Authentically Austen: an ur-text established through adaptation and style

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AUTHENTICALLY AUSTEN

an Ur-Text Established through Adaptation and Style

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Introduction: In-between Adaptations

Swirling around in a ballgown hoping to stumble upon their own Mr. Darcy is something that Jane Austen fans collectively dream of. There is almost nothing that has not been done to re-experience Jane Austen's novels. Balls, festivals, biopics, fanfiction, adaptations, or immersive experiences: nothing is considered too much. Jane Austen's books have been so popular that fans have produced a term that describes the 'essence' of a typical novel by Jane Austen: Austenism. "Austenmania" can be traced to the mid 1990's, and it is the recent film adaptations that have catapulted Austen's works and her person to their current celebrity status (Grogan 292). This type of 'essence', something authentically Austen, can also be described as an "ur-text".

The aim of this thesis is to determine the ur-texts of Jane Austen's novels *Emma* (1815) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). I will analyse the novels and their different adaptations to find out what binds them all together. Then I examine the way the adaptations have adapted the ur-texts to fit into a certain context, both cultural and temporal. In my analysis I will describe the influence the different adaptations had on the ur-text and if they either *re*shaped it or were shaped *by* it. Comparing my analyses, I conclude that the two ur-texts created by the novels and their paratexts make up a bigger ur-text: a myth of Austenism. I have divided my research into four chapters. In chapter one I discuss Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, the 1995 BBC-series adaptation *Pride and Prejudice* (Andrew Davies), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Helen Fielding 2001), and the 2005 adaptation *Pride and Prejudice* (Joe Wright). In chapter two I analyse how each of these adaptations relates to Austen's novel and how they fit in their own contexts. I repeat this approach in chapters three and four, with *Emma* as the source text and *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling 1995), *Emma* (Douglas McGrath 1996), *Emma* (Diarmuid Lawrence and Andrew Davies 1996), and *Emma.* (Autumn de Wilde 2020) as adaptations.

A Case of Fidelity

First, I want to discuss the theoretical framework I have selected to analyse the adaptations. The first point of discussion is fidelity. Fidelity regarding novel to film adaptation is a heavily discussed topic among cinema critics. Film and literature are different media: it is therefore hard for the two to portray a story in the exact same way. Where a book has to tell its story through textual signs, a film also has access to visual and aural signs. A film, thus, has to fill in the gaps that a novel leaves to be interpreted by the reader. Choices regarding setting, actors, background music, clothes, or costumes can change the way a reader interprets the story, which may cause a disruption in relation to the sense of fidelity to the novel. Robert Stam attests to the fact that due to a change of medium, an adaptation is not able to retain strict fidelity to its source text. He suggests that instead of remaining faithful to a source text, an adaptation should follow the essence of the medium of expression. Stam calls this medium specificity, an approach that assumes that every medium is inherently "good at certain things and bad at others" (57). A film is thus free to, or should be expected to, explore its inherent qualities when adapting a story. Adaptation is thus more than a replication. Stam proposes the term 'translation', because "[t]he trope of adaptation as translation suggests a principled effort of intersemiotic transposition, with the inevitable losses and gains typical of any translation" (62). When translating a story, the adaptation inserts its source novel into a much broader "intertextual dialogism"(64). An adaptation becomes an ongoing dialogical process, a product of intertextual dialogue. He explains that "all texts are tissues of anonymous formulae, variations on those formulae, conscious and unconscious quotations, and conflations and inversions of other texts" (64). This means that an adaptation adapts, or translates, more than just its source text. Film adaptations, as Stam argues, are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin.

An Ur-text as Common Ground

The second term I would like to mention is *ur-text*. Sarah Cardwell introduces the concept of an ur-text as a solution. Adaptations no longer refer to a base or centre, but to a *meta-text*. A meta-text entails both a primary source text and earlier adaptations. This meta-text arises from an ur-text, a story that exists "untethered by a medium and separate from its representations, it pre-exists its telling" (27). Applied to the stories central in my analysis, the novels by Jane Austen can no longer be considered as merely a primary source, but also another iteration of the ur-text that encompasses all the translations of that what has become the essence of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. Considering the intertextuality inherent to an ur-text, a successful adaptation of either *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma* not only translates the plot, but also a sense of *Austenism* that evokes a feeling of authenticity with its audience, which "replaces the language of fidelity" (281), as Shelley Cobb points out. This feeling of authentically Austen, is what fans of the novels have come to expect of the adaptations and what brings them joy. As Linda Hutcheon states, "the real comfort lies in the simple act of almost but not quite repeating, in the revisiting of a theme with variations" (115). Knowing which other works the adaptation alludes to or translates is what brings the audience pleasure in watching it. Hutcheon calls this "the doubled pleasure of the palimpsest: more than one text is experienced– and knowingly so" (116). An audience member experiences joy when they recognize the different references within an adaptation. The notion that a text can contain different intertextual references and that these references can start a new dialogue, interact, and create meaning, is called dialogism, according to Aragay and López. Dialogism is the third element to adaptation that will be important in my analysis. It suggests a synergetic, synchronic view of the mutual inf(l)ection between source and adaptation(s) (201), which means that newer adaptations can also alter the interpretations of older adaptations, even the source text. The source text becomes infected by its adaptations and adaptations are inflections of other versions that exist simultaneously. For example, with *Pride and Prejudice*,

an audience will reflect or interpret the story differently when they have seen the 1995 miniseries by the BBC, *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Pride and Prejudice* (Wright). The interplay of the different adaptations and the primary text help create the ur-text of *Pride and Prejudice.*

The Importance of the Right Costume

An audience's interpretation of an adaptation also depends on the style of the film. As Stam states, a film adaptation performs transformations mediated by different discourses, mediated "by a series of filters" (68). These filters include studio style and ideological style. In chapters two and four I will analyse how the film adaptations are affected by these filters and how this influences their way of filling in the gaps which are primarily left to the imagination of the reader. These gaps include aspects like constructing the mis-en-scene, fashion or costumes, and setting. I will mostly focus on the adapted fashion in the translations and the motives behind it. The filmmakers of the adaptations had a lot of freedom to adapt the fashion of the clothes of the characters in *Pride Prejudice* and *Emma*, for Austen does not explicitly describe the clothes the characters wear. Austen focuses in her descriptions of her characters on their personality traits and the more general descriptions of their appearance, like beautiful, proud, intelligent, humorous, and so forth. This would make it difficult for the filmmakers to stay faithful to the text concerning fashion. However, it presented the freedom of choice to the filmmakers to remain faithful to historical context, to conform to the audience's expectations of Austenism, or to let go of this myth of Austenism and to conform entirely to a contemporary context, as with *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Clueless*, while staying true to the ur-text. However, clothes also highly influence the image of a character, for a costume supports the character and can offer an insight of the character's personality "that the narrative does not spell out explicitly" (Gibson and McDonald 300). This means that despite the freedom, filmmakers still had to make sure that the costumes presented the character true to Austen's descriptions.

The importance of costumes in art is described in detail by Anne Hollander in her book *Seeing through clothes* (1975). She explores the idea that "in civilized Western life the clothed figure looks more persuasive and comprehensible in art than it does in reality" (xi). This means that people are unlikely to doubt the authenticity of the clothes or costumes they see on the screen or stage. Not only can costumes signify a certain historical period, but costumes are also important because the primary function of a garment, says Hollander, is to contribute to the making of a self-conscious individual image (xiv). So, clothes also help shape the appearance of the character on stage or screen. Thirdly, not only do clothes help create an image of a person, but their instant expressiveness also enables them to be interpreted as tangible and three-dimensional emotions, manners, or habits (xv). So, clothing strengthens the personality traits of a character and makes them visible through a visual medium. As Hollander summarizes: "Clothes, then, are objects made of fabric that convey messages beyond the power of the cloth" (2); they are "part of the formula, visually satisfying only if they conform to certain expectations" (239). This means that rather than be true to historical accuracy, costumes work better when they conform to audiences' expectations, fit into the formula. With *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* the formula can be translated as Austenism. Hollander continues that if costumes were to depart from the formula to portray more realistic, abstract, or imaginative concepts, audiences would perceive it as a violation of the character, or the formula.

On screen films offer "ordinary clothes whose common look has been magnified and distorted, simply by their appearance as costume" (Hollander 239). Clothes appear as a costume because the audience knows that the clothes are intentionally put together. This consciousness, paired with the fact that costumes have to meet the audience expectations to be appreciated, ensured that "stylistic authenticity became a guiding principle of historical costume" (Hollander 294). This results in historical costumes filtered through an artist's style, which is also influenced by current styles in reality. The audience still accepts this as being

authentic, for when looking at movie costumes, the pleasure of recognition is in the end more satisfying than the pleasure of seeing historical accuracy. This pleasure of recognition causes historical costume to look better to an audience if it resembles other familiar costumes that have presented certain historical periods. Considering *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, this presents more freedom for the stylists and the filmmakers to portray their vision of Austenism, or of what has become the ur-text of either *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*.

The focus on the pleasure of repetition by the audience resulted in a "whole fake history of costume" (Hollander 303). This means that the costumes in adaptations do not have to be historically accurate to be perceived as authentic. However, with adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, the filmmakers do not only have to be concerned with portraying a sense of authenticity, but they also have to coincide with the myth of Austenism. These criteria can also be summarised as authentically Austen and have become part of the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text. When an adaptation meets these expectations of a feeling of authenticity, rather than historical accuracy, and Austenism the audience would consider it as authentically Austen. In the next chapters I will examine whether the adaptations succeeded in staying true to the ur-text and to what extent they have altered it.

Chapter One
Defining the Ur-text of *Pride and Prejudice*

In this chapter I determine the ur-text of *Pride and Prejudice* by comparing the text with three different adaptations: *Pride and Prejudice* the BBC television series from 1995, *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Pride and Prejudice* by Joe Wright. All three adaptations show a different translation and interpretation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which I examine and compare to determine the common denominator. This will enable me to lay bare the ur-text that forms the foundation of *Pride and Prejudice.*

To determine the ur-text I will firstly analyse common themes in the primary text and the different adaptations. In all four versions, romance is a common theme. Aragay and López argue that it is a romance "in relation to notions of femininity and masculinity, and a common anticipated female audience" (201) . I agree with Aragay and López that Jane Austen's novels meets female desire; the text prioritises a female point of view. A second theme is that Jane Austen did not merely write her stories to entertain, but also to criticize and to educate. The women in Austen's novels are never perfect. They all have faults in their characters they are forced to face and to address. The same goes for Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, protagonists of *Pride and Prejudice.* Just like the title implies, the characters' faults in this novel are that they let prejudice and pride spoil their judgement. The main theme of the story is the romance, but another important theme is becoming aware of one's faults and trying to overcome them.

What was innovative in Austen's novel, was that Jane Austen introduced an autonomous and independent female character, "a heroine endowed with the intelligence and wit that enable her to exert a power of choice denied to women in the context of the social economic and gender realities of her time" (Aragay and López 205). This character trope is one of the different elements that inspired different adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice.* Other

elements that caught the attention of writers and directors were “Austen’s focused descriptions of the family’s place within a social structure of a local and limited community” (2), as Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield bring to our attention. The challenge that arises for contemporary writers and filmmakers is to portray this localism in a globally recognizable way. To stay true to the ur-text, but also manage to appeal to a modern audience. As Claire Grogan states, the viewer and reader’s response to a modern production owes as much to its accurate rendition of the original text (which I would like to translate as ur-text) as to a new creative reworking of that material (294).

