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Purloined Letters. An International Journal of Quotation Studies is a peer-reviewed, biannual scientific journal which addresses the fields of literature, art, cinema, history and the humanities. With its focus on the theory and practice of quotation, the journal has an essentially interdisciplinary approach, publishing articles on the textual re-use of verbal, visual and musical materials, and specifically the appropriation of fragments and their re-insertion into a different context, from classicism to postmodern rewritings. Prospective contributors may consider the question of quotation both in theoretical and interpretative/historical perspectives. Contributions can be written either in French, English, Italian, Dutch, Spanish or German.

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DIEGO SAGLIA

AUSTEN IN THE SECOND DEGREE: QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

The three categories in the subtitle of this special issue hold an undeniably central place in present-day Austen studies. Quotation, intertextuality and rewriting – deeply rooted in Austen's fiction – also characterize the relentless proliferation of offshoots and by-products which her writings and *persona* continue to generate. 'Purloined words' are indeed intrinsic to the texture of Austen's novels and a familiar field of analysis for critics who have traditionally busied themselves with chasing allusions and references, throwing into relief the various kinds of intertextual relations within her output. In addition, quotation, intertextuality and rewriting have become unprecedentedly visible as part of the panoply of strategies available to contemporary rewritings and reinventions of Austen. In other words, a solid, if problematic, line connects Austen's practices of re-making other authors with those of contemporary authors and other cultural producers, such as script-writers and directors, re-making Austen.

Though nothing new in itself, the current phenomenon of reinventing the novelist and her works stands out for its ceaseless pace, cultural pervasiveness and sheer volume. Such features can make contemporary Austenmania more than occasionally irksome, as well as inspiring dismissals of its products as opportunistic and superficial; and yet, many of its manifestations present fascinatingly self-conscious and self-critical facets which cast them as intriguing objects for cultural consumption and analysis. Take, for instance, the TV series *Lost in Austen* (2008) or the novel-film *Austenland*.[1] These reinterpretations blur the boundary between fiction and reality in order to bring the more alert readers and viewers to ponder the constructedness of the work they are experiencing, of Austen's narrative universe and, more broadly, of the ever expanding dimension of 'all things Austen'. Contemporary Austenland is located at the meeting point of originality and derivation, authenticity and fabrication. On the one hand, it implies a desire to identify and own the real Austen; on the other, an unstoppable production and consumption of more or less convincing and satisfying Austens 'in the second degree'.[2] And, while this issue generally addresses Austen's ambivalent positioning in contemporary culture, the question of authenticity is specifically explored in Maddalena Pennacchia's contribution on *Austenland*, where she considers the real and symbolic *locus* of the theme park in order to show how the novel and film promote a critical reflection on the fabricated nature of contemporary Austen universes and their power of seduction over readers and fans.

Current reprises of Austen seem to have reached a peak of postmodern self-consciousness and transnational success thanks to the

[1] See D. Zeff, *Lost in Austen*, Mammoth Screen, UK, 2008; S. Hale, *Austenland*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2007 and J. Hess, *Austenland*, Fickle Fish Films – Moxie Pictures, UK - USA, 2013.

[2] See G. Genette, *Palimpsests. La littérature au second degré*, Paris, Seuil, 1982.

mash-up phenomenon. The film adaptation of Seth Grahame-Smith's novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was released in 2016, spreading further the popularity of one of the most viscerally adored but also denigrated Austen offshoots of recent years.[3] Associated with fiction thanks to Grahame-Smith's novel and Ben H. Winter's *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*,[4] the Austen mash-up has now taken global screens by storm. Though it remains to be seen if the film directed by Burr Steers will eventually become an influential reinvention of Austen, the amount of attention it has received confirms that, now more than ever, Austenland is teeming with constantly mutating forms of second degree derivations. Indeed, we could almost say that we are in the presence of an unstoppably mutant Austen. And yet, this novel-film pairing also demonstrates how, as Serena Baiesi contends in her essay, even the most seemingly unpromising derivations never completely sever the link to Austen's text. As Baiesi suggests, Grahame-Smith's work is indebted to *Pride and Prejudice* not merely because it replicates its narrative arc and reproduces entire portions of it, but also, and much more interestingly, because it reworks and updates problems and addresses questions of economy, race, class and gender that are both central to Austen's canon and relevant to the anxieties and concerns of a twenty-first century reader.

As to quotation, intertextuality and rewriting within Austen's work, we need look no further than *Pride and Prejudice* itself, the title of which re-echoes the final chapter of Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782). Entitled *A Termination*, this chapter repeatedly conjoins the two terms to provide a concluding moral to Burney's cautionary tale. As one of the characters

[3] See J. Austen and S. Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Philadelphia, Quirk Books 2009 and B. Steers, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Cross Creek Pictures – Sierra Pictures, USA – UK, 2016.

[4] See J. Austen and B. H. Winter, *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*, Philadelphia, Quirk Books, 2009.

declares: "The whole unfortunate business […] has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE".[5] Borrowing this conceptual pairing, in *Pride and Prejudice* Austen switches its position from Burney's finale to the starting point of her own narrative, making it the cornerstone of her finely nuanced study of the complexities of human relationships. Moreover, instead of narrating an "unfortunate business", Austen develops her work through comic and comedic registers that have ensured its status as one of the most beloved classics of English-language as well as world literature. To be sure, critics tend to disagree over whether Austen successfully managed to rewrite and "subvert" Burney.[6] However, even such interpretative disputes serve to confirm the significance of Austen's borrowings and reinventions together with the mirror games they play with specific works and narrative modes such as the contrast novel, the moral-domestic tale, the regional or the national tale, to name but a few. Quotation, intertextuality and rewriting are another crucial facet of Austen as a "determined author".[7]

If intertextual moments in *Pride and Prejudice* are fairly well known, the opening essays in this issue address less familiar forms of citation in Austen's fiction. Edward Copeland offers an exploration of Austen's practice of appropriation and strategic deployment of contemporary popular fiction, before assessing similar appropriations of Austen by 'silver fork' novelists of the 1820s and 1830s. Carlotta Farese, in turn, expands the connection between *Mansfield Park* and Elizabeth

[5] F. Burney, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, Edited by P. Sabor and M. A. Doody, With an Introduction by M. A. Doody, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 930.

[6] M. Waldron, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Her Time*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 37.

[7] A. Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: The Determined Author*, Basingstoke – New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows* as well as including the latter's novel *A Simple Story*, in order to reconstruct a triangular relationship that illuminates Austen's engagement with her sources as a way of questioning and revising the aesthetic features and ideological import of different genres.

Perhaps inevitably, a significant number of essays focuses on *Pride and Prejudice*. As Austen's most celebrated and best-known novel, it is still the main point of access to her production for many readers and the most frequently reworked and adapted text in her canon. If its constantly multiplying reprises defy any attempt at critical mapping,[8] a significant portion of this issue addresses a selection of the most compelling among the latest productions in this fertile region of Austenland. Massimiliano Morini analyzes Ang Lee's 1995 *Sense and Sensibility* and Joe Wright's 2005 *Pride and Prejudice*, parsing their opening scenes in order to focus on the mechanisms of selection and exclusion of narrative-dialogic elements in the transition from novel to film, as well as the textual organization of these sequences and their (re)creation of meaning in collaboration, as well as in competition, with the source text. As indicated above, Serena Baiesi examines Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride Prejudice and Zombies* and its reworking of some of the distinctive themes and ideological concerns in Austen's fiction. Looking at another prominent rewriting of recent years, Paola Partenza offers a detailed analysis of P. D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011), a combination of the novel of manners and sentiment, the psychological tale and detective fiction that, focusing on a murder in the woods near Darcy's and Elizabeth's home, reinterprets the significance of the enigmas and mysteries in Austen's narrative universe. Eleonora Capra, instead, considers the textual peculiarities of an Italian rewriting of

[8] See J. Todd, *Preface*, in *The Cambridge Companion to "Pride and Prejudice"*, edited by J. Todd, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. XV.

Pride and Prejudice, P. R. Moore-Dewey's *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* (2012), which include its adoption of Darcy's viewpoint and an intricate intertextual web combining Austen with a variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century English-language novelists. Finally, Olivia Murphy examines Jo Baker's *Longbourn* (2014) as exemplifying a postmodern reinvention of a familiar work from a perspective that was either sidelined or absent in the original, in this case that of the Bennets' servants and Elizabeth's maid in particular. For Murphy, Baker's engagement with *Pride and Prejudice* constitutes a powerful way of rethinking and problematizing Austen's much-loved (and, for this critic, also much abused) "darling child".[9]

Put succinctly, a major portion of this issue explores contemporary manifestations of Austen's "textual lives",[10] a phrase that is particularly relevant because it stresses the textual component underlying the countless artefacts and products that make up contemporary Austenland. On the one hand, it is undeniable that "Austen's success as an infinitely exploitable global brand, or conceptual product, is everything to do with recognition and little to do with reading".[11] And yet, it is crucial not to lose sight of the fact that Austen's writing lies at the basis of this process of infinite exploitation and we must always return to it when examining its products, offshoots and effects.

A particularly multifaceted phenomenon when envisaged from the standpoint of remediation, Austen 'in the second degree' may be seen to comprise the two principal meanings assigned to this term – the

[9] J. Austen, *Letters*, Collected and Edited by D. Le Faye, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 20114, p. 201 (letter to Cassandra Austen, 29 January 1813).

[10] K. Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2005.

[11] C. Harman, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*, Edinburgh – London – New York – Melbourne, Canongate, 2009, p. 3.

transposition and re-making of a text from one medium to another, and the translation of a text from a less to a more technologically advanced medium according to a mechanism of supersession and improvement.[12] Moreover, because of its complexity and scope, the phenomenon of Austen 'in the second degree' also requires us to ask why Austen of all writers; why now, at the turn of the twenty-first century; and why in so many different forms and repeatedly remediated formats. Indeed, it is evident that the current burgeoning of quotation, intertextuality and rewriting of Austen is as much to do with her output as with ourselves, so that another central question might be: what is there in our culture, intended as a simultaneously local and global construct, that urges us to produce and consume Austen 'in the second degree'? A provocatively straightforward answer is that "the main reason for Austen's mass popularity is the one from which critics tend to avert their eyes: the love stories".[13] This is also the reason why so many Austen by-products tend to be disappointingly repetitive. Yet, in order to account for more challenging and groundbreaking reinventions and remediations, we may perhaps take a different approach: a possible answer may lie in the fact that, in novel after novel, Jane Austen "elaborated, explored, and riffed on the play of opposites, generating variations".[14] If Austen's narratives are grounded in a clash of contrasting views, concepts and identities, this may be precisely where their capacity to "generate variation" resides. In this fashion, we return once again to the crucial point that, even when it seems most unlikely, Austenland is still centred in and draws upon Austen's texts.

In the final analysis, we may have to resign ourselves to the

[12] See J. D. Bolter and R. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Cambridge (Mass.) – London, MIT Press, 1999, pp. 44-50.

[13] C. Harman, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*, cit., p. 246.

[14] R. M. Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 9.

impossibility of finding any satisfactory and definitive answers to these questions. Just as we will presumably continue to read and re-read Austen, so the question 'why Austen?' is destined to re-emerge endlessly, together with its corollary: why has Austen ended up joining Shakespeare as co-tutelary godhead of English-language literature worldwide? The best proof of what still vaguely feels like canonical sacrilege is that both authors are currently caught up in processes of rewriting as updating occasioned by their respective anniversaries. Austen's novels are being recast as part of *The Austen Project: Jane Austen Re-imagined*, in which six modern authors rewrite her six complete works by transposing period details and language to a contemporary context. In her essay for this issue, Penny Gay examines this series (currently including Joanna Trollope's *Sense and Sensibility*, 2013; Val McDermid's *Northanger Abbey*, 2014; and Alexander McCall Smith's *Emma*, 2015) in order to identify its position and impact in the current panorama of Austen derivations and, more specifically, to evaluate the technical challenges posed by creating an adaptation in the same genre as its source. Significantly, something similar is happening to Shakespeare thanks to the *Hogarth Shakespeare* project that, as its official website announces, "sees Shakespeare's works retold by acclaimed and bestselling novelists of today",[15] starting from Jeanette Winterson's rewriting of *The Winter's Tale* as *The Gap of Time* (2015).[16]

This mutable and expanding panorama confirms that Austen has achieved the status of free-floating global cultural currency; and, for better or worse, scholars and critics have come to confront this process and to accept that no one has a monopoly over the author, her output, their aura

[15] *Hogarth Shakespeare*, web address www.crownpublishing.com/hogarth-shakespeare.

[16] See J. Winterson, *The Gap of Time*, London – New York, Hogarth Shakespeare, 2015.

and resonance:

> "If Dr. Johnson […] was correct in opining that the purpose of literature was to help us better to enjoy or endure life, then we must be glad […] that 'Jane' is 'theirs', 'yours', and 'ours, after all."[17]

The essays that follow consider this intricate phenomenon by looking at forms of intertextuality, quotation, rewriting and remediation within Austen's works, as well as in subsequent reformulations and reinventions, the latter roughly comprised between the epoch-making BBC *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) and the present. The international cast of authors ensures a broader focus than one exclusively centred in the Anglo-American academic tradition or merely concerned with English-language literary and filmic works, thus probing further into the current status of Austen as "part of today's multinational, multilingual, multicultural single currency".[18] Fully aware of the daunting scale of Austenland, these essays are representative of the degree of attention currently given by critics to Austen's pervasiveness on the page, on various types of screen, and on the shelves of souvenir and gadget shops. Ultimately, this issue of "Parole Rubate / Purloined Letters" contends that it is this attention that enables us to discover new cultural artefacts such as novels, films and digital objects, which may prove just as challenging, enriching and entertaining as Austen's works. As we continue to confront the multiple mutations of Austen's cults and cultures and metamorphoses of Austenland, these artefacts are the best evidence of an ongoing, genuinely productive and transformative legacy.

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[17] C. L. Johnson, *Austen Cults and Cultures*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, Edited by E. Copeland and J. McMaster, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 224.

[18] C. Harman, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*, cit., p. 2.

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EDWARD COPELAND

THE ANONYMOUS JANE AUSTEN: DUELLING CANONS

1. *The two canonical traditions*

All adaptations as the first condition for their success, writes Julie Sanders, depend on their readers' familiarity with the adapted source, a "canonical" recognition.[1] One can cheerfully agree to that proposition in regard to movies called *Persuasion*, or *Emma*, or *Sense and Sensibility*. No question, these movies are 'adaptations' of Jane Austen's texts, their more 'adapted' bits including, for example, a much extended part for the youngest Dashwood sister in the Emma Thompson *Sense and Sensibility*[2] and, in the Laurence Olivier *Pride and Prejudice*,[3] Lady Catherine de Burgh revisited as a kindly mother-hen.

[1] J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 120.

[2] See Ang Lee, *Sense and Sensibility*, Columbia Pictures Corporation – Mirage, USA-UK, 1995.

[3] See Robert Z. Leonard, *Pride and Prejudice*, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA, 1940.

On the other hand, what would you call a work equally loose in its borrowings when the poached material does not make even the most cursory nod towards its source? Amy Heckerling's film *Clueless* for example,[4] a film based on Austen's *Emma*, but casual indeed with its source, places its substantial gamble in the marketplace on a crowd of ticket-buyers with pockets full of change and heads empty of Austen.[5] This sort of borrowing, says Julie Sanders, might loosely be called an "appropriation", a polite term for pilfering in which "the intertextual relationship may be less explicit, *more embedded*".[6] "Adaptations", she notes in distinction, depend upon a fixed canon to direct the reader to the source. "Appropriations" depend upon, well… she doesn't say.

In place of our usual assumptions about canons as fixed, there may be another understanding of canon that can take Julie Sanders' unstable term "appropriations" under its wing. James A. Sanders, a canonical scholar, offers his experience in editing the Dead Sea Scrolls to suggest how appropriations, or "repetitions" as he calls the phenomenon, are in fact the key to his understanding of canon. "The word *canon*", he writes, "has two meanings". Canon may indeed refer "to a discrete body of literature having a stable structure", but "canon [also] refers to the function of a particular literature in the communities that find their identity and ethos in it".[7] "At the simplest level", he argues, "the first consideration of canonical criticism is the phenomenon of repetition. […] Minimally speaking it is the

[4] See Amy Heckerling, *Clueless*, Paramount Pictures, USA, 1995.

[5] David Streitfield reports that *Pride and Prejudice* is among the most opened book on Oyster but is finished less than one percent of the time. See D. Streitfield, *Books, Just Like You Wanted*, in "New York Times", 3 January 2014.

[6] J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, cit., p. 2 (my emphasis). See also L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation: History, Theory, Fiction*, New York and London, Routledge, 2006, p. 3 and p. 9.

[7] J. A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm*, Eugene (Oregon), Wipf and Stock, 1987, p. 14.

nature of canon to be *remembered* or contemporized through *repetition*".[8] Moreover, the "repetition of a community value", he writes, "introduces the possibility, some would say the necessity of *resignification* of that value to some limited extent".[9] A proto-canonical process, in other words, goes into operation through community values well before the 'fixed' canon reaches its state as a formal product.[10]

Such an understanding of canonical process operates paradoxically between opposite poles – in one direction between cultural instability and the canon's fixed form and, in the other direction, between canonical stability and a community's developing values.[11] In this way, Julie Sanders' embedded appropriations work like James Sanders' repetitions, setting up the possibility of "a posture of critique, even assault" on unacknowledged sources.[12] Such casual appropriations of Jane Austen's novels, the allusions or repetitions that readers might (or might not) recognize, shift our attention from the exclusivity of a finalized canon to the less familiar operation of a canon in process, one in which a "community […] finds its identity in […] an otherwise obscure and disorderly, even inexplicable, world".[13]

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[8] Ibidem.

[9] Id., *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism*, Eugene (Oregon), Wipf and Stock, 1984, p. 22.

[10] See Id., *The Canonical Process*, in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, edited by W. D. Davies, L. Finkelstein and S. T. Katz, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, vol. 4, p. 231. Cf. Id., *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm*, cit., p. 30: "Adaptability and stability. That is canon. Each generation reads its authoritative tradition in the light of its own place in life, its own questions, its own necessary hermeneutics".

[11] See ibidem, p. 14 and p. 30.

[12] J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, cit., p. 4.

[13] J. A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism*, cit., p. 22 and p. 25.

2. *The proto-canonical world*

Women's fiction in Jane Austen's day operated for the most part as a collective body, not, as today, as a bid for an individual author's celebrity. As opposed to the elevated status that Jane Austen's name now enjoys in the literary canon, readers in the nineteenth century were to take a very long time to arrive at any such consensus. From the 1811 anonymous publication of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* until Richard Bentley issued his collected edition of her works in 1832-1833, Austen's name did not appear on the title-page of a single one of her novels. The low value contemporaries placed on this "class of fictions", Walter Scott's dour expression for women's novels,[14] provided a distinctly unreliable base on which to mount Jane Austen's posthumous fame.

The designations Miss Austin, Miss Austen or Mrs. Austin, if the name were known to readers at all, sufficed in the same spirit as Miss Edgeworth, Miss Ferrier or Miss Burney – as the female-authored novel lying on the library table. When the publisher John Murray wrote to Lady Abercorn a year after Austen's death (December 1817) that he was "printing two short but very clever novels", *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, "by poor Miss Austen, the author of *Pride and Prejudice*", Lady Abercorn replied at once, "Pray send us Miss Austen's novels the moment you can […] it is a great pity we shall have no more of hers",[15] pious regret for one sparrow among many in a well-stocked marketplace of

[14] See note 19.

[15] S. Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the House 1768-1843*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, vol. 2, pp. 64-65 (1st edition London, John Murray, 1891).

women novelists.[16] The multiple names – Miss Austin, Mrs. Austin or Miss Austen – functioned in contemporary society as simply one more participant in a "plurality of voices, of other words, other utterances and other texts".[17] Female authors assumed that the repetitions and variations they took unacknowledged from the plurality of voices simply belonged to the job description of novelist.[18]

Although Walter Scott gives *Emma* extravagant praise in the "Quarterly Review", he still offers nothing better in defence of that lesser "class of fictions" to which Austen's works belong than to suggest them as a refuge in "hours of languor and anxiety, of deserted age and solitary celibacy, of pain even and poverty" that "are beguiled by the perusal of these light volumes". Addressing the novel before him, he closes his glowing remarks on *Emma* by recommending it merely as one from which "the youthful wanderer may return from his promenade to the ordinary business of life, without any chance of having his head turned by the recollection of the scene through which he has been wandering" – that is, as nothing more than a pleasant watering-place diversion.[19] Richard Whately's even more extravagant praise of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and

[16] G. Allen, *Intertextuality*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 71: "In the modern market system, the name of the author allows the work to be an item of exchange value […] the capitalist market system […] encourages us to view works as disposable, or at least finite, commodities".

[17] Ibidem, p. 72.

[18] Anthony Mandal places Austen firmly in a broad spectrum of Jane Austen's associations with other novels. See A. Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: the Determined Author*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 and also E. Copeland, *Women Writing About Money: Women's Fiction in England 1790-1820*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 117-158 (for Austen's general participation in the women's tradition, in particular "The Lady's Magazine").

[19] [W. Scott], [review of *Emma*], in "Quarterly Review", XIV, October 1815 [issued March 1816], pp. 188-201, cited from *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, Edited by B. C. Southam, vol. I: 1811-1870, London, Routledge & Kegan, 1979, p. 59 and p. 68.

Persuasion in the "Quarterly Review", ultimately comparing the author's characters to Shakespeare's, concludes likewise, that

> "Miss Austin's works may safely be recommended, not only as among the most unexceptionable of their class, but as combining, in an eminent degree, instruction with amusement […] for mere innocent amusement is in itself a good […] especially as it may occupy the place of some other that may *not* be innocent."[20]

A canonical process more powerful, however, than either Scott or Whately understands, guides "this class of fictions". Mr. Morland, the fictional spokesperson for Letitia Elizabeth Landon in her novel *Romance and Reality* (1831), recalls his lifetime of reading novels as a voyage of discovery through the community of women's fiction: "One does not easily forget the impressions of our youth", he says, "and mine passed in the reign of female authorship". He traces his earliest enthusiasm for the popular novels of the Minerva Press, then with added years, through the novels of Mary Robinson, Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith, and finally, his maturation into adulthood in the company of "Miss Edgeworth, Miss Burney and Miss Austen".[21] Jane Austen herself affirms the community of women's fiction in *Northanger Abbey*:

> "Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? [...] Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body".[22]

In the same novel her hero, Henry Tilney, boasts of his experience in reading within the women's tradition: "I myself have read hundreds and

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[20] [R. Whately], [review of *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*], in "Quarterly Review", XXIV, January 1821, pp. 352-376, cited from ibidem, p. 105.

[21] L. Landon, *Romance and Reality*, London, Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831, vol. II, pp. 192-194.

