shared between Elizabeth and her friend Charlotte. And then what feels like just about every word from the novel is given in dialogue, letters read aloud and voice-over. As Fay Weldon admits herself, the adaptation comes across as distinctly wordy.

Despite its almost painful literalness the adaptation is well cast and well acted. The result is a convincing Elizabeth who goes through exactly the same development as in the novel. We are never left to guess at her emotional state as what she cannot express with her face we are told through dialogue and voice-over. Elizabeth's ironic point-of-view leads her into cynicism, but Mr Darcy's letter saves her from the brink. Most of Darcy's letter is included and so are Elizabeth's reflections in reaction to it. Elizabeth is saved from her father's fate, but fortunately not completely subdued. Our last glimpses of her show Elizabeth pleasantly teasing Mr Darcy.

Mr Bennet's character is explained to us by Elizabeth at the very beginning. And she returns with commentary on several occasions. Mr Bennet quickly displays his sardonic side, and he is continually seeking refuge in his library. Mr Bennet is given many opportunities in the adaptation to mock his family and the world in general, but we also see his affection for Elizabeth. There is a real connection between them. And when Lydia elopes, his remorse and self-recriminations are real. Then he returns to character as in the novel. If we do not see the danger of Mr Bennet's conduct ourselves, we are explicitly told about them by one of Elizabeth's voice-overs.

5.3 *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*, BBC, 1995

This adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* also incorporates the opening line from the novel, and again it is given mainly to Elizabeth. This time she is teasing her mother. It works well to give this line to Elizabeth because she is very like the book's implied author in wit and spirit.

This version of Elizabeth is quite bubbly and lives up to the vivacity aspect of her literary inspiration. She is passionate both emotionally and temperamentally. When she is trying to convince her father not to let Lydia go to Brighton, Mr Bennet has to try to calm her down. She does not respond positively to his attempts to put some ironic distance between them and Lydia's outrageous behaviour, though. At this point in the story she has begun her road to enlightenment. Elizabeth's wit is very much present in the adaptation. Her ironic comments on

the world around her are given a wide scope. Her passionate nature does, however, not allow her to get as close to bitterness of feeling as Elizabeth in the novel and the 1985 adaptation.

There is more than a connection between Elizabeth and her father in the 1995 version of the story. They seem to be two versions of basically the same character. At the beginning of the first episode of the adaptation Elizabeth and Mr Bennet exchange amused looks through a window at the noise of the Bennet household. She shares heartily in many of her father's jokes at other people's expense in the early part of the story, especially when it comes to Mr Collins, but she also occasionally laughs at her mother. Again she is saved by her complex relationship with Mr Darcy, and by having to face up to her pride and prejudices.

The Mr Bennet in this *Pride & Prejudice* is a lighter version than in the 1985 adaptation. His ironic detachment is more amused than sardonic. He still refuses to take life seriously, though. We see him early on pondering over his accounts. But the creases on his forehead are soon made smooth by the sight of a tumbler of dark liquid on his desk. Despite the lighter aspect to Mr Bennet, the consequences of his detached amusement are just as serious as the consequences of the other Mr Bennet's sardonic detachment.

The adaptation gives a very good rendering of Mr Bennet's sincere admittance to Elizabeth of her better judgement where Lydia is concerned. I consider this to be a pivotal scene in the context of the ironic detachment of Elizabeth and Mr Bennet. It confirms that Elizabeth is safe from her father's fate, while Mr Bennet returns to his habitual form when next addressing Kitty. Elizabeth and her father seem to have on final meeting of minds before they go off in their different directions.

5.4 *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*, UNIVERSAL, 2005

This film received much critical praise on its first release. As someone who has seen it more recently I must assume the praise was from critics who had not read the novel. As an adaptation it is trying too hard to be modern and to distance itself from earlier attempts at bringing *Pride & Prejudice* to the screen. Trying too hard seldom yields satisfactory results.

This version of Mr Bennet has certainly detached himself from the world around him. But it is the detachment of a whipped man, not a man of irony. He also seems to feel affection for

his whole family and not just his two eldest daughters. He basically seems to feel quite comfortable in his noisy family.

Elizabeth learns a lesson in this version of the story, but it is purely a lesson of her heart. She has strong opinions and a strong spirit, but is too fond of laughing to be ironic in any noticeable degree.

The adaptation is noticeably modern in its preference of casting women Bridget Jones would call 'stick insects'. The Bennet table is bountifully loaded with food at all meal times but none of the girls look like they eat much at all. The film is more a testament to changing beauty ideals than any philosophising over the question of ironic distance.

Nevertheless, I cannot but admit that the film does pull at the heart strings. It is emotional as only a film can be. Love stories will forever have universal appeal.

5.5 DEPARTURES

The next three adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* are definite departures from the literal adaptation. Considering the success of *Clueless* it is still interesting to take a look at them.

5.5.1 *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*, EXCEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, 2003

This is a modernised adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* which leaves you in no doubt about its literary inspiration. The version available on DVD does not, however, flaunt its modern inspiration. The adaptation is of all things a Mormon take on Jane Austen's story. The DVD version is edited to suit a wider public, and only retains a certain amount of references to church and scripture.

Great pains have been taken to include characters with the same names as in the novel, but there is no Mr Bennet. The aspiring writer Elizabeth Bennet is too poorly acted to be anything like her namesake. And at no point does she display any wit or sense of irony. It is tempting to assume that Jane Austen's novel was thought a ready made story that would make suitable material for a morally uplifting film as there is no premarital sex. It might have been a slightly funny comedy had the filmmakers had a budget that allowed them to hire actors who could actually act.