Staying True to Tone and Spirit

The first translation of the ur-text that I am going to discuss is the BBC mini-series of 1995. This mini-series succeeds in portraying the authenticity of Austenism, because it is the rendition that stays the closest to the primary text. It is known that the goal of the BBC’s production was “to remain true to the tone and spirit of *Pride and Prejudice* but to exploit the possibilities of visual storytelling” (Belton 186). This attitude shows that it was the makers’ intention to adapt the ur-text of the novel and not necessarily the novel itself. To stay true to the tone and spirit, the ur-text, the series stayed remarkably close to the literal text. Because of the format, six episodes of fifty-five minutes, the series could address a lot more plot events than a film of roughly ninety minutes. To “exploit the possibilities of visual storytelling” (Belton 186) the makers took the opportunity to add some scenes which would show Mr. Darcy’s (Colin Firth) perspective. One scene in particular influenced later adaptations. In episode five, Elizabeth (Jennifer Ehle) travels to the Pemberley estate. In the novel, this visit to Mr. Darcy’s estate, makes Elizabeth realize what could have been hers had she accepted Mr. Darcy’s proposal. She is convinced of the good of his character by his housekeeper. The filmmakers decided to emphasize this moment by heightening the “latent eroticism”, as mentioned by Marie N. Sørbø (149). Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are both unaware of either’s presence on the estate. Coming back from a long journey on his horse, Mr. Darcy decides to

cool down by having a swim in a pond near his house. He reappears wearing light trousers and a wet white shirt clinging to his body. This particular scene has become a part of the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text and is repeated or referenced in later adaptations.

By adding to this erotic undertone of the story, the 1995 version altered the ur-text of *Pride and Prejudice*. Besides the eroticism, the makers of the series also decided to privilege the individual relationship and "surrendered the irony to this ulterior goal" (162), as Sørbø argues. Whereas Jane Austen has been praised for the irony and satire in her writing, the series shows a preference for romance. The irony is kept to a certain degree: Elizabeth still delivers some satirical and self-ironic remarks and has a "mischievous glimpse in her eye" (Sørbø 158). However, romance is overarching, and as effect it altered the ur-text. Instead of also delivering a satiric commentary on society's rigid standards and expectations, the story is now mainly received as a romance.

An Adaptation of an Adaptation

The next adaptation in this analysis is *Bridget Jones's Diary.* The Bridget Jones film itself is another adaptation of the novel, or 'chicklit', by Helen Fielding. Both the book and the film had its influence on the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text. The story by Helen Fielding was created as a column in British newspapers. In 1996 the story was converted into a novel, and in 2001 the first book was adapted into film. At first glance one would not necessarily notice that the plot of *Bridget Jones's Diary* was based on the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.* However, Helen Fielding has admitted that she had blatantly stolen the plot. In this rendition the story is set in the context of the twenty-first century. Bridget Jones is a woman in her early thirties who struggles with being a young single woman and wanting to find a partner. Fielding even goes as far as naming the male protagonist Mark Darcy, after Mr. Darcy. Through the narrative form of a diary, the reader gains insight in her insecurities, her feelings regarding her two love interests, her career, her self-image, and her vices. How Fielding and the filmmakers of the adaptation managed to form the plot to modern standards is something I

will elaborate on in chapter two. For now, I will focus on both Fielding's novel and its adaptation's place in the ur-text. For *Bridget Jones's Diary* is an intertextual maze of a multi-layered adaptations.

Fielding has not been discreet about the presence of *Pride and Prejudice* in her story. Numerous elements that present themselves in the Austen novel and the 1995 BBC-series are also repeated in *Bridget Jones's Diary.* The first element is the fact that the main characters have to face their faults and better them. Both Elizabeth and Bridget find faults within their characters and struggle with feelings of pride and prejudice. In accordance with the primary novel, Jones is at first taken aback by Mark Darcy's reserve. Her prejudice makes her form an unpleasant opinion of his character. Jones also does not make the best first impression on Mark Darcy. Just as in Austen's novel, Jones is then presented a second potential love interest: Daniel Cleaver. Bridget Jones is fooled by his charm and just like Elizabeth, she has to realise that she had been blinded by prejudice. She was told that in the past, Mark Darcy had started an affair with Daniel Cleaver's wife, but the opposite was true. Jones has to move past her prejudice to realise that she is in love with Mark Darcy. By understanding this, she moves past her prejudice and eventually her pride and accepts that she has fallen for him.

The second recuring trope in this translation is that of the strong independent and autonomous heroine. Bridget Jones can be considered autonomous and independent because she is a woman who stands up for herself. When she finds out that Daniel Cleaver had been cheating on her and actually gets engaged right after she finds out, she decides that she can do better for herself. She quits her job at a publishing house where Daniel was her boss and decides to follow her dream to become a reporter for the BBC. The third element that recurs in this adaptation is the romance. At the centre of the story lies Bridget's search for a boyfriend. She falls in love with Cleaver, but gets her heart broken. Then, she finds out that Mark Darcy likes her. So, just like the BBC-series, *Bridget Jones's Diary* privileges the individual relationship, but contrary to the BBC-series, this does not happen at the expense of

the irony and satire Austen's writing were praised for. As Kelly A. Marsh argues, Bridget records through the diary narrative "the many factors that influence her to change—not only her mother and her rivals, but also self-help books, diets, and other imports from American popular culture" (53). Bridget manages to do this with humour, by looking back, commenting on her mistakes and her ability to not take herself as seriously. By doing this, Marsh states, she rejects the "American dream of a perfected self" (53). This rejection also introduces the fourth element; representing something local and also being globally familiar. All over the world are women who struggle with fitting in this same picture of perfection and by treating it from an ironic perspective, the reader finds themselves comforted by being assured of not having to fit in this picture to experience romance and have a fulfilling career. Which brings me to the fifth element that is copied in this adaptation; the attraction for the female gaze. Because Bridget Jones's female perspective, a female audience is more likely to relate to the story.

Not only is the plot 'stolen', the 1995 mini-series is directly referenced in the novel as well. Bridget Jones is a big fan; she even says she is addicted:

> Love the nation being so addicted. The basis of my own addiction, I know, is my simple human need for Darcy to get off with Elizabeth. … That is precisely my feeling about Darcy and Elizabeth. They are my chosen representatives in the field of shagging, or, rather, courtship. I do not, however, wish to see any actual goals. I would hate to see Darcy and Elizabeth in bed, smoking a cigarette afterwards. That would be unnatural and wrong and I would quickly lose interest. (Fielding 246)

In this quote she also mentions the nation's addiction to the story, an addiction that can be ascribed to the myth of Austenism. This term, coined by Roland Barthes, describes how Austenism attaches a meaning to an empty form (Hammouri). This empty form constitutes the feeling of something authentically Austen, in a way that it portrays a story from the nineteenth century with a feeling of nostalgia, the grandeur of nature, the structuring role of society and

the anticipation of the fulfilment of an unexpected romance. This myth of Austenism is what got the whole nation addicted, including Bridget Jones. Acting on this addiction, Bridget Jones proposes to her boss at Pemberley Press (an intertextual clue to Mr. Darcy's estate in *Pride and Prejudice*) to hold an interview with Colin Firth, the actor who played Mr. Darcy in the 1995 BBC-series.

This interview was an obstacle in the film adaptation of Fielding's novel, because Colin Firth was cast to play Mark Darcy. This made it impossible for the film to embody the direct references to the BBC-series, as Colin Firth could not play both himself as an actor and Mark Darcy as Bridget Jones' love interest. This means that the film had to show the connection to the story of *Pride and Prejudice* in an alternative way. They did this by casting the actor who played Mr. Darcy as Mark Darcy (Colin Firth), a direct connection to the mini-series. Another solution was to play into the sixth element that has become part of the ur-text, and which was heightened by the BBC-series: the eroticism. In the BBC-series it was the pond-scene that made hearts beat faster; in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire) the pond scene is repeated but moved to the ironic layer of the story. In the film, it is Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant) who falls in a pond, after mockingly reciting a poem to Bridget (Renée Zellweger) on a rowing boat; this scene ridicules the romance *Pride and Prejudice* is revered for. Another example is the scene at the end of the movie where Bridget runs after Mark Darcy into the snow only wearing a pair of knickers and a top underneath her coat, when she thinks that he has run off after reading an old hurtful passage about him in her diary. This scene, with the trope of water/snow being present during dramatic romantic confessions, is something that will also be repeated in the 2005 adaptation.

Considering the different context of the story and the translation of the setting and characters, *Bridget Jones's Diary* still had an impact on the formation of the ur-text. This rendition separated the ur-text from the authenticity of Austenism and moved the plot of the story away from romance to a story about young, independent, autonomous, single women

trying to stay true to themselves. This shows the dialogism at play between the different adaptations; they inf(l)ect each other and show that newer adaptations can alter the main plot.

A Handful of Romance

The third and last adaptation that I will discuss in relation to the ur-text of *Pride and Prejudice* is the 2005 film, directed by Joe Wright. After the popularity of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, it is interesting to notice that this adaptation returns right back to the myth of Austenism. This translation is not as literal as the 1995 BBC-series but is also received by many fans as their favourite *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation. The 2005 version contains the same characteristics as the previously described adaptations. It portrays an autonomous and independent heroine, the same feelings of pride and prejudice that have to be overcome, a sense of locality of a family being an integral part of the society of a small town and the tension of the building romance. Fans who appreciated the irony in the 1995 BBC-series and *Bridget Jones's Diary*, however, would have been disappointed by the 2005 translation. The filmmakers decided to leave this context behind and to solely focus on the romance of the plot. They made sure that the mis-en-scene as well as the dialogue, and the characters would portray this myth of Austenian romance. There are three scenes which are particularly successful in portraying this romance and to play on the latent eroticism that was brought to the surface in the 1995 version and in *Bridget Jones's Diary.*

The first scene is when Mr. Darcy (Matthew MacFayden) proposes to Elizabeth (Keira Knightley) for the first time. This happens when she meets Darcy during her visit to her best friend Charlotte. In the proposal scene, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth meet when finding shelter from the pouring rain. Mr. Darcy confesses that he no longer can contain his feelings, despite their difference in status. In this scene, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are both wet to the bone, which may allude to the pond-scene in the 1995 adaptation and can summon the same erotic subtext. Apart from the recuring trope of wetness, or water, the sense of eroticism is also sparked by the verbal sparring between the two. The heat of their verbal combat almost seems

to turn into passion, when at the end their faces are so close to each other that they appear to be on the verge of kissing.

The second scene that plays into the erotic subtext between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, is when she departs from Netherfield where she had stayed taking care of her sister who had fallen sick visiting Mr. Bingley. In this scene we see Mr. Bingley helping Jane into the carriage, with Jane wearing gloves. Man and women touching each other, as in skin to skin, was seen as improper and often only done when dancing. The moment when Mr. Darcy helps Elizabeth into the carriage, with neither of them wearing gloves, thus adds an extra layer to this small moment, a layer of subdued eroticism. This subtext is emphasized when the camera focuses on Mr. Darcy's hands flexing after helping Elizabeth, as if releasing some build-up tension.

The third scene that conveys a heightened sense of eroticism is the last proposal scene between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. In this scene the two characters meet in a wide-open field, still covered in morning mist. Elizabeth walks barefoot over the field and Mr. Darcy is portrayed hurrying in the same direction, with an open coat, no waistcoat and shirt open to show his bare chest. Elizabeth also appears in a state of half dress; aside from her bare feet, she merely wears a nightdress and a coat. They show up in a dishevelled state, as if they have both just woken up. The mystical mist does not only portray the heightened romance, but also plays into the trope of water being associated with the erotic subtext, introduced by the 1995 series.

By moving the latent eroticism from the subtext to the text of the story, the film prioritizes the female gaze. This translation of the 1813 text by Fielding affected the ur-text to the extent that the text of *Pride and Prejudice* has come to favour the romance and the heightened eroticism over Austen's irony and satire. When comparing the different translations, the other elements that have come to make up the ur-text also become evident. *Bridget Jones's Diary* has caused the story to represent an independent and autonomous

heroine who will not let a male partner alter her person and her life's morals. The trope of facing one's fault remains in the centre of all and governs the plot. Something different that has been added to the ur-text, caused by the 1995 adaptation is water as a trope that is being associated to bringing the latent eroticism to a heightened level.