[22] J. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, edited by B. M. Benedict and D. Le Faye, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 30 (I, 5).

hundreds. Do not imagine that you can cope with me in a knowledge of Julias and Louisas", citing the two most favoured names for their heroines as proof of it.[23]

3. *Austen's and women's fiction*

Austen indulged in her own appropriations from the woman's canon through a story entitled *Guilt Pursued by Conscience; or, The Perfidious Friend*, a tale she found in "The Lady's Magazine" of 1802. Stories in "The Lady's Magazine" were provided by the readers themselves as free and grateful offerings to the muse – a thrifty policy of the magazine that resulted in monthly conversations of free-flowing tales in which the shared concerns of the authors and the readers, the same beings in very fact, could be examined in unending repetitions, not unlike internet blogging today. The tale that claimed Austen's particular attention will catch the eye of any present-day reader of *Emma*:

> "Mr. Knightley, a country-gentleman of not very large fortune, but such as was amply sufficient for his mode of living—as he rarely visited the capital, had an aversion to the expensive pleasures of dissipated life—had married, from the purest of affection, and an esteem which grew with his knowledge of its object, a young lady of foreign birth, who had been left a deserted orphan at a boarding-school near the residence of a relation of his whom he sometimes visited. As by this union he made no addition to his property, nor formed any advantageous connexion, he was by some blamed, and others ridiculed. He however found himself amply compensated […] by the amiable qualities and virtues of his wife; who, like himself, despised ambition, and sought only the genuine enjoyments of domestic happiness."[24]

[23] Ibidem, p. 108 (I, 14). See J. Spencer's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, pp. 107-210.

[24] *Guilt Pursued by Conscience; or, The Perfidious Friend: a Tale*, in "The Lady's Magazine", November 1802, p. 563.

Few contemporaries would have remembered *Guilt Pursued by Conscience* – or would have cared if they did – but any reader of Austen's *Emma* remotely familiar with popular fiction would have taken the point of its concern. Is it possible, "The Lady's Magazine" tale asks, for a Mr. Knightley to wed a penniless orphan from a boarding school? The Mr. Knightley in the magazine does so with grateful alacrity. Jane Austen's Mr. Knightley never considers it for a moment. Only Emma Woodhouse and Harriet Smith, great novel readers themselves, could dream of such a thing. Austen appropriates "The Lady's Magazine" tale in the broadest sense of parody, the "ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity" or "repetition with critical distance".[25] Austen made deliberate incursions into the despised field of popular literature through "situated conversation", a crafty practice implicitly announcing her own work as "counter-novelistic", but at the same time assuring herself of a profitable stake in the popular market.[26]

That is true enough, but Austen's irony, her characteristic distancing of her works from the tradition, was achieved over time and, in her early writing, not always with complete success. In *Sense and Sensibility* for example, Colonel Brandon's melodramatic in-set account of the two Elizas – that is his confession to Elinor Dashwood of his own failed love for the first Eliza and his report of Willoughby's seduction of the second Eliza, her daughter – reminds us of the dangers of entrapment in the rhetorical slough of women's fiction. Colonel Brandon concludes his tale of Willoughby and

[25] L. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, New York and London, Routledge, 1988, p. 26.

[26] K. Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: from Aeschylus to Bollywood*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 217. See also J. Simons, *Jane Austen and Popular Culture*, in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, editors C. Johnson and C. Tuite, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 469.

the second Eliza by bringing the boilerplate resources of contemporary women's fiction into play. He reports to Elinor with horror that

> "*h*e [Willoughby] had left the girl whose youth and innocence he had seduced, in a situation of the utmost distress, with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address! He had left her promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her."[27]

In like manner, Anna Maria Bennet writing from the bottom of the literary status pile, the Minerva Press, supplies the readers of her popular novel *The Beggar Girl and Her Benefactors* (1797) with just such a cry of outrage: "from such a state of happy security, to be at her age at once sunk from affluence to poverty, without one natural friend, was enough to shake the strongest mind".[28] Charlotte Smith, a middle-level author, serves up the expected dish in her *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake* (1789): "young, beautiful, indigent, and friendless, the world was to her only as a vast wilderness, where perils of many kinds awaited her". [29] Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, the gold standard of gothic fiction, provides yet another version from the heroine of *The Italian or the Confessional of the Black Penitents. A Romance* (1797):

> "'Alas!' said she, 'I have no longer a home, a circle to smile welcomes upon me! I have no longer even one friend to support, to rescue me! I—a miserable wanderer on a distant shore!'"[30]

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[27] J. Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, edited by E. Copeland, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 237-238 (II, 9).

[28] A. M. Bennett, *The Beggar Girl and Her Benefactors*, London, William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1797, vol. II, p. 127.

[29] C. Smith, *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake*, London, T. Cadell, 1790[2], vol. V, p. 38.

[30] A. Radcliffe, *The Italian or the Confessional of the Black Penitents. A Romance*, Edited by F. Garber, With an Introduction and Notes by E. J. Clery, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 220.

Colonel Brandon, to his credit, updates the hoary trope, a practice in "the nature of canon",[31] by altering Mrs. Radcliffe's heroine from a "wanderer on a distant shore!" to Austen's more modern heroine "left […] ignorant of his address!".

Austen's more characteristic posture, the mockery of such jargon, paradoxically appears in the very same novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, relying on an appropriation, one also borrowed from "The Lady's Magazine", *The Shipwreck*. This tale from the magazine's supplement for 1794 supplies two significant names for characters in *Sense and Sensibility*, Willoughby and Brandon. At the opening of "The Lady's Magazine" tale, the reader finds Miss Brandon, who has long held a distinct preference for Mr. Willoughby (and he for her), waiting inconsolable, but obedient, aboard a ship preparing to set sail for Bristol where she must marry her father's choice for her husband, an elderly colleague in trade. A sudden storm in the harbour sweeps Miss Brandon into the sea. By the greatest good fortune, Mr. Willoughby, who attends the ship's departure, spies Miss Brandon's danger and unhesitatingly plunges into the waves to bring her safely to shore. When Mr. Brandon, the father, learns of his daughter's narrow escape, he instantly demands to meet her rescuer:

> "Her preserver appeared and announced himself as Willoughby; that Willoughby who […] would not hesitate to encounter a thousand times the same danger he had now braved to shield her from harm."[32]

A grateful Mr. Brandon, reversing his past refusal to countenance the couple's union, agrees to an immediate celebration of their nuptials. Austen's quiet repetition of the billowing waves of *The Shipwreck* as a

[31] J. A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, Eugene (Oregon), Wipf and Stock, 1972, p. XV: "It is in the nature of canon to be contemporized".

[32] *The Shipwreck*, in "The Lady's Magazine", Supplement for 1794, p. 680.

mere "driving rain"[33] in *Sense and Sensibility* reveals an author at the top of her ironic game. When Willoughby arrives at the Dashwood cottage the morning after Marianne's accident, the youngest Dashwood sister, Margaret, greets his appearance with a quotation taken directly from "The Lady's Magazine" story: "Marianne's preserver" she exclaims – Austen noting that her expression had "more elegance than precision".[34] "The Lady's Magazine" *Shipwreck* remains in Austen's memory, resurfacing four years later in *Emma* when the novel's heroine mistakenly interprets Jane Fairfax's sailing accident as sure evidence of Jane's guilty love for her best friend's husband, Mr. Dixon, her timely preserver from the Weymouth waves.[35]

4. *Appropriating Austen's novels: the 1820s and 1830s*

In this context, it should not be surprising that novelists of the period that followed Austen felt free to import dialogue, characters and plots from Austen's works with no obligation to their source, just as she had done with "The Lady's Magazine" tales. Novelists of fashionable aristocratic life, the next generation of novelists to follow Austen, were outrageous poachers of Austen's works. Richard Bentley, the publisher of the first collected edition of her novels (1832-1833), acknowledged Austen's influence on this profitable contemporary genre in the preface to his edition of *Sense and Sensibility*: "Miss Austen is the founder of a school of novelists", he writes, "and her followers are not confined to her own sex, but comprise in their

[33] J. Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, cit., p. 49 (I, 9).
[34] Ibidem, p. 55 (I, 10).
[35] See Id., *Emma*, edited by R. Cronin and D. McMillan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 171 (II, 1).

number some male writers of considerable merit".[36] The followers Bentley refers to, the "silver fork school",[37] took its name from the radical critic William Hazlitt as his term of contempt for their slavish attention, as he considered it, to the tastes and manners of a corrupt aristocracy. The school enjoyed a huge success in the 1820s and 1830s, making the fortune of their primary publisher, Henry Colburn, and, by no coincidence, his sometime partner Bentley himself. Edward Bulwer, a leading member of the school, confessed to being surprised and appalled by the popularity of these works:

> "Read by all classes, in every town, in every village, these works […] could not but engender a mingled indignation and disgust at the parade of frivolity, the ridiculous disdain of truth, nature, and mankind, the self-consequence and absurdity, which, falsely or truly, these novels exhibited as a picture of aristocratic society."[38]

Bentley no doubt hoped that his claim of Austen's relation to these glamorous and popular fictions would promote his new collected edition of her novels. Ironically however, it was Jane Austen's self-identification with the language and mores of the genteel middle classes that made her novels so tempting to authors writing about the aristocracy in the 1820s and 1830s. Austen's novels had aimed at a lower social group, a narrow "coalition of Anglican gentry and middle-class people of merit", with the intention "to educate [her readers] stylistically and therefore politically".[39] Silver fork

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[36] H. Austen, *Memoir of Miss Austen*, in J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, Edited with an Introduction and Notes by K. Sutherland, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 154 ("An editorial paragraph issued from Bentley's office and not strictly part of Henry Austen's 'Memoir'").

[37] W. Hazlitt, *The Dandy School* (1827), in Id., *The Complete Works*, Edited by P. P. Howe, London and Toronto, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1934, vol. 20, p. 146.

[38] E. Bulwer, *England and the English*, Paris, Baudry's European Library, 1834, p. 252.

[39] G. Kelly, *Jane Austen and the Politics of Style*, in *Re-drawing Austen: Picturesque Travels in Austenland*, edited by B. Battaglia and D. Saglia, Napoli, Liguori, 2004, p. 68.

novelists shared the same intention, to educate their readers, but for them the aim was political as they turned their attention towards a much wider span of society, one covering the genteel middle classes, the gentry and the aristocracy itself.

The importance of Austen's novels for authors in these years, 1825 to 1840, politically the Age of Reform, lay in her gift to them of a "new consciousness fully consonant with cultural evolution", that is, the "fundamental assumption" that "our knowledge of the world […] our world of everyday life" belongs to the great world of politics and public life.[40] For novelists who placed liberal political reform at the top of their agenda, Austen's Sir Walter Elliot could easily be reworked as a proto-canonical 'repetition' for an enfeebled aristocracy; Mr. Rushworth for a dim-witted upper gentry; Mrs. Elton, for an aggressive merchant class. Each of Austen's characters "is in fact a *text* with a style and language of its own",[41] texts ideally suitable for such appropriation. Constantine Henry Phipps, Lord Normanby, an aristocrat writing in the cause of Reform, borrows (with no acknowledgement) the plot of *Persuasion* for his novel *Matilda: A Tale of the Day* (1825), and has a significant twist on his repetition, having the Anne Elliot character, after breaking off the engagement to her Captain Wentworth, haplessly succumb to her guardian's will and the well-meant advice of her late mother's best friend, and marry the wrong man, a wife-beater and, it turns out, a narrow-minded Tory as well. When her true love, a liberal Whig, returns to mend their relationship, Normanby turns the heroine's tragic marriage into a sympathetic, but deeply troubled case for revised divorce laws.

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[40] M. Hayes, *Why Jane Austen Made It a Movie*, in *Jane Austen. Oggi e ieri*, a cura di B. Battaglia, Ravenna, Longo, 2002, pp. 26-27 and p. 31.

[41] B. Battaglia, *Jane Austen's 'Chameleonic' Art and a Poetics of Postmodernism*, in *Jane Austen. Oggi e ieri*, cit., p. 41.

Novelists of fashionable life found Austen's novels richly stocked with solutions to their most pressing needs: first, a genteel language that could buffer the awkwardness of introducing the middle classes into higher company and, second, plots that with only slight alterations could alert contemporary readers to a change in political and social mores. The briefest survey of the silver fork school makes for encounters with Jane Austen that always can surprise. Marianne Spencer Hudson's novel *Almack's* (1825) produces a Lady Norbury who complains fretfully: "I am not fond of young men […] they make such a noise in the house with their boots, and they clap the doors so after them".[42] Very much the same thing Mr. Woodhouse says of Frank Churchill in *Emma*:

> "He has been opening the doors very often this evening, and keeping them open very inconsiderately. He does not think of the draught. I do not mean to set you against him, but indeed he is not quite the thing!"[43]

In the same novel Mr. John Knightley objects to going out to Mr. Weston's house for dinner:

> "The folly of not allowing people to be comfortable at home […] when they can! […] in defiance of the voice of nature, which tells man […] to stay at home himself, and keep all under shelter that he can […] Going in dismal weather, to return probably in worse; — four horses and four servants taken out for nothing but to convey five idle, shivering creatures into colder rooms and worse company than they might have had at home".[44]

Sir William Lacy in Thomas Henry Lister's *Herbert Lacy* (1828) endorses the sentiment:

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[42] M. Hudson, *Almack's. A Novel*, London, Saunders and Otley, 1827, vol. I, p. 193.

[43] J. Austen, *Emma*, cit., p. 268 (II, 11).

[44] Ibidem, pp. 121-122 (I, 13).

"Conceive, if you can, a spectacle more delightful, than that of a whole family going, in the worst of weather, six miles out and back again, actuated and supported only by a noble determination to do as other people do."[45]

Landon begins her novel *Lady Anne Granard, or, Keeping Up Appearances* (1842) with a foolish married couple about to launch into familiar Austen territory:

"For five years every thing went on exceedingly well, excepting that every year a daughter made its appearance, a fact which astonished no one so much as it did Lady Anne herself […] Moreover it was a son they wanted, as a male heir was necessary before any settlement could be made of the property."[46]

Any boarding-school girl would recall *Pride and Prejudice*:

"When first Mr. Bennet had married, economy was held to be perfectly useless; for, of course, they were to have a son. This son was to join in cutting off the entail […]. Five daughters successively entered the world, but yet the son was to come; and Mrs. Bennet […] had been certain that he would."[47]

It was Austen's ear for contemporary speech, however, that made the most profound mark on her followers. Edward Bulwer Lytton reminds contemporary authors of the new Austen way in *Pelham: or The Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828), his first novel of fashionable life:

" […] there is only one rule necessary for a clever writer who wishes to delineate the *beau monde*. It is this: let him consider that 'dukes, and lords, and noble princes,' eat, drink, talk, move, exactly the same as any other class of civilized people—nay, the very subjects in conversation are, for the most part, the same in all sets."[48]

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[45] T. H. Lister, *Herbert Lacy*, Philadelphia – New York – Boston, Carey Lea & Carey, 1828, vol. I, p. 285.

[46] L. E. Landon, *Lady Anne Granard, or, Keeping Up Appearances*, London, Henry Colburn, 1842, vol. I, p. 11,

[47] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by P. Rogers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 340 (III, 8).

[48] E. Bulwer Lytton, *Pelham: or The Adventures of a Gentleman*, London, Henry Colburn, vol. III, pp. 49-50.

Marianne Hudson, possibly the most free-handed of her contemporaries with variations on Austen's dialogue, mines *Emma* for a wealth of opportunities to demonstrate her proficiency in Austen-speak. When Austen's middleclass Mr. John Knightley addresses Jane Fairfax, he

> " […] smiled, and replied,
> ' […] The post-office has a great charm at one period of our lives. When you have lived to my age, you will begin to think letters are never worth going through the rain for.'"[49]

In Hudson's *Almack's* a kindly duke finds similar words for the heroine of that novel:

> "'I fancy, when your ladyship is a little older,' said the Duke smiling, 'you will find your nerves not quite so easily excited: none but very young ladies ever receive such exquisitely interesting letters'."[50]

Miss Bates's old mother, referring to Jane Fairfax's 'crossed' letters (lines written over one another at right angles to save space and postage), tempts another Hudson aristocrat into Austen's idiom: "Well, Hetty," says old Mrs. Bates, "now I think you will be put to it to make out all that chequer-work".[51] A great lord in *Almack's* protests likewise:

> "I have often wondered what the deuce women can find to write about: such crossed sheets! One ought to be paid for deciphering their chequer-work."[52]

Catherine Grace Francis Gore, the leading female author of the silver fork school, compared by contemporaries to Austen, is the most complex

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[49] J. Austen, *Emma*, cit., p. 316 (II, 16).
[50] M. Hudson, *Almack's*, cit., vol. II, p. 137.
[51] See J. Austen, *Emma*, cit., p. 168 (II, 1).
[52] M. Hudson, *Almack's*, cit., vol. II, p. 137.

and probing of Austen's debtors. Gore reworks two of Austen's novels, *Emma* and *Mansfield Park*, at least three times each. *Emma* presents Gore with opportunities to explore Austen's trope of the independent woman. In her first appropriation of *Emma*, the anti-heroine of *Mothers and Daughters* (1831) enters the novel as a character "neither handsome, clever, nor amiable",[53] an elegant tribute to Gore's source. This unpromising character thrashes her two elegant, but much-abused daughters through the London marriage market in a vain attempt to land them aristocratic marriages. In Gore's second appropriation of this novel, *Pin Money* (1831), a bright, spirited, but naïve heroine shows herself inadequate to navigate aristocratic London without a guide more responsible than the boarding school chum she chooses. Finally, in *Mrs. Armytage: or, Female Domination* (1836), Gore traces the frightening career of a young woman born to Emma's happy state of independence, in whom, as with Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Taylor, her father and tutor can see no flaw. She grows into a domestic terror and a political monster.

In Gore's appropriations of *Mansfield Park*, any heroine with a limp in her step, a smallpox-ruined complexion or a hopeless love for her cousin is entitled to refuge in the Park's East room, where Fanny's "writing desk, and her works of charity and ingenuity, were all within her reach […] Every thing was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend".[54] The reader thus finds Cousin Mary (smallpox) in Gore's *Mothers and Daughters*

" […] surrounded by her books, her work, her music, her easel, her flowers, her birds! [...] sufficing to her own amusement—yet ever ready to lay aside her favourite pursuits and preoccupations in order to contribute to the happiness of others."[55]

[53] C. Gore, *Mothers and Daughters: A Novel*, London, Richard Bentley, 1831, vol. I, p. 4.

[54] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, edited by J. Wiltshire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 178 (I, 16).

[55] C. Gore, *Mothers and Daughters: A Novel*, cit., vol. III, p. 32.

In her *Stokeshill Place, or The Man of Business* (1837), the Bertram sisters stroll over to become the Drewe sisters:

" […] tall, handsome, high-bred girls […] with no worse disqualification than [their] selfishness […] All without was bright and polished, — and all within hollow and unprofitable";[56]

the very judgment visited on Austen's spoiled Bertram girls:

" […] it is not very wonderful that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility."[57]

These spoiled girls are given a Fanny Price figure to patronize as well:

"Rivalship with such a person was out of the question; and instead of treating her want of connection with the scorn it would have provoked from some country baronet's daughter, they were fascinated by her unassuming gentleness, and amused by her *naïveté*";[58]

the discriminating variation of a higher social class on the relationship between the Bertram sisters and their humble cousin:

"Though unworthy, from inferiority of age and strength, to be their constant associate, their pleasures and schemes were sometimes of a nature to make a third very useful, especially when that third was of an obliging, yielding temper."[59]

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[56] Id., *Stokeshill Place, or The Man of Business*, London, Henry Colburn, 1837, vol. I, p. 101.

[57] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, cit., pp. 21-22 (I, 2).

[58] C. Gore, *Stokeshill Place, or The Man of Business*, cit., vol. I, p. 101.

[59] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, cit., p. 19 (I, 2).

The heroine of Gore's *Stokeshill Place* Margaret Barnsley (scarlet fever, hopeless love) revisits her old schoolroom, like Fanny Price, to get the better of some very unsettling reflections:

"*There* stood the piano, awaiting her with its figures and concertos, — the drawing-box with its chalks, — the eternal tapestry-frame with its worsteads and floss-silk; — while Blair, Chapone, Graham, Trimmer, Hannah More, Fordyce, Gisborne, and a few other female classics, displayed their well-worn tomes on the shelves of her limited bookcase."[60]

In Gore's final and most extended appropriation of *Mansfield Park*, *The Cabinet Minister* (1839), the orphaned heroine, Bessy Grenfell, lives in the home of her wealthy aunt where she nurses, like Fanny Price, dual anxieties over her brother's career ambitions and a secret and unrequited love for her cousin, the son of this aunt, with regular bouts of verbal abuse from her aunt in the combined idioms of Mrs. Norris and Sir Thomas Bertram. It is to her East room that she retreats for solace:

"She arose and bestirred herself; her favourite books and occupations were again around her. She would not suffer herself to dwell upon evils, perhaps never to be realized."[61]

5. *Austen in the crossfire: duelling canons*

How the contemporary critical establishment, the professionals of the literary periodicals, could have remained so utterly silent about this plentiful, even flamboyant recycling of Jane Austen's novels is a mystery, one that deliberately conceals the conflict of critical attention that divides popular literature from approved literature throughout the century; the difference between an understanding of canon as an achieved status of

[60] C. Gore, *Stokeshill Place, or The Man of Business*, cit., vol. II, p. 2.
[61] Id., *The Cabinet Minister*, London, Richard Bentley, 1839, vol. II, p. 271.

value as against canon understood as a process in the development of a readership's common values.

The usual account of Jane Austen's long-delayed rise to fame, for example, rests on contemporary uncertainty about her deserved presence in a formal, fixed canon. The market at the beginning of the nineteenth century flourished on celebrity, the glittering reputations of authors like Scott, Lord Byron and Robert Burns, a privileged mark of value that continued through the century, and one that ran completely counter to the collective system that supported even the best known of women writers like 'Miss Burney', 'Miss Ferrier', 'Miss Edgeworth' and 'Miss Austin'. The female-weighted collection of novels edited by Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *The British Novelists* (1810-1820), where eight are written by women and fourteen by men, easily lost its bid to establish a novelistic canon to Walter Scott's collection, *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library* (1821-1824), in which "twelve are men, [only] two are women".[62]

Professional critics of the nineteenth century complain over and over that Miss Austen is not well known, that hers is a talent too good, too refined for the masses, that she is a hidden treasure of English letters.[63] The great triumvirate of Austen's supporters in the century, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Archbishop Whately and George Henry Lewes, resort to elevating their author to honorary male status, a "prose Shakespeare",[64] a well-considered design to inoculate her against "this class of fictions", the

[62] C. Johnson, *"Let Me Make the Novels of a Country": Barbauld's "The British Novelists" (1810/1820)*, in "NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction", 34, Spring 2001, p. 170. Claudia Johnson offers an account of these two competing efforts to create a selective canon of the British novel.