5.5.2 *BRIDE & PREJUDICE*, PATHÉ PICTURES, 2004

Bride & Prejudice is yet another modernised adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*, but with a distinctly original twist. The Bennet family has become the Bakshi family and Longbourn has been moved to India. I personally found it a totally captivating film, and also a most interesting adaptation even if it disappoints a bit in the context of this thesis.

Elizabeth, or Lizzy, has become the equally independent minded Lalita. She is spirited and just as much a victim of her own pride and prejudice as Elizabeth. But the quality that makes her both endearing and in danger of succumbing to cynicism is her passionate nature and not her ironic detachment.

Mr Bakshi has to deal with a wife just as silly as Mrs Bennet, and he does make the occasional joke at her expense. But there is no exaggerated ironic distance, and he does not let his wife and daughters run free like Mr Bennet. They cause him some embarrassment and trouble, but it is not because of any fatherly failing on his side. He has both their respectability and happiness at heart.

This adaptation would be interesting from the point of view of issues like modern social structures and multiculturalism, but sadly does not let me dwell on it in my present investigations.

5.5.3 *BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY*, UNIVERSAL, 2001

Bridget Jones's Diary is actually an adaptation of a novel of the same name which in turn is inspired by the story of *Pride & Prejudice*. The Elizabeth in this version of the story is, as the title suggests, Bridget.

Bridget is really more like a thirty something version of Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, though. Awkward and naïve she stumbles her way through life. Not much of Elizabeth's wit to be found there. While Bridget is a comic character her father is positively pathetic. A good portion of ironic detachment would have done Mr Jones a world of good.

Again not an adaptation that has much to contribute in the way of irony, but it does provide an insight into Austenmania. When the novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* made it to the screen an intricate web of intertextuality was created. The romantic hero of *Bridget Jones's*

Diary, novel and film, is Mark Darcy, modelled on Mr Darcy of *Pride & Prejudice*. In the novel there are references to the 1995 television adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* as Bridget and her friends gather to drool over Mr Darcy walking through his grounds in a wet and white shirt after a dip in the lake, played by Colin Firth. In a sequel to the novel, inspired by the plot of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, Bridget even gets to go to Rome and interview Colin Firth. In the film version of *Bridget Jones's Diary* Colin Firth was cast to play Mark Darcy. This was certainly not without irony, and something Colin Firth found irresistible.[5] For the second Bridget Jones film the interview scene with Colin Firth obviously had to be cut.

[5] Colin Firth expresses this view in the bonus material on the DVD release of the film.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

My point of departure for this thesis has been that when Jane Austen's writings are adapted for the screen 'the loss of the ironic third-person narrator requires some form of compensation.'[1] We have seen that successful compensation has not been all that forthcoming in most of the texts studied.

Emma (1972) is too concerned with reproducing the plot elements of the original novel to be concerned with its ironic structure. *Emma* (1996) reduces all it can to comedy. *Jane Austen's Emma* (1996) makes a decent effort with the ironic subplot of Frank and Jane's engagement and with the portrayal of its main character, but is perhaps a bit too dark. A fusion of the two 1996 adaptations would have been an interesting experiment. That would also have provided us with a fuller representation of the original story as they focus on different parts of it. They both share the problem of huge time restrictions in telling the story of *Emma.* The only adaptation of the novel that really manages to create something that approaches an equivalent to Jane Austen's original ironic story is *Clueless*, even though it does not reproduce the ironic structure of *Emma*'s many mysteries to any great degree. What it does is reproduce the novel's ironic tone. *Clueless* seems to indicate that the only way to really transfer Jane Austen's habitual ironic point-of-view from page to screen is by moving her stories to the present. But as the modernised adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* suggest, updating the story is not enough on its own.

For *Pride & Prejudice* both BBC adaptations do quite well in their representations of Elizabeth and Mr Bennet, though this is achieved through the use of varying filmic discourse and with slightly different results. Both adaptations have many episodes at their disposal, which probably have given them an advantage over feature films, but a conscious effort also seems to have been made to represent the ironic aspects of these two characters faithfully. The adaptations show that this can be done fairly easily. When it has not been done in the other

[1] Nora Nachumi, '"As If!" Translating Austen's Ironic Narrator to Film' in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, p. 130.

adaptations one can only assume that it was a conscious decision. In all those cases everything seems to yield to the romance.

There can be no doubt that reproducing the irony from a written text on screen is a difficult task. Some seem to think it almost impossible:

> '[T]here are hundreds of […] ways in which pictures can't do easily what languages does easily. They can't establish an ironic context: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (*Pride and Prejudice* I.i). You could use a voice-over, but in pictures the irony has to be much simpler even than that.'[2]

Yet two of the adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice* incorporate this very sentence quite well. I hope this thesis has shown that, though an adaptation will probably never be able to reproduce the full complexity of the novel, irony certainly can travel from page to screen. The question is rather whether filmmakers have the imagination required, or even the inclination. It seems a shame to me that not more of the potential for filmic irony demonstrated in Chapter 3 is put to good use in adaptations of Jane Austen's writing. The example presented from *Sense & Sensibility* (1995) on page 49-50 is an all too rare instance of filmic irony in all its glory. None of the adaptations studied in this thesis can boast a collection of scenes to equal it, and I felt a need to include it for that very reason. I wanted at least one example of what might have been.