Chapter Two
Adapting the *Pride and Prejudice* Ur-text

In the first chapter I have examined the ur-text the primary text and the different adaptations share, and how each adaptation had its effect on the ur-text. In this chapter I will analyse how the different adaptations shaped the ur-text to their own context, for they reflect their own particular historical moment (Belton 175). In this analysis I will examine how the adaptations made the story more suitable for their own time, to meet the audience's expectations and wishes. Some of the adaptations tried to stay close to historical accuracy and others are more set to keep to the audience's idea of what Austenism is supposed to look like. This confirms Gina and Andrew MacDonald's argument that the changes made in the adaptations show messages about current thinking about what was deemed attractive (1). One example is the women's hair. In the 1995 BBC-series, Elizabeth's hair is fashioned after the way women wore their hair in the early nineteenth century. Small curls frame Elizabeth face. These curls, however, may look strange to an audience for whom this style is no longer deemed attractive. The 2005 adaptation by Joe Wright shows a different hairstyle, looser and more natural, one that a modern audience can perceive as attractive. Figures 1 and 2 show the difference in hairstyle.

Figure 1 Face framing curls on Jennifer Ehle (BBC P&P Eps. 1 00:35:14)

Figure 2 Keira Knightley with a looser hairstyle (P&P Joe Wright 00:35:10)

To give an accurate representation of the primary text by Jane Austen regarding costumes, without Austen ever explicitly describing her character's costumes, the filmmakers and the stylists had to design clothing that would portray a character's personality and would fit the into the framework of what is considered authentically Austen. To analyse how the adaptations decided to stay close to the ur-text, I first have to examine how the characters are described in Austen's novel. The characters are not 'objectively' described by the omniscient narrator, only through the observations of other characters. So, to get an accurate understanding of the characters, I gathered the different comments regarding the appearance and personality about a character.

The Beauty of the Bennet sisters

To start, the novel emphasises the beauty of the Bennet girls. When attending the town's ball, Mr. Bingley hopes to see the Bennet girls "of whose beauty he has heard much" (*Pride and Prejudice* 13). Especially Jane is known for her beauty. According to Mr. Bingley, "she is the most beautiful creature" (14) he has ever beheld. Even Mr. Darcy describes her as the "only handsome girl in the room" (14) when he first meets the sisters. Besides being revered for her beauty, Jane is also admired as being "a great deal too apt to like people in general" (17). She is further described as to behave in "a quieter way" (15) and established as "a sweet girl" (19) by Mr. Bingley's sisters. She behaves as if she is unaware of her beauty and "compliments always take [her] by surprise" (17).

Elizabeth is mostly praised for her wit. This is also why her father favours her over her sisters. He is accused of giving her preference, even though "she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia" (10) according to Mrs. Bennet. Mr. Bennet responds that all the girls are "silly and ignorant" but "Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters" (10). Despite the fact that Lizzy is not deemed the most beautiful of her sisters, she is still "very pretty" (14). Mr. Darcy's first impression also changes when he realises that he had looked at her "only to criticise" (23). He is especially mesmerised by

Elizabeth's "fine eyes" (26). Elizabeth is also described as to being less concerned with her appearance. She jumps over stiles and puddles while crossing a field at a quick pace, without caring that it would dirty her dress. When she visits her ill sister at Netherfield, she arrives "with weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise" (30). To Mr. Bingley's sisters she looked "almost wild"; her hair "so untidy, so blowzy" and with her petticoat "six inches deep in mud" (32). They judge her to have no conversation, no style, no taste, and no beauty. Mr. Darcy, however, could not help but admire "the brilliancy which exercise had given her complexion" and Mr. Bingley as well thought that Elizabeth looked "remarkably well" (30).

When Mr. Darcy first arrives, he catches the attention of everyone at the ball, but their high expectations are soon let down when they discover that he is "proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased" (14). It no longer matters that he is a "fine, tall person" with "handsome features, noble mien, and the report (…) of his having ten thousand a year", for he has "a most forbidding" and "disagreeable countenance" (14). In comparison to Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy is higher regarding status but less of a gentleman: clever, but also haughty and reserved, and his manners are anything but inviting. Where "Bingley was sure of being liked wherever he appeared; Darcy was continually giving offence" (18) This opinion (which is also Elizabeth's) of Mr. Darcy is altered by the housekeeper's description of her master. She describes him as good-natured and that he was "the sweetest tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world" (187). Elizabeth sees this different side of Mr. Darcy herself when he appears during her visit, and she observes that she has never seen him so "free from self-consequence or unbending reserve" (197). As she comes to love him, Elizabeth realises that "he has no improper pride" and "his perfectly amiable" (275).

Where Jane is the beautiful one, Lizzy the witty one, Kitty and Lydia are the most childish ones, and Mary, the middle child, is considered "the only plain one in the family" (24). She is described as "a young lady of deep reflection" (10). Even though she might be

considered as the most accomplished girl in the neighbourhood (15), Mary is not perfect. It is said that she "had neither genius nor taste" and that vanity "had given her a pedantic air and conceited manner"(24). Then we have Mr. Bingley's sisters, Mrs. Bingley and Mrs. Hurst. They are described as "fine women, with an air of decided fashion" (14). They often criticise the Bennet family for their manners and their societal position. There is a mention about the clothes in the text. Mrs. Bennet proclaims that never in her life did she see "anything more elegant than their dresses. I dare say the lace upon Mrs. Hurst's gown –" (16).

Costumes that Speak

Now that I have given a detailed depiction of the characters, I will analyse how the cinematic translations have adapted the descriptions in the novel to fit their context and/or the audience's expectations. The 1995 BBC-series is the version that is considered to have stayed the closest to the novel. Rosemary Harden, a dress curator and manager of the Fashion Museum in Bath, comments on the clothing worn in the 1995 series that the series showed trends from the regency era, but – for example – the placement of the bosom and the fabric shows traces from what was fashionable in the 1990s, resembling the bosom placement of a *Wonderbra.* She mentions that the costume department realistically portrayed, for example, that short sleeve dresses were worn during the day, and that long sleeves were more appropriate for evening wear. Even the linen shirt worn by Mr. Darcy in the pond scene reveals something about his character, for snow white linen was a mark of a gentleman (Harden, Rosemary 00:07:13-00:11:32).

The series thus stayed close to the fashion of 1813, when Austen's novel was published. They still had to fill in the gaps the novel had left open. For the portrayal of Elizabeth, they had chosen a curly brunette. According to Sørbø this is echo, whether conscious or subconscious, of Jane Austen's own appearance (132). The brown hair, however, could also have been chosen to augment Elizabeth's colour palette. The filmmakers, the stylist, and the director, favoured earthly tones for Elizabeth, to supplement Elizabeth's love

for nature. The earthly colours also resemble a natural symbolism of freedom and independence, which coincide with Elizabeth's revered personality traits. Figure 3 shows the assorted colour palette and hairstyles chosen for the sisters.

Figure 3 The colour palettes of the Bennet girls (BBC P&P Eps. 1 00:04:28)

Elizabeth, along with her sisters, is also seen wearing mostly white and pale shades of yellow, pink, and blue. Especially Jane is often seen in these light and pastel colours, as they represent innocence, clarity, and beauty. They augment her angel-like personality. Elizabeth is mostly seen wearing white in comparison to Mr. Darcy. Mr. Darcy is often depicted wearing a black jacket when attending a ball, as figure 4 shows. In these scenes, Elizabeth is shown wearing white dresses to emphasize their opposing characters.

Figure 4 The contrasting colours of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy (*BBC P&P* Eps. 2 00:33:07)

The light colour palette is also used to distinguish the Bennets from the Bingleys. As Kendra van Cleave points out, “one of the biggest character contrasts needed to be between the uber-rich, London-based Bingley sisters and the still-well-off, but less-so, and country-based Bennet sisters”. To contrast the class difference between the two families, the Bingley sisters are dressed in brightly coloured silk gowns with a lot of ornamentation and extravagant headpieces, often adorned with feathers. The Bennet sisters, on the other hand, stick to light-coloured muslin dresses, with minimal ornamentation. This would strike the modern audience as more “country”, as Cleave explains. The director had a direct hand in this contrast, for he was of the opinion that “pale colors or creamy whites for the girls” would reflect both their “zest and innocence” (Cleave). This left the darker, richer colours and “exotic fabrics” (Cleave) for characters like the Bingley sisters or Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Figures 5 and 6 show the assorted styles of the sisters.

Figure 5 The Bennet girls (BBC P&P Eps. 6 00: 19:51)

Figure 6 The Bingley sisters (BBC P&P Eps. 1 00:24:08)

Regarding Mr. Darcy, his apparel and its colour palette does change throughout the series. When Lizzy is visiting Pemberley and after Darcy has taken a swim in the pond, he is dressed

in more earthy tones. It creates the idea that Mr. Darcy's dive in the water connected him with Elizabeth's love for nature. The change of his colour palette predicts a change in his and Elizabeth's relationship. This change continues through the rest of the series and is once more emphasized when in episode five Mr. Darcy tells his servant "oh, no, no, the green one" (eps. 5 00:10:34) when choosing a coat before visiting Elizabeth.

Figure 7 Mr. Darcy in his green coat (BBC P&P Eps. 4 00:50:12)

Another costume feature besides the colour palette to portray a character's personality is the fit of the clothes, in particular the necklines of the dresses the Bennet girls wear. It was common in the early 1800's to wear morning dresses with a high neckline, or low necklines stuffed with a chemisette. However, most of the Bennet sisters wear low necklines, for this would look prettier to a modern eye. Mary is the only sister who regularly wears high-necked morning gowns. This relates to her "pedantic air and conceited manner" (Cleave). It is an attempt to visually tell the audience that she is the "only plain one of the family", for it does not look attractive to a modern audience, but it would have been historically accurate for the rest of the Bennet sisters to also wear these higher necklines. Aside from the necklines, the gentlemen's clothes underwent some modern alterations as well. The costume designer, Dinah Collin, admitted in an interview that she does not think

> it's essential to be slavishly historically correct to the letter. I like to find that step between them and us, translating between the two flavours. It has to appeal to people in the modern day" (qtd. in "Silk and Sensuality").

This mindset returns in Colin Firth's wardrobe, for "pieces were selected that looked like clothes that could be bought in the modern era" (Cleave). Collin wanted the clothes to fit just like a regular pair of jeans and a T-shirt. The outfits of the men in the series did display the very high collars which were custom in regency men's wear, and they also wear knee-length breeches for more formal occasions alternated with ankle-length trousers for the younger gentlemen during daytime. Cleave also mentions that the placement of the bosoms in the film, pressed together to show more cleavage, does not correspond with the Regency bust: high and separated.

Becoming Boho

The BBC-series thus stayed close to the fashion of the early 1800's, with some minor tweaks to meet the audience's expectations, and speak to their imagination, like the opposing and colliding colour palette of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Where the BBC-series stayed close to the fashion of the early 1800's, the 2005 film by Joe Wright took the liberty to take inspiration from an earlier era. Instead of the novel's publication year, they decided to use 1795, the year in which the novel was written, as their starting point. It is said that this change was made because the director Joe Wright did not like the high waist of the gown in the early nineteenth century (Sørbø 167). Figure 8 shows the difference between the waistlines. Whatever the reason, this change of setting also implies a choice of vividness, richness, colourfulness, exuberance, wildness over simplicity, lightness, airiness, discipline, order, as Marie N Sørbø argues (167). It was also

Figure 8 Two different waistlines (P&P Joe Wright 00:21:43)

done to differentiate the film from the many other heritage films that portray the classical beauty of the Empire or Regency style.