[63] See B. C. Southam, *Introduction*, in *Jane Austen, The Critical Heritage*, cit., vol. II: 1870-1940, 1987, p. 21, p. 46, p. 50 and p. 52.

[64] [G. H. Lewes], [review to *The Fair Carew*], in "The Leader", 22 November 1851, p. 115, cited from *Jane Austen, The Critical Heritage*, cit., vol. I: 1811-1870, p. 130.

dismissive phrase Scott uses for women's fiction. Women authors simply falls below their horizon of serious critical consideration. Austen is thus lofted into the company of established male merit in the manner of Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser in Johan Zoffany's painting *The Academicians of the Royal Academy* (1771-1772) in which the male academicians are shown busily at work on the task of 'life-drawing' while the Academy's only two female members are consigned to portraits hung on the wall.

Even Walter Scott, who valued Austen's works to the end of his life, never gets past the undigested fact that her great talents must exist beside those of ladies who write "this class of fictions". In his journal, he records with genuine, if patronizing admiration: "That young lady had a talent", one he admits is denied to him. Two weeks later, he returns to the sub-text of ladies who write fiction: "The women do this better—Edgeworth, Ferrier, Austen have all their portraits of real society, far superior to any thing Man, vain Man, has produced of the like nature". And, in a late conversation cited by John Lockhart, he throws up his hands in wonder: "There's a finishing-off in some of her scenes that is really quite above every body else".[65]

The problem for Austen's nineteenth-century admirers lies in her undeniable claim to be placed in the formal canon of English literature and yet her persistent association with the stain of women's popular fiction. Ironically, the three greatest female luminaries of mid-century English letters, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, found the critics' repeated comparisons of Austen to Shakespeare a deeply

[65] W. Scott, *The Journal* 18256-26, the text revised from a photostat in the National Library of Scotland, edited by J. G. Tait, Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1939, vol. I, p. 135 and p. 144 (14 and 28 March 1826) and J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter* Scott, Bart., Edinburgh – London, Robert Cadell – John Murray and Whittaker, 1837, vol. VII, p. 338, cited from ibidem, p. 106

troubling issue. Its implied exclusivity threatened their own claims as women to seats on Mount Olympus.

Charlotte Brontë wrote to Lewes to protest what she considered his excessive praise of Austen. Lewes responded hotly that she "*must*" read Austen and, as Brontë quotes his own words back to him, "learn to acknowledge her as *one of the greatest artists, of the greatest painters of human character*, and one of the writers with the nicest sense of means to an end that ever lived". Brontë reluctantly promised to follow his advice to read Austen, but closed her return letter to him with a flourish of unmistakable contempt for the task, "I do not know when that will be, as I have no access to a circulating library", that low place.[66]

Elizabeth Barrett Browning also protested Austen's elevation to canonical status, deeming the critics' admiration of Austen's characters a misplaced evaluation, the effect of mere "craft", not "poetry". For her taste, she wrote Mary Russell Mitford, Jane Austen's novels were *unworthy* to be compared to Mary Howitt's "delightful" translation of Frederika Bremer's *The Neighbours. A Story of Every-Day Life* (1842): "I do consider the book of a higher & sweeter tone", she writes Miss Mitford, "than Miss Austen had voice & soul for".[67] Regarding Austen's canonical status, Elizabeth Barrett Browning is distinctly unimpressed: Miss Austen is "delightful exquisite *in her degree!*", but she does not belong in the same company

[66] T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, *The Brontës: Their Friendships, Lives, and Correspondence*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1932, vol. II, p. 180 (C. Brontë, letter of January 18, 1848), cited from ibidem, p. 127.

[67] *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford, 1836-1854*, edited and introduced by M. B. Raymond and M. R. Sullivan, Waco (Texas), Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, 1983, vol. II, p. 99. See K. Halsey, *Jane Austen and her readers, 1786-1945*, London, Anthem Press, 2012, p. 155.

with those "who aspire, like *ourselves*", she confides, to the higher claims of Literature.[68]

George Eliot is more circumspect in her opinions of Austen expressed in her later years, she was living after all with Lewes, Austen's most outspoken nineteenth-century promoter. But in an early unsigned essay, *The Progress of Fiction as an Art* (1853), an essay her biographer considers to be from her pen, she has this to say of Austen:

> "Without brilliancy of any kind — without imagination, depth of thought, or wide experience, Miss Austin, by simply describing what she knew and had seen, and making accurate portraits of very tiresome and uninteresting people, is recognised as a true artist, and will continue to be admired, when many authors more ambitious[69] […] will be neglected and forgotten."[70]

As for Austen's canonical status, all this talk of Shakespeare is a mistake:

> "Miss Austin's accurate scenes from dull life, and Miss Burney's long histories of amiable and persecuted heroines, though belonging to the modern and reformed school of novels, must still be classed in the lower division."[71]

George Eliot shares Elizabeth Barrett Browning's contempt for the women's tradition to which Austen belongs:

> "They show us too much of the littlenesses and trivialities of life […] They fall short of fulfilling the objects, and satisfying the necessities of Fiction in its highest aspect […] ."[72]

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[68] Ibidem, vol. II, p. 109. See K. Halsey, *Jane Austen and her readers, 1786-1945*, London, Anthem Press, 2012, pp. 154-158.

[69] She remarks with perhaps a hint of personal anxiety.

[70] [G. Eliot], *The Progress of Fiction as an Art*, in "Westminster Review", LX, October 1853, p. 358, cited from *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, vol. I: 1811-1870, cit., p. 145.

[71] [G. Eliot], *The Progress of Fiction as an Art*, cit., p. 145.

[72] Ibidem, pp. 145-146.

Even Lewes succumbs finally, and with obvious regret, to the high-minded notions of his helpmeet, George Eliot, and confesses in his last essay on Austen, published in 1859, that Austen "never stirs the deeper emotions […] never fills the soul with a noble aspiration". The problem, he implies, falls to the contamination of the woman's novel. "Her fame, as we think", he writes, "must endure. But, after all, miniatures are not frescoes, and her works are miniatures".[73]

The anxiety that women's popular culture compromised Austen's status remained a lasting influence. Catherine Gore's *The Hamiltons: or, Official Life in 1830* (1834), thought to be her best novel, gathered dust in university libraries for over hundred years with no notice of its massive appropriations from *Sense and Sensibility*: a recycling of Austen's plot, the same two sisters, the same two suitors, the predatory Lucy Steele, with bits of little-altered Austen dialogue salted-in along the way.[74] But for those with eyes to see, ample evidence demonstrates that her texts were deeply involved in the popular marketplace.

James Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir of Jane Austen* found the late-Regency association of silver fork fiction with his aunt's novels unsafe territory, responding to the threat by turning her into a figure of Victorian propriety. As for F. R. Leavis and the New Critics of the mid-twentieth century, they took umbrage at any association at all of popular literature with Jane Austen. Matthew Whiting Rosa's study *The Silver Fork School* (1936), a representative example, roundly rejects Gore's explicit confession

[73] [G. H. Lewes], *The Novels of Jane Austen*, in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine", LXXXVI, July 1859, cited in B. C. Southam, *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, vol. I: 1811-1870, cit., p. 166.

[74] See E. Copeland, *The Silver Fork Novel: Fashionable Fiction in the Age of Reform*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 37-64.

in the preface to her novel *Pin Money* that her work is influenced by "the familiar narrative of Miss Austin":[75]

> "One feels a difference in their works not to be atoned for by any amount of similarity in aim or subject, the delicate clarity of an Austen novel is as remote as can be from the prolix cumbrousness of a Gore novel."[76]

One of the advantages, however, of Jane Austen's delayed path to formal canonical status is the respite that twenty years of title-page anonymity provided her between 1811 and 1832, before she became "Jane Austen" in Bentley's collected edition, before her descendants branded her as a Victorian lady, or her Janeite champions created her as the 'Dear, dear Jane' of 'Austen-land', or James Edward Austen-Leigh made her the mark of "cultivated minds",[77] or Leavis announced her to be the "inaugurator of the great tradition of the English novel",[78] or, for that matter, before the 1970s variably introduced Jane Austen as the conservative propagandist, the subversive feminist, the political radical, or more recently, the modern person's guide to sexual ecstasy. [79] None of these Jane Austens existed when her novels were appropriated by the silver fork authors during the 1820s and 1830s.

With our knowledge of their rampant predations, we may now dismiss the hundred year-old canard that Austen's novels lacked an early popular audience. The multitudinous adaptations, appropriations and repetitions of the years immediately after her death had the effect both of

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[75] C. Gore, *Pin Money: A Novel*, London, Henry Colburn, 1831, vol. I, n. p.

[76] M. W. Rosa, *The Silver Fork Novel: Novels of Fashion Preceding "Vanity Fair"*, New York, Kennicat Press, 1964, p. 128.

[77] K. Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: from Aeschylus to Bollywood*, cit., p. 12.

[78] F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1950, p. 7.

[79] See K. Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: from Aeschylus to Bollywood*, cit., p. 12.

extending and confirming public access to Austen in areas hitherto unsuspected. As for the operations of Julie Sanders' unacknowledged appropriations in later fiction, it would be hard to account for *Vanity Fair*, *A Portrait of a Lady*, *Howard's End* or, for that matter, the loopy teenagers in Heckerling's *Clueless* without Austen's proto-canonical presence. As Cornel West recently observed of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, it is "impossible" to think that "characters like Didi and Gogo are not fundamentally connected to the preoccupation in the quotidian that you get in the light, playful, subtle, sophisticated, complex stories of Jane Austen";[80] an insight that frankly embraces the presence of such a canonical process in the on-going world of the novel.

Finally, however, it must be admitted we are left with puzzling questions about the reading practices of Austen's day. Could there have been a highly selective, elite readership for example, one that would be able to nod appreciatively when an obvious adaptation or an unacknowledged appropriation of Austen swam to the surface? Was there a second tier of readers, a less knowing market where embedded appropriations were normal and expected, silently incorporated into a proto-canon of developing tastes and values? Or, should we imagine a much cannier general readership than we have previously thought, one in which all novel readers were in on the game, readers who knew their way around the novel better than professional critics blinded by their obsession with the establishment of a formal canon? It could be that Jane Austen was slowly becoming a classic without their help through inclusions and exclusions made by time passing and by reader choice. In other words, it could be that a *functioning* canon at work on Scott's "this class of novels"

[80] C. West, *Power and Freedom in Jane Austen's Novels*, in "Persuasions. The Jane Austen Journal On-Line", 34, 2012, pp. 114-115.

was silently making a seat for Jane Austen on Mount Olympus notwithstanding the gallant, but unnecessary imprimatur provided by the professionals.

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CARLOTTA FARESE

"COMEDY IN ITS WORST FORM"? SEDUCED AND SEDUCTIVE HEROINES IN "A SIMPLE STORY", "LOVERS' VOWS", AND "MANSFIELD PARK"

1. *Two novels and a play*

The intertextual relationship between Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) and the German play *Das Kind der Liebe* by August von Kotzebue (1790), adapted by Elizabeth Inchbald into *Lovers' Vows* (1798), has been the object of intense critical scrutiny in the last years. The role of the theatricals within the novel, the correspondence between the themes and characters of the three texts, Austen's attitude towards the theatre in general, and this famously controversial play in particular, have been discussed at length.[1] However, these issues have only occasionally been

[1] See G. Kelly, *Reading Aloud in "Mansfield Park"*, in "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", XXXVII, June 1982, pp. 29-49; C. Pedley, *"Terrific and Unprincipled Compositions": The Reception of "Lovers' Vows" and "Mansfield Park"*, in

examined in the context of a possible, more general relationship to the work of Elizabeth Inchbald. This paper will take precisely this approach, focusing in particular on the links connecting Inchbald's first novel *A Simple Story* (1791), *Lover's Vows* and *Mansfield Park*. I will argue that many aspects of Austen's novel recall *A Simple Story*, and I will show how bringing this novel into the picture would enhance our understanding of Austen's intertextual practices and shed new light on the ways in which she engages with her sources to question and revise the thematic, ideological, and formal features of different genres.[2] The 'triangular' relationship between *Mansfield Park*, *Lovers' Vows*, and *A Simple Story* moves across the boundary between novelistic and dramatic writing, allows for a new understanding of the contrast between the two heroines of *Mansfield Park*, and confirms recent critical interpretations suggesting that Austen's attitude might be more radical then envisaged by traditional readings of her work.

When *Lovers' Vows* was staged for the first time at Covent Garden – on 11 October 1798 – it gained an unexpected triumph. The popularity of the play was immediate, spread all over England, and lasted well until 1815. However, its success was in fact counterbalanced by a large number of attacks and negative reviews that depicted the play as morally and

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"Philological Quarterly", LXXIV, Summer 1995, pp. 297-316; P. Gay, *Theatricality and the Theatricals in "Mansfield Park"*, in "Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal", 17, 1995, pp. 121-129; P. Byrne, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, London, Hambledon and London, 2002; P. Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; E. G. Stanley, *Jane Austen's "Mansfield Park" and Kotzebue's "Das Kind der Liebe", "Lovers' Vows": "that we should have such a scene to play!?"*, in "Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, CCXLII, 2005, pp. 300-317; S. Allen Ford, *It Is All About "Lovers' Vows": Kotzebue, Inchbald, and the Players of "Mansfield Park"*, in "Persuasions. The Jane Austen Journal On-Line", XXVII, Winter 2006, web address www.jasna.org/persuasions/ on-line/vol27no1/ford.htm; C. Farese, *From German into English, from Novel into Play: "Lovers' Vows" and "Das Kind der Liebe"*, in *The Languages of Performance in British Romanticism*, editors L. M. Crisafulli and C. Pietropoli, Bern, Peter Lang, 2008, pp. 201-217.

[2] See C. Farese, *Elizabeth Inchbald: scandalo e convenzione. Romanzo e teatro nell'Inghilterra della Reggenza*, Roma, Aracne, 2012, pp. 75-107.

politically questionable, especially for the presence of Amelia, a heroine who is in love with her tutor Anhalt, a Protestant minister to whom she will eventually get married.[3] Although today it might be difficult for us to understand why this seemingly harmless play caused such a violent reaction, I would argue that Inchbald's contemporaries were not entirely mistaken in denouncing its radical features. In particular, there is an aspect of the play that seems to surpass in dauntlessness Inchbald's notoriously radical novels – *A Simple Story*, published in 1791, and *Nature and Art* published in 1796. Although usually labelled as Jacobin novels, these two books respect the conventions of the theme of the seduced heroine insofar as they show how the consequences of a transgression cannot be but fatal, and their heroines pay a high price for their unruly behaviour.[4]

2. *Vindicating the coquette: Inchbald's Miss Milner*

A Simple Story is particularly interesting for us as its parallels with *Lovers' Vows* are indeed striking. The novel tells the love story between the *coquette* Miss Milner and her tutor Dorriforth, a Catholic priest who – after having inherited his family fortune, following the sudden death of his

[3] See W. Reitzel, *"Mansfield Park"* and *"Lovers' Vows"*, in "Review of English Studies", IX, 36, 1933, pp. 451-456; A. Jenkins, *I'll Tell You What. The Life of Elizabeth Inchbald*, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 2003, p. 427; C. Bode, *"Unfit for an English Stage?" Inchbald's "Lovers' Vows" and Kotzebue's "Das Kind der Liebe"*, in "European Romantic Review", XVI, 3, 2005, pp. 297-309.

[4] As to the relationship between Elizabeth Inchbald and English Jacobinism see G. Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976; T. L. Hoagwood, *Elizabeth Inchbald, Joanna Baillie, and Revolutionary Representation in the Romantic Period*, in *Rebellious Hearts. British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, Edited by A. Craciun and K. E. Lokke, Albany (N. Y.), State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. 293-316; A. Garnai, *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s. Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; B. P. Robertson, *Elizabeth Inchbald's Reputation. A Publishing and Reception History*, London – New York, Routledge, 2013.

cousin – will eventually renounce his vows and marry her. During a prolonged absence of her husband, Miss Milner commits adultery and, as a consequence, will be repudiated and die in disgrace. Her vanity and foolishness contrast with the behaviour of her daughter Matilda, who is a model of obedience and, in the final part of the novel, will reap the reward of her virtue. Notwithstanding this punitive structure, Miss Milner has always been perceived by readers as an extremely ambiguous character. On one hand, she lacks the "negative virtues of feminine propriety", but on the other she possesses "the outgoing ones that transcend that ideal – passionate love, generosity, warm, reckless sympathy".[5] In her 1791 review of the book, Mary Wollstonecraft was probably the first of the many readers who noticed that the character's moral defects are "softened, or rather gracefully withdrawn from notice by the glare of such splendid, yet fallacious virtues, as flow from sensibility".[6] In other words, Miss Milner is a sinner whose sin is caused, and to some extent justified, by the 'virtues' of passion and sensibility; a sinner for whom the reader cannot help but feel a strong sympathy, inevitably undermining the moral condemnation suggested by the structure of the novel. Indeed, according to Wollstonecraft's unsympathetic review, the positive description of the "vain" and "giddy"[7] Miss Milner seriously undermined the praiseworthy moral purpose of *A Simple Story* – to advocate the importance of female education for the development of a young woman's self-awareness. But the novel's dangers and limits stigmatised by Wollstonecraft were paradoxically to be appreciated and interpreted as qualities by subsequent

[5] K. M. Rogers, *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1982, p. 198.

[6] [M. Wollstonecraft], [*review of "A Simple Story"*], "The Analytical Review or history of literature, domestic and foreign, on an enlarged plan", X, May-August 1791, p. 101.

[7] Ibidem.

readers. A perceptive Victorian reader like Julia Kavanagh, for instance, was bewildered by the modernity and novelty of Miss Milner's character and in her 1863 *Biographical Sketches* she underlined how "there is nothing heroic about her":

> "She is a new woman, a true one, a very faulty one, introduced for the first time in the world. There had been no Miss Milner before this one, no such grateful embodiment of woman's failings held out, not to imitation or admiration, but to a surer and deeper feeling – sympathy."[8]

Kavanagh's interpretation is insightful because the literary value and the radically innovative nature of the novel did not lay, as Wollstonecraft would have it, in the defence of a rational education for women, but rather in the articulation of female desire and agency through the figure of Miss Milner, who seems to embody "the female sexuality that women writers of Inchbald's time were busy in denying in the interests of their own respectability."[9]

Her unconventional passion for her tutor, who is a clergyman and whom she loves "with all the passion of a mistress, and with all the tenderness of a wife",[10] is strikingly similar to the relationship between Amelia and Anhalt in *Lovers' Vows.* One could indeed say the comedy provides a sort of happy-ending version of the tragic story told in the novel: Amelia's coquetry and explicit behaviour are not punished; on the contrary, she is rewarded by her father's consent to her marriage. If *A Simple Story* offers a contrast between vice and virtue (i.e. between Miss Milner and her daughter Matilda), in *Lovers' Vows* we find a very different pattern, as

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[8] J. Kavanagh, *English Women of Letters: Biographical Sketches*, London, Hurst & Blackett, 1863, p. 80.

[9] J. Spencer, *Introduction,* in E. Inchbald, *A Simple Story*, edited by J. M. S. Tompkins, Introduction by J. Spencer, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. XIV.

[10] E. Inchbald, *A Simple Story,* cit., p. 72.

there is no disparity between transgression and obedience, no punishment of sorts. The play, in fact, stages the triumph of two female characters (Amelia and Agatha) who, in different ways, overstep the boundaries of social conventions in the name of their desire. With the adaptation of Kotzebue's play, Inchbald's writing seems to free itself from the harsh moralistic approach that shaped the 'contrast' structure of *A Simple Story*.

3. *Jane goes to the theatre: "Lovers' Vows" as a model for "Mansfield Park"*

This is a relevant aspect for an examination of the intertextual relationship that Jane Austen establishes with *Lovers' Vows* and Inchbald's work in general. Austen uses the play in *Mansfield Park* as a *mise en abyme*, a representation on a minor scale of some features of the novel itself. But her interest for the themes and characters of Inchbald's work is, as I intend to suggest, probably more extensive and likely to encompass *A Simple Story* as well as *Lovers' Vows*. The interpretation of the function of *Lovers' Vows* in *Mansfield Park* is strictly related to Austen's attitude towards the theatre, a critical issue that in the recent years has given rise to a number of innovative critical contributions. The traditional interpretation explained Sir Thomas's interruption of the play as the expression of the author's negative attitude towards theatre and drama in general.[11] Today, it is widely accepted that Austen was not only a frequent theatre-goer, but also that herself and most of her family were devoted readers of classic as well as contemporary plays and they often amused themselves by organizing private theatricals with the same enthusiasm shown by the

[11] See M. Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1975, pp. 230-236.

young improvised actors of *Mansfield Park*. In light of these new interpretations, the traditional reading of Mansfield's private theatricals as an utter rejection of the immorality of the play (and perhaps theatre in general) seems less likely to be correct, and the question of the reason why Austen chose *Lovers' Vows* will have to be approached from a new perspective.

First published after the first performance at Covent Garden in 1799, the play had been republished twelve times,[12] and had been performed at the Theatre Royal in Bath in the years between 1801 and 1805, when the Austen family was still living there. In view of their passion for contemporary sentimental comedies, it is highly possible that some members of the family, if not Jane herself, had attended one of these performances.[13] What is undeniable for the reader of *Mansfield Park* is that Austen had a deep familiarity with the text. It might be right arguing that

> " […] any play selected by the bored young people would have served for Austen's introduction of the theme of carnival disruption, the great house turned topsy-turvy; and for the theme of the unavoidable theatricality of adult social life, which makes up the novel's final two volumes."[14]

Yet, *Lovers' Vows* had a specific feature that made it particularly suitable for the purpose: the relationship between the impudent Amelia and the inhibited cleric Anhalt functioned as an ideal intertextual extension of the novel's plot. Austen "must have had the play in mind from the beginning",[15] because of the complex network of parallelisms and

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[12] See P. Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, cit. p. 105.

[13] On the basis of three 1814 letters from Jane to Cassandra, Paula Byrne speculates that the writer might have taken part in a private staging of *Lovers' Vows*: see P. Byrne, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, cit., p. 150.

[14] P. Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, cit. p. 107.