The appeal of adapting Jane Austen's writing for the screen seems to mainly be her love stories. I will admit that I find them very appealing myself. But I will never accept that the romance alone can represent Jane Austen. As Cher demonstrates in *Clueless* when she equals Mel Gibson with Shakespeare as a communicator of *Hamlet*, adaptations do become part of an author's legacy. It worries me that watching an adaptation like *Emma* (1996) can potentially replace the reading of the novel for some people, and also make them think they know something of Jane Austen as an author.

But I am not as sure as I was when starting out that a satisfactory adaptation of Jane Austen's writings is only a question of irony or no irony. I think the issue is more complicated than that. I have mentioned that *Jane Austen's Emma* (1996) is my favourite literal adaptation despite the fact that I did not find it completely satisfactory from the point of view of irony. I have also indicated my enthusiasm for *Bride & Prejudice* (2004) which does not perform at all in this

[2] Roger Gard, 'A Few Skeptical Thoughts on Jane Austen and Film in *Jane Austen on Screen* ed. by Gina Macdonald and Andrew F. Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 11.

respect. It seems to me that what is at stake here is the issue of interpretation. Of this irony is perhaps the most important aspect with an author like Jane Austen, but there are other factors as well. Her galleries of intriguing characters that provide us with archetypes, social issues and timeless interpersonal relationships. Every adaptation is a new take on the original novels, and some of them provide us with more interesting perspectives than others. What makes me dismiss an adaptation is not its lack of literalness, but its lack of intelligence. A good adaptation should have the courage to say something interesting, and not shy away from things that are deemed difficult, like irony.

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Appendix 1: Segmentations

Emma 1972

PART ONE

C over moving pictures of pink flowers to simple piano music – Emma by Jane Austen, dramatised by Denis Constanduros

DVD 1 Alone Together

1 at Hartfield

1a camera pans to the right and we see a large house where carriages are leaving and a woman goes inside

1b cut to woman inside a hall, she stops to compose herself

1c room with Mr Woodhouse and Mr Knightley, Emma comes in

DVD 2 Handsome Letters

2 Mrs Goddard and Harriet call at Hartfield

3 Emma, Mr Knightley and Mr Woodhouse discuss a private party for Mr and Mrs Weston

DVD 3 Splendid Gathering

4 party at Hartfield for Mr and Mrs Weston

DVD 4 Man of Knowledge

5 Harriet and Emma at Hartfield – the Martins are discussed

6 Harriet and Emma visit the poor – they meet Mr Martin

7 Mr Elton visits Emma and Harriet at Hartfield

DVD 5 Simplicity of Character

8 Harriet comes back to Mrs Goddard's school – Mr Martin has called in her absence and left a letter

9 Mr Knightley, Mrs Weston, Mr Elton and Mr Woodhouse discuss Emma's drawing of Harriet – Mr Elton is to take the drawing to London to have it framed

10 Harriet visits early the next day to inform Emma of Mr Martin's proposal of marriage and Emma convinces her to decline him

C over an image of Emma's drawing of Harriet

PART TWO

C over image of top hat, gloves and a walking stick on a sideboard

DVD 1 Ridiculous Infatuation

1 at Hartfield

1a the hat is picked up by Emma and given to her father – he is going for a walk – Mr Knightley comes to visit