Aside from the difference in historical period, the 2005 film also takes a more stylistic approach rather than a historically accurate one, as Abby Cox mentions (00:01:33). The lower waistline is an example of the decision to create costumes more stylistically pleasing to the modern audience. Another example is the hair of the women. Instead of wearing their hair up and in tight curls framing the face, the women in the 2005 film often wear their hair loose, which makes the women appear more modern. For example, the tight curls of Jennifer Ehle are traded for bangs on Keira Knightley. Jane (Rosamund Pike) and Elizabeth are still often depicted with their hair in a bun, because they are the elder sisters and are more formed by society's standards. Mary's (Talulah Riley) hair is also either styled in a bun without any loose strand or in tight ringlets, to portray her rigid personality. Lydia's (Jena Malone) and Kitty's (Carey Mulligan) hair, however, is either styled in two pigtails or a loose braid, this is to signify their childlike and playful personalities.

Figure 9 Keira Knightley in 'Boho chic' as Elizabeth Bennet (P&P Joe Wright 00:31:03)

Other changes made in the 2005 version is that the older women, like Mrs. Bennet and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, wear historically older clothes. This is not historically accurate, because older women would have just as much wanted to stay fashionable, but is done to hint to the audience that these women are older and thus not as fashionable as the younger girls. An observant eye is also able to notice the influences of the early 2000's on the stylistic appearances of the characters. Take for example the loose hair, the loose shawls, and the flowy dresses, which are inspired by the *Boho-chic* trend of that time, as says Rosemary Harden (00:12:12-00:12:30). A third change in this movie is that the filmmakers decided to present the Bennet

family poorer than they actually are in the novel. The family seems to live on a farm, surrounded by the animals and with the pigs walking into the house. The stylisation is not exactly true to the novel, for Mr. Bennet is still a gentleman and an owner of an estate. This is done to better display the gap between the Bingley family, including Mr. Darcy, and the Bennets for a modern audience. This poorer side to the family is also portrayed by some of the clothes. Abby Cox points out that some dresses seem to have been altered, remade, or refashioned from older styles.

However, this shabbiness does not necessarily have to be received as a sign of poverty, as Sørbø argues. Sørbø interpreted the 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice* as a "shabby chic" film, a style that was popular during the early 2000's in interior decorating and fashion, which was called Country Living, which includes the aestheticization of "the everyday, or trivial, object over objects of art and design" (167). She says that its function is the "cultivation of the aged, the remnants, the relics of past times, where the aged appearance is the main point" (167). This aligns with the film's aim to stay true to a feeling of Austenism, rather than perfect historical accuracy. It is evident that the filmmakers of the 2005 version moved away from historical accuracy and went in a different direction than the 1995 BBC-series. The clothes have a more modern feel and have the function to appeal aesthetically, for it was unlikely that a woman of the eighteenth century "could wander around so freely without a hat or meet a suitor at dawn wearing a dressing gown" (Cartmell 236). To add to the aesthetic appeal, Cartmell mentions that the costumes seem to function to be looked through rather than be looked at. Cartmell argues that Elizabeth's costumes function to "reveal rather than conceal the shape of the actress"(236), for example at the first and second proposal scenes.

The filmmakers did keep the same colour palette as the 1995 version. Elizabeth wears the same earth tones, Darcy is often portrayed in darker tones, and Bingley and Jane are pictured opposite in their often-white apparel. Just like in the 1995 version, Elizabeth and Darcy are

starkly contrasted during the ball scene when they dance together; Elizabeth is dressed in all white and Darcy in all black. Once again, their changing feelings for each other are reflected in Darcy wearing clothes in a colour that meets Elizabeth's palette. This is especially apparent in the meadow scene, where Darcy wears a dark green jacket and Lizzy wears a dark brown cardigan over her dressing gown: figure 10 shows how their colours blend in with the nature surrounding them. The recurrence of the same colour palette proves Holland's argument that the audience rejoices in the pleasure of recognition. Even though the costumes are less historically accurate than the 1995 version, the audience still loves this rendition, or may love it even better, because the style recalls the myth of Austenism, intermingled with influence of modern life. Thus, the style of the adaptations has become part of the ur-text.

Figure 10 Matching colour palettes. (P&P Joe Wright 01:55:46)

Red Stands for Romance

Even though they are not as costume-like as in the 1995 and 2005 adaptations, the clothes in *Bridget Jones's Diary* play a significant role as well. In contrast to the historical adaptations, the modern translation does not adhere to the same colour palette as the other two. The only colour I found noticeable throughout the film was the colour red. Most of the time the characters wear toned-down, black, or grey coloured clothes, so whenever the colour red appears it is more noticeable. This colour theory is not limited to the costumes, for Bridget's diary is a very bright red. Because of this, red can be thought of as Bridget's colour. Bridget is

seen wearing this colour when Mark Darcy confesses his feelings for her; even though "there are some elements of the ridiculous" about her, he likes her *just as she is* (00:54:35 – 00:55:31). The fact that Mark Darcy likes Bridget just as she is, is given a lot of attention in the film. Her friends even ask in disbelief "not thinner, not cleverer, not slightly bigger breasts, or a slightly smaller nose?" (00:56:08). This sceptical reaction is a result of the beauty standards in the late nineties, which was called heroin chic, or super-waif and showed paper-thin models who looked like they suffered from an unhealthy drug habit. Bridget is supposed to be the opposite of that beauty ideal and because she is so influenced by *Cosmopolitan*, a fashion magazine that portrayed the aforementioned super-thin models, she is determined to lose weight and become more like the fashion models, like Kate Moss. That Mark Darcy likes Bridget just as she is, is a response to this unrealistic ideal that women were pushed into and that women did not have to look heroin chic to be beautiful.

To return to the significance of the colour red, I would like to refer to a particular scene. When Bridget eventually gets dumped by Cleaver, she returns to her reunited parent's home for Christmas. This is where she hears that Cleaver had deceived her, and that it was actually he who had had an affair with Darcy's wife and not the other way around. When she comes to this realisation, she decides to join her parents at the Ruby wedding celebrations of Mark Darcy's parents. Besides its symbolism for the fortieth year of marriage, ruby, or red, also symbolises love and the union between Bridget and Mark. For when she has decided to confess her feelings to Mark Darcy, he is shown wearing a bright red necktie (figure 12). Besides symbolizing the union between the couple, the red and white theme of the necktie also refers back to the first meeting between the two when he was wearing an ugly Christmas sweater and she was wearing her mother's clothes, which led to bad first impressions (figure 13). The necktie also closely resembles Bridget Jones's red and white pyjamas in the openings scene when she is drinking a glass of red wine whilst listening to *All by myself* by Céline Dion

(figure 11). This scene nicely contrasts the confessional scene at the Ruby wedding party and are linked together because of the pyjamas and the necktie.

Figure 11 Bridget Jones in her Christmas pyjama (BJD 00:05:35)

Figure 12 Mark Darcy with his snowmen necktie (BJD 01:17:44)

Figure 13 Bridget and Mark in their 'ugly' Christmas outfits (BJD 00:03:31)

Another fashion trope that is similar to the other adaptations, in particular the 2005 one, is the sheerness or thinness of the clothes. As I mentioned, in the 2005 version the clothes show the body than conceal it. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget's body is also more often revealed than concealed. This depends, however, on her mood. When Bridget is feeling confident and flirty, she is shown wearing a tight skirt and sheer blouse to work. On which Cleaver remarks "You appeared to have forgotten your skirt. Is skirt off sick?" (00:11:35) and regarding her blouse "P.S. Like your tits in that top" (00:13:21). In this case the tight clothes are associated

with sexual attraction and Bridget feeling confident in her own skin. Whenever she is feeling down or when she is in the comfort of her own home, she wears looser clothes, like her pyjamas or simple grey T-shirt and trousers which were fashionable in the late nineties. Besides from relating to her emotional state, in *Bridget Jones's Diary* the clothes are also used to convey the humour or irony which is central to the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text. The irony that is attached to the costumes in this film comments on societal standards and expectations, like the unrealistic beauty standard of heroin chic. An example is when Bridget wears a tight little black dress to a book presentation at the publisher house. When getting dressed she is debating to whether to wear the sexy panties which would be "most attractive at crucial moment" or the "Scary-stomach-holding-in panties" (00:16:45 – 00:16:60) which would increase the chances of reaching said crucial moment. She decides on the granny panties, which she regrets when she ends up having that crucial moment with Daniel Cleaver and he mocks her for wearing them. This joke about the panties is repeated at the end of the movie when Bridget runs after Mark Darcy in the snow, this time wearing her sexy tiger print panties. Another outfit that shows the humour of the film and the commentary on contemporary societal ideals, which only showed extremely thin models. The bunny outfit Bridget wears to the family gathering, which to Bridget's knowledge was themed prostitutes and priests.

Each adaptation thus was influenced by their own time and place, but they also added their own interpretation to the body of the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text. The 1995 BBC-series set the standard for the successive adaptations. Elizabeth would have brown hair and was appointed a colour palette of earthly tones, in contrast to her sister Jane's purely white clothes. This colour palette played a vital role in the visualization of the character's relationships and has been repeated in the 2005 adaptation. The main difference between these two adaptations is that the BBC-series aspired to be as historically respectful as possible, whereas the 2005 film seemed more determined to be more respectful of the audience's expectations. *Bridget*

Jones's Diary did not keep the same colour palette as the previously described adaptations, but it did include some colour symbolism in its visual narrative to catch the watchful eye of an attentive viewer. *Bridget Jones's Diary* also shares with the 2005 adaptation that it favoured showing bodies over concealing them. This adds to the heightened eroticism I mentioned in chapter one and lifts the humour from the textual to the visual. The repetition of the colour palettes and the audience's joy in recognition ties in with Hutcheon's theory of the pleasure of the palimpsest. Hollander argued that repeating costumes brings joy to the audience because it is something they recognise. Hutcheon explains that in de doubled pleasure of the palimpsest more than one text is experienced, in this case the text is the costumes the audience is able to *read*, to make connections between the different characters.

Chapter Three
Defining the Ur-text of *Emma*

Coming face to face with your own faults and growing by correcting them was one of Jane Austen's favourite themes. *Pride and Prejudice's* title already introduces the reader to the main theme of the novel. If we compare this to *Emma*, then we could conclude that this novel's main theme is Emma herself. Is it, however, then also possible to say that Emma herself becomes the ur-text of *Emma?* In this following chapter I set out to answer this question. As I did in my chapters about *Pride and Prejudice* I will compare different adaptations to the novel and each other to find out what has been kept throughout the various translations; what might have been added to the story that has become integral to *Emma's* ur-text. As I did with *Pride and Prejudice*, I will analyse the adaptations in chronological order. This way it will be clear how previous adaptations might have inf(l)ected later ones. I will analyse and compare te following adaptations: *Clueless*, *Emma* (McGrath), *Emma* (Lawrence & Davies), and *Emma.*. I have decided to analyse one more adaptation than I did for *Pride and Prejudice*, for even though the two were made in the same year, they both show two different interpretations of Austen's novel.

Emma shares its main themes with *Pride and Prejudice.* Both texts prioritize the point of view of an independent and intelligent female and both heroines undergo circumstances in which they have to rectify their personality flaws. In *Pride and Prejudice* the title reveals the flaws of the characters to the reader before they even get to read the story, whereas in *Emma* it is up to the reader to discover them. The title does reveal that the story will be focused on Emma. The fact that her name is the title of the novel also hints to the fact that Emma likes to think about herself as the centre-point of her society. She is a fan of matchmaking and is overconfident in her abilities to couple her friends with the most suitable partners for marriage. Her overconfidence is one of the flaws she is to overcome, and she is often assisted

in rectifying her behavioural flaws by her brother-in-law and romantic interest Mr. Knightley. Even though Emma eventually falls in love with Mr. Knightley and is to marry him, Emma's love for matchmaking does not involve finding a partner for herself, for her position guarantees economical security and she is already mistress of a grand estate, Hartfield. Her independence and intelligence make her conscious of her own societal status, but she also remains humble in her position, as is made sure of by Mr. Knightley when he reprimands her for disrespecting Miss Bates, whose status is below Emma's (*Emma* 302-303).