[15] A. S. Byatt and I. Sodré, *"Mansfield Park"*, in *Imagining Characters. Six Conversations About Women Writers*, New York, Vintage Books, 1997, p. 27.

differences connecting the characters in the novel and those in the comedy. The exclamation with which John Yates greets the choice of the *play* ("It is so useful to have any thing of a model!")[16] can therefore be read as an expression of the author's satisfaction in having found the right model, which not only means a source of inspiration, but also a concise representation, on a small scale, of the novel's narrative strategies to be placed *en abyme*, and thus mirroring and anticipating the developments of plot, themes and characters. The triangular relationship between Edmund, Mary and Fanny is of course central to the relationship between the two texts. Fanny refuses to act, and seems passively devoted to the role of reader:

> "The first use she made of her solitude was to take up the volume which had been left on the table, and begin to acquaint herself with the play of which she had heard so much. Her curiosity was all awake, and she ran through it with an eagerness which was suspended only by intervals of astonishment, that it could be chosen in the present instance – that it could be proposed and accepted in a private Theatre!"[17]

And indeed her attentive analysis of the dramatic text makes her immediately aware of the potential dangers of the play:

> "Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation – the situation of one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty, that she could hardly suppose her cousins could be aware of what they were engaging in."[18]

A witness to the whole staging of *Lovers' Vows*, but relegated to a marginal secondary role, Fanny soon realises how much everyone else is enjoying the excitement from which she is excluded:

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[16] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, edited by J. Wiltshire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 163 (I, 15).

[17] Ibidem, p. 161 (I, 14).

[18] Ibidem.

"She was full of jealousy and agitation. Miss Crawford came with looks of gaiety which seemed an insult, with friendly expressions towards herself which she could hardly answer calmly. Every body around her was gay and busy, prosperous and important, each had their object of interest, their part, their dress, their favourite scene, their friends and confederates, all were finding employment in consultations and comparisons, or diversion in the playful conceits they suggested. She alone was sad and insignificant; she had no share in any thing; she might go or stay, she might be in the midst of their noise, or retreat from it to the solitude of the East room, without being seen or missed. She could almost think any thing would have been preferable to this."[19]

The theatricals affect Fanny's psychological and emotional development much more than it would appear at first sight, as she finds herself quite changed at the end of them. Despite her aversion to it, the whole *mise en scene* gives her the possibility to engage with theatre and, through theatre, to get in touch with a hidden part of herself, thus experiencing a process of indirect sentimental and sexual education.[20] The most striking evidence of the morally constructive function of the theatricals is the way in which the behaviour of the apparently passive and obedient Fanny changes to conform to the model provided in the play by the "odious, little, pert, unnatural, impudent"[21] Amelia. As the latter refuses to marry Count Cassel (as her father warmly recommends), the former rejects Henry Crawford's marriage proposal in the second part of the novel, to the utter bewilderment of the whole Bertram family. Fanny thus implicitly takes Amelia as a role model, transposing within the 'real world' of the novel an aspect of the character that she was not able to perform within the fictional sphere of the play. It could be argued that what Fanny learns from *Lovers' Vows* is indeed what a large number of conservative reviewers identified as the most subversive and dangerous aspect of the

[19] Ibidem, p. 187 (I, 17).
[20] P. Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, cit., p. 107.
[21] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, cit., p. 160 (I, 14).

character of Amelia: the ability to resist patriarchal authority and assert her own will against social conventions.

Fanny not only gets acquainted with *Lovers' Vows* through a thorough reading of it, familiarising with the passionate love scene that her beloved cousin Edmund will rehearse with Mary Crawford, but she also directly witnesses it – being relegated to the role of defenceless and frustrated spectator of one of the most controversial love scenes of the time. "*I*nvested, indeed with the office of judge and critic",[22] Fanny is overwhelmed once again by feelings of wariness and inadequacy:

> "In watching them she forgot herself; and agitated by the increasing spirit of Edmund's manner, had once closed the page and turned away exactly as he wanted help. It was imputed to very reasonable weariness, and she was thanked and pitied; but she deserved their pity, more than she hoped they would ever surmise. At last the scene was over, and Fanny forced herself to add her praise to the compliments each was giving the other; and when again alone and able to recall the whole, she was inclined to believe their performance would, indeed, have such nature and feeling in it, as must ensure their credit, and make it a very suffering exhibition to herself."[23]

The scene that Mary and Edmund are rehearsing – one that readers of the time knew far too well – is the one in which the uninhibited Amelia declares her love to her tutor Anhalt. Inchbald's brilliant dialogue articulates a content involving plenty of radical and transgressive connotations, because it presents a heroine who, against all the norms of propriety, cunningly declares her desire and imposes her will.

It is thus certainly not by chance that, in the *cast* of Mansfield, the role of Amelia goes to Mary Crawford: the anti-heroine *par excellence*, the only one who, despite her questionable behaviour, possesses, in Wollstonecraft's words, the "splendid, yet fallacious virtues, as flow from sensibility" and wit. If in *Lovers' Vows* Inchbald engaged with the issue of

[22] Ibidem, p. 199 (I, 18).
[23] Ibidem, pp. 199-200 (I, 18).

the agency of the female subject, and her right to express desire, Jane Austen does the same in *Mansfield Park*.[24] The choice of *Lovers' Vows* is in fact related to Austen's long-standing interest for the issue of "female conduct in the courtship process".[25] The prototype for this theme was of course Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) whose first three volumes are devoted to the difficulties encountered by the heroine who has to decide whether to confess her love to Sir Charles or not. The theme is also explored by Inchbald-Kotzebue in *Lovers' Vows* (where Amelia openly challenges the norms established by Richardson), and by Austen herself in *Mansfield Park*, in the triangular relationship between Edmund, Fanny, and Mary, where the two female characters embody the alternative between *propriety* and the transgressive expression of female desire. The crucial function of the intertextual parallel with the comedy is to expose this conflict as the sexual-emotional centre that is "buried" at the heart of the novel:

> "It's Mary who gets to act Amelia, and Amelia is a woman who breaks the law of silence imposed upon Fanny […]. Amelia simply says 'No, I love you, will you marry me?', which a woman may not do, and which is obviously what Fanny's deepest soul must want to say, but she can't. […] I think buried in the centre of *Mansfield Park* and all the events that take place is the prohibition, like a fairy-tale, but it's also convention in society, the prohibition that Fanny wouldn't break: she couldn't speak to Edmund because she was a woman."[26]

But this very theme is already present in *A Simple Story*, where Inchbald narrates the love story between the *coquette* Miss Milner and Dorriforth, a Catholic priest. It is therefore perfectly legitimate to wonder whether Jane Austen knew Inchbald's novel and whether – in addition to

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[24] See P. Byrne, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, cit., p. 153.

[25] Ibidem, p. 155. See also E. M. Butler *Mansfield Park and Kotzebue's "Lovers' Vows"*, in "The Modern Language Review", XXVIII, 1933, pp. 326-337.

[26] A. S. Byatt and I. Sodré, *Mansfield Park,* cit., pp. 26-27.

Lovers' Vows and through *Lovers' Vows* – she intended to refer to a work whose stylistic affinity with her own has been noticed.[27] A detail that could suggest Austen's knowledge of *A Simple Story* is the fact that *Emma*'s Mr Knightley describes the news of Robert Martin's engagement with Harriet as a "simple story".[28] Though interesting, this observation does not provide any solid evidence, and it is fair to acknowledge that we cannot have any certainties in this respect, although it could be argued that an avid reader such as Jane Austen, with a specific inclination for novels written by women, was likely to come across a work such as *A Simple Story* that enjoyed great popularity and success. Furthermore, the similarities between the two novels are numerous. Both Miss Milner and Mary Crawford's mistakes are ascribed first of all to the lack of a proper education, as they are said to be the product of an upbringing based more on "fashionable accomplishments" than on "good principles and morals".[29] Another striking similarity between the two novels is the protracted absence of the two patriarchal figures – Lord Elmwood-Dorriforth and Sir Thomas Bertram – who undertake long journeys in order to look after their business, and in both cases travel to the *West Indies*. While in *A Simple Story* Lord Elmwood's absence allows Miss Milner to betray him, in *Mansfield Park* the absence of the *pater familias* permits the undisturbed *mise en scene* of *Lovers' Vows*, with all the transgressions and dangerous flirtations that the private theatrical enables. It could also be argued that the marriage between Miss Milner and Dorriforth (who renounces his vows and becomes Lord Elmwood following the unexpected death of a cousin) seems to unfold the

[27] J. Spencer, *Introduction*, cit. p. VII: "Inchbald's concise, ironic narrative style anticipates Austen".

[28] J. Austen, *Emma*, edited by R. Cronin and D. McMillan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 515 (III, 18). See P. Byrne, *A Simple Story. From Inchbald to Austen*, in "Romanticism", V, 2, 1999, pp. 161-172.

[29] Ibidem, p. 165.

potential plot that, in *Mansfield Park*, is suggested by the illness of Tom Bertram, cherished by Mary Crawford, and finally disrupted by the recovery of the heir of Mansfield.

There is, moreover, a crucial feature of *Mansfield Park* that does not find a parallel in *Lovers' Vows*, but corresponds very closely to *A Simple Story*: the contrast structure which, in both novels, outlines the binary opposition between a virtuous heroine, reserved and respectful of patriarchal authority (Matilda-Fanny), to a charming *coquette* who does not hesitate to violate the rules of feminine propriety (Miss Milner-Mary). This opposition, which in both cases results in the punishment of the rebellious heroine, is (as we have already seen) completely absent from *Lovers' Vows*, where Amelia accomplishes her designs by imposing to her father her choice of a future husband. The dialogue between Jane Austen's novel and *Lovers' Vows* highlights, among the many analogies, also an essential difference between the two texts: Fanny Price has to accept a minor role within the staging of *Lovers' Vows* because her proper role (that of the virtuous young woman who respects traditional values and norms) is in fact absent form the play. Indeed, this role rightfully belongs to a novel like *A Simple Story*, in which Matilda, the exemplary daughter of Miss Milner, obtains exactly what Fanny will achieve in *Mansfield Park*.

Including *A Simple Story* in Austen's intertextual framework encourages us to consider the possibility that she might have compared the two patterns offered by Inchbald's oeuvre and decided to reject that of *Lovers' Vows* in favour of the far more pessimistic binary structure of *A Simple Story* based on the contrast between the two heroines. On one side, we find the official protagonist, Fanny Price, probably the least loved of all Austen heroines because of her apparent lack of liveliness and wit; on the

other side, we find Mary Crawford, the anti-heroine, to whom, according to some critics, Austen lends her truest voice.[30] Exactly, as with Inchbald's Miss Milner, Mary solicits sympathy from readers despite her evident faults, and this sympathy risks to undermine the message conveyed by the edifying structure of the plot in which the young woman who behaves improperly and utters her desire, cannot but surrender to the dull but solidly conservative Fanny.

4. *The sense of an ending*

Of course, it is perfectly possible to give a moralistic and, as it were, 'reactionary' reading to the strategy I am outlining. We could in fact think that Jane Austen might have followed Inchbald's path backwards, from the play to the novel, in order to restore and vindicate the "politically and morally conservative"[31] structure of the *contrast novel*, which allowed a clear distinction between vice, to be punished, and virtue, to be rewarded. Austen would thus have rejected the seductive but dangerous immorality of a work like *Lovers' Vows*, which has to be regarded as an example of "comedy in its worst form".[32] However, this reading seems harder to defend in the light of the new interpretations of Austen's attitude towards the theatre and recent critical readings that tend to outline a profile of the author that, if not properly subversive, is certainly much less conservative than the one widely accepted in the past.[33] My own suggestion that Amelia

[30] See B. Battaglia, *La zitella illetterata. Parodia e ironia nei romanzi di Jane Austen*, Napoli, Liguori, 2009, pp. 111-184.

[31] P. Gay, *Theatricality and the Theatricals in "Mansfield Park"*, cit., p. 126.

[32] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, cit., p. 160 (I, 14).

[33] See among others C. L. Johnson, *Women, Politics and the Novel*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1988; D. Nokes, *Jane Austen. A Life*, London, Fourth Estate, 1997; C. Tuite, *Romantic Austen*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; W. H. Galperin, *The Historical Austen*, Philadelphia, University

functions as a model for *both* Fanny and Mary seems to weaken the stress in traditional interpretations on the opposition between the two heroines as well as between the novel and the play, suggesting that both relationships might involve a high degree of "symmetry" rather than mere contrast.[34] From this new perspective it would be possible to argue that, by making reference to the novel of a Jacobin writer whose representation of an outspoken young woman is so compelling that it contradicts the moralistic message entrusted to the structure of the book as a whole, Jane Austen is subtly suggesting to her readers the nature of the very ideological and textual strategy she is pursuing in *Mansfield Park.*

Some critics have argued that, in *Mansfield Park,* Austen articulates a double language: the language of the conventional moralistic narrator, and the language of an ironic author who denounces the partiality and unreliability of the very exemplary moral tale she pretends to tell.[35] In this light, we could believe that, by alluding to Inchbald's work in general, and to *A Simple Story* in particular, Jane Austen is indeed referring to a model whose message she intends to reiterate. Indeed, the happy ending of *Lovers' Vows* is rejected by Austen and denounced as misleading, but not (as the traditional interpretation would have it) because it is subversive or immoral, but rather because it is overly optimistic. Real life does not work like 'comedy'; real life is more similar to a novel like *Mansfield Park* or *A Simple Story*, where the heroines need to conform to conventions and expected standards of behaviour, as with Fanny or Matilda, or be punished

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of Pennsylvania Press, 2003; J. Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions. Subversive Laughter, Embodied History*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005; P. Byrne, *The Real Jane Austen. A Life in Small Things*, London, Harper Press, 2013.

[34] A. S. Byatt and I. Sodré, "*Mansfield Park"*, cit., p. 19: "It's a symmetry that's also brought out by their relationship to Amelia in *Lovers' Vows*, who in a way represents both of them [Fanny and Mary]".

[35] See B. Battaglia, *La zitella illetterata. Parodia e ironia nei romanzi di Jane Austen*, cit., p. 114.

like Mary Crawford and Miss Milner. The conclusion of the novel is "deeply undramatic"[36] insofar as it contradicts the utopian outcome of the comedy: patriarchal order is restored and the subversive theatrical carnival of the "acting week"[37] is forgotten.[38] The words used by Austen to confirm that this is to be regarded as a happy ending are so ambiguous that, ironically, they might seem to suggest to her reader that this is not the case: "With so much true merit and true love, and no want of fortune or friends, the happiness of the married cousins *must appear* as secure as earthly happiness can be".[39]

[36] P. Gay, *Theatricality and the Theatricals in "Mansfield Park"*, cit., p. 128.

[37] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, cit., p. 414 (III, 5).

[38] See B. Battaglia, *La zitella illetterata. Parodia e ironia nei romanzi di Jane Austen*, cit., pp. 175-184.

[39] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, cit., p. 547 (III, 17). Emphasis added.

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MASSIMILIANO MORINI

BITS OF IVORY ON THE SILVER SCREEN: AUSTEN IN MULTIMODAL QUOTATION AND TRANSLATION

1. *Austen on film and multimodal stylistics*

Studying the Austen film industry through the lens of multimodal stylistics means applying new analytical tools to a well-known phenomenon. Since a rather mysterious 1938 "teleplay" of *Pride and Prejudice*,[1] there have been numerous cinematic and TV adaptations of Austen's novels. These adaptations, in turn, have prompted academic examination from such different fields as cinema studies, literary criticism, and cultural studies.[2] More generally, the adaptations have played a

[1] P. H. Bolton, *Women Writers Dramatized: A Calendar of Performances from Narrative Works Published in English to 1900*, London, Mansell, p. 16.

[2] See *Jane Austen Goes to the Movies*, editor L. V. Troost, Special issue of "Topic", XLVIII, 1997; B. T. Lupack, *Nineteenth-Century Women at the Movies: Adapting Classic Women's Fiction to Film*, Bowling Green (Ohio), Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999; D. Monaghan, A. Hudelet and J. Wiltshire, *The*

significant role in a thriving "Austen industry"[3] which involves literary societies in English-speaking countries and elsewhere, literary clubs, facebook pages, twitter accounts and sites dedicated to everything Austen. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the two films discussed below have already been subjected to critical scrutiny.[4]

Multimodal stylistics, on the other hand, is a very recent sub-discipline of scientific enquiry which stems from the realization that much of the relevant writing that makes a real impact on worldwide audiences today is of a multimodal nature; and a lot of this multimodal material has so far been subjected, particularly by stylisticians, to analyses of an essentially linguistic kind.[5] So far, a more complete stylistic appreciation of multimodal art has been attempted for dramatic writing,[6] pop-rock music,[7] television,[8] illustrated or typographically deviant literature,[9] and, most relevantly for our present purposes, film.[10]

Cinematic Jane Austen: Essays on the Filmic Sensibility of the Novels, Jefferson (North Carolina), McFarland, 2009.

[3] R. Sales, *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 25.

[4] See D. Cartmell, *Screen Adaptations. Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice": A Close Study of the Relationship Between Text and Film*, London, Bloomsbury, 2010; S. Parrill, *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations*, Jefferson (North Carolina), McFarland, 2002, pp. 16-44.

[5] See for instance M. Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, London, Longman, 1996, pp. 168-254.

[6] See D. McIntyre, *Integrating multimodal analysis and the stylistics of drama: a multimodal perspective on Ian McKellen's "Richard III"*, in "Language and Literature", XVII, 4, 2008, pp. 309-334.

[7] See M. Morini, *Towards a musical stylistics: Movement in Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill"*, ibidem, XXII, 4, 2013, pp. 283-297.

[8] See K. Richardson, *Multimodality and the study of popular drama*, ibidem, XIX, 4, 2010, pp. 378-395.

[9] See N. Nørgaard, *Multimodality and the literary text: Making sense of Safran Foer's "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close"*, in *New Perspectives on Narrative and Multimodality*, edited by R. Page, London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 115-126; A. Gibbons, *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature*, London, Routledge, 2012.

[10] See R. Montoro, *A multimodal approach to mind style: Semiotic metaphor vs. multimodal conceptual metaphor*, in *New Perspectives on Narrative and Multimodality*,

In this essay, I selected two cinematic works, which are based on literary models. This has the obvious advantage of allowing a comparison between novel and film – through which the filmmakers' choices can be pinpointed and clarified, either by contrast or by analogy. Obviously, the technical means available to directors, scriptwriters and cinematographers are far different from those at the novelist's disposal: but this very difference may be turned into a possibility, if the analyst looks at how similar effects are striven for in different media. Thus, each medium can be considered for what it offers or lacks in terms of modality and narrative devices: modern cinema normally, though not universally, having to dispense with the narrative voice that is more at home in the written mode; literature lacking the visual and aural dimensions that are cinema's natural elements.

Given these differences, the two Austen adaptations discussed below will be studied for the way their moving images, dialogue and soundtrack reconfigure the narrative structures of, respectively, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. In particular, the openings of both films will be analysed in all their modal dimensions for the way they orient their audiences' appreciation of the stories they tell. Arguably, in the openings of Austen's novels the narrator guides the reader's judgment by providing orientation and evaluation, although the very fact that the narrator is mostly conspicuous by her absence at the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice* also influences the reader's perception of that work as a lighter-spirited affair. Apart from the general mood of the narrative, however, the *incipit* of a novel normally identifies heroes and villains, and provides a lot of general

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cit., pp. 31-49; Id., *Multimodal realisations of mind style in "Enduring Love"*, in *Telecinematic Discourse: Approaches to the Language of Films and Television Series*, editors R. Piazza, M. Bednarek and F. Rossi, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2011, pp. 69-83.

information as to the social and financial situation in which the plot is going to unfold. A film that dispenses with voice-over will normally do the same by means of moving images, diegetic and extra-diegetic sounds and dialogue (despite the inevitable cuts due to the transition from a three-hundred-page book to a two-hour movie). Sounds and images being generally less explicit than language, it follows that every choice in these departments may be regarded as significant in terms of orientation and evaluation. A mood can be defined by the prevalence of light or darkness and/or by the use of music in the major-minor key; a character can be marked out as good or evil according to the way he/she looks, sits or smiles, or depending on how the camera decides to frame him/her.

While briefly touching on Austen's source novels, the following analysis concentrates on the two cinematic openings under discussion, with special emphasis on four related aspects: 1) the selection or exclusion of narrative or dialogic elements in the transition from novel to film; 2) the textual organization of the cinematic sequences, or, reflecting the viewer's experience, "the *textual* logic of understanding a film's narrative";[11] 3) the creation of cinematic viewpoint; 4) the presence of significantly foregrounded or salient elements,[12] and more generally, of any significant distinction between what occupies the audiovisual "figure", what belongs to the "ground", and what is relegated to a barely discernible "field" of perception.[13]

[11] J. A. Bateman – K.-H. Schmidt, *Multimodal Film Analysis: How Films Mean*, London, Routledge, 2012, p. 5.

[12] See G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, London, Routledge, 1996, pp. 212-214.

[13] T. van Leeuwen, *Speech, Music, Sound*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999, p. 23.

2. *Two Austen novels*

In a sense, Ang Lee's 1995 *Sense and Sensibility* and Joe Wright's 2005 *Pride and Prejudice*[14] represent polar opposites in the range of audio-visual possibilities opened up by Austen's novels. Even superficially, Ang Lee's film is a rather sombre affair, exhibiting a very strong emphasis on unpleasant feelings, dark colours and stark visuals, and the hard economic facts of social life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Joe Wright's movie, by contrast, is lighter in hue and relatively light on social realism, concentrating as it does on the central sentimental plot involving Elizabeth Bennet and rich, initially class-conscious but ultimately repentant Darcy.

This difference in tone also reflects a disparity between one of the darkest works in Austen's oeuvre and the novel that the author herself thought "rather too light & bright & sparkling".[15] A comparison between the opening chapters of these two works of fiction is enough to illustrate the difference. In *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), only after pages of fact-laden information are the main characters allowed speaking for themselves:

> "The family of Dashwood had long been settled in Sussex. Their estate was large [...] The late owner of this estate was a single man, who lived to a very advanced age, and who for many years of his life, had a constant companion and housekeeper in his sister. But her death […] produced a great alteration in his home; for to supply her loss, he invited and received in his house the family of his nephew Mr. Henry Dashwood, the legal inheritor of the Norland estate [...]
>
> By a former marriage, Mr. Henry Dashwood had one son: by his present lady, three daughters. The son, a steady respectable young man, was amply provided for by the fortune of his mother [...] To him therefore the succession to the Norland estate was not so really important as to his sisters [...] Their mother had nothing, and their father

[14] See Ang Lee, *Sense and Sensibility*, Columbia Pictures Corporation – Mirage, USA – UK, 1995 and J. Wright, *Pride and Prejudice*, StudioCanal – Working Title Films – Focus Features, France – UK – USA, 2005.

[15] J. Austen, *Letters*, Collected and Edited by D. Le Faye, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2011[4], p. 212 (letter to Cassandra Austen, 4 February 1813).

only seven thousand pounds in his own disposal [...]

The old Gentleman died […] He was neither so unjust, nor so ungrateful, as to leave his estate from his nephew; —but he left it to him on such terms as destroyed half the value of the bequest. […]

Mr. Dashwood's disappointment was, at first, severe; [...] the fortune, which had been so tardy in coming, was his only one twelvemonth. He survived his uncle no longer [...]