1b Emma and Mr Knigtley discuss Mr Martin's proposal

1c Mr Knigtley leaves in a temper

DVD 2 Conundrums and Riddles

2 Harriet and Emma at Hartfield discuss the book of riddles – Mr Elton arrives with the framed drawing

DVD 3 Inducements to Marry

3 Emma and Harriet go visiting the poor and 'runs into' Mr Elton

DVD 4 Grievous Business

4 Mr Woodhouse is anxious about the journey and arrival of Isabella and her family

5 Isabella and family arrive

6 Mr Knightley arrives and settles his disagreement with Emma over their baby niece

7 dinner at Hartfield for the extended family

8 Mrs Goddard's School

8a Emma visits Harriet's sickbed

DVD 5 Objects of Desire

8b Emma meets Mr Elton outside on his way to enquire about Harriet

8c John Knightley picks up Emma in his carriage

9 The Woodhouses and the Knightleys leave Hartfield to go to Randalls

10 Christmas party at Randalls

10a arrival

10b after dinner – Jane's letter, Elton's misbehaviour and the snow scare

10c departure

10d the carriage journey with Mr Elton's proposal

10e arrival at Hartfield

C over an image of the charade

PART THREE

C over image of Harriet's book of charades next to Harriet's bed

DVD 1 Unpleasant News

1 Emma visits Harriet who is still in bed – she tells of Mr Elton's proposal

2 at Hartfield – Mr Knightley and Emma disagree about Frank Churchill

3 Emma and Harriet call on Miss Bates – Jane Fairfax has come for a visit

DVD 2 Wedding Announcement

4 evening party at Hartfield – Jane plays

5 Mr Knightley visits Hartfield the next day – Miss Bates comes with Jane to announce Mr Elton's marriage

6 Harriet calls on Emma to tell of her meeting with the Martins

7 Mr Weston brings Frank Churchill to visit at Hartfield

DVD 3 General Store Gossip

8 Emma defies her father's concerns and goes out to Ford's

9 Emma at Ford's where she meets Mrs Weston and Frank Churchill – Frank and Emma are left to themselves

10 at the Bates' Jane gets a new piano – Emma and Frank talk conspiracy

DVD 4 Dinner Visiting

11 the invitation to the Coles arrives

12 party at the Coles

DVD 5 Exquisite Performance

C over an image of a hat, some gloves, a tie and some pink thread

PART FOUR

C over an image of the clock in the Hartfield hall

DVD 1 Morning Room

1 Harriet comes to visit Emma

2 at Ford's – Harriet deliberates over ribbons and Frank and Mrs Weston drop in

3 at Randalls Frank suggests a ball

4 at Hartfield Frank presents his plan for a ball at the Crown

DVD 2 Wise Judgement

5 at the Bates' Jane demonstrates the piano for Frank and Emma

DVD 3 Conflict of Interest

6 Harriet and Emma at Hartfield – they discuss the new Mrs Elton

7 Frank pays an unexpected visit to say he must leave

8 Harriet and Emma prepare to leave Hartfield

9 wedding visit to the vicarage

10 Emma vents her frustration over Mrs Elton to Mr Knightley – and her insecurities about Mr Knightley's feelings for Jane Fairfax

DVD 4 Private Conversations

11 Emma discusses inviting the Eltons to dinner with her father

12 Mrs Elton and Jane at the vicarage

DVD 5 Hard on the Ears

13 dinner party at Hartfield

13a Jane is pestered about going to the post office

13b Mrs Elton is rambling on at dinner

13c after dinner Mrs Elton continues – Frank's return announced

C over an image of Jane's new piano

PART FIVE

C over an image of a flower decoration in the ball room

DVD 1 Ensemble Dance

1 the ball at the Crown

DVD 2 Rise to the Occasion

2 Mrs Goddard comes home to a dreaming Harriet

3 Mr Woodhouse leaves Emma for his walk

4 Harriet and Betty walk through the woods

5 Emma at Hartfield

6 Harriet and Betty meet the gypsies and Harriet is saved by Frank

7 Frank brings Harriet to Hartfield – Harriet declares her release from Mr Elton's charms

DVD 3 April Showers

8 at the Bates' – Frank lets slip the information about Mr Perry setting up a carriage

9 Mrs Elton visits Mr Knightley at Donwell Abbey where she bullies him into an invitation

10 Mr Knightley visits Emma at Hartfield and tells her of his suspicions regarding Jane and Frank

DVD 4 Conspiring Voices

11 picking strawberries at Donwell

DVD 5 A Proper Picnic

12 excursion to Box Hill

C over an image of the scenery around Box Hill

PART SIX

C over an image of Jane's piano

DVD 1 Stricken by Sickness

1 Emma visits Miss Bates

2 Mr Knightley calls at Hartfield to say he is going to London

3 Harriet and Emma at Hartfield – Mr Weston calls

4 Emma comes to see a worried Mrs Weston and is told of Jane and Frank's engagement

DVD 2 Requesting Counsel

5 Harriet visits Hartfield to talk about the secret engagement and Emma finds out who she really likes

DVD 3 Hidden Admiration

6 Emma and her father at home

7 Emma goes for a walk and meets Mr Knightley – he proposes

DVD 4 Request for Love

8 Mr Woodhouse is worried about Emma's absence

9 Emma and Mr Knightley settle things

10 Emma and Mr Knightley return to a fussing Mr Woodhouse

11 Emma's letter to Harriet and Harriet's letter to Emma

12 at the Bates' Jane is the centre of attention – Emma and Jane become friends

13 at Hartfield Mr Woodhouse goes for a walk and Mr Knightley is visiting

14 Emma and Mr Knightley talk of Harriet and Mr Martin

15 Harriet comes to Hartfield to talk of her engagement and to present Mr Martin

DVD 5 A Father's Blessing

16 Emma tells her father of her engagement

17 Mr and Mrs Elton play cards at the Bates' and discuss the news of Emma and Mr Knightley

18 all meet to see the new baby and Frank and Emma settle scores

C over moving picture of Hartfield which pans to the left to the flowers from the opening credits in part one

Emma 1996

C opening titles with a painted spinning globe

1 the wedding of Miss Taylor and Mr Weston

2 at Hartfield

- 2a Emma and Mr Woodhouse alone – Mr Knightley calls
- 2b Mr Knightley, Emma and Mr Woodhouse in conversation – Emma decides to marry off Mr Elton

3 party at Hartfield

- 3a Emma introduces Mr Elton to Harriet Smith
- 3b at the dinner table
- 3c admiration of Mr Churchill's letter
- 3d Mr and Mrs Weston take their leave

4 Emma and Harriet get to know each other

- 4a walking in Highbury – Emma hides them from Miss Bates
- 4b Emma and Harriet in an apple garden – Harriet tells of Mr Martin and his family
- 4c walking in the forest – they meet Mr Martin

5 Emma and Harriet sewing out of doors

6 Emma is helping Mr Elton decorate the church

7 Harriet is posing for Emma with Mr Elton as an enthusiastic onlooker

8 Harriet has received a letter with a marriage proposal from Mr Martin

9 Emma and Mr Knightley at Donwell Abbey

- 9a argument over Harriet and Mr Martin while doing archery
- 9b the argument continues over tea