Pride and Prejudice and *Emma* also have in common that Austen did not merely write these stories to entertain, but also to educate and comment on conservative societal standards by implementing irony and satire in the voice of the narrator, as Emma's introduction shows:

> Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and a happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. (*Emma* 1)

This passage introduces a heroine without flaw, but the ironic subtext hints that the opposite will be true and at the same time ridicules the overtly perfect picture of the upper class, for what *Emma* cannot be a heroine in a *bildungsroman* if she is already perfect. This interpretation of *Emma* as a bildungsroman is something that will be repeated in the various adaptations. The last resemblance between the two novels I will mention is that the stories cover events which, even though they take place in small communities, can be related to from various places across the world. These commonalities thus lay at the ground of what Austenism entails. What remains now is to find out what distinguishes *Emma* from *Pride and Prejudice* and to establish *Emma*'s ur-text.

Interpreting *Clueless*

Clueless seems to have the less in common with the original novel but is often celebrated for being the only adaptation that managed to convey Austen's story most accurately, or what may even be *Emma's* ur-text. This modern version of Austen's story was produced before the

historically respectful adaptations of the novel. Gina and Andrew MacDonald describe Heckerling's modernisation as follows:

> Heckerling sets up a surprisingly parallel milieu, develops a character that is both the object of satire and of sympathy, and then draws on parallels of plot, with the similarity in plot events relatively less important than the parallel settings – privileged and isolated worlds obsessed with status and manners – and parallel characters – immature young women moving from self-love to a more mature awareness of others. (7)

According to this description, Austen's *Emma* can be stripped down to the story of a character that lives in a privileged and isolated world, who is obsessed with status and manners, can be considered immature, and who walks a path of self-education during which she develops a more mature awareness of others. Satire and sympathy are also important, for they draw the reader or audience in the story. They learn that the heroine is not perfect and also sympathize with her because she still has to learn to be better.

However, the main character in *Clueless,* Cher (Alicia Silverstone), is not the only one or the only thing that has been changed in this modern rendition of *Emma*. Instead of nineteenth century England, Heckerling's adaptation unfolds in twentieth century Los Angeles, where high school teenagers replace Emma Woodhouse's society. As the MacDonalds point out, Heckerling has made use of almost every cliché of youthful California life to present a satirical, and therefore truthfully Austenian, reading of not only the novel but also of youth society in the late 1990's (7). Because Heckerling has moved away from making a historically respectful adaptation of *Emma* it is not fitting to define it as either a transposition or commentary adaptation, like the two 1996 adaptations. Jocelyn Harris suggests that *Clueless* should be perceived as an 'imitation'. Harris borrows this terminology from John Dryden and explains that an imitation is not expected to stay true to the original text, but that the imitator assumes the liberty to only take some general patterns of character

and plot and to then rearrange them as they seem fit. According to Harris "The most satisfying Jane Austen movies are not just translations but imitations rejoicing in their difference" (65-66). I agree with Harris that Heckerling strayed from the original plot events and that she applied the available signifiers to her own vision, but I do not find that Heckerling has merely taken some hints from *Emma* for the audience to recognize depending on their own cultural context. I believe that Heckerling's interpretation succeeds in being more than an imitation and that it has successfully translated the ur-text. In my opinion, Heckerling thus may have imitated the patterns of the events and the characters of *Emma*¸ for it also implies creative intervention, but she has also successfully reintroduced the ur-text.

One of these patterns or themes that Heckerling has successfully translated is that of the bildungsroman. Marc DiPaolo introduces this interpretation of *Emma* as a bildungsroman in his book *Emma Adapted*. Just like Emma, Cher "learns to grow in understanding of herself and her place in society, and to finally reach her potential as she grows into womanhood (128). Both Emma and Cher are young women who still have to learn what it means to mature within their society. Both characters find out that their expectations of reality may not always comply with actual reality and that they have to grow in their understanding of their place within the lives of their friends, that they cannot claim control of their friend's futures. Heckerling has translated this state of learning as Cher finding herself in a state of cluelessness during her adolescence. Not only is Cher to learn that her friend's life does not revolve around her, but she also learns what it means to grow up. Heckerling has been able to show this process with the humour that is expected in a successful adaptation of an Austen novel. For example, when Cher is preparing for her date with Christian (Justin Walker), she burns her cookies in the oven. The theme of the bildungsroman with cluelessness at its core is also reflected by her love interest Josh Lucas (Paul Rudd), Cher's ex-stepbrother and a university student who helps her father prepare for a case as a lawyer. Josh Lucas is the substitution for Mr. George Knightley and just as his predecessor, he helps Cher realise that

she has to show a different kind of compassion towards her friends, and not one that merely benefits her own judgments and imagination. Josh Lucas represents a gateway to the next step towards maturity when she realises that he is the better fit for her romantically and that her disinterest in high schoolboys was grounded on their immaturity.

The biggest trope in *Clueless* that shows the essence of the bildungsroman is Cher's cluelessness. John Mosier argues that "it is the cluelessness of Heckerling's heroine that makes her such a stand-in for Emma Woodhouse. They are both handsome, rich, clever, young, and clueless" (242). Mosier, however, does not connect this cluelessness to maturity but to sexuality. He claims that "she (Emma) is remarkably unaware of the interests of the men in the story" (242), because she believes that the interest shown in her by Mr. Elton was actually directed towards Harriet. This misunderstanding is copied in *Clueless* when she tries to match Tai (Brittany Murphy) with the popular Elton (Jeremy Sisto). Mosier adds that Cher's cluelessness is "highly specific, primarily a deficiency which relates to things sexual" (242). He substantiates his claim by explaining that Cher seems to be capable of controlling other aspects in her life, like negotiating grade changes and organizing successful class projects, and she has a lot of knowledge about fashion, but regarding the interests and behaviour of men, she remains clueless. I do not agree with Mosier that Cher is at sea when it comes to the opposite sex, for she succeeds in coupling two of her teachers and she he is highly aware of what she tries to accomplish with Christian during their date and of Elton's intentions when he drives her home from the party. She is merely clueless regarding Christian's sexual orientation and Josh's and Elton's attraction towards her because she was focused on other goals, even though these goals may not be as fruitful as she had imagined. Even if her cluelessness would be directed towards the sexual desire of the male sex, realisation would still be part of her *bildung.*

The second element that has been successfully adapted by Heckerling is the humour. Mosier claims that the humour in "both film and novel is exactly the same, as it depends on an

ironic and aware audience who see the situation much more clearly than does the heroine." (243). Humour in this case is used to portray Cher's and Emma's cluelessness of their surroundings. This cluelessness contains both the satire and sympathy I mentioned before. Cher's ignorance that Tai may not fit in with her clique and is perfectly able to find the people who she is comfortable with herself both satirizes society's aim to prioritize higher society, but it also makes the audience sympathize with Cher because she has to realise this the hard way. The humour Heckerling has adapted also shimmers through the unique dialogue of the movie. Even without transposing the original dialogue, Heckerling is able to implement and Austenian satire in a modern translation. As Mosier states, Heckerling's "shares Austen's awareness of the possibilities inherent within the genre for a subtle but unobtrusive exploration of important social/cultural issues" (243).

Just as was the case with *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Pride and Prejudice*, this rendition separated the ur-text from the authenticity of Austenism and it has moved the story into a more modern context. *Clueless* shows that *Emma* is more than a story about a young woman who fails at matchmaking and realises that she is in love with her brother-in-law. *Emma's* ur-text has come to represent a story about a woman who has to overcome her 'cluelessness' to mature and to realise her place among her friends and acquaintances. Heckerling's translation "caters to the values of the mass Hollywood audience" (218) as Monaghan argues, by showing that a young woman is able to flourish as an autonomous and morally aware person in society.

Criticism Versus Aestheticism

Next I will analyse the two 1996 adaptations in comparison to each other. Both translations have their strengths and weaknesses. This corresponds with Robert Stam's argument that with every translation something is gained, and something gets lost. For example, McGrath's *Emma* can be praised for its focus on romance and comedy and for "its retelling of the story of the novel as a domestic bildungsroman", as says DiPaolo, "just as it

can be faulted for being too light and too uninterested in social issues" (143). The McGrath adaptation has been successful in translating one of the key-elements of the ur-text: the bildungsroman. On the other hand, the Lawrence and Davies adaptation is considered as having successfully stressed "the social issues facing Regency England" but can also be criticized for "being too sombre and for having too little romance and humor" (DiPaolo 143). These quotations show that this version has successfully incorporated Jane Austen's satire, but it lacks the humour that is key to the ur-text. Because of their different approach the two can be considered to complement each other and as such give a more complete portrayal of the source text. My intention of this analysis, however, is not only to distinguish the differences between the two, but also to find the similarities that lead to a common ur-text.

McGrath's *Emma* features Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma and is often critiqued as "too easy to watch" (144 Schor). Hilary Schor goes as far as stating that McGrath has reduced "Emma's artful construction around the ethics of plotting to a thinness" (144) of romance. DiPaolo agrees that the Hollywood rendition conveys a

> traditional, conservative reading of the novel that does little to clash with the lay public's vision of the work and avoids including any elements that might be inspired by more liberal scholarly interpretations (86).

This description leads to DiPaolo's definition of the Hollywood translation as a "transposition adaptation", as it copies the plot without making any major alterations to the storyline. David Monaghan also agrees that of the three *Emma* adaptations from the nineties, McGrath's stays the closest to the original text regarding "incident, plot, and character" (199). Monaghan also points out that the Hollywood version was mainly concerned with "broadening its box-office appeal" (199) and that it shows a flattened-out version of Austen's deeply layered novel. He states that "[w]here Austen is serious, McGrath is trivial; where she is complex, he simplifies; where she is tough-minded, he sentimentalizes; and where she is subtle, he is crude." (199). Besides transposing the plot, McGrath also stayed close to its source by adapting Austen's

rhythmic writing style through camerawork and editing style, as they create a dance-like effect as Monaghan argues (220).

This interpretation shows a reading of the novel as "a fairy-tale-like domestic bildungsroman" (DiPaolo 142). The film romanticizes its landscapes and uses high key lighting to visualize the romantic emphasis in their interpretation. High key lighting is a lighting style that creates a soft image by minimizing shadows and contrast and thus gives a fairy-tale like effect. This lighting style accompanied by her beauty adds to Paltrow's angelic portrayal of Emma. This angelic portrayal and Paltrow's good looks, Nora Nachumi argues, have become an indication of Emma's moral worth (136). This moral worth is heightened by the film's focus on Emma's charitable deeds for the less fortunate, for example when she takes Harriet to care for a poor old lady (McGrath 00:29:03- 00:29:45) for which she gives Harriet credit when they retell their visit to Mr. Elton (McGrath 00:30:45 – 00:32:21). According to Nachumi this portrayal of Emma leads to an interpretation of Emma as a young goddess who deserves her spot on the pedestal: "She may make mistakes, but she is never really in need of any serious improvement" (136). Nachumi's interpretation of the Hollywood adaptation goes against DiPaolo's categorization of the film as an adaptation of the novel as a bildungsroman. Nachumi finds that the film no longer portrays the story of a young woman's education and focuses too much on Emma's beauty (136). This shift of focus also causes the film to depart from Austen's subtle dialogical satire, for "the splendid appearance of Gwyneth Paltrow in Emma can undercut the satire directed against the character she plays" (Troost and Greenfield 7). However, Troost and Greenfield also argue that the film is not without its satiric dimension, it just lacks subtlety and balance (7). According to Monaghan, this lack of subtlety gives the film a comical feel (223). He illustrates this by mentioning some side gags McGrath included in the film, including "a pan that moves from Knightley (Jeremy Northam). describing his home as "cosy" to a low angle long shot of Donwell Abbey in all its glory" (223). Physical comedy, like being embarrassingly clumsy, and acting without the appropriate

refinement and delicacy make the film resemble a “comedy of manners” (223). Emma as well does not shy away from sarcasm or crude jokes.