His son was sent for as soon as his danger was known, and to him Mr. Dashwood recommended [...] the interest of his mother-in-law and sisters";[16]

whereas in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) it is the bickering Mr and Mrs Bennet who take centre-stage after two short paragraphs which include the narrator's very famous, and presumably tongue-in-cheek, opening:

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

[…]

'My dear Mr. Bennet,' said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?'

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

'But it is,' returned she; 'for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.'

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

'Do you not want to know who has taken it?' cried his wife impatiently.

'*You* want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.'

This was invitation enough."[17]

Both novels, of course, belong in 'Austenland',[18] in economic as well as ideological terms. Though *Pride and Prejudice* has a livelier *incipit*, the lives of its characters are governed by the same socio-economic laws whose workings are so starkly exhibited in the three opening chapters of *Sense and Sensibility*. The two families at the centre of the novels – the Bennets and the Dashwoods – are left by different circumstances in very

[16] Id., *Sense and Sensibility*, edited by E. Copeland, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 3-4 (I, 1).

[17] Id., *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by P. Rogers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 3 (I, 1).

[18] See M. Morini, *Jane Austen's Narrative Techniques. A Stylistic and Pragmatic Analysis*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, p. 79.

similar plights, i.e., in the rather pressing need to find suitable husbands for all the marriageable girls in each household. And in the course of the long exchange between Mr and Mrs Bennet which forms most of the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, readers are informed about such crucial socio-economic details as Mr Bingley being "A single man of large fortune; four of five thousand a year" – which, as Mrs Bennet immediately hastens to add, is such "a fine things for our girls!"[19]

The different narrative processes through which all of this socio-economic information is conveyed, however, make for very different reading experiences. The two novels differ in their distribution of "orientation", i.e., in how they provide the necessary details on the "who, what, where, when" of the story.[20] The disparity in mood at the beginning of the novels is accounted for by these differences in evaluation at least as much as by the different dispositions of the characters. In *Pride and Prejudice*, everything is filtered through the contrasting comic personalities of Mr and Mrs Bennet, and what orientation the reader is given is allowed to slip through their exchanges, rather than presented in any explicit manner. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the narrator herself describes and summarizes the characters' speech and thought acts for the best part of three chapters. Furthermore, while in *Pride and Prejudice* the narrator forbears from giving straightforward judgments until the end of chapter one ("Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, caprice"),[21] in *Sense and Sensibility* readers are immediately and explicitly invited to take sides:

[19] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 4 (I, 1).

[20] W. Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972, p. 363.

[21] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 5 (I, 1).

"Mr. John Dashwood had not the strong feelings of the rest of the family; but he was affected [...] and he promised to do every thing in his power to make them comfortable. […]

He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed: [...] Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was [...] But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself;—more narrow-minded and selfish."[22]

3. *Joe Wright's "Pride and Prejudice"*

The openings of the two films under discussion certainly reflect, and perhaps exacerbate, this disparity. In Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*, a prevailing mood of lightness and playfulness is established in the course of a very few shots, and arguably maintained for most of the action. In the opening scene, the cinema-goer is first presented with a view on a heath with woodland in the background; the sun rises on this country scenery, and then the camera finds a young woman (Elizabeth, played by Keira Knightley) walking in the same landscape shortly after daybreak, book in hand. Within a few seconds of cinematic time, Elizabeth closes the book, crosses a narrow arched bridge and approaches her home, outside which sheets are hung up to dry and servants are performing menial tasks. After that, the audience is given a glimpse of the interiors of the Bennet household – one young woman playing the piano, another walking, two more young women running down a staircase and around, shrieking excitedly. Outside with the camera again, the audience is offered a view of Mr and Mrs Bennet talking inside the house, across a window, as seen from Elizabeth's perspective. Then Elizabeth and the camera get into the house, and the rest of Mr and Mrs Bennets' discussion is overheard by four of the five sisters (Elizabeth included), who are eavesdropping on their parents from behind the door.

[22] Id., *Sense and Sensibility*, cit., pp. 5-6 (I, 1).

J. Wright – *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

Linguistically, the inevitable condensation needed to turn a novel into a two-hour movie leads the filmmakers to make some interesting choices. One is the extreme compression of the exchange between Mr and Mrs Bennet, which is reduced from a few pages to a few lines – some of which arguably serve the purpose of delineating the different dispositions of the spouses:

"*Mrs Bennet*: My dear Mr Bennet – have you heard? Netherfield Park is let at last! [pause] Do you not want to know who has taken it?
Mr Bennet: As you wish to tell me, my dear, I doubt I have any choice in the matter."

Another interesting choice can be described taking into account the distribution of turns at talk. The socio-economic orientation which is mainly apportioned to Mrs Bennet in the novel is here neatly divided between mother and daughters, who inform the audience by repeating what

they overhear ("There's a Mr Bingley arrived from the north", "Five thousand a year!", "He's single!"). In combination, this different apportionment of lines and the extreme compression of the opening dialogue (in contrast, for instance, with later sections which feature verbal sparring between Elizabeth and Darcy – an example of this being the collective exchange at Bingley's place in chapter 8, much expanded in the film) suggest that Mr and Mrs Bennet, or rather the financial hopes and worries voiced in their first exchange, may be more central in the novel than in the film. Here, the love-hate relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy takes up much more space.

These linguistic choices, however, are a small part of the complex decision-making process involved in turning a novel into a feature film, and only become fully significant in their audiovisual context. A neat example of this, very early on, is the series of shots alternating between Mr and Mrs Bennet as seen by their daughters from behind a half-closed door, and a medium close up of the young ladies themselves, seen giggling as they repeat what they overhear of their parents' exchange.

While the gist of what is being communicated to the viewers is a reduced version of the Bennets' exchange in chapter 1 of the novel – a well-to-do single man worth five thousand a year has just turned up, or is going to turn up, in the neighbourhood – the context in which that information is given is far different. In the book, an uncooperative Mr Bennet is trying to stave off his wife's verbal attacks. In the film, all this is shown, and indeed heard, from the perspective of the girls – who are repeating what the viewer is unable to hear and, in the case of Kitty and Lydia, tittering and squealing excitedly as they do so. For the occasion, even clever Elizabeth allows herself a laugh, and sedate Jane is smiling: by

means of a viewpoint shift, the "complicating event"[23] that triggers all the other events in the story is presented as a joke to be shared among sisters.

More generally, the whole opening sequence demonstrates that this film is, in keeping with Deborah Moggach's view of the novel on which she worked to produce the script, "the ultimate romance about two people who think they hate each other but are really passionately in love"[24] – a light-hearted romantic comedy, rather than a full-blown treatment of Austen's lights, shadows and ironies. The first shot, for instance, establishes the world of *Pride and Prejudice* as a place in which everything is harmonious and on the rise. The opening credits begin to roll on the beautiful natural backdrop of a heath with trees in the background. The landscape composition is roughly symmetrical yet also capable of accommodating unevenness (clumps of weeds, the unequal silhouettes of the trees), like an English garden. The reassuring effect of this rural scene is heightened by the rising sun, which after a few seconds floods the whole shot with warm, diffused light, more orange than yellow (the same warm light illuminates most of the film: it is there, for instance, in the 'overhearing' sequence discussed above). Any remaining doubts as to the positive value of this opening are dispelled by the soundtrack: harmonious birdsong followed by, and combining with, a romantic-sounding piano piece in the major key, written by contemporary composer Dario Marianelli.

[23] W. Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, cit., p. 363.

[24] Focus Features, *Pride & Prejudice: The Production*, web address http://www.focusfeatures.com/article/pride_prejudice_the_production?film=pride_and_prejudice.

J. Wright – *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

If the first shot creates a positive, bucolic effect that sets the mood for the rest of the film, the second immediately establishes Elizabeth as the romantic heroine. Though Elizabeth is also the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice* the novel, and functions as the narrator's reflector for most of the action, it is worth bearing in mind that she does not occupy that exalted position until the end of chapter 3, and that Austen chose to point her narrative camera at Elizabeth's parents at the beginning of the novel. In Joe Wright's film, no uncertainty is allowed to arise as to Elizabeth's "salience".[25] Here the viewer sees her in frontal close up – a pretty young lady, simply but elegantly dressed, reading a book as she walks. As the romantic piano piece continues to unfold, this pretty young lady smiles and covers her mouth with her left hand – a complex gesture, at once expressing bookishness, cleverness and modesty. Then, in the third shot, her head is seen in extreme close up, from behind – a kind of arrangement, which encourages viewers to identify with the character, because they have

[25] G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, cit., p. 212.

to share her field of vision (this is roughly the same result that is obtained in literary fiction through the use of a reflector – a technique Austen knew well).[26] However, with a double-perspective effect, which would not be possible or advisable in fiction, the viewer sees not only what Elizabeth sees, but also her slender neck and rebellious wisps of hair – more distinctive traits of a romantic heroine. Elizabeth's long, delicate fingers close the book and stroke its back cover, as if to visually underline, once again, her love for books.

J. Wright – *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

In the next few shots, viewers are offered a quick visual and aural insight to the world inhabited by Elizabeth and the Bennets. On her way home, the protagonist is seen crossing a footbridge in a rural setting, featuring ducks, cattle and a young shepherd; and walking through rows of sheets hung out to dry, with servants working in the background. The camera then leaves her for a few seconds as it enters the house and

[26] See M. Morini, *Austen's Narrative Techniques. A Stylistic and Pragmatic Analysis*, cit., p. 24 and p. 31.

introduces the viewer to the other sisters, a dog, and a cheerful clutter of mostly womanly objects. Finally, the camera goes out and finds Elizabeth again, as she stops to watch her parents through a windowpane and from the foot of an external staircase.

J. Wright – *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

What is particularly interesting about this whole sequence is its structure in terms both of visual foregrounding and point of view. As to the former, viewers are left in no doubt that Elizabeth is central, the "figure" against her bucolic, domestic and mostly still "ground" and "field": she is present in most of the shots, in a central or generally foregrounded position, and quite often seen moving and/or in close up. As regards perspective, viewers are invited to share a sight line with the ostensible protagonist, who is therefore also assumed as a sort of reflector. These two structural facts, with attendant visual and aural elements such as Elizabeth's physical appearance and the soundtrack, invite the audience to see the young woman as the protagonist of what is probably going to unfold as a romantic story. Viewers are invited to share this view not only through the concentration of

"textual focus" (the camera mostly follows Elizabeth, and puts her at the geometrical or notional centre of shots), but also by such "ideational" means as having the Bennets' opening exchange observed and overheard by their daughter across a windowpane (rather than seeing the Bennets, viewers see Elizabeth watching the Bennets).[27]

4. *Ang Lee's "Sense and Sensibility"*

In contrast with this view of Austen's world as dominated by light-hearted romanticism, Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* paints a darker picture (again, visually and metaphorically), and delineates a world in which money is the centre around which individual lives revolve. This is shown neatly in the opening sequence, where the financial preoccupations discussed at length by the narrator in the novel are presented both verbally and by other cinematic means. A mere textual reading of this sequence is enough to appreciate the distance between Lee's and Wright's intersemiotic translations: while the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* opens on a pretty young woman walking in the fields at dawn, the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility* invites its viewers to penetrate a dying man's bedroom. And while Wright's romantic comedy seems to confine the necessary socio-economic information to an audiovisual footnote, Ang Lee's film puts it at the centre of the exchange between the dying man and his son and sole inheritor. The elder Mr Dashwood makes it perfectly clear that the prime mover of events in this world is money, and his main preoccupation the status, lifestyle and alliances that money can bring:

"*Father*: John – John – you will find out soon enough from my will that the

[27] J. A. Bateman – K.-H. Schmidt, *Multimodal Film Analysis: How Films Mean*, cit., p. 11.

estate of Norland was left to me in such a way as prevents me from dividing it between my two families […] Norland in its entirety is therefore yours by law [...] but your stepmother – my wife and daughters – are left only five hundred pounds a year – barely enough to live on – nothing for the girls' dowries! You must help them! You must promise to do this."

In very few lines of dialogue (John mainly assents in this exchange), the screenwriter, Emma Thompson (playing Elinor in the film), has managed to concentrate a lot of the orientation provided by Austen's narrator in two chapters and a half. The language used by the dying father is legal and financial, rather than psychological, religious or moral: Mr Dashwood makes it very clear that the sum of money referred to, at least in the polite society to which the main characters belong to, is "barely enough to live on" (further sequences in the film will elaborate on what this means in terms of carriage and servants, thus contextualizing the expression). The reference to "the girls' dowries" presupposes a world in which young women must count on marrying well to maintain their place in society and John is enrolled in the cause of financial assistance for his half-sisters – as the following scene, featuring John Dashwood and his wife, is going to confirm.

Thus, while Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* mostly dispenses with dialogue in its early shots, to concentrate instead on the audiovisual presentation of Elizabeth as its romantic heroine, Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* uses dialogue to highlight the socio-economic motives that drive the story: the fact that neither John Dashwood nor his father are going to be the protagonists of that story – and the elder Mr Dashwood, of course, will disappear altogether – emphasizes the importance of what they say. Again, however, the effect created for the viewer in this opening scene is not merely linguistic, but multimodal: various visual and aural details

contribute to the creation of a film-world that is much more ambiguous, and perhaps more disquieting, than the one the audience is asked to experience in the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice*. Visually, for one thing, this is a world with little light and no colours: the scene opens in complete darkness, and its main part is then shot in a darkened room lit only by a few slender tapers.[28] As for the soundtrack, the opening piece for piano, strings and recorder is not dissimilar in effect from the one heard in Wright's film: but in this case the music ends when the action starts, to be replaced by footsteps, the creaking of the bed, and the subdued voices of the characters.

Sombre is the adjective that comes most readily to mind for a general description of this sequence – and the mood it describes is perfectly in keeping with the audio-visual representation of a man's death. The effect, however, is not limited to the opening sequence: the following shots, which dramatize John Dashwood's change of mind about helping his half-sisters financially, as brought about by his wife, are bathed in light; yet it is a cold, white kind of light with very few splashes of colour. In general, this is the dominant palette in the film – and when Marianne falls dangerously ill near the end, many visual details are reprised from the opening scene, down to the six yellow streaks against a dark background that are probably produced by the fire in both sickrooms.

[28] See T. van Leeuwen, *The Language of Colour*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2011, p. 20.

A. Lee – *Sense and Sensibility* (1995)

Apart from the general darkness shrouding the opening scene, much of its significance is – as happens in Wright's *Pride and Prejudice*, but with predictably different results – conveyed by modes other than the linguistic. The body language and facial expressions of the two characters, in particular, can be said to represent their mental states, and the way these develop in the course of their exchange. After John's entrance, the scene is realized as a conventional series of medium close-ups alternating between father and son. The contrast between the two actors is marked: the father is lying in his bed, but as tensely as his state allows, his eyes bulging when he repeatedly bids John "help them"; John himself is sitting upright, almost motionless, his mouth twitching occasionally in his faltering reassurances to his father. Their voices form a similar kind of contrast – the father's being strong and determined, though relatively hushed, while his son's is almost a whisper. When he is asked to do something for his stepmother and half-sisters, John either stammers or mouths several mute syllables before he recovers his voice.

A. Lee – *Sense and Sensibility* (1995)

As seen before, the three opening chapters of *Sense and Sensibility* offer the orientation the readers need to find their way in the narrative: some of that orientation, however, is value-laden. Thus, readers are told that Mr and Mrs John Dashwood are mean-spirited before they get a chance to see or hear their actual words. In Ang Lee's film, much of this evaluative work is done by visual rather than linguistic means, or by visual and linguistic means combined. The second scene, in which Mrs John Dashwood talks her husband into giving nothing to their needy relatives, is a visual confirmation that the body language and facial signals exhibited by John Dashwood in his final interview with his father are not to be taken as symptoms of a generous disposition. His wife, in fact, is only slightly more upright and expressionless than he is, her voice as cold as her demeanour. Her first words, heard before her figure is seen, while the camera is shooting a street in a wealthy neighbourhood, provide a cohesive connection to the previous scene ("Help them? What do you mean, help

them?") – and the icily indignant tone in which these words are spoken leave one in little doubt as to the real chances of her father-in-law's last wish being fulfilled.

Diametrically opposed as they are in execution and effect, Wright's and Lee's opening scenes neatly demonstrate the vast and varied resources available to film-makers for orienting and influencing their audiences. While both films dispense with a narrative voice, and therefore lose the complexity created by the fine dialogic interplay between narrators and characters in Austen's novels, they make up for this loss through the deployment of audio-visual means that provide information and evaluation, much in the manner of a fictional narrator. In a sense, this kind of multimodal narrative can be even heavier-handed than Austen's most decisive narrative interventions: the light of dawn stands for high hopes and the prime of life, while deep darkness stands for sadness and death; a slow, expanding piano piece in the major key creates an atmosphere of romantic serenity; a smiling, book-stroking actress must surely be the romantic heroine, whereas two uptight, unsmiling actors are probably to be identified with the villains. In both cases, even before a single word is spoken by the actual protagonists (Elizabeth Bennet and Elinor Dashwood), the viewer has already been introduced to the main moral, aesthetic and ideological motives of these two contrasting adaptations.

5. *An attempt at narrative irony?*

Another relevant, but technically different example of how the function of a fictional narrator can be multimodally replicated is Ang Lee's recreation of Willoughby's definitive parting with Marianne and the rest of

the Dashwood family. In chapter 15 of *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne runs upstairs "in violent affliction"[29] when her mother and sisters come back from Lady Middleton's; the rest of the family confront Willoughby over this, only to learn that he must go immediately and that he too is violently upset; then Mrs Dashwood quits the parlour "to give way in solitude to the concern and alarm which this sudden departure occasioned";[30] in about half an hour she comes back and has a long chat with Elinor, in which she tries to defend Willoughby's behaviour against her daughter's sounder judgment; Marianne appears at lunchtime, unforthcoming, her eyes "red and swollen [...] her tears [...] restrained with difficulty".[31] Austen's narrator opens chapter 16 ironically, noting that "Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby"[32] – while also admitting that this time her real feelings are much stronger than her 'literary' ones, and leave "her in no danger" of having any rest.[33]

While not necessarily replicating this exact chain of events or this rather explicit ironic swipe, Ang Lee's rendition of this scene is arguably ironic in ways that Austen might have recognized. In the film, everything is necessarily more succint: Marianne, in tears, repairs to a drawing room as Willoughby talks to her family (who have been to church, not on a visit to their neighbours); Mrs Dashwood joins her when Willoughby goes; Elinor watches from the threshold; Marianne runs upstairs, still crying uncontrollably; her mother and Elinor sit down to discuss the thing; Mrs Dashwood grows angry at Elinor's apparent scepticism and storms upstairs too, followed by Elinor who is crying "Mama! I am very fond of

[29] J. Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, cit., p. 87 (I, 15).
[30] Ibidem, p. 89 (I, 15).
[31] Ibidem, p. 95 (I, 15).
[32] Ibidem, p. 96 (I, 16).
[33] Ibidem.

Willoughby. Mama!"; upstairs, all the other members of the family shut or lock themselves in their rooms, and Elinor is left alone on the landing with a cup of tea. All this – the cinematic recreation of a crucial chapter of the book – lasts a mere three minutes in a 135-minute film.

What is most striking about this scene, however, is not so much its duration or its textual organization as its visual presentation – particularly at the end, when Elinor is left alone on the first-floor landing. In narratological terms, Elinor has already been established for most of the film as the director's reflector, and this particular sequence is no exception. When she follows her mother upstairs, for instance, the camera follows her before changing its position to a point above the first-floor landing. On the landing, Elinor also finds Margaret, who has apparently been trying to get into Marianne's room, but to no avail ("She will not let me in", she says as she hands Elinor the teacup).

A. Lee – *Sense and Sensibility* (1995)

When Margaret also disappears into the central door in a row of three (Marianne, Margaret, Mrs Dashwood), Elinor looks at her, then at the teacup, at Marianne's door, at Margaret's closing door, at her mother's locked door and again at the teacup, before she sits down on the steps of the staircase leading above and sips the tea. The audience is mostly unable to see her face, as it is mostly turned towards the doors and hidden by a cap – but they can see the little head-twitches that reflect her divided, shifting attention. Again, one is invited to look at the scene as if from her point of view, though Elinor herself is shot from above by a camera that can be said to be in the position of a heterodiegetic narrator (because it is out of frame, self-evidently, but also because its distance from the protagonist – this is a rather wide shot – reminds one that one is also watching Elinor from the outside). And though there is no explicit commentary in the ending of the scene, point of view can be grasped in its ideological as well as its physical sense, because Elinor's body language and her subtle gestures will be taken by most viewers as a commentary on her family's behaviour, or as an evaluation of the situation as a whole.

A. Lee – *Sense and Sensibility* (1995)

In conclusion, while too much cannot been made of the parallel between two arts whose modes and techniques are largely different, one may feel that the realization of the final shot in this sequence is an attempt at reproducing Austen's wry, terse narrative descriptions. On occasion, these descriptions appear to make statements that are either unrelated or under-informative with regard to the state of affairs that is being described.[34] In *Sense and Sensibility*, for instance, when Lucy Steele complains that she rarely sees Edward Ferrars (she is actually trying to impress Elinor with the idea that she has a prior claim on him), the narrator merely reports: "she took out her handkerchief; but Elinor did not feel very compassionate".[35] Rather than explicitly stating that this is all a pretence on Lucy Steele's part, or that Elinor thought so, at any rate, the narrator merely describes Elinor's state of mind in rather general terms, leaving the reader to understand the implicature created by her reticence. The effect, for many readers, may be one of ironic communion with the narrator's and/or reflector's evaluation of the rapacious Lucy Steele.

In the scene described above, Elinor's physical reactions can be read in much the same manner. Since no explicit commentary is offered at this stage by the narrator or by any of the characters, the protagonist's demeanour and gestures can be interpreted by the audience in terms of fuzzy evaluation. And if one had to back-translate the final shot into narrative discourse, one could come up with a factual description which invites the reader to look for more in the protagonist's attitude:

[34] See P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 22-57 and M. Morini, *Austen's Narrative Techniques. A Stylistic and Pragmatic Analysis*, cit., p. 42.

[35] J. Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, cit., p. 153 (I, 22).

> "Elinor took the teacup and watched Margaret as she opened the door in front of her, and immediately closed it behind her back. Then she looked at Marianne's locked door on the left, and at her mother's locked door on the right. Finally, she sat down on the steps of the staircase leading up, and sipped her tea."

That conclusive "sipped her tea" sounds like the narrator of *Sense and Sensibility* at her most wryly uncooperative – and it is a measure of Lee's ability as a director, rather than of the present writer's mimetic talents, that this cinematic scene translates so smoothly into something that might, if taken in isolation, sound just like Austen.