10 at Hartfield

- 10a the portrait of Harriet is unveiled in framed condition to the applause of friends (and especially Mr Elton)
- 10b Emma asks Mr Elton to contribute to Harriet’s book of riddles

11 Emma seeks out Harriet in her open chase and shows her the riddle from Mr Elton

12 Emma and Harriet visit the poor Clarks family

13 on their way home

- 13a Emma expresses her views on matrimony where she herself is concerned
- 13b they meet Mr Elton who is on his way to the Clarkses

14 visit of Isabella and John Knightley with the new edition to the family – Emma and Mr Knightley shake hands and make up

15 Mr Woodhouse and Emma pick up Mr Elton on their way to Mrs Weston's Christmas party

16 at Randalls

16a Emma is unsuccessfully trying to catch the contents of Mr Weston's description of a letter from Frank Churchill while being pestered by Mr Elton

16b at the dinner table

16c after dinner Mr Elton urges Emma not to risk visiting Harriet – the party breaks up early due to the falling snow

16d Emma is led to her carriage by Mr Elton

17 Emma and Mr Elton in her carriage – his pompous offer of marriage

18 Emma confides in Mrs Weston

19 Emma telling the sad news to Harriet at the school

20 Emma and Harriet are enjoying the company of some puppies

21 in a desperate attempt to avoid the subject of Mr Elton Emma takes Harriet to call on the Bateses

22 Emma is at the Bates' to welcome Jane Fairfax

23 Emma with Mr Knightley rearranging her flowerpots – Mr Knightley tells Emma of Mr Elton's engagement

24 Harriet tells Emma of her meeting with Elizabeth Martin and her brother

25 Emma is stranded with her injured chaise in a large pond – enter Frank Churchill

26 Emma meets with Miss Bates in Highbury

27 Emma is fretting over the absent invitation from the Coles

27a Emma asks her father if the invitation has arrived

27b another day – looking through the letters without finding the invitation

27c another day – another unsuccessful search through the day’s letters

27d in front of the fire with her father expressing her dismay at not having been invited

28 the Coles' party

28a talk where the gift to Jane of a pianoforte is mentioned – Frank shares his suspicions of Mr Dixon and Jane with Emma

28b Mrs Weston relates her suspicions regarding Mr Knightley and Jane

28c Emma at the piano singing – Frank joins in – Jane is lead to the piano and joined by Frank – Emma clarifies Mr Knightley's involvement in Jane's present

29 Frank comes to Hartfield to take his leave of Emma and is close to betraying a confidence when they are interrupted by Mr Weston

30 Emma at her dressing table writing in her diary – she is convinced Frank must be in love with her – she thinks herself in love with him

31 Mr Elton brings his new wife to tea at Hartfield

32 Emma and Harriet in an open carriage through the streets of Highbury – Emma decides she must give a party for Mrs Elton

33 outside the church Mrs Elton is excited about the party – and she declares her determination to take Jane under her wings

34 Mr Knightley, Mrs Weston and Emma in the garden at Randalls – Mr Knightley is put on the spot about his regard for Jane

35 party at Hartfield

- 35a the concern over Jane and her letters
- 35b while the others are dining Mr Weston arrives with news of Frank

36 Emma at her dressing table writing in her diary – she is not in love with Frank, but Harriet would do very well for him

37 Mr Knightley and Emma at Hartfield, with him expressing his dislike of the upcoming ball

38 the ball

- 38a Emma is welcomed by Frank – he claims to be on the lookout for Mrs Elton
- 38b Miss Bates arrives with Jane and Frank
- 38c first dance and Mr Elton snubs Harriet – Mr Knightley saves her
- 38d after the dance Emma catches up with Mr Knightley to thank him
- 38e last dance where Emma and Mr Knightley dance together

39 Emma and Harriet out walking in the woods and they are attacked by gypsies – Frank comes to the rescue

40 the burning of Harriet's most precious possessions

41 the outing to Box Hill

- 41a strawberry picking in the fields and talk of Harriet's new affections
- 41b Mrs Elton has found a position for Jane, nether she nor Frank is pleased – Frank stops Mrs Elton by introducing a game – she walks off and Emma insults Miss Bates
- 41c Mr Knightley scolds Emma

42 Emma calls on Miss Bates, but both she and Jane excuse themselves from her company

43 back at Hartfield Mr Knightley has come to take his leave

44 Emma sitting outside writing in her diary – Frank's aunt is dead – she is still making efforts with Miss Bates that she hopes Mr Knightley will approve of – Mr Weston comes running

45 Mrs Elton tells Emma of Frank's engagement to Jane

46 the direction of Harriet's affections is clarified

47 Emma confides in Mrs Weston – she is in love with Mr Knightley

48 Emma at her dressing table writing in her diary about how she tried not to think of Mr Knightley the whole day

49 the return of Mr Knightley

- 49a in church praying that Mr Knightley at least would stay single
- 49b on her way home she meets with Mr Knightley – a declaration of mutual love is finally made

50 the happy news of Emma and Mr Knightley's engagement is communicated to the rest of the world

51 Emma in the greenhouse, visited by Harriet who tells of her engagement to Mr Martin

52 the wedding of Emma and Mr Knightley

53 a painting of the church on the globe from the opening titles and the new Mr and Mrs Knightley and other characters – voice over – downwards roll to