The film makes Emma its prime focus, it dramatizes her rich inner life and her romance with Mr. Knightley . It may lack Austen’s subtle societal satire, but the film still grants some importance to class and social issues. Critic Christine Colón confirms this by stating that the film has added visual clues and subtle additions to the text to resemble the ironic voice of the narrator which conveys the class critique present in the novel. Colón explains her argument by use of the hand-made paper globe that appears at the beginning and at the end of the movie, which was Emma’s wedding present to Mr. and Mrs. Weston. According to Colón, this globe is a parable of Emma’s understanding of her place in society as her class consciousness and her judgement are developed for the better. This globe also refers to theme of making something local globally recognizable, which has come to be integral to Austenism. The scene in which the globe is presented spinning around in Emma’s hand, represents “the heroine’s imagined relationship to the world around her” (Schor 148). She believes herself to be the centre of everyone’s world and that she is the one who can pull the strings by matchmaking, to lead her acquaintances in the right direction. The globe thus signifies that even though Emma’s stories take place within her small societal circle, to her it resembles a world, her world.

To summarize, McGrath’s interpretation stayed close to the novel, but in the process simplified the plot by focusing on the main characters’ physical appearances and their romance. This translation gained the subtext of a bildungsroman with some traces of a comedy of manners. It, however, lost the satire and criticism that is considered ‘typically Austen’. This satire and class satire is more pronounced in the British Lawrence and Davies adaptation made for television and which is comparable to the BBC-series of *Pride and Prejudice* and can be considered “indebted to the classic drama formula” (Monaghan 198).

Lawrence and Davies's version differs slightly more from the novel. One change that created a bigger gap between the film and the book, as says DiPaolo, was rewriting Knightley (Mark Strong) as a progressive socialist (3). DiPaolo further states that the film can safely be

> categorized as a commentary since the creative team is clearly looking back upon the original text with a modern eye that condemns the class structure of the period and, consequently, judges the title character even more harshly than Austen did. (19)

In this case, the film may move away from the novel, but is does not diminish Austen's social criticism. This translation gains the class criticism which the Hollywood version had lost. As a result, DiPaolo labels this translation as a commentary translation, opposed to McGrath's transposition adaptation. DiPaolo defines a commentary translation as a reading of the novel which disregards sticking to fidelity "in favor of a re-envisioning of the original work" (19) and instead draws upon radical or progressive critical literary readings of the text. In this case the radical and progressive readings stem from class and gender issues. One way that this is shown in the film by giving more attention to the servants. For example, when the characters decide to take a trip to Box Hill, the camera focuses on a group of servants who are with great effort trying to bring heavy furniture up on the hill whilst the group is carelessly walking up and conversing without the slightest inconvenience. Monaghan suggest that this attention to the servants shows "something of a post-Marxian" (202) perspective in the representation of nineteenth-century English society. They thus interposed a modern perspective, adding to Austen's own critical class perspective, whilst also trying to stay true to the original novel.

Adding to the focus on class criticism, Lawrence and Davies also made some changes concerning their interpretation and portrayal of Emma (Kate Beckinsale). Lawrence and Davies show Emma as a very imaginative person. Her imagination is shown on screen as daydreaming. DiPaolo says that the film demonstrates that Emma's imagination clouds her perception of reality (108). She is, for example, oblivious to the sufferings of Harriet

(Samantha Morton), Jane Fairfax (Olivia Williams), and the servants. DiPaolo's interpretation of the film is that Emma is shown as a

> misguided figure with a slight snobbish streak and a very vivid imagination who needs to observe with greater clarity and empathy the people who populate the community of Highbury. (108)

According to DiPaolo, the film succeeds in presenting Emma's misguided perception and at the same time contrasts it with the point of views of the less fortunate and less socially powerful members of Highbury (109). In this version, Kate Beckinsale's Emma differs distinctively from Paltrow's angelic portrayal of Emma. It is shown that Emma is wrong in her class biases, in contrast to being put on a pedestal and ignoring further issues concerning class. As Monaghan states, Davies and Lawrence's adaptation can be considered more particularly satisfying, for it "interacts with its source text in a much more complex way" (212). Both films thus stayed close to their source text, whilst also implementing their own interpretation.

Emma., a Modern Period Piece

Emma. is the most recent adaptation of Jane Austen's text and has been produced to fit the interests of a contemporary audience. This aim has resulted in a mixture of a period drama, or heritage film with high entertainment value. This adaptation draws on a modern translation of Austenian humour, which has become one of the ur-text's key elements. Autumn de Wilde turns Austen's story into a slap-stick comedy, says Guro Erdal. The comparison with a slap-stick comedy results from the visual over-the-top physical comedy. De Wilde succeeded in blending this physical comedy seamlessly into the story. The actors move from set to set, from one scene to the next as if it were a dance. Erdal justly points out that the comedy implemented in this translation "captures the personality traits and elevates them to new heights" (64). To use Harris' classification, or Dryden's terminology, de Wilde made a striking imitation of Jane Austen's *Emma,* by translating its humour to something that would

be highly appreciated by a modern audience. Not only does this make the film fun to watch, but it also augments Austen's satire and commentary on some of the characters. For example, Mr Woodhouse, Emma's father, is a frail, nervous person afraid of change and Emma feels that he would be lost without her attention. The absurdity of his character is heightened in de Wilde's film. In the film Mr. Woodhouse always seems to feel a slight draft; when sitting by the fire he enquires the staff to put down more screens to keep him warm up to the point when he is fully enclosed from the rest of the room and the other characters present (de Wilde 01:49:00-01:50:03). De Wilde also heightened the selfish aspects of Emma's character but made her less clueless which makes the second key-element, the theme of the bildungsroman, less prominent. In this film it is shown that Emma is highly aware that she is trying to manipulate the people around her. She is, however, clueless to the fact that her intentions only benefit her own happiness and not that of the people around her. With the use of sharp and witty dialogue plus striking visual elements, like Mrs. Elton's often ridiculous hairdos and the exaggerated amount of wind screens, de Wilde has been able to highlight the imperfections of the characters and by emphasizing the humoristic part of the story she made the audience aware that these characteristics are to be ridiculed and not forgiven.

This adaptation may lack the prominence of the bildungsroman, but it does contain a nod to Jane Austen's class critique. The servants play bigger parts in the story, especially to show the audience that some behaviour of the main characters was not generally socially acceptable, or just a bit absurd. They readily attend to their masters' whims and wishes but can occasionally be spotted exchanging looks or rolling their eyes. The reactions of the servants to the behavior of the characters adds to the feel of a slap-stick comedy. The rich are expected to show some bizarre mannerisms and the reactions of the servants let the audience know that these are indeed things to ridicule. The inclusion of a more significant role for the servants does play into the discussion regarding class, but it does not directly comment on the class distinctions. If it does anything, it is to put the servants on the same level of importance

as the other characters. As a result, the film still shows that higher class society is something to satirize and it becomes a commentary adaptation.

To conclude, all four adaptations in some way or another share an Austenian satire that criticises class inequality, try to entertain the audience with humour, and revolves around the theme of the bildungsroman. The satire and the humour that are often tied with it, are the elements that make the adaptations representative of Austenism. That what remains is the main-element of *Emma's* ur-text: the bildungsroman. Emma (or the modern equivalent, Cher) has to outgrow her cluelessness, mature, and realise that the world does not revolve around her and that she has to be respectful of other people's right to make decisions. I find it safe to say that *Clueless* might have had the biggest impact on the formation of this ur-text. The humour and satire also belong to this ur-text, but in a sense that it makes it part of an even bigger ur-text, which would be Austenism. When viewed together, the films would be able to give the full picture of *Emma's* ur-text.

Chapter Four
Adapting the *Emma* Ur-text

In the previous chapter I discussed the different *Emma* adaptations and how each of them has had their own impact on the formation of the ur-text. In this chapter I will analyse how each adaptation has shaped the story and the ur-text to make it fit into their context. Costumes and fashion played a big part in how an adaptation would be perceived by the audience. When designing the costumes, the designer often has three choices: use historically accurate designs, move away from authenticity and design clothes that would be recognized by the audience, or a little bit of both. Deciding what clothes the characters are going to wear is particularly important because clothes can help shape the appearance of a character. Clothes or costumes are able to possess an instant expressiveness that adds an extra dimension to a character which makes them easier to read for the audience. In this chapter I will examine both costume choices and casting choices, for an actor has as big an influence on how a character will be remembered as their costumes do. Each adaptation presents a new chain of choices and decisions that will have influenced the ur-text. In this chapter I will demonstrate that C*lueless* has had the biggest impact on how the story of *Emma* would be interpreted.

Before I start analysing the adaptations, I will present an overview of the character's description in Jane Austen's novel. As in *Pride and Prejudice,* Austen barely mentions what kind of clothing the characters in *Emma* wear. What readers do learn is that Emma's hair is curled by a maid (*Emma* 107), that the young girls go to a shop for muslin, gloves, and ribbons in various colours which they would have delivered to any place desirable (188), that spectacles could be worn even by people from lower classes like Mrs. Bates (188), that during strawberry picking on warmer days larger bonnets are worn (286), and that Mr. Knightley wears "thick leather gaiters" that have to be buttoned up (230). One character in particular gives a bit more attention to what she wears. Mrs. Elton particularly cares about how she is

perceived by others. She minds how others perceive her gown, her trimming, and her hair (258). Her preoccupation with her appearance would suggest that her sense of fashion would somehow be highlighted in any adaptation. Aside from Mrs. Elton, another character who is concerned or a bit uncertain about her appearance is Harriet. Her inexperience is displayed when she is uncertain what colour ribbon should go with her yellow pattern for a gown she wants to fashion when she is shopping with Emma (188). Besides these two polar opposite characters, any adaptor is free to fill in the blank spaces regarding clothing with as much imagination as they would like.

Emma Becomes Clueless

This freedom, however, is limited by what kind of adaptation a filmmaker would like to produce – transposition, commentary, heritage, or modern – and the character's styling will be influenced by how the filmmakers have interpreted them. The story of *Clueless* takes place in 1995 Los Angeles and is a modern adaptation of *Emma*. This has influenced the costumes in the film. Time and place thus may change, but what is set about the characters is their personality and their position in society. Emma's is established from the first page. She is introduced as

> Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. (1)

Any adaptation would have to cast Emma accordingly, if they want to stay true to the text. Amy Heckerling, the director of *Clueless*, decided to stray a little from the literal description above to make Emma's story appeal to a younger and modern audience. She made Cher (Alicia Silverstone), the alternative for Emma, a couple of years younger (sixteen) to fit in a high school setting, but she was kept "handsome, clever, and rich"(1). Other descriptions of Emma primarily tell of her beauty. Mrs. Weston is convinced that Emma is almost the perfect example of beauty, face, and figure. She speaks highly of her brilliant, "true hazle" eyes and

regards her as the "picture of health", she is "loveliness itself" (29). Mr. Knightley agrees with Mrs. Weston's praise and adds that he finds her anything but personally vain, with which he means that as beautiful as she is, she is not preoccupied by it. Even though Cher does not have Emma's hazel eyes, she is presented as a very beautiful girl who with her fashion sense is envied by many girls at her school.

Besides staying true to a character's physical appearance, an adaptation also has to make sure the character has the right personality. Emma Woodhouse is not only handsome, but also clever. She might seem preoccupied with silly hobbies and might value trivial things, but she does not lack intelligence. Emma tells Harriet that she has an "an active, busy mind, with a great many independent resources" (68); she likes to busy herself with drawing and if that would disinterest her, she would occupy her mind with reading, making music, or doing carpet-work (68). She always has a hobby at hand, and those hobbies are not only limited to matchmaking or Harriet. Just like Emma, Cher makes sure that she always has some project at hand. In the first twenty minutes of the film Cher is preoccupied with convincing her teachers to give her better grades, either though arguing or matchmaking. When she has accomplished getting her higher grades, Tai is presented as her new project.