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SERENA BAIESI

REMEDIATING JANE AUSTEN THROUGH THE GOTHIC: "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES"

Since the end of nineteenth century, Jane Austen has held celebrity status not just in England but also throughout Europe. While her life and novels have been subject to intense scholarly study, she also has attracted fans from all around the world in what could be described as a cult following:

> "Jane Austen has occupied a position within English-speaking culture that is both popular and canonical, accessible and complexly inaccessible, fixed and certain yet wonderfully amenable to shifts of sensibility and cultural assumptions."[1]

Austen has accordingly been acknowledged as cultural commodity, one bound to produce expectations even in those who have not read her novels. Her success as an infinitely exploitable global brand, or conceptual

[1] K. Sutherland, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives. From Aeschylus to Bollywood*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, backcover.

product, has everything to do with recognition and little to do with critical understanding. As a consequence, her appeal has been powerful enough to distort interpretations of her life and works, and to inspire many kinds of adaptations. A global celebrity as well as a popular novelist, Austen's plots prove complex as they simultaneously meet the requirements of satirical, gothic, romance and erotic fantasy literature, offering meditations on personal and gender relations as well as social interactions.

In conjunction with worldwide celebrations of *Pride and Prejudice*'s 2013 bicentennial, we have witnessed a surge of adaptations of its plot, characters, and settings across several new media. In response to these proliferating works, this article investigates transformations of Austen brought about by those new adaptations, focusing specifically on the well-known mash-up, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), a gothic story based on Austen's most famous novel by the American writer Seth Grahame-Smith. Before analysing this work's content and relation to Austen's novel, I first want to examine the role of the gothic in nineteenth-century sentimental novels, including the prevalence of figures such as zombies, monsters and vampires, and topics such as plague, tyranny, slavery and revolution. By no means a modern invention, the gothic has its roots in the literature of Austen's time.

1. *The Gothic tradition*

In contrast with eighteenth-century neoclassicism, the gothic traditionally has been associated with the primitive, the barbarous, and the savage.[2] Gothic literature was partly the product of a growing interest in the

[2] See D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror, a History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, London, Longman, 1996.

transformative power of the sublime, that aesthetic category Edmund Burke defined as the experience and recognition of pleasure derived from objects of terrors,[3] and to which Anna Laetitia Barbauld *née* Aikin included passion and imagination as the genre's key elements. In *On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terrors* (1773) she describes how

> "*a* strange and unexpected event awakens the mind, and keeps it on the stretch; and where the agency of invisible beings is introduced, of 'forms unseen, and mightier far than we,' our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers. Passion and fancy cooperating elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amazement. Hence the more wild, fanciful, and extraordinary are the circumstance of a scene of horror, the more pleasure we receive from it; and where they are too near common nature, though violently borne by curiosity through the adventure, we cannot repeat it or reflect on it, without an overbalance of pain. *The Castle of Otranto* is a very spirited modern attempt upon the same plan of mixed terror, adapted to the model of Gothic romance."[4]

This popular literature was transformed and reshaped from the end of eighteenth century through the Victorian period, culminating with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the ultimate embodiment of gothic monstrosity. Indeed, the English gothic tradition is rooted in a preoccupation with the inherited power and corruption of the feudal aristocracy, as well as the regressive and unequal dynamics of archaic authority, including the hierarchies of the Roman Catholic Church.[5] Ann Radcliffe's romances written at the end of eighteenth century, for example, share with the subsequent gothic novels of the Romantic and Victorian periods the desire to stage social and political conflicts, such as unequal gender relations,

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[3] See E. Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*…, in Id., *The Works*, with a general introduction by the late Judge Willis and a preface by F. W. Raffety, Oxford, Humphrey Milford – Oxford University Press, 1925, vol. I, pp. 65-219.

[4] A. L. Aikin, *On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terrors*, in Id. and J. Aikin, *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose*, London, J. Johnson, 1773, p. 125.

[5] See C. Baldick, *Introduction*, in *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, edited by C. Baldick, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. XX.

corrupt aristocratic powers, and middle class anxieties about historical revision.

Transformed and adapted by new media, the gothic tradition of the present is still very much in fashion, proliferating in a wide range of forms: from novels to graphic novels, from films to TV shows, and from videogames to mobile phone applications. Though long considered popular entertainment for newly enlarged reading publics, the gothic continues to be a site where rationality and unexplainable mysteries of the mind conflict and confront one another. As I stated above, the genre originated at the end of eighteenth century with the aim of undermining, manipulating, and critiquing Enlightenment rationalism; our modern gothic forms still embody and give voice to contentious issues like undefined identities, confrontations with otherness, and social struggles. Nowadays many artists employ the genre to engage a large audience of both adults and young adults, expanding canonical tropes and figures like vampires, werewolves, ghosts, zombies, and other monsters into new media such TV, movies, and the Web.

How, then, do Jane Austen's canonical 'novels of manners' fit into this long tradition of gothic fiction? Indeed, it was long before Austen began publishing her works that Radcliffe inaugurated a tradition of female heroines searching for happiness and fulfilment in dangerous gothic settings. In Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), for example, the protagonist, Emily, faces the villainous Montoni in order to save her lover's life and keep possession of her inherited estates. The romance repeatedly depicts the stereotypical scenario of men abusing, torturing, and kidnapping women in order to wield power over them. Thus, Radcliffe's work succinctly represents the fraught gender politics of late eighteenth-century Britain. Though set in a distant past, the story remains "both profoundly realistic – that is, its plots speak the realities of the culture from which they

emerge – and consistently daring in its exploration of formal, psychological, and social possibility".[6] The Gothic here is manifested not only in settings like the mysterious castle of Udolpho, but also in the societal architecture in which women live and act. Moreover, the author demonstrates how "the mind has an unlimited power over external reality" so much so that "many readers found this an intoxicating and revelatory experience".[7] The gothic aptly represents the patriarchal system in which Radcliffe, as well as Austen after her, wrote and sought literary fame. Together with Radcliffe, between the 1790s and the 1820s more than fifty women writers engaged what we now call now the female gothic, following "the dynamic argument that Radcliffe proposes in her fiction concerning sexuality and political morality".[8]

Of her six published works, Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (whose first draft is dated back to 1798-9 but the publication came out only in 1817) is the most indebted to Radcliffe's gothic innovations; it examines both the aesthetic of the rationalized supernatural and the discourse of sensibility and sexuality. Satirizing the popular gothic, Austen deploys the tropes of sentimental fiction and female education in depicting her heroine. In accordance with the traditional manners and social dynamics of the time, Catherine Morland enters the fashionable society of Bath, England. Though an avid reader of gothic novels, she reads them with an uncritical eye and engages in the self-indulgent interpretation of reality through the lens of fantasy. She soon discovers, however, that what is truly frightening is not the books she reads but the patriarchal society that imposes strict rules on her life preventing her from marrying above her station or from trascending

[6] P. Meyer Spacks, *Desire and Truth: Function of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 3.

[7] M. Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 68.

[8] Ibidem.

her class status. In this novel, Austen both parodies and defends novels and novel-reading, that genre of fiction in which

> " […] the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most through knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusion of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language."[9]

She neutralizes the more sensational conventions of the gothic and sentimental novel, and, in the process, exposes a tyrannical and cruel society that takes advantage of a young girl's lively imagination but especially because she belongs to a lower social class. While Catherine never faces zombies or vampires, the novel casts the villain – General Tilney – as a controlling tyrant who greatly resembles the malicious criminals of Radcliffe's gothic romances that Austen greatly admired: "domestic tranquillity and fashionable modernity, Austen argues, are the true location of modern terror".[10]

In their novels, both Radcliffe and Austen depict male and especially female characters preoccupied with social and economic issues, including estates, incomes, and class statuses. Such concerns crop up in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), for instance, where Austen takes overt stances on a number of political and social issues connected to gender and class relations. Even in an enclosed setting of just "3 or 4 Families in a Country Village,"[11] the writer speaks about major moments of social and political unrest in England during the Georgian period. Through her treatment of the issue of the entail, for example, Austen challenges and condemns the period's legal conventions of inheritance, advocating for a freer dimension

[9] J. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, edited by B. M. Benedict and D. Le Faye, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 31 (I, 5).

[10] M. Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, cit., p. 69.

[11] J. Austen, *Letters*, Collected and Edited by D. Le Faye, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2011[4], p. 275 (letter to Anna Austen, 9-18 September 1814).

of courtship and marriage. The main character, Elizabeth Bennet, openly diverges from the model of conduct-books and sentimental heroines, just as Catherine Morland did before her. However, contrary to her predecessor, Elizabeth is an accomplished and rational reader; she openly affirms her will and displays her complex personality through her satirical conversation, sense of humour, and sharp intelligence. Thanks to her wit and outspokenness, she embodies a kind of femininity different from the typically passive, vulnerable, and child-like romantic characters. Austen called her independent and open-minded heroine "as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print".[12] The qualities that distinguished Elizabeth from common heroines familiar to Austen's contemporary audiences continue to appeal modern readers, making her the most immediately attractive of all Austen's heroines.

2. *Re-adapting the tradition: the Jane Austen mania*

This explains why the majority of Austen adaptations and rewritings have taken up *Pride and Prejudice*, which has been seen as the 'flexible' and modern of Austen's novels. Rewriting this sentimental novel within a gothic framework allows for the re-contextualisation of two genres in one: it accommodates both the gothic's central theme "of female constraint and persecution, its fictive indulgence in forbidden lusts and passions", and the sentimental novel, "with its ideal of 'romantic' picture of life and its over-valuation of erotic love as the key to female happiness".[13] This is what contemporary reading publics desire:

[12] Ibidem, p. 201 (letter to Cassandra Austen, 29 January 1813).

[13] A. Richardson, *Reading Practices*, in *Jane Austen in Context*, edited by J. Todd, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 399.

" […] unique to our era is the impulse to infiltrate Austen's novels with – or, depending on your point of view, open them up to – sex and erotica, as well as horror and paranormal content that is equally out of place in her realistic fictional world. […] Elements absents in Austen's writings or kept to a minimum by her are made explicit and expanded to suit the taste of a particular group of present-day readers."[14]

The so-called Austen mania has created addictive readers who crave anything about her life and work, as well as those works celebrating Austen as public icon, no matter the authenticity, vehicle, or literary merit. As a consequence, every reader has his – but most of all, her – own version of Austen from primary or secondary sources, whether they be original novels, modern sequels, television or film adaptations, blogs or video games. There are no limits to what this mania can produce in terms of literary and media adaptations and genre contaminations.

Readers' appetites for Austen-inspired fiction seems insatiable, as does their enthusiasm for attempting to recreate the worlds of her novels. Austen's many devotees, including fans of screen adaptations of her novels, have voiced their enthusiasm in fiction and non-fiction, in genres ranging from advice guides, cookbooks, blogs, memoirs and horror novels. Such works shed light on Austen's present-day popularity, a phenomenon undoubtedly of concern to all Austen scholars. Many of these works actively, even gleefully, challenge our scholarly practices concerning how texts should be read, discussed, and responded to in writing.[15] Moreover, in recent years Austen spin-offs have overlapped with other cultural fields, such as the gothic. North-American writers are evidently less affected than English ones by reverence of Austen as a cultural figure, while US publishers and filmmakers have demonstrated a readiness to invest in ever

[14] J. Wells, *Everybody's Jane. Austen in the Popular Imagination*, London, Continuum, 2011, pp. 177-178.

[15] See Id., *New Approaches to Austen and the Popular Reader*, in *Uses of Austen: Jane's Afterlives*, edited by G. Dow and C. Hanson, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2012, p. 78.

more audacious reworkings of the Austen brand.[16] These kinds of Austen hybrids are mostly an American phenomenon, although some works, like Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, have reached an enthusiastic international audience.

Individual Austen hybrids differ in their degrees of distance from the original world and works of Jane Austen; these popular romances are some of the best-known examples of what might be called an extreme intervention into Austen's literary field. Nevertheless, Grahame-Smith's gothic rewriting of the novel should not be reduced to a mere marketing scheme; rather, the gothic themes and tropes directly relate to the original as well as gothic traditions of the Romantic period. Indeed, for the most part *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* consists of Austen's original prose: according to the author, "some 85% of the text is from Austen's bookshelf classic," while "rotting-flesh monsters seem to fit naturally in the Austen's world of ritual and melodrama."[17] As the American writer suggests, Austen's polished novel of manners already contains inklings of gothic horror; the novel addresses conflicts of culture and identity and, more specifically, themes like nationalism, displacement, otherness, masked repulsion and attraction for the unknown, as well as combined feelings of passion and pleasure, fear and torment. Testing the boundaries of gothic parody, Grahame-Smith's adaptation brings these gothic themes and issues to the fore, subsequently revealing their presence in Austen's original text.

This gothic mash-up – famously adapted into a movie and an interactive mobile application – features the Bennet sisters living in a Regency England overrun by zombies and forced to become fighters and

[16] See Id., *Everybody's Jane. Austen in the Popular Imagination*, cit., p. 178.

[17] G. Boucher, *"Pride & Prejudice & Zombies" to be "incredible true" to Austen*, in "Los Angeles Times", insert *Hero Complex. Pop Culture Unmasked*, Augustus 22, 2011, web address www.herocomplex.latimes.com/books/pride-prejudice-zombies-to-be-incredibly-true-to-austen/.

masters of eastern weapons but still in search for suitable husbands. Similar in context, but unlike in content, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* introduces us to the well-known world of the Bennet family with the key difference that horrible monsters populate the countryside at Netherfield Park. The invasion of monsters that spread death and plague metaphorically represents the British Empire's dark history of colonization and slavery. Emerging from a postcolonial reading of the original, these zombies, like slaves, arrive in England from the colonies in order to exact revenge for their sufferings. As a consequence, in Austen's time "zombies" stood as a marker for central issues of slavery and colonialism. More specifically, these monsters occasioned the remembrance of slavery in the American colonies, evoking moments of resistance and rebellion on the part of enslaved Africans. Indeed, the first accounts of zombies appeared in eighteenth-century histories of West Indian sugar colonies, where slaves' degraded living and working conditions were reimagined as a kind of living death. Significantly, these accounts appeared most frequently during moments of cultural and political tension in the colonies, instances of brutal violence narrated by newspapers and travel reports. Such events included numerous rebellions, the abolition of the slave trade, and slaves' subsequent emancipation and independence. Zombies were also considered cannibals, a label used to evidence the civilised authorities' moral superiority over the supposedly barbarous slaves.[18]

[18] M. Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, cit., p. 218: "In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term 'zombie' referred to a constellation of gothic prosperities related to slave culture in the Caribbean: the leader of maroon rebels, a ghost or revenant, or a demon-lover in the shape of an impossibility seductive young woman. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the figure of the zombie is revived and rewritten, remade in new circumstances. The new zombie of the modern era, nonetheless, does not forget its slave heritage, the status of the revenant, or its role in colonial desire".

3. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*

Graham-Smith's zombie insertions in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* are particularly striking against the backdrop of the original novel's familiar prose; in particular, they highlight parallels between Austen's Regency England and Graham-Smith's cosmopolitan twenty-first century. Specifically, they illuminate women's roles in both societies, as well as disease's ability to represent issues of alterity that arise from contact with otherness.

Of these issues, women's societal roles are central to both original text and modern mash-up. In Graham-Smith's version, the opening chapter mimics the original in terms of characters, dialogue and social dynamics, as Mr. and Mrs. Bennet discuss Mr. Bingley's arrival at Netherfield Park. The fact that he is "a single man of four or five thousand a year" attracts Mrs. Bennet's attention as "a fine thing for our girls!" When Mr. Bennet replies with a sceptical "how so?" he does not ask the original version's question of "how can it affect them?" but rather, "Can he train them in the ways of swordmanship and musketry?".[19] Following Austen's original dialogue, Mrs. Bennet responds, "How can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them".[20] If it is Mrs. Bennet's goal to marry off her daughters, it is Mr. Bennet's to keep them safe from dangerous zombies. Indeed, navigating the marriage market remains the primary concern for Regency women even in a world inhabited by the un-dead.

In Graham-Smith's adaptation, the Bennet sisters are empowered modern women; active rather than passive, they undertake physical training to fortify their bodies and minds. Their education consists not of lessons on

[19] J. Austen and S. Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, cit., p. 7.
[20] Ibidem.

embroidery and music but on war tactics and combat training. Elizabeth is "a warrior first, and a woman second," and her sisters "servants of His Majesty, protectors of Hertfordshire" who resist invasion and constant attacks from the "unmentionables."

Just as in the original, societal roles form the basis of human relationships even when zombies are involved. "Although zombies are restored to life, they do no reoccupy their previous place in society",[21] indeed, in this modern novel they pose a serious threat to the British nation's stability. Even though these creatures belonged to the gentry, middle or upper classes when they were humans, once they became zombies, they were banned from any kind of interaction with members of those classes. In a world where Englishness and zombiness oppose one another, zombies are excluded not only because of their non-human status but also because of their non-social position.

The plague is another important theme of Graham-Smith's novel as well as a recurring motif in Romantic literature. Mary Shelley's apocalyptical science-fiction novel *The Last Man* (1826), for instance, stages the plague as an epidemic that emerges from the Orient and destroys the United Kingdom, leaving a single man alive on the entire planet. Similarly, in Graham-Smith's adaptation, Mr. Collins contaminates Charlotte Lucas on their wedding night and her contamination could be interpreted as punishment for choosing marriage instead of serving the country in battle:

> "Charlotte was already showing the earliest signs of transformation, though she took great care to hide them from all but the trained eye. Her skin had taken on a slight pallor, and her speech seemed a trifle laboured."[22]

[21] M. Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, cit., p. 206.
[22] Ibidem, p. 110.

The theme of orientalism also plays a role in the mash-up, not only in terms of aesthetic description but also in reference to the girls' education and training. At the beginning, we learn that the Bennet sisters' training took place in both England and "during their trips to the Orient"[23]. Moreover, Darcy's residence at Pemberley is designed in a Japanese style, where "the natural beauty of the Orient had been so little counteracted by English taste".[24] Darcy's housekeeper, "a respectable-looking English woman, dressed in a kimono and shuffling about on bound feet", introduces guests into the dining-parlour, "a large, well proportionated room, handsomely fitted up with art and furniture from Darcy's beloved Japan".[25]

Oriental influence plays an even more prominent role in the novel's description of the differences between Chinese and Japanese martial arts. The dichotomy between the two becomes a way to articulate the disparity in class and social status between the middle-class Bennet family and the upper class Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Darcy. Where Lady Catherine trains in a sophisticated Japanese studio imported from Kyoto and employs private ninjas, Elizabeth wields a Katana sword from China. For Lady Catherine, the sword is a marker of Elizabeth's poor education; she regards Elizabeth as inferior because of her fighting abilities that metaphorically stand for her social class. Just as in the original novel, women's position in society depends on the quality of their education and family income, markers Graham-Smith translates into talent in combat and martial training. Lady Catherine reminds Elizabeth of her inadequate martial arts education, which was carried out by a Chinese monk. As evening entertainment, she challenges Elizabeth to fight three ninjas whom the heroine easily overcomes:

[23] Ibidem, p. 17.
[24] Ibidem, p. 194.
[25] Ibidem, p. 195.

"She delivered a vicious blow, penetrating his rib cage, and withdrew her hand – with the ninja's still-beating heart in it. As all but Lady Catherine turned away in disgust, Elizabeth took a bite, letting the blood run down her chin and onto her sparring gown".[26]

Elizabeth's vampirism symbolizes her desire to elevate herself from the middle class to aristocracy. Elsewhere in the novel, the gentry and upper classes are portrayed as vampires who increase their income by sucking the blood of the labouring classes, a trope that persists from John William Polidori's short story to Stoker's Dracula.

Graham-Smith similarly transforms the scene in which Mr. Darcy's declares his love to Elizabeth, a key moment in the novel. In this rewriting, Elizabeth responds not only with anger but also with violence towards Darcy; she is a warrior in both domestic and public spheres. While the dialogue remains generally unchanged, the description of her body language suits her dynamic female temper. After Darcy professes his feelings, she violently kicks him:

"Elisabeth presently attacked with a series of kicks, forcing him to counter with the drunken washwoman defence. She spoke as they battled. […] One of her kicks found its mark, and Darcy was sent into the mantelpiece with some force as to shatter its edge. Wiping the blood from his mouth, he looked at her with a smile of affected incredulity".[27]

Surprisingly, Elizabeth's violent reaction increases Darcy's esteem for her; through her display of skilful combat and physical strength, she asserts superiority over him. Yet, as in the original, Elizabeth discloses weakness that casts her as a truly feminine warrior:

[26] Ibidem, p. 132.
[27] Ibidem, p. 151.

"The tumult of her mind was now painfully great. She knew not how to support herself, and from the feminine weakness which she had so struggled to exercise from her nature, sat down and cried for half an hour."[28]

The gothic mash-up concludes with a happy ending and the possibility of a sequel, which, the narrative suggests, might follow the happy couple's future adventures after their marriage takes place surrounded by zombies. Indeed, every character receives his or her own unique ending: Charlotte dies after Lady Catherine cuts off her head, while Mr. Collins kills himself by "hanging from a branch of Charlotte's favourite tree".[29] Mr Wickham, meanwhile, suffers a carriage accident that confines him to a wheelchair where he is "unable to move his limbs, or control his personal business",[30] and moves to Ireland with Lydia. Even as England "remained in the shadow of Satan" while "the dead continued to claw their way through crypt and coffin like, feasting on British brains", we are told that "Victories were celebrated, defeats lamented"[31] while

" [...] the sisters Bennet – servants of His Majesty, protectors of Hertfordshire, beholders of the secrets of Shaolin, and brides of death – were now, three of them, brides of man, their swords quieted by the only force more powerful than any warrior."[32]

Not long after its publication, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was a enormous success thanks in part to its effective marketing by American publisher Quirk Books, a company that publishes innovative and "buzzworthy" print and digital books that "entertain, amuse, and inform"[33] readers. The company also released an application for phones and tablets

[28] Ibidem, p. 153.
[29] Ibidem, p. 238.
[30] Ibidem, p. 242.
[31] Ibidem, p. 317.
[32] Ibidem.
[33] *Quirk Books – Who's Who*, web address www.quirkbooks.com/page/whos-who#.

entitled *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Interactive eBook App*, which includes hundreds of pages of illustrated, interactive zombie mayhem, the complete respective texts of both Jane Austen and Grahame-Smith, and an original musical score and sound effects.

Both gothic rewritings of Austen's novel – *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and its interactive eBook application – are not only inspired by the original but also maintain a dialogue with it; in this way, these works captivate readers and players through a continuous cycling of past and present, tradition and innovation, convention and subversion, seriousness and satire. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* also spawned a graphic novel, prequel and sequel, as well as a 2016 film of the same name directed by Burr Steers.[34] The last of these has been moderately received by the box office and had an unenthusiastic critical reception. Acknowledging that "in Austen's novel, the mutually hostile Elizabeth and Darcy are already combatants of a kind whose primary weapons are their witty, wounding, deeply meaningful words", the critic recognizes how Austen employed subversive narrative strategies without staging zombies: "the larger problem is that each moment spent on this movie is another spent away from Austen's novel".[35] Discussion of the mash-up persists on blogs and forums dedicated to Jane Austen, where fans enjoy the challenge of unearthing the original Austen between additions of zombies and bloody battles. These modern rewritings can indeed be read and interpreted in several ways: as sterile exploitations of a popular brand for profit – as seems to be the case with most Austen spin-offs – or as fascinating

[34] See B. Steers, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Cross Creek Pictures – Sierra Pictures, USA – UK, 2016.