C credits

Jane Austen's Emma 1996

➡ A&E commercial break + sponsor

1 chicken thieves strike at Hartfield

2 Miss Taylor and Mr Weston's wedding

3 Emma and Mr Woodhouse alone at Hartfield

4 visit from Mr Knightley – Emma decides to marry off Mr Elton

5 Emma discovers Harriet Smith at church

6 an evening of cards at Hartfield

- 6a Emma decides to match Mr Elton and Harriet
- 6b Emma fantasises about the lucky couple – inner images
- 6c Emma alone in her bedroom and content with herself

7 Harriet and Emma out walking – they meet Mr Martin

8 Emma is drawing Harriet while Mr Elton is enthusiastically watching

9 the finished drawing is up for evaluation by family and friends – Mr Elton is in raptures

10 Mr Elton rides off to London to get the drawing framed – Harriet comes running with a letter of proposal from Mr Martin – Emma does what she can to arrange things properly

11 Mr Knightley and Emma have an argument because she has made Harriet refuse Mr Martin

➡ A&E commercial break

⇨ end of screenplay part one

12 Isabella and John Knightley come visiting – Emma and Mr Knightley are softened by the presence of their nephews and nieces and make up

13 Emma and Mr John Knightley share a carriage on their way to a Christmas party at Randalls – they pick up Mr Elton on their way

14 Christmas party at Randalls

- 14a dinner – Frank Churchill is mentioned and explained
- 14b Emma is admiring a picture of Mr Churchill – Emma is alternately in conversation with Mr Elton and Mr Knightley – declares playfully that Mr Frank Churchill must be the perfect man for her
- 14c the party is broken up early because of the snow

15 the picture of Frank Churchill comes alive in Emma's imagination while the others are getting ready to leave – inner images

16 Emma ends up alone with Mr Elton in the carriage – Mr Elton's proposal

➡ A&E commercial break

17 Emma sees Mr Elton leaving the village by post on her way to Harriet with the bad news

18 Harriet is given the bad news

19 Emma and Harriet in Highbury

19a Harriet and Emma are called in by Miss Bates to meet Jane Fairfax

19b Emma relates the story of Jane's background to Harriet on their way in

20 we meet Jane Fairfax

20a the story of how Mr Dixon saved Jane is told

20b Emma's imagination is stimulated – inner images

20c back with Miss Bates

21 social gathering at Hartfield

21a Jane's musical talent is demonstrated

21b Emma makes an unsuccessful attempt to get to know Jane

22 Emma shows the extent of Mr Knightley's property to Harriet

23 Emma lets Harriet visit the Martins

24 back at Hartfield Mr Weston is waiting for Emma with Frank Churchill

➡ A&E commercial break

⇨ end of screenplay part two

25 Emma and Frank get to know each other

26 Emma shows Highbury to Frank

26a the arranging of a ball is suggested and we get to hear about Frank's visit to the Bates the previous day

26b Emma shows Mr Elton's house to Frank – Frank tells Emma of Mr Elton's engagement

27 Emma and Frank at Randalls – the first hints about Jane and Mr Dixon are exchanged between them

28 an irritated Mr Knightley has come to Hartfield to meet Frank only to discover that he has gone to London to have his hair cut

29 Jane is given a pianoforte by an anonymous donor

30 party at Randalls

30a Frank sings first with Emma and then with Jane

30b Mrs Weston speculates about Jane and Mr Knightley

30c dancing

31 Emma is having a nightmare

31a Emma dreams Mr Knightley is marrying Jane – inner images

31b Emma wakes up with a start

➡ A&E sponsor and commercial break

32 Emma and Harriet visit the Bates' where they also find Jane and Frank – Frank announces the ball

33 Mr Elton returns with his new wife

34 Mr and Mrs Elton visit Hartfield

35 later in the garden

35a Emma complains about Mrs Elton to Mrs Weston

35b Mr Knightley expresses his high regard for Jane

36 Frank calls at Highbury to inform Emma that he is leaving Highbury because of his aunt – he is close to making an intimate confession when they are interrupted by Mr Weston's arrival

➡ A&E commercial break

⇨ end of screenplay part three

37 Emma confides to Harriet that she is not in love with Frank

38 dinner party at Hartfield – Mr Weston arrives late to announce Frank's return and consequently the resumption of the plans for a ball

39 the ball

39a Mr Knightley saves Harriet after she has been snubbed by Mr Elton

39b Emma and Mr Knightley dance together

40 next day out of doors

40a Harriet and a friend are attacked by gypsies and Harriet is saved by Frank

40b Frank brings Harriet to Hartfield

40c Emma fantasises about Harriet and Frank – inner images

➡ A&E commercial break

41 strawberry picking at Donwell Abbey

41a Mrs Elton pesters Mr Knightley

41b Mrs Elton pesters Jane

41c Jane leaves without wanting to take advantage of Emma's kind concern

41d Emma watches Mr Knightley attending to Harriet

41e we see a hot exchange of words between Jane and Frank as she is leaving and he is arriving

41f Emma meets an irritated Frank Churchill

42 the picnic to Box Hill

42a Frank's 'blunder'

42b a game with alphabet letters – Mr Knightly tells Emma of his suspicions relating to Jane and Frank

➡ A&E commercial break

42c bad atmosphere at the picnic – Emma insults Miss Bates

42d Mr Knightley scolds Emma because of the episode with Miss Bates

⇨ end of screenplay part four

43 Emma calls on Miss Bates – Jane does not want to see her and she has decided to take up a post as a governess

44 back at Hartfield Mr Knightley has come to take his leave before going to London – he softens when he hears where Emma has been

45 Emma and Harriet in Highbury

45a Harriet confides that she has found another object of admiration

45b Miss Bates pops her head out to tell Emma that Jane is still indisposed

46 Mr Martin sees Jane walking in the fields, crying

➡ A&E commercial break

47 Mrs Churchill dies

48 Emma and Harriet in Emma's bedchamber speculating about what will happen to Frank now

49 a worried Mr Weston comes to claim Emma for his wife

50 at Randalls

50a Mrs Weston tells Emma of the secret engagement between Jane and Frank

50b previous incidents fall into their rightful place in Emma's mind – inner images

50c what about Harriet?