Other important characters that have been translated into the modern setting, are Harriet and Mr. Knightley. Tai is the character who replaces Harriet in *Clueless.* This character is Emma's friend and at the same time her protégé. Where Mrs. Weston evidently admires Emma for her beauty, is Harriet the one Emma admires for *her* beauty. Harriet is described as "short, plump, and fair, with a fine bloom, blue eyes, light hair, regular features, and a look of great sweetness" (*Emma* 16). Tai resembles this description in that she might be considered short and plump next to Cher, the light hair and blue eyes, however, seem to have been passed over to Cher. Not only does Emma notice Harriet's appearance, but she is also as pleased "with her manners as her person" (16). Even though she does not strike her as remarkably clever, Emma is still very engaged in their interaction. Harriet leaves such a

graceful impression that Emma is determined that Harriet "should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury" (16). Frank Churchill also expresses that he had "never seen so lovely a face and was delighted with her naïveté" (175). Tai, however, did not leave that same graceful impression in the modern translation. In *Clueless*, Tai is presented as an artistic girl who feels at home at the grunge scene and lacks the sense of innocence or naïveté that accompanies Harriet, for she seems to have been more exposed to sex and drugs than Cher. Tai's naïveté, then, seems to be more directed to what in Cher's eyes means to be perceived as success and having class.

Josh Lucas is the character portraying the role of Mr. Knightley. Josh is a university student who likes to flaunt his intelligence. Just as Mr. Knightley, Josh tries his best to steer Cher in the right direction. What lacked and had to be translated through different means, is Knightley's gentility. Emma describes Mr. Knightley as having an "air [...] so remarkably good that it is not fair to compare Mr. Martin with *him*…" (*Emma* 24). An air of a gentleman would not have fitted Josh's student persona and that gentleman-like personality is now hidden in Josh's readiness to be there for Cher when she needs him and to stand up for her when she gets insulted. For example, he drives all the way to Sun Valley when Cher is stranded at a parking lot after being sexually assaulted by her supposed friend Elton and robbed by a thief (*Clueless* 00:40:46 – 00:43:02) and he defends her when she is accused by one of her dad's interns of ruining their case (01:27:15- 01:28:18). Something that is also kept in Josh's portrayal is Knightley's "downright, decided, commanding sort of manner" (*Emma* 25), that is evident in Josh's reprimands towards Cher, for example when she assumes that the maid form Mexico and the gardener from El Salvador have the same nationality because they both speak Spanish (*Clueless* 01:11:57).

As I mentioned, a change that accompanies a change in setting (time and place) is a change in costume. I wil now discuss the importance of a modern interpretation of the character's outfits. Not only has this adaptation been influenced by its cultural context when it

was produced, the costumes are actually based on contemporary fashion trends. The costume designer, Mona May, collaborated with Heckerling to produce the best costumes for each character. She was conscious of the fact that in a comedy costumes can overpower and/or overshadow the essence of the film ("Fashion on Film: Clueless") . Aside from not appearing too costumey and having to add to speak for the character, the costumes also had to fit the ur-text, which is made up out of Austenian humour, Emma's cluelessness, and her bildung-story. May played with a lot of designs and really tried to remain true to the fact that the characters were still teenagers. For example, Cher often sports Mary-Janes, either flat or with small heels, which adds a youthful dimension to her outfits, exemplified by figures 14 and 15.

Figure 14 Cher wearing Mary Janes (Clueless 00:48:35)

Figure 15 The girls wearing Mary Janes (Clueless 00:29:03)

May also took inspiration from the catwalks instead of contemporary teenagers. May's motivation behind this decision was to show that Cher was up to date to any developments in the fashion industry, as this would be a big trope for her character and is one of the reasons why Cher is 'queen' of the popular clique at school.

May thus took inspiration from the catwalk, but also played with contemporary styles among teens. She, for example, elevated the plaid grunge look to something that would have an iconic impact on mid-nineties teen culture: Cher's yellow plaid outfit. This outfit,

reminiscent of a traditional school uniform, is either still worn today as Halloween outfits or used as inspiration for more contemporary versions.

Figure 16 Matching plaid outfits (Clueless 00:03:06)

This plaid outfit sets the tone for outfits worn throughout the movie, because the outfits that incorporate plaid symbolize that character's relationship with Cher. For example, her best friend Dionne (Stacey Dash) is introduced at the same time in a similar plaid skirt and blazer, but in the black and white. This introduction indicates that the two friends communicate before meeting up to coordinate their outfits. Tai, on the other hand, wears plaid because she dresses herself in Cher's image after Dionne and Cher have given her a make-over. Josh, as well, is never seen wearing an outfit without a plaid flannel.

Figure 17 Tai in plaid and Josh with his flannel (Clueless 01:14:05)

Aside from showing the connections between the different characters and Cher, the clothing is also used to portray the characters' development throughout the show. Cher often wears skirts and dresses, and pants were reserved for Tai to show their difference in class, but Cher starts to alternate her skirts with pants when she realises she has been in love in Josh and that she had treated Tai unfairly, that she had prevented her from being her own person. Cher's influence on Tai, however, is not particularly bad. In the film Tai is shown as becoming more confident and going after what she wants. Tai's insecurity is also conveyed through her clothes. She grows more confident in herself when she dresses in the likeness of Cher, but still asks for Cher's advice, for example at the party when she put together an outfit herself and is not sure what to do with her blouse (*Clueless* 00:56:09). Her uncertainty regarding her outfit conveys her discomfort being a newcomer in Cher's circle. Their friendship started because Cher wanted to transform Tai as a project. Their friendship starts to grow and gets more real when both girls begin to understand that they are both their own person, and they cannot treat people like dolls. Even though the friendship started on unequal footing, it made them find themselves and mature, they both change for the better.

An Angelic Emma

The next adaptation I will discuss is the 1996 McGrath Hollywood film. As I mentioned in my previous chapter, Gwyneth Paltrow's Emma is very much presented in an angelic manner. In *Emma* Mrs. Weston admits in a conversation with Mr. Knightley that Emma has her faults, but she would never purposely mislead anyone, "where Emma errs once, she is in the right a hundred times" (*Emma* 29). This statement shows that Mrs. Weston might be a bit biased in her opinion of Emma. Austen's satiric subtext shimmers through when Mr. Knightley answers: "Very well; I will not plague you any more. Emma shall be an angel" (29), for he is more than perfectly aware of Emma's faults, as he is the one determined to correct her. Knightley's ironic comment seems to have been the main inspiration for McGrath's adaptation, but they may have taken Knightley's opinion a bit too literally. Emma's so called

angelic behaviour is repeated in her appearance. McGrath's Emma has blond her and blue eyes, just like Heckerling's Cher, while the novel describes Emma with hazel eyes. McGrath may have been influenced by *Clueless* to have an actress with blonde hair and blue eyes fill the role of Emma, or he was set on giving Emma the angelic and innocent appearance that is often associated with blue eyes and blonde hair, or both. He thus strayed from Austen's text and decided to create an image that would evoke a certain reaction or interpretation with the audience. The appearance of the main character thus lacks novelistic accuracy.

McGrath and the costume designer Ruth Meyers also decided to not have the costumes designed historically accurate. Instead of presenting the woman in costumes that would have been accurate for the early nineteenth century, the director and costume designer decided that they wanted to incorporate outfits that looked "completely free and completely lovely" (Willen). This sense of freedom was mostly represented by getting rid of any corsets or stays, and they were replaced by Wonderbra's and push-up bras to still give an illusion of a nineteenth-century woman's silhouette (Willen). The wardrobe of the film thus tries to give an illusion of historical accuracy, whilst implementing a twentieth century sense of freedom. In an interview with Barabara de Witt for *Los Angeles Daily News,* Meyers explains that the modern touch was inspired by a "flapper-ish" similarity between the regency era and the 1920's. She based the similarities on the fact that she noticed that in both periods there was a freedom of costume for women and "it was a period of constant diversions for the upper classes–picnics, dinners, balls, dances" (qtd. In *Los Angeles Daily News*).

The softness of the costumes was achieved by incorporating floral prints and using colours that resembled the watercolours of that period used in authentic nineteenth century prints that she had found. Some dresses and other accessories therefore incorporate fabric in vibrant pinks, blues and greens which would clash with the audience's expectations of Austen adaptations in which "neutral tones and rigid costuming" (Willen) would have been frequently featured. Meyers thus incorporated historically accurate colours in the costumes,

but for the audience it feels inaccurate; it is different then what they were used to. The historical accuracy is limited to the colours. Adding to the lack of stays, petticoats, chemises and corsets, the clothing barely resembles nineteenth century sartorial etiquette. Emma mainly wears short sleeved dresses, regardless of time of day or seasons and her necklines are often too low to be considered fashionable during the day. Aside from that, the tops of her dresses are very much like modern t-shirts and divert from what was fashionable back in the day. These clothes thus do not resemble any historical accuracy, nor do they meet the Austenian expectations of the audience. They do, however, fit the fairy-tale and angelic subtext McGrath has added to the film by interpolating dream-like landscapes and soft lighting.

Aside from the colours Meyers has found on nineteenth century prints, the approach to colour can also be interpreted as being influenced by *Clueless*, in which Cher alternates softer colours with more vibrant ones, as does McGrath's Emma. Besides some more vibrant coloured dresses, the pink one she wears while doing archery, and other pastel green and blue gowns, Emma most often wears white.

Figure 18 The pink dress (McGrath 00:23:07)

Figure 19 the blue dress (McGrath 01:39:56)

Figure 20 the green dress (McGrath 01:06:18)

This corresponds with the more angelic image McGrath wanted Emma to convey. These white dresses often have some pattern on them, which is copied in some of Harriet's dresses to convey Emma's influence on her (figure 21), just as is done in *Clueless* with a plaid pattern. Another thing that can be connected to *Clueless* is how Emma's or Cher's clothing reflect her state of maturity. In *Clueless* Cher wears Mary-Janes to show that she is not adult enough to wear high heels, and also shows a limited amount of skin by layering small tops over blouses, except for when she goes out. She wears pigtails in a scene but takes them out when Josh mentions that she looks like Pippi Longstocking (*Clueless* 01:26:57), for she does not want to look childlike, she wants to come over as mature. Emma is always bonnetless, has bare arms and wears "carelessly tossed cashmere shawls to illustrate Emma's carefree refusal to face up to the responsibilities and constraints of grown-up propriety" (Pappas). These childlike signs are repeated in Harriet's wardrobe, but more noticeable because she wears button-front bodices, and her neckline is more than once filled up with a chemisette.

Figure 21 matching outfits (McGrath 01:27:33)

One more character whose wardrobe is worth mentioning is Mrs. Elton's. To portray her interest in fashion, but also to contrast her with the more modest women in the novel, Mrs Elton is shown wearing "comically large, imposing bonnets and hats" (whereas Emma barely ever wears a bonnet), "deep V-necklines, sharply-peaked shoulders, overdone jewellery, and an overdramatic contrasting red-and-cream ballgown" (Pappas).

Figure 22 Mrs. Elton heavily accessorized (McGrath 01:29:07)

Mrs. Elton is thus presented as someone you can barely take seriously, just is suggested in Austen's novel when Mrs. Elton feels that her marriage to the vicar places her in a higher position than Emma. This ridiculing of Mrs. Elton by use of her outfits will be repeated in the later adaptations, as I will show. The more modern inspired outfits make me believe that the film was made for the modern viewer who would not care too much about a historically accurate rendition, as long as it presents an illusion of that time period.