[35] M. Dargis, *"Pride and Prejudice and Zombies"; More Tea, Dear?*, in "The New York Times", February 4, 2016, web address www.nytimes.com/2016/02/05/movies/pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-review.html?_r=0.

multimedia interpretations of canonical novels. Indeed, Grahame-Smith's adaptation sheds light on the significant parallels between Austen's world and ours. New revisions of old novels can actually offer modes of expression for contemporary audiences to cope with the pressures of modern society, which, like Austen's Regency England, is often frightening and mysterious rather than stable and rational: in this way, the zombie personifies an imperial critique of modernity itself.

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PAOLA PARTENZA

REVISITING "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE": P. D. JAMES'S "DEATH COMES TO PEMBERLEY"

1. *Jane Austen's characters*

In recent years, critics have repeatedly stressed that the linguistic power of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) resides in the author's ability to model her characters according to a view based on what might be defined as a specific "life-language relation".[1] Despite her depiction of female characters through "the representation of ordinary people performing the rituals and routines of daily living",[2] the author gives life to a heroine who is an autonomous and independent figure. Elizabeth Bennet is "a complicated and penetrating heroine",[3] who, as she improves as a

[1] G. Agamben, *The End of the Poem. Studies in Poetics*, translated by D. Heller-Roazen, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 78.

[2] J. F. Blackall, *Eudora Welty. The Silent Mentors*, in *American Literary Mentors*, Editors I. C. Goldman-Price and M. McFarland Pennell, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1999, p. 167.

[3] A. H. Wright, *Elizabeth Bennet*, in *Elizabeth Bennet*, Edited and with an introduction by H. Bloom, Broomall, Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, p. 47.

reflective character, begins to acquire "good reason to credit herself with the ability to discern people and situations extraordinarily well".[4]

Some scholars have argued that Austen never epitomises a faithful historical picture of the world she lived in,[5] but, conversely, she primarily focuses on portraying characters that symbolise the characteristic stability of the society of her time: "Jane Austen regards the characters, good and bad alike, with ironical amusement, because they never see the situation as it really is and as she sees it".[6] In contrast,

> "*f*or the most part the people are as fixed and repetitive as the linked routines and established social rituals which dominate their lives. Money is a potential (never an actual) problem, and courtship has its own personal dramas; but everything tends towards the achieving of satisfactory marriages […] ."[7]

The very beginning of the novel presents readers with a situation that is seemingly unchangeable, as expressed by the famous incipit and its "truth universally acknowledged".[8] As these words categorically state a firmly held opinion in Austen's society, they convey the idea that everything in the novel is created *by* and *for* the respect of this universal

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[4] Ibidem, p. 38.

[5] Edward Neill, instead, sees the author as being involved in a wider debate that simultaneously focuses on past and present, social change and continuity: "Jane Austen's fictional discourse is much more politically destabilised and destabilising than the critical convoy for Austen's work has been at all eager to acknowledge" (E. Neill, *The Politics of Jane Austen*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. IX). See also D. Looser, *The Cult of "Pride and Prejudice" and its Author*, in *The Cambridge Companion to "Pride and Prejudice"*, edited by J. Todd, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 174-185; *Alchimie austeniane. Donne, fortuna e altre storie in "Pride and Prejudice" di Jane Austen*, a cura di P. Partenza, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2015; D. Saglia, *Leggere Austen*, Roma, Carocci, 2016.

[6] A. C. Bradley, *Jane Austen: A Lecture*, in J. Austen, *Emma*, An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Reviews, and Criticism, Edited by S. M. Parrish, New York, Norton, 1993, p. 355.

[7] T. Tanner, *Jane Austen*, London, Macmillan, 1992, p. 105.

[8] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by P. Rogers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 3 (I, 1).

conviction. Indeed, "we see from the beginning that her [Austen's] observations are likely to bear an ironic relation to the views, and points of view, of her characters".[9] If it is Mrs Bennet who embodies this belief more than anyone else in the novel does, however, she appears a clumsy strategist who tends to create awkward situations and verbal misunderstandings. Nevertheless, the opening sentence provides a general picture of how language works – its directness is particularly significant – and how this language emerges as an effective means for the interaction between characters, namely, between the members of Mrs Bennet's family and its *other*, that is "a single man […] in want of a wife".[10] It is Elizabeth who most incisively challenges her mother's *idée fixe*. As the most rational character in the Bennet family, Elizabeth balances her mother's obsession with matchmaking[11] and questions her mother's role, thus creating an "interior distance".[12] Still, she is not exempt from misunderstandings incorrect evaluations of her interlocutors. Although she is portrayed as a reasonable figure gifted with a lively and analytical mind,[13] even Elizabeth Bennet may be deceived by a linguistic manipulator such as Wickham, who

[9] E. M. Halliday, *Narrative Perspective in "Pride and Prejudice"*, in *Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice"*, in "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", 15, June 1960, p. 65.

[10] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 3 (I, 1).

[11] As we might argue, Mrs Bennet's claim – evident in the first pages of the novel – is symptomatic of a personality inclination. This specific focus on her intention and action is simply and literally envisaging the events in which she and her possible interlocutors will take part. Gradually, her lack of consciousness metamorphoses into an awareness of what she may do in the future, though "she was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper" (ibidem, p. 5, I, 1) The distortion of her perspective is a distortion of the truth; she does not ponder over the will of others, but, consequently, she reinforces her own idea. Actually, she continues to pursue her plan (that might be read as a need for self-reassurance) despite her husband's reluctance and her daughter's prudence.

[12] P. Ondek Laurence, *The Reading of Silence*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1991, p. 6.

[13] This aspect is evident in "Elizabeth's verbal victory over the interfering Lady Catherine de Bourgh when she arrives to warn Elizabeth against marriage to her nephew, Mr Darcy" (P. D. James, *P. D. James on "Death Comes to Pemberley"*, in Id., *Death Comes to Pemberley*, London, Faber & Faber, 2011, p. 327).

confuses reality with imagination and moral conscience with expediency: "clever and charming, a smooth social being, and for these qualities Elizabeth is ready to believe his long, unsolicited tale of being wronged and even to imagine herself falling in love with him".[14] Thus, "despite her intelligence, wit, and critical energies",[15] Elizabeth is subject to mistakes which make reality and people appear to be different from what they really are. Consequently, only after having developed a full awareness of other people's personalities and characters does she discover the truth. In this way, Elizabeth becomes the instrument of Austen's reflection on characters and society,[16] and her increasing mature personality acquires the features that P. D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley* reprises and develops.

2. *Revisiting "Pride and Prejudice"*

Published in 2011, P. D. James's novel has received considerable attention from criticism; it is not merely a sequel cast in the mode of a murder-mystery narrative, but also a complex tribute to its literary precedent.[17] The novelist has made clear her response to *Pride and Prejudice* and her own work's relation to it as follows:

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[14] M. Mudrick, *Irony as Discrimination: "Pride and Prejudice"*, in *Elizabeth Bennet*, cit., p. 22. Wickham plays a crucial role in P. D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley*.

[15] J. Lowder Newton, *"Pride and Prejudice": Power, Fantasy, and Subversion in Jane Austen*, in "Feminist Studies", 4, February 1978, p. 37.

[16] Thanks to its dialogic nature, *Pride and Prejudice* reveals the author's complex web of convictions about the importance of a disposition to analyse society critically. Austen herself provided this critical attitude, despite her well-known statement that the novel was "rather too light & bright & sparkling" (J. Austen, *Letters*, Collected and Edited by D. Le Faye, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 20114, p. 212, letter to Cassandra Austen, 4 February 1813).

[17] L. Schillinger, *"Pride and Prejudice" and Murder*, in "The New York Times", December 16, 2011: "Not infrequently, while reading *Death Comes to Pemberley*, one succumbs to the impression that it is Austen herself at the keyboard".

"My own feeling about sequels is ambivalent, largely because the greatest writing pleasure for me is in the creation of original characters, and I have never been tempted to take over another writer's people or world, but I can well understand the attraction of continuing the story of Elizabeth and Darcy. Austen's characters take such a hold on our imagination that the wish to know more of them is irresistible […] For me, one of the joys of writing *Death Comes to Pemberley* was revisiting once again the world of Longbourn and Pemberley and finding, as I always do, fresh insights and delights."[18]

In other words, Austen's characters are congenial to her own literary experiment: she has rewritten their experiences and conflicts in a novel that is the expression of her "two lifelong enthusiasms, namely for writing a detective fiction[19] and for the novels of Jane Austen".[20]

Austen's "paradigmatic marriage plot"[21] is bypassed by James, who offers a novel in which everything seems to be already accomplished and where the heroines have happily followed their mother's model: "It was generally agreed by the female residents of Meryton that Mr and Mrs Bennet of Longbourn had been fortunate in the disposal in marriage of four of their five daughters".[22] In fact, the setting, situations and characters appear to be almost the same as in Austen's novel:

"Meryton, a small market town in Hertfordshire is not on the route of any tours of pleasure, having neither beauty of setting nor a distinguished history, while its only great house, Netherfield Park, although impressive, is not mentioned in books about the county's notable architecture. The town has an assembly room where dances are regularly held but no theatre, and the chief entertainment takes place in private houses

[18] P. D. James, *P. D. James on "Death Comes to Pemberley"*, cit., p. 325 and p. 330.

[19] C. Fletcher, *"Death Comes to Pemberley" by P. D. James*, in "Booklist", 108, December 15, 2011, p. 26: "James places a template of Austen characters and Austen-like language over a traditional mystery plot and even takes on the role of the omniscient Austen narrator herself".

[20] P. D. James, *P. D. James on "Death Comes to Pemberley"*, cit., p. 325.

[21] A. Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 45.

[22] P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, cit., p. 1.

where the boredom of dinner parties and whist tables, always with the same company, is delivered by gossip."[23]

The Bennets, William Collins, Charlotte Lucas, Mr Bingley, Darcy, Colonel Fitzwilliam, Wickham, the Gardiners, and most of the minor characters in Austen's scenario return in James's novel. Each of them seems to have preserved their own basic characteristics. Yet, things are not so simple. James's interpretation of the Austenian heroine is quite unusual; her critical reading of Elizabeth's nature reinforces the reader's idea that she is portrayed as a mature and silent character who formulates rational and objective thoughts and opinions. It appears that her radically changed condition is accompanied by an equally radical displacement of meaning and role. James's description transforms Elizabeth into a heroine who is the embodiment of an interior narration,[24] a figure who is able to entrust her own reflections only to herself, avoiding useless conjectures which might create further misunderstandings and, consequently, reinforce prejudice.

3. *Time and silence*

James's investigation of social and psychological conflicts and depictions of specific cultural and social environments is a hallmark of Austen's realism, but James transposes the forces that conditioned and informed *Pride and Prejudice* into her work so as to shape the circumscribed society of *Death Comes to Pemberley*. As an interpreter and a close reader of Austen's text, James focuses her attention on the interior life of characters whose subjectivity is expressed through language and

[23] Id., *Death Comes to Pemberley*, cit., p. 1.
[24] See P. Ondek Laurence, *The Reading of Silence*, cit., pp. 13-55.

silence alike.[25] Thus, she delineates and follows a temporal fluctuation informed by inner reflections on past events, which provides the reader with a clear idea of the relationship between "the narrator and the characters and the characters to one another".[26] For this purpose, she borrows the Austenian chain of events, giving a strong impulse to her characters and creating a movement made of 'befores' and 'nows',[27] which leads to the reconstruction of a microcosm based on a seemingly unexpected and unusual disorder. James rewrites a line of continuity in which the past is the *has been* and the 'nows' of the characters establish a new beginning. Her novel is "a closely-knit fabric composed of both threads".[28] What she aims at is to show how her views on her characters' flexibility of movement influence the movement of their minds, producing new events and shaping the temporal rhythm of the novel. This movement also stands for the mechanism of James's writing, one which "leads the reader from the known to the unknown".[29]

James analyses the evolution of a few characters focusing on an event, the murder, which constitutes the starting point for an interpretation of the issue and its subsequent influence on the lives and views of the protagonists involved. In this fashion, she explores how their experience reveals mental schemas that result in familiar and recognisable structures, though she also liberates the text from its traditional confines through the

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[25] See, for *Mansfield Park*, J. Preston, *The Silence of the Novel*, in "Modern Language Review", 74, April 1979, pp. 257-267.

[26] J. Hillis Miller, *Time and Intersubjectivity*, in *The Victorian Novel*, Edited with an introduction by H. Bloom, New York, Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, pp. 201-216.

[27] See P. M. Bray, *The Novel Map: Space and Subjectivity in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction*, Chicago, Northwestern University Press, 2013, pp. 193 ff. and p. 216.

[28] J. R. Veenstra, *The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt. On Poetics of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare*, in "History and Theory", 34, October 1995, p. 28.

[29] P. Ondek Laurence, *The Reading of Silence*, cit., p. 15.

concept of an investigation which involves both the characters and the reader, suspending the Austenian love story between two extremes: "crime" and "romantic happy novel".[30] Though James makes her heroines appear as they really are – frail and resolute, confused and rational – each of them serves as an important link joining all the parts of a macrostructure that otherwise could not be completed.

Her strategically deployed narrative re-creation establishes a powerful connection between a renewed situation and the old context on which she focuses, involving the characters (and mainly the male characters, such as Darcy and Wickham), who existed within the relatively mundane world of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, in a murder mystery, "producing a mixture of suspense and certainty".[31] James scrutinises the entire situation from the privileged perspective of a contemporary woman who looks at Austen's society and its transformations, making her novel an instrument for further cultural analysis and renewed interpretation, and giving emphasis to silence and the distortion of her characters' viewpoint which, consequently, are once more distortions of the truth. In this way, James transposes the Austenian families and social contexts in which the protagonists acquire consistence mainly in terms of what is unsaid and hidden. Silence becomes a space for feeling and thought, a space in which the author draws their developing inwardness.

If, in *Pride and Prejudice*, everything pivots around the five daughters who support their mother's role and ambition, in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, Elizabeth – happily married to Darcy – acquires the fundamental role of a character that is able to follow the rhythm of events. As words 'move', Elizabeth and all the other characters become part of a

[30] P. D. James, *P. D. James on "Death Comes to Pemberley"*, cit., p. 329.

[31] A. Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, cit., p. 45.

rhythm, so that action itself acquires its own rhythm. James not only makes her characters move in a coherent space (Pemberley) and in a certain period of time,[32] but also in and out of their minds. Such flexibility of the characters oscillates between what is present and what is absent (for example, "Elizabeth missed a little of her previous life"),[33] thus making silence part of the protagonists' interior narration. The novelist becomes an observer who allows them to reflect, act, and speak for themselves. In fact, James seeks to make silence and solitude effective by the balancing presence of dialogue, which, instead, necessarily leads the reader from the private sphere of the individual to that of human relationships:

> " […] recalling her mind to the present, Elizabeth slipped Lady Anne's notebook into a drawer and then, *reluctant to leave the peace and solitude* which she could not now hope to enjoy until the ball was safely over."[34]

In this rich and multifaceted sequel, in which family relationships are continuously subjected to analysis and judgement, the author cannot avoid expressing her own opinion on the attitudes of her own characters, particularly on the connections and misunderstandings that spring from pride and prejudice. They are not far from the type of fictional characters to which Austen refers, yet, some of them, like Lydia, are isolated from those they love by a lack of communication due to their past actions:

> "Again there was a pause and then, to her surprise and discomfort, he [Colonel Fitzwilliam] said, 'I take it that George Wickham is still not received at Pemberley?'
>
> 'No, never. Neither Mr Darcy nor I have seen him or been in touch since he was at Longbourn after his marriage to Lydia'.
>
> *There was another and longer silence* after which Colonel Fitzwilliam said, 'It was unfortunate that Wickham was made so much of when a boy'."[35]

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[32] The novel is set in 1803, six years after Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage.
[33] P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, cit., p. 22.
[34] Ibidem, p. 23. Emphasis added.
[35] Ibidem, p. 31. Emphasis added.

On the one hand, the close affinity between Jane and Elizabeth is established by intuition and mutual confidence:

> "The sisters, who had shared a bedroom at Longbourn, had been particularly close companions since childhood and there was no matter on which Elizabeth could not speak to Jane, knowing that she would be totally reliable in keeping confidence and that any advice she gave would come from her goodness and loving heart."[36]

On the other hand, Elizabeth and Lydia have remained mentally separated from each other since Elizabeth received "Jane's letter with the news of Lydia's elopement".[37] In spite of their apparent and superficial relationship, Lydia could not accept Elizabeth's moral judgement on her decision to follow and marry Wickham, privileging sensibility at the expense of sense, prudence and decorum, thus intensifying the pre-existing tension between them: "Lydia had disliked Elizabeth from childhood and there could never have been sympathy or close sisterly affection between such disparate characters".[38]

The continuous transformation of the protagonists' reaction results in a change and a fluctuation of their states of mind. Even scenes of silence and self-reflection in the novel reveal that the author expands the genre from the primarily dialogic method of Jane Austen to a narrative analysis of the inner life of her characters. For example, Elizabeth's silence – and what it means in terms of "intensely felt, contained emotions" – reflects her thoughts and helps the reader understand the progression of her state of mind. Notably, her role is reversed and her position is used as "a shield to

[36] Ibidem, p. 38.
[37] Ibidem, p. 54.
[38] Ibidem, p. 131.

protect the world of feeling which is not spoken".[39] Thus, the meaning of each dialogue seems to lie in a dimension in which words conceal something instead of overtly expressing it.

4. *Darcy's silence and the past*

The opening chapters give a very entertaining account of Elizabeth's life at Pemberley, of her two sons, new relationships and responsibilities. The narrative pace slows down and everything seems to conform to the orderly world typical of Austen's novels; but, one night, an uninvited Lydia arrives at Pemberley, ruining the quiet atmosphere on the eve of the annual ball. The murmur of the night and the "howling of the wind"[40] accompany the rumbling of the approaching coach at which Elizabeth looks with a sense of foreboding:

> " […] it seemed to Elizabeth that she was seeing a spectral coach of legend flying soundlessly through the moonlit night, the dreaded harbinger of death. […] At a gesture from Darcy, Stoughton opened the door. The wind rushed in immediately, a cold, irresistible force seeming to take possession of the whole house, extinguishing in one blow all the candles except those in the high chandelier. The coach was still coming at speed, rocking round the corner at the end of the woodland road to approach the house. […] the coach door was opened and in the shaft of light from Pemberley they saw a woman almost falling out and shrieking into the wind. […] she seemed like some wild creature of the night, or a mad woman escaped from captivity. For a moment Elizabeth stood rooted, incapable of action or thought. And then he recognised that this wild shrieking apparition was Lydia and ran forward to help. But Lydia pushed her aside and, still screaming, thrust herself into Jane's arms, nearly toppling her. […] they could hear her harsh broken words.
>
> 'Wickham's dead! Danny has shot him! Why don't you find him? They're up there in the woodland. Why don't you do something? Oh God, I know he's dead!'."[41]

The episode marks the first significant event in a plot which seems to

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[39] J. Robinson, *Words and Silence in "L'Idee Fixe"*, in "Modern Language Notes", 87, May 1972 (French Issue: Paul Valery), pp. 644-645.

[40] Ibidem, p. 59.

[41] Ibidem, pp. 58-60.

present "the surface simplicity and hidden complications of many sensation novels as well as crime thrillers".[42] George Pratt, the coachman, gives a further impulse to this plot by answering Mr Darcy's questions:

> "'Tell me what happened in the woodland. Make clear and concise, but I want to know the whole story, and quickly. […] Where are Mr Wickham and Captain Denny?'
> 'I don't really know, sir. When we was about halfway into the woodland Captain Denny knocked to stop the chaise and got out. He shouted something like 'I'm finished with it and with you. I'll have no part in it,' and ran off into the woodland. Then Mr Wickham went after him, shouting to him to come back and not to be a fool, and Mrs Wickham started screaming for him not to leave her and made to follow, but after she got down from the coach, she thought better of it and got back in. […] then we heard the shots.'
> 'How many?'
> 'I couldn't rightly say, sir […] but I heard one shot for certain, sir, and maybe one or two more.'
> 'How long after the gentlemen left did you hear the shots?'
> 'Could be fifteen minutes, sir, maybe longer.'"[43]

It is from this detailed description, which gives the episode its unmistakable prominence in the novel, that we can immediately identify Darcy's character not only as a figure of "detection but also as a figure for its author".[44] Paradoxically, if in Austen's novel the authorial persona is mostly identified with a female character (the reader has to face a heroine who becomes the author's voice), in James's novel the authorial function is held by Darcy – and later by Colonel Fitzwilliam – who becomes the vehicle for the "author's aesthetic response".[45]

After the events described above, the atmosphere at Pemberley is lively once more, and all the characters are excited and nervous as their lives "are dramatically altered by this circumstance", one that "propels

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[42] A. B. Emrys, *Wilkie Collins, Vera Caspary and the Evolution of the Casebook Novel*, Jefferson, McFarland, 2011, p. 133.

[43] P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, cit., pp. 62-63.

[44] N. Jackson, *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 215.

[45] Ibidem.

them through the intricate machinations of the plot that act like fate".[46] And although the narrator's stance presents a certain formality, it is, at the same time, characterised by a state of mental strain, which reflects Darcy's tense mood:

> "It seemed to Darcy that the great entrance hall of Pemberley, with its elegant furniture, […] had suddenly become as alien as if he were entering it for the first time. The natural order which from boyhood had sustained him had been overturned and for a moment he felt as powerless as if he were no longer master in his house, an absurdity which found relief in an irritation over details. […] No one spoke and when, minutes later Darcy looked back, the great door of Pemberley had been closed and the house stood as if deserted, serene and beautiful in the moonlight."[47]

Darcy looks around with piercing eyes while the nocturnal atmosphere of the woodland gives him the illusion of a return to the quiet world of his childhood; looking around, he experiences again his impressions as a boy, when the future seemed to be full of promise:

> "As always when he walked in the woodland, Darcy's thought turned to his great grand-father. […]. Here in his remote tree-guarded refuge where the birds and small animals could come unimpeded to his home, he could believe that he and nature were one, breathing the same air, guided by the same spirit."[48]

On the one hand, Darcy's attempt to focus his attention on agreeable thoughts is a way of evading the tragic event and avoiding Wickham's death, which is never explicitly discussed. On the other hand, his reflections on the natural world might be viewed as one of the fundamental elements in the author's definition of the landscape of human experience: in fact, Darcy "could believe that he and nature were one, breathing the

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[46] P. Brantlinger, *What is 'Sensational' about the 'Sensation Novel?'*, in "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", 37, June 1982, p. 13.