51 Harriet puts Emma straight – Mr Knightley is the object of her admiration not Frank

52 Emma begins her journey towards better self-knowledge

52a Emma walking home in frustration and aggravation

52b she recalls situations with Mr Knightley and Harriet – inner images

52c Emma still walking briskly

52d Mr Knightley and Harriet's wedding – inner images

52e we are back at Hartfield with a start late at night

52f Emma recalls situations with Mr Knightley and herself – inner images

52g she finally realises that she is in love with Mr Knightley

➡ A&E commercial break

53 Mr Knightley returns anxious for her feelings – and finally proposes

54 in her bedchamber at night Emma is awoken from her bliss by the memory of Harriet

➡ A&E commercial break

55 Emma goes to see Harriet – she is to marry Mr Martin after all

56 Emma and Mr Knightley persuade Mr Woodhouse to accept their marriage

57 the harvest is brought inn

58 Mr Knightley gives a harvest supper for his friends and tenants

58a the Eltons arrive

58b Emma shakes hands with Mr Martin

58c Emma and Frank have a chat

58d Mr Knightley claims Emma for the dance and the rest of the assembly follow suit

59 the chicken thieves strike again outside

➡ A&E commercial for sale of video and tie-in book

Clueless 1995

C credits with glimpses of Cher's fashionable, wealthy lifestyle – voice-over brings us into the first segment

1 Cher's voice-over tells us about her life

1a how she dresses in the morning

1b introduces us to her father and their relationship

1c her car

1d her friend Dionne

1e school and high school boys

2a Cher in class debating immigration from Haiti, and getting her report card

2b Cher and Dionne complaining about it over their mobile phones

3 back at the house Cher tells us about her mother

4 Cher finds ex-stepbrother Josh in front of the refrigerator, and they all have dinner – Cher tells her father that she considers her report card as a jumping off point to start negotiations

5 Cher negotiates her grades – but Mr hall will not budge

6 to regain control Cher seeks refuge in the mall with Dionne – she decides to solve her problem by making Mr Hall sublimely happy

7 the 411 on Mr Hall – Cher decides he needs a woman; Miss Geist

8 Cher sets the wheels in motion to get together Mr Hall and Miss Geist

8a she leaves a love note in Miss Geist's pigeon hole

8b while Mr Hall goes through the tardies Cher tells him that Miss Geist has said that he was the only one in the school with any intelligence

9 Cher's father is upset because she has got a ticket without even having a driving licence

10 Cher gets Josh to give her a diving lesson

11 while driving they argue over Cher's view of life

12a at school Cher is upset over Josh's criticism of her

12b Cher and Dionne also make some new efforts to get Mr Hall and Miss Geist together

13 Mr Hall and Miss Geist fall in love – and the entire student body is grateful

14 Cher's new report card gets her father's approval

15a encouraged by her initial success Cher feels a need to do more good deeds – when the new student Tai turns up in gym class Cher decides to adopt her

15b Cher and Dionne show Tai the ropes of the high school

15c Tai meets Travis in the cafeteria

15d Cher and Dionne discourage Tai about Travis, and decide to do a makeover on Tai

16a Tai is made over

16b Cher boasts to Josh about her unselfish devotion to the welfare of another human being – Josh is not impressed

17 Tai makes an impression the next day at school – Travis gives Tai a flyer about a party in the Valley – to distract Tai's attention from Travis Cher selects Elton as Tai's love interest

18 photo session with the kids where Cher makes a fuss over Tai – Elton asks for a copy of Cher's picture of Tai

19 Tai joins Cher and her father for dinner – Dionne calls and they decide to go to the party in the valley

20 the Valley party

20a Dionne and Murray fight over the map while they are driving

20b Travis spills a drink on Cher's shoes

20c Cher makes Tai act up to get Elton to notice her

20d Murray shaves off his hair

20e Travis dives in front of Tai – Cher rescues her and pushes her in the direction of Elton

20f Tai gets hit in the head by a flying shoe – Elton helps revive her – Cher is delighted with herself

20g Cher's father calls her and demands that she returns home

21a Cher ends up alone in Elton's car despite her efforts to get Tai to go with him

21b Cher tries to get Elton to talk about Tai – he is more interested in Cher – he is convinced she wants him too

21c Cher gets out of the car and Elton drives off – she is left alone in the middle of nowhere – while she tries to ring for a cab she is held up and mugged

21d Cher has to call Josh to get him to come and pick her up – he is in the middle of a date and not pleased

21e Cher puts Josh's over-intellectual date in her place

22 Cher gets a massage to relieve her tension

23 Tai is devastated to find out that Elton does not want her

24 Cher, Dionne and Tai have a calorie fest to forget their sorrows – they discuss men, sex and virginity – a song triggers Tai's grief – Cher feels she must find someone else for Tai