A More Historically Respectful *Emma*

The 1996 adaptation by Lawrence and Davies, however, succeeds in appealing to an audience who wishes a historically accurate, Austenian' translation of the novel. This British adaptation remains true to the expectations of the novel and to the fashion trends of the 1815's: it even follows the fashionable trend of women wearing their hair in face framing curls. The characters are shown wearing appropriate day and evening wear, with gown with higher necklines and longer sleeves for during the days and more daring gowns with lower necklines and shorter sleeves for parties in the evening. Even Emma's hats and bonnets, which might feel a bit out of place for a more modern audience, fit into the time period and add to Emma's characterization, for the rather tall, large, imposing hats were chosen to accentuate "her hawkish, aggressive qualities" (Pappas). To further accentuate this, the other female characters wear less intimidating bonnets.

Emma's and Harriet's physical appearance also divert from the previous adaptations and seem truer to the descriptions in the novel. In this adaptation Emma has the hazel eyes Mrs. Weston is so appreciative of and she has the dark hair that is more common in combination with dark eyes, instead of the blonde hair and blue eyes combination both Alicia Silverstone and Gwyneth Paltrow bring to the role. Harriet is also more accurate to the novel's description, for in this adaptation she has the has the blue eyes and light hair Emma finds so beautiful (figure 23). In lieu of McGrath's adaptation and before that Austen's text,

Mrs. Elton is portrayed as the most "fashionable" of the women, for she "wears frills at her hem, lots of trim and braid and bold colors" (Parrill 144), as can be seen in figure 24.

Figure 23 Emma and Harriet look like the book descriptions. (Lawrence and Davies 00:09:07)

Figure 24 Mrs. Elton with more prominent jewellery (Lawrence Davies 01:42:15)

Lawrence and Davies also revert to representing the changing seasons, which was suggested in the novel and kept in *Clueless* but neglected in McGrath's *Emma.* This adaptation distances itself from the other two adaptation, by focusing on its historically accurate representation. I could not find any traces of Cher's love for fashion and the vibrant colours that were repeated in McGrath's *Emma.* By focusing on its accuracy, Davies and Lawrence seem to have purposely directed themselves toward a different audience than the one that would have appreciated Heckerling's and McGrath's adaptations, which turned out to be the more popular ones. This shows that an Austenian and historical accurate approach does not necessarily equal popularity

Getting Dressed with *Emma.*

Emma., as the most recent adaptation, has incorporated all three different adaptation, which also might have been inevitable given the cultural prominence of the previous adaptations. As I mentioned in my previous chapter, *Emma.* is comparable with Lawrence and Davies' *Emma* regarding its content. Visually, the film is more influenced by its American predecessors. Just

as in *Clueless* and McGrath's *Emma*, Emma (Anya Taylor-Joy) is played by a blonde-haired actress, however, this time *with* hazel eyes. Other resemblances are evident as well. For example, when Mr. Knightley (Johnny Flynn) proposes to Emma he does this in a comparable setting as the McGrath one, standing underneath a tree, and just like in Cher in *Clueless* Emma wears a staple yellow outfit that makes her stand out from the rest of the characters. This outfit is shown in figure 25.

Figure 25 Harriet in a more muted colour and Emma in a vibrant yellow (Emma. 00:18:33)

Emma's yellow coat was chosen as part of her autumn palette, just as Cher's outfit was, and the colour yellow represents a similar symbolic meaning as did the plaid pattern in *Clueless*, for whoever wears yellow in *Emma.* will be viewed in relation to Emma. For example, both Mr. Knightley and Mr. Churchill (Callum Turner) wear yellow coats at some points, which shows their possible romantic relation to Emma. Mrs. Elton (Tanya Reynolds) wears an overembellished version of

Figure 26 Mrs. Elton in a yellow dress embellished with jewellery (Emma. 01:07:47)

Figure 27 Mrs. Elton's first appearance in a noticeable yellow gown (Emma. 01:04:09)

Emma's yellow outfit to the ball (figure 26) and during her introduction in the film (figure 27).

The overtly trimmed fashion makes her look ridiculous and over-the-top in relation to Emma. Emma and Harriet's (Mia Goth) relationship is symbolised through their costumes. Harriet, for example, wears a yellow dress as well at some point, but in a much more muted colour than Emma's. This shows that Harriet can dress similarly to Emma, but she would never truly compare because of their class difference (figure 25). Harriet's muted coloured gowns turn into more colourful gowns as Harriet and Emma grow closer. Their dresses become increasingly alike, however Emma's accessories and the detailing on Emma's gowns that are lacking on Harriet's make sure that the social disparity stays intact.

Aside from the colour yellow, the film's colour scheme is also adjusted to a degree that the actors either clash or blend in with their environment to portray that the character is either at ease or at odds at that particular moment in that particular time. For example, Mr. Woodhouse (Bill Nighy) often blends in with the interior of Hartfield, for that is where he feels the most at ease. Sometimes he even seems to disappear in his chair, as his clothes resemble the chair's upholstery (figure 28). The same case of colour blending can be applied to the servants of Hartfield. They blend in with the house's interior because they are meant to come across as part of the furniture.

Figure 28 Mr. Woodhouse barely noticeable in his chair. (Emma. 01:48:52)

Besides the colour coded symbolism of the costumes, the costumes are also praised for their historical accuracy. Even though the bright and vibrant colours might clash with the audience's expectations of what a nineteenth century wardrobe is supposed to look like, they were based on original fashion plates. The vibrant colours show a resemblance with

McGrath's film, although they are brighter. An audience with an interest in adaptations of *Emma* would have been more accustomed to those colours. De Wilde, however, did decide to show more historically accurate costuming in her film than McGrath did. De Wilde even goes as far as showing the audience what is hidden underneath all those layers of clothes and how they were assembled. This film shows as much interest in the process of getting dressed as in the fashion itself. Emma is shown being fitted for a new blue dress in the summer (00:25:50), which she wears during winter, and also hiking up her skirts to warm her bare behind in front of the fireplace (00:11:40). Emma is not the only one who is pictured in a state of undress. De Wilde also really wanted to show how much effort it took to get dressed as a gentleman, and Mr. Knightley is shown getting dressed layer by layer by his servant (00:07:55 – 00:08:15).

A fervent viewer of Austen adaptations would not have been disappointed by de Wilde's translation, even if the vibrant colours may divert a bit from what had become a norm in Austenian films, they add a layer to the film and the characters that enables the film to remain true to *Emma's* ur-text. The vibrant colours have become part of *Emma's* ur-text, just as the earthly colour palette has become part of the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text. In the *Emma* adaptations, costumes show Emma's wealth and her relationship with the other characters and some of the better and worse qualities of the characters surrounding her, like Mrs. Elton's exuberance.

This analysis has shown that even though each film managed the ur-text in their own way, every adaptation managed to inf(l)ect it in a way that it was impactful to such a degree that a succeeding adaptation would implement any additions in their interpretation, which would make the additions part of the ur-text. *Clueless* set the tone for Emma's character being more pre-occupied with fashion than the book suggests. Sure, Jane Austen's Emma would never wear something out of date, but she does not care as much about her clothes as Mrs. Elton does or would be insecure about the right match of colours like Harriet. The character herself might not be preoccupied by fashion, but after *Clueless*, Emma would be the most

fashionably dressed among her peers, which would make her stand out and establish her as the main character. *Clueless* thus had the biggest effect on the ur-text and inflected that in later adaptations the costumes would not necessarily have to meet Austenian expectations. The one adaptation that did, was the one by Lawrence and Davies and would have appealed to a different kind of audience than the other adaptations. For the other three adaptations did a better job in meeting the audience expectations, but it also surprised them by using colours that are more common in modern times. *Clueless* thus showed that a Jane Austen adaptation did not have to be historically accurate nor fit into the Austenian picture to portray a successful translation of an Austenian story and the film made the ur-text more colourful.

Conclusion: A Mythical Ur-text

In chapter one I analysed how four different films have adapted the same story: the 1995 BBC-series *Pride and Prejudice*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* by Joe Wright. I found out that they share multiple themes. The shared themes turned out to be the central points of the Austenian ur-text. The adaptations are mostly attractive for a female audience, they contain characters who come aware of their faults and try to better them, the heroines are autonomous and independent female characters, and local stories are told in a globally recognisable way. The most important commonality and addition to the source text is that throughout the adaptations, the eroticism hidden in the novel's subtext is heightened to the visual text of the films and thus made more explicit.

In chapter two I analysed the same adaptations to examine how they altered the source text to fit into their own context. I found out that each adaptation was influenced by their own time and place and that they had imprinted their own interpretation to the body of the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text. The 1995 adaptation was the most influential iteration and shaped the ur-text in such a way that every adaptation would now be viewed in comparison to the BBC-series. From then on Elizabeth would be pictured with brown hair and a colour palette that complimented her earthly interests. The 2005 adaptation by Joe Wright added a more modern feel to the ur-text, with costumes that would remind the audience of the flowing style of boho-chic. *Bridget Jones's Diary* strayed from the previously set ur-text shaped by the 1995 series and introduced a blonde heroine who struggles with more contemporary societal demands and expectations. Staying true to the plot's essence, *Bridget Jones's Diary* expanded the modern setting that would be relatable to a contemporary audience. *Pride and Prejudice's* ur-text has now become a story that appeals to people in the modern day, with the appeal of a nineteenth century romance fantasy.

In chapter three I moved on to an analysis of *Emma* and my pick of adaptations: *Clueless*, *Emma* by McGrath, *Emma* by Lawrence and Davies, and *Emma.* by Autumn de Wilde. This story and its four adaptations showed a lot of resemblance with *Pride and Prejudice*. The two stories could be reduced to the same basic principles: attractive for the female gaze, a main character who changes for the better, an autonomous and independent female character, a local story turned global, and an individual romance in the centre of it all. The feature that has become the central point of the *Pride and Prejudice* ur-text is the heightened eroticism, with *Emma* the bildungsroman became its centre point. Each translation of the source text shows how Emma has to realise that society does not revolve around her and that she has to respect other people's decisions. Humour is the second central focus point, which makes the ur-text not only representative of Emma but also of Austenism. As I mentioned in this chapter, *Clueless* had the biggest impact on the formation of this ur-text. Like the 1995 BBC-series did for *Pride and Prejudice*, *Clueless* would influence an audience's viewing experience of any successive Emma adaptation.

In chapter four I analysed how each adaptation altered the ur-text by their decisions to fit the source text within their own context. My analysis has shown that even though each film managed the ur-text in their own way, every adaptation accomplished to inf(l)ect it in a way that it was impactful to such a degree that a succeeding adaptation would implement any additions in their interpretation, which would create a new ur-text. After *Clueless*, Emma's style would become one of the main factors that would form her personality and an audience would expect to see the same feminine confidence in Emma for which Cher had set the standard. In Emma, the character's costume's play a key role in establishing the different relationships between the characters, most importantly, they would place Emma in the centre of a story, like a spin looking over her newly spun web.

All these analyses show that, even if adaptations are approached with different interpretations and produced with a different goal in mind, they all have to remain true to the

essence of the original novel's story. The two stories, however, have become more than what Jane Austen published in 1813 and 1815. The story of *Emma* started with what Austen had written down but has come to encompass the stories of the different adaptations and their different interpretations and depictions as well. Emma is no longer just Emma Woodhouse, but also Alicia Silverstone playing Cher and both Gwyneth Paltrow's and Kate Beckinsale's portrayals of Emma. *Emma's* ur-text, just as that of *Pride and Prejudice* is a gathering of all the different elements that the adaptations have added to the story. Jane Austen's story was merely a tree trunk, the adaptations and their tiniest of details are the sticks, the leaves, the fruits, the flowers, the small bumps, and imperfections that decorate that trunk and the ur-text is the spectacular masterpiece that the tree has become. Austenism, in this case, is the forest that is made up by all of these trees and is the grand ur-text that encompasses the myth that conveys a feeling of romance, satire, humour, bildung, and eroticism.

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