25 Cher complains about how guys dress today

26 while pondering how to find a new guy for Tai the mysterious joint custody Christian turns up – he is the incarnation of Cher's dream boy – he seems to like her

27 Cher starts a campaign to get Christian's attention – he asks to join her at a party

28 Christian comes to take Cher to the party – Josh does not like him – when Josh sees Cher's dress he feels he should go to the party as well, to look after her, even though he is in the middle of helping Mel with a major deposition

29 the party – Christian seems to be uninterested in every other girl in the room – Cher is convinced that he is in love with her – Tai is not being asked to dance, but Josh steps in and rescues her from becoming a wallflower – Christian decides to party through the night and Josh takes the girls home

30 Cher suggests they bring some takeout back to the house to feed her father and the others working hard on the deposition

31 Cher enjoys vegeing out with Josh – she invites him to stay in the house for spring break

32 Christian calls and invites himself over – Cher goes frantic and calls for reinforcement to design the perfect night

33 a night alone with Christian – Cher is planning to loose her virginity – Christian does not bite, and leaves when he realises what she is up to – she does not understand what she did wrong

34 Dionne is out practice driving with Murray and Cher – Cher talks about her failure with Christian and Murray tells them Christian is gay – they end up panic-stricken on the freeway

35 Cher and Christian hang out at the mall – Christian saves Tai from some boys

36 Tai is the centre of attention at school as the story of her dangerous adventure at the mall has spread – Cher feels left out and ignored – Tai snubs Travis

37 Cher is frustrated as she has to take her driving test in the middle of everything else – she insults Lucy, the maid, and Josh thinks she is a brat

38 the driving test – Cher is not paying attention and almost kills several people – she fails, and cannot talk herself out of it

39 back at the house she finds Tai fooling around with Josh – she has to tell them she failed – Tai is exited to tell her she is finally over Elton – she burns some stuff she has saved – Tai is now interested in Josh – Cher cannot be supportive and Tai insults her – Cher feels she has created a monster

40 Cher goes out to air her frustrations – she feels clueless – finally she realises that she is in love with Josh

41 Cher does not know how to act around Josh after she has come to understand how she feels about him

42 Cher airs her problems with her dad who reassures her of her attractiveness and her good heart

43 Cher decides to make over her soul – she volunteers to help in the Pismo Beach disaster

44 Cher collects things from the house to give to the relief aid

45 Cher at work collecting for the relief – Travis turns up with his pot equipment – he has turned over a new leaf - he invites Cher to a skating competition

46 at the skating competition Cher and Tai make up – Cher sees that Tai's feelings for Travis have sparked up

47 Cher helps Josh and another lawyer with her father's deposition – Josh and Cher flirt – Cher marks the wrong papers and the lawyer yells at her, accuses Josh of making puppy love instead of working and leaves – Cher is upset, but Josh reassures her – after a while they reveal their mutual feelings for each other and kiss

48 Miss Geist and Mr Hals' wedding – Cher is a bridesmaid – the three girls discus their future weddings and freak out their respective guys who are also in attendance – the guys bet on who gets the bouquet, and Cher bags the money – Cher and Josh kiss

C end credits

Appendix 2:

Cast of Characters in Emma

Emma Woodhouse – is our snobbish heroine. She is nearly twenty-one years old, and runs the house for her widowed father in the village of Highbury. They belong to a wealthy and respectable family at the top of the social hierarchy.

Mr Woodhouse – is Emma's self-centred, hypochondriac father.

Mr Knightley – is the biggest landowner in the area. He is sixteen years older than Emma, and a old friend of the Woodhouse family.

Mrs Weston (Miss Taylor) – is Emma's former governess who marries at the beginning of the novel. She adores Emma who to her can do no wrong.

Mr Weston – is a middle-aged man of good fortune and happy disposition. He has been married once before, but his wife died a couple of years after their son was born.

Frank Churchill – is Mr Weston's son from his first marriage. When his mother died her family undertook his education, and he took their name in return. Frank has never been to Highbury.

Harriet Smith – is somebody's natural daughter, and has been educated at a boarding school in Highbury. After the completion of her education she stays on at the school as a parlour boarder.

Jane Fairfax – was born in Highbury, but lost both her parents and was taken into the care of Colonel Campell's family. Her father once saved Colonel Campell's life. She has been raised as a companion to their daughter, but when Miss Campell marries Mr Dixon Jane chooses to stay in Highbury a while before she has to seek employment as a governess.

Miss and Mrs Bates – are Jane's aunt and grandmother. A respectable family where the remaining women sink progressively into poverty as they grow older.

Mr John Knightley – is Mr Knightley's younger brother. He is a lawyer in London, and is married to Emma's older sister. They have five children.

Isabella Knightley – is Emma's older sister. She is very much like her father, and deeply devoted to her husband.

Mr Elton – is the vicar of Highbury. He is in his mid twenties, conceited and rather shallow.

Mrs Elton – is the wife Mr Elton travels to Bath to find after his proposal of marriage to Emma is rejected. She is an arrogant and self-important woman.

Mr Robert Martin – is Mr Knightley's largest and most capable tenant. Harriet is a friend of his sister and has spent the summer at their farm.

Mr Perry – is the physician of Highbury and a constant support for Mr Woodhouse.

Mrs Goddard – is the headmistress of Harriet's school.

The Coles – are a family climbing the social ladder.