[47] P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, cit., p. 66 and p. 69.

[48] Ibidem, p. 71.

same air, guided by the same spirit".[49] However, "the slow intensification of silence" in Darcy's behaviour "echoes the sense of suffocation and ultimate dissolution"[50] he has already experienced. Shortly afterwards, he finds himself questioning once again the mysterious nature of his relationship with Wickham:

> "Darcy walked in bitterness of spirit broken from time to time by surges of anger, like the rush of an incoming tide. Was he never to be free of George Wickham? These were the woods in which the two of them had played as boys. It was a time he could once recall as carefree and happy, but had that boyhood friendship really been genuine? Had the young Wickham even then been harbouring envy, resentment and dislike? […] The petty, hurtful remarks now rose into his consciousness, beneath which they had lain untroubling for years. How long had Wickham been planning his revenge?"[51]

Darcy seems to be divided between conflicting impulses. This sense of division leads to a more emblematic split between what is imagined and what is real, as symbolised by the contrast suggested by nature, which immediately becomes gloomier, leading Darcy to anticipate the worst: "the wind, which had been hardly heard, suddenly dropped and in the calm it seemed that the secret life of the woodland was stilled by their unwanted presence".[52] This narrative interpolation expresses Darcy's personal microcosm by showing the movement of his mind, which transforms his nature according to the degree of consciousness he has reached.

Indeed, his moral attitude is reflected not only by the conflicting ways in which he reacts to the mysterious events he is now facing, but also

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[49] Ibidem. See D. E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison – London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998[2], p. 35. See also, for Jane Austen, R. Bodenheimer, *Looking at the Landscape in Jane Austen*, in "Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900", 21, Autumn 1981, p. 610 and B. B. Wenner, *Prospect and Refuge in the Landscape of Jane Austen*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 67.

[50] M. Parry, *The Theme of Silence in the Writings of François Mauriac*, in "The Modern Language Review", 71, October 1976, p. 790.

[51] P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, cit., p. 72.

[52] Ibidem, p. 75.

by those past events which made Wickham his own subtle antagonist. Therefore, Darcy's self-reflection leads the reader to reconsider the 'befores' (already present in Austen's novel) which have accompanied the protagonist during the period of transition between youth and maturity, when he had to face the conflicts of adult life in order to create a harmonious family that, he now fears, is a mere illusion. Looking back, Darcy understands that he has achieved a profound consciousness and self-awareness in relation to the places of his youth, when the woods around Pemberley were both his refuge and a backdrop to his *brotherhood* with Wickham. Despite the passing of time, Wickham continues to haunt and torment Darcy, reminding him of those past events which made him feel humiliated, wounding his pride, self-respect, and dignity. Darcy is afflicted by recurring thoughts connected with an unhappy love affair, whose intricacy is defined with precision in the following passage in which Wickham's designs are presented in detail, revealing his ambivalent, *quasi*-demonic character:

> "The knowledge that his sister had only avoided social disgrace and ignominy because he was rich enough to buy her would-be seducer's silence was so bitter that he almost groaned aloud. *He had tried to put his humiliation out of mind* in the happiness of his marriage but *now it returned*, made stronger by years of repression, an intolerable burden of shame and self-disgust made more bitter by the knowledge that it was only his money that had induced Wickham to marry Lydia Bennet. It had been a generosity born of his love for Elizabeth, but it had been his marriage to Elizabeth which had brought him the right to call Darcy brother and made him an uncle to Fitzwilliam and Charles. He might have been able to keep Wickham out of Pemberley but he could never banish him from his mind."[53]

If, in Austen's novel, Darcy's perception of reality radically alters his existence, and his past deception sharpens his pride and aloofness, now his love for Elizabeth prompts him to ignore, if only temporarily, his feeling of

[53] Ibidem, pp. 72-73. Emphasis added.

dislike, being conscious of the immutable nature of human destiny. His only regret concerns the impossibility of banishing Wickham "from his mind".[54] Darcy becomes progressively more concerned with this situation, until an unexpected scene unfolds before him, Fitzwilliam, and Alveston:

> "Captain Denny lay on his back, his right eye caked with blood, his left, glazed, fixed unseeing on the distant moon. Wickham was kneeling over him, his hands bloody, his own face a splattered mask. His voice was harsh and guttural but the words were clear. 'He's dead! Oh God, Denny's dead! He was my friend, my only friend, and I've killed him! I've killed him! It's my fault'."[55]

What they see seems to confirm their worst fears. This shift towards personal guilt occurs through Wickham's words, which are immediately associated with the scene of death that the three men are witnessing. As the real and the unreal seem to merge, the episode warns readers of the rapid transformation in the development of events, as well as highlighting the sense of bewilderment that besets the characters.

5. *The distance from Austen*

The murder complicates the role of the narrator who has to unravel the plot through the gradual discovery of truth, until what narrator and reader know coincides. The narration acquires a peculiar intensity. Darcy, Fitzwilliam and Alveston go back to Pemberley and start to unveil what has happened. The initial step in this process of detection concerns the association between Wickham's bloody hands and his desperate words "I've killed him!".[56] Darcy notifies Sir Selwyn Hardcastle, "the nearest

[54] Ibidem, p. 73.
[55] Ibidem, p. 77.
[56] Ibidem.

magistrate",[57] of Denny's death. The master of Pemberley feels the disquieting presence of the past, as represented by Wickham: the obscure circumstances might reinforce common opinions about Wickham's proclivity to criminal acts and his own liability for the consequences of his past conduct.

Once at Sir Selwyn Hardcastle's, Darcy paints a dreadful picture of what he, Fitzwilliam and Alveston have found in the woodland. Early in the morning, the magistrate arrives at Pemberley to examine Captain Denny's body, while "Wickham was being guarded by Bingley and Alveston".[58] The conversation about the events of the previous night is balanced by the dialogues between Jane and Elizabeth, who slowly become background figures, as the murder completely absorbs the reader's attention.

During the trial, everyone is waiting for a reconstruction of "the story [that] would be told scene by scene, imposing both coherence and credibility on the narrative and producing in court as it unfolded something of the excited expectancy of a theatre".[59] Witnesses give a detailed account of the facts. Wickham tells his own version of events, too. The inquisitive language used by the court seems to proceed towards a guilty verdict. After his speech, Wickham feels dominated by a silence which suggests the fate that awaits him: his "face had the stiffness and sickly pallor of a mask of death".[60] Though his words resonate in the law court, his sense of impotence only allows him to repeat "with more force, 'I am not guilty, my lord, not guilty'".[61] Soon afterwards:

[57] Ibidem, p. 87.
[58] Ibidem, p. 105.
[59] Ibidem, p. 237.
[60] Ibidem, p. 260.
[61] Ibidem.

"Darcy turned his eyes to where Mrs Younge had been sitting […] He knew that he had to find her, needed to know what part she had played in the tragedy of Denny's death, to find out why she had been there, her eyes locked on Wickham's as if some power, some courage were passing between them."[62]

Darcy knows this is a significant encounter and no coincidence. James's focus on Mrs Younge's presence serves to give a new impulse to the narration, as well as highlighting the significance of the murder and its outcome.

Thus, once more, the author, who seems to stress that there is a reason for what happened, emphasises the sense of fatality pervading these sections of the narrative. In this way, James distances herself from Austen's plot and characters, transforming her own novel into a synthesis of her predecessor's viewpoint. Indeed, James tellingly moves some female characters to the background, while throwing others into relief with the precise aim of reversing the familiar attitudes of Austen's heroines, who, for example, looking back in retrospect, after "years of happy marriage, might certainly see their meeting as a matter of fate",[63] and not as a determined event.[64] For this reason, James focuses mainly "on the dramatic narrative and not on causal accounts".[65] Wickham's situation seems to be similar: he, who has always been depicted as an unreliable character, has been involved in events determined by fate and which he is unable to resolve. In other words, through these figures, James alerts the reader's to a sort of fatalism to which all characters yield, thus distancing her own characterisation from Austen's.

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[62] Ibidem.

[63] R. C. Solomon, *On Fate and Fatalism*, in "Philosophy East and West", 53, October 2003, p. 440. See L. W. Mazzeno, *Austen. Two Centuries of Criticism*, Suffolk, Camden House, 2011, p. 190.

[64] A. Craig, *Not so Happy Ever After*, in "New Statesman", 140, 5079, 2011, p. 44: "The whole point about Elizabeth as a revolutionary Georgian heroine is that she will marry for love and nothing but love".

[65] R. C. Solomon, *On Fate and Fatalism*, cit., p. 441.

A theatrical dimension pervades the final part of the novel. Before dying, a seemingly minor figure writes William Bidwell a long letter in which he declares his responsibility for Denny's death, a real *coup de théâtre*.[66] In his long confession, this figure gives "a true account of what occurred in Pemberley woodland on the night of 14th October last".[67] He reveals that he killed Denny to protect his sister's virtue, since she "had told [him] that an officer of the militia, stationed at Lambton the previous year, had attempted an assault on her virtue, and [he] knew instinctively that this was the man and he had returned to take her way".[68] Tragically, William misunderstood his intention and killed Captain Denny, who was not his sister's lover. His confession concludes with a disturbing sense of satisfaction: "I felt nothing but pride that I had saved my darling sister. […] I rejoiced that he would not return".[69]

The letter is the 'place' where the *unsaid* and the *hidden* converge: here James reveals other concealed facts that the reader discovers with uncanny surprise. Bidwell's vengeance can be interpreted as the result of his protection of a woman's virtue. However, what Fitzwilliam adds also explains the involvement of Wickham and the mysterious Mrs Younge, the fatal relationship uniting the three characters. In this respect, Colonel Fitzwilliam acts as the author himself by making the plot follow another path, disclosing a clandestine relationship, hidden to save the decorum of Darcy's family – for Wickham is, as we know, Darcy's brother by marriage. Involuntarily involved in events that he could not avoid, Colonel Fitzwilliam reveals to Darcy that Louisa Bidwell and Wickham:

[66] William Bidwell is the son of Thomas Bidwell who "had been head coachman to the late Mr Darcy, as his father had been to the Darcys before him" (P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, cit., p. 21).

[67] Ibidem, p. 263.

[68] Ibidem, p. 264.

[69] Ibidem, p. 265.

" […] met by chance in the woodland […] They began meeting often, and she told him as soon as she suspected that she was carrying a child. […] this child, although illegitimate would have been nephew or niece both to you and Mrs Darcy and to the Bingleys. […] he [Wickham] confided in his friend Denny, and more fully in Mrs Younge, who seems to have been a controlling presence in his life. […] Mrs Younge wrote to me at my London address, saying that she was interested in adopting the child […]."[70]

James's subplot clearly gives prominence to the role of chance and the unavoidable consequences deriving from it. In this case, the author seems to reverse, once more, Austen's architectural construction, stressing even more the importance of the turning points in the characters' lives. The numerous intersections, which Fitzwilliam focuses on, serve to unravel the plot, which thus becomes increasingly intriguing and illuminating. All at once, the characters who have dominated the world of Longbourn and Pemberley appear to be secondary figures, subjected to fate and chance. At the same time, a sense of sympathy towards Wickham and Mrs Younge, who is defined by Darcy as "a blackmailer and a kept woman",[71] emerges through Fitzwilliam's words, thus disorienting both Darcy and the reader, who do not know what kind of story they are listening to. From this perspective, it is as if there were two different worlds at play in this novel: the world suggested by Jane Austen, in which all things actively contribute to maintaining the appearance of a regular and ordered microcosm, and that of James's plot, in which the unpredictable takes over the scene and the characters' lives, and engrosses the reader's attention.

It is Fitzwilliam who conveys James's alternative view, when he says: "Darcy, I am occasionally surprised at how naive you are, how little you know about the world outside your beloved Pemberley. Human nature

[70] Ibidem, pp. 274-278.
[71] Ibidem, p. 280.

is not as black and white as you suppose".[72] Fitzwilliam is James's voice, showing Darcy and the reader a more nuanced and realistic position than Darcy's. His words and his attempts to mitigate his friend's viewpoint serve as an alternative to a misrepresentation of reality informed by past actions and implications bearing on the present. The real focus of Fitzwilliam's words is not the individual, psychological significance of the destruction of the world of Pemberley, which Darcy strenuously protects, but rather the status of that world as a cultural emblem. On the contrary, from Darcy's perspective, Wickham's current predicament is an extension of his past behaviour: what he is experiencing now is the realisation of his destiny. Moreover, this rigidity has its basis in the author's point of view. Darcy's way of looking at Wickham is different from the reader's but is nonetheless a plausible one. The characterisation of Wickham throughout the novel not only gives prominence to his distinctive features, but also endorses Darcy's interpretation of reality.

It is here that the author's plan in writing the novel acquires consistency and her purpose becomes clear: her aim is to give a new form to her characters' consciousness, making them establish a contact with a reality that is distant from what Austen originally depicted. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen shows Darcy governed by misunderstanding and an erroneous perception of reality, appearing unable to comprehend facts and feelings correctly. In James's novel, instead, the author criticises Darcy, highlighting his shortsightedness, and inviting the reader to notice, through Fitzwilliam, how Elizabeth's husband does not have a deep understanding of human nature outside his "beloved Pemberley".[73]

It is not a coincidence if – when the trial is over and Wickham and

[72] Ibidem.
[73] Ibidem, p. 280.

Lydia plan to move to "the New World […] to take advantage of the opportunities available there"[74] – James conjures up a predictable conclusion for the characters who aspire to a peaceful existence, removing the problem, and thus revealing the core of her complicated plot. The narrative, in other words, reveals the author's reflection on human experience and its multifaceted aspects, as well as her reading of the interrelations between self and society. Though her novel departs from Austen's main plot, James does not marginalise the subplot, but rather integrates it into a new totalising structure. She interprets the original matrimonial aspirations of Jane Austen's characters by emphasising the thrill of discovering the secret, as well as the sense of mystery, hiding behind unsuspected figures, and by creating a plot that questions their individuality and redefines the central values of their worlds. The circularity of *Death Comes to Pemberley*, which might be read as a hermeneutical one, tends to reassure the reader, who also desires to believe that, in James's sequel, the orderly world of Pemberley can be restored and preserved, since, as James notes, "duty to the community, learning, tradition and an ordered, civilised lifestyle embody all that is good about the age".[75]

[74] Ibidem, p. 289.
[75] Id., *P. D. James on "Death Comes to Pemberley"*, cit., p. 329.

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ELEONORA CAPRA

P. R. MOORE-DEWEY'S "PREGIUDIZIO E ORGOGLIO": AN ITALIAN REMAKE OF AUSTEN'S "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE"

1. *The many lives (and afterlives) of "Pride and Prejudice"*

In her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to "Pride and Prejudice"*, Janet Todd comments on the immense fortune of "the Austen title everyone knows",[1] as well as on the popularity of all its adaptations and also, possibly, adulterations. She concludes by noting that the multiplication of titles paying tribute to *Pride and Prejudice* is so fast that the section devoted to adaptations "will be out of date by the time the volume is published".[2] As a matter of fact, new publications and re-mediations are published relentlessly, and it would be difficult, maybe even impossible, to keep track of all the examples stemming from Austen's

[1] J. Todd, *Preface*, in *The Cambridge Companion to "Pride and Prejudice"*, edited by J. Todd, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. XI.

[2] Ibidem, p. XV.

"darling Child".[3]

The tradition of rewriting *Pride and Prejudice*, and in particular that of giving its characters a life beyond Austen's tale, began when the author was still alive. In his *Memoir of Jane Austen* James Edward Austen-Leigh recollects how "dear Aunt Jane"[4] would tell her family about the destiny of some of her characters, including those in *Pride and Prejudice*. Some two hundred years later, readers and viewers still cannot get enough of Elizabeth and Darcy, so much so that these characters continue to undergo radical makeovers for the screen, the stage, the printed page, digital and countless other media.

Contemporary authors, inspired by Austen, have taken in order to re-work or re-write the novel. These approaches are the most varied and questionable: displacing characters to different countries or continents, far from *merry England*; "re-targeting" Elizabeth and Darcy's love story for a teenager audience; or stressing erotic features, thus "giving readers a chance to indulge in the guilty pleasure of undressing their favourite literary characters".[5] Also, readers who would like to explore the darker sides of the story, may find amusement in those re-workings which have re-imagined the plot as a crime novel or detective fiction.

Generally, one of the recurrent techniques is that of rewriting the story by shifting the narrator's point of view, as if the whole plot were developed, filtered, and told through the eyes of another character. In this perspective, many have been the uses and abuses of Mr. Darcy as a

[3] J. Austen, *Letters*, Collected and Edited by D. Le Faye, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2011[4], p. 201 (letter to Cassandra Austen, 29 January 1813).

[4] J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, in Id., *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, Edited with an Introduction and Notes by K. Sutherland, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 119.

[5] E. Auerbach, *Pride and Proliferation*, in *The Cambridge Companion to "Pride and Prejudice"*, cit., p. 193.

narrator. Enthusiastic readers of prequels, sequels, and remakes will remember a host of more or less acclaimed titles including *Mr. Darcy's Diary: A Novel* (2007) and *Dear Mr. Darcy: A Retelling of Pride and Prejudice* (2012) both by Amanda Grange; *Darcy's Passions: Pride and Prejudice Retold by His Eyes* (2009) by Regina Jeffers; a trilogy by Pamela Aidan which goes under the collective name of *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman* (2003, 2004, and 2005); and again Mary Street's *The Confessions of Fitzwilliam Darcy* (2008) or Sara Angelini's *The Trials of the Honorable F. Darcy* (2012).

Within this virtually uncontrolled panorama of spin-offs, there stands one rare example of Austenian remake which is a special instance of this global phenomenon because, unlike the majority of rewritings, it developed in Italy. Its author is an Italian Austen enthusiast and admirer, Patrizia Murreddu, who writes under the pseudonym of P. R. Moore-Dewey. Her work, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, appeared in 2012, to coincide with the bicentenary celebrations of its model and source, and it constitutes a genuine literary effort that deserves the attention of Austen enthusiasts and fans for its many merits, in particular that of being an intricate patchwork of quotations and, thus, a thoroughly post-modern work.

Before illustrating the allusive and stylistic complexity of this text, however, it is necessary to describe briefly the cultural context where it developed. *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* was published during a phase of growing interest in Austen in Italy. If until some years ago "*t*he works of Jane Austen, for all their popularity" could not "be considered to be among the most admired foreign classics in Italy",[6] the contemporary panorama has undergone some relevant changes. Thanks to the Internet and, perhaps, also

[6] B. Battaglia, *The Reception of Jane Austen in Italy*, in *The Reception of Jane Austen in Europe*, Edited by A. Mandal and B. Southam, London and New York, Continuum, 2007, p. 205.

to the ever-flourishing Austen film industry, the Italian public seems to have definitely embraced Janeitism and is nowadays as lost in the author as countless Janeites across the Channel (or the Ocean). Over the last seven years, web pages and thematic blogs have proliferated, and local or internet book clubs have been created. Most significantly, Italy can now boast its own Internet-based Jane Austen Society – the *Jane Austen Society of Italy* – gathering hundreds of fans, devotees, and scholars. JASIT has many merits, not least that of having been the first non-academic association in Italy to spread and popularize Austen criticism and translations.[7] This has resulted in the possibility for the wider reading public to form a deeper and perhaps more accurate understanding of the author.[8] The great merit of bridging the world of Janeites to that of scholars and academics is also visible in the association's journal "Due Pollici d'Avorio", the counterpart of The Jane Austen Society of North America's "Persuasions. The Jane Austen Journal On-Line". Its varied contributions from fans or academics celebrate Austen's work, lifetime, and culture with an eye to scholarly accuracy and a critical appreciation of the writer and her cultural and historical context.

Italy has also its own special fan club, *Il Club Sofà and Carpet di Jane Austen*, more focused on the celebration of Austen's times. The club's

[7] The society has issued the first Italian translation of Rudyard Kipling's famous short story, *Janeites*, Constance Hill and Ellen G. Hill's early biography *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends* and a series of critical essays, reviews, and articles on the early reception of Jane Austen in England and Italy. Moreover, the society frequently translates articles from "Persuasions. The Jane Austen Journal On-Line", thus reinforcing the bond with its American counterpart association. See the list of the society's publications at the web address www.jasit.it/pubblicazioni/.

[8] According to some critics, the Italian public has always been unable to understand the *real* Austen for many reasons. Its opinion has been traditionally influenced by the only Austen biography available in Italian, J. E. Austen-Leigh's *The Memoir of Jane Austen* (1869), and therefore the author has been read and seen as a Victorian writer, mainly relegated to her domestic sphere. Her novels, too, have been mostly analysed according to their romantic plot, where the quest for marriage predominates. See B. Battaglia, *The Reception of Jane Austen in Italy*, cit., pp. 205-223.

main activity revolves around its yearly three-day meeting at the seaside resort of Riccione, where fans get together and wear Regency costumes to re-create the atmosphere of Jane Austen's novels. Public readings, promenades along the seaside, theatricals, and dances are part of the schedule, along with tea parties and re-enactments of the scenes from Austen film adaptations. Of course, such celebrations of the author and her novels are entirely in line with the various performances given during the world-famous *Jane Austen Festival* in Bath, yet they seem rather surprising in a country where, only a few years ago, Jane Austen could be said to be among the less famous international authors.

2. *Eyes on Mr. Darcy: a change of perspective*

The foremost stylistic feature of *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* is the fact that narration is filtered through the point of view of Mr. Darcy and his sister Georgiana, whereas Elizabeth emerges as a narrator only in the last chapter. This strategy allows the author both to present the story through another perspective and to give prominence to characters which, in *Pride and Prejudice*, are only described by others and judged by readers according to their behaviour towards other characters (as is the case of Mr. Darcy, for instance). The opening pages of *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* start with Georgiana's description of her brother, focusing on the fact that he "sbrigava assorto la corrispondenza, la penna per aria, la mano sinistra semiaffondata tra i riccioli scuri".[9] Thus, as readers, we immediately gain access to a private Mr. Darcy, with a "nobile profilo, la figura elegante".[10] Further on, the narrative adds an insight into his social status:

[9] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, n. p., PetitesOndes, 2012, p. 1.
[10] Ibidem.

" […] le amiche della scuola, nelle loro conversazioni bisbigliate dopo cena, lo avrebbero definito senza dubbio 'un ottimo partito', riassumendo con questa definizione le due qualità che tenevano nella massima considerazione: l'essere 'di bell'aspetto' e 'facoltoso'."[11]

The idea conveyed here is not far from Austen's initial description of Darcy at the Meryton Ball, where readers learn about his physical appearance and wealth through other characters' conversations:

"Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year."[12]

Still, Moore-Dewey's perspective is perceptibly different from Austen's, since the description is given by his innocent and adoring sister Georgiana. Tellingly, she refers to her brother's fortune of ten thousand a year through the metaphor of the "incantato 'regno di Carabas'",[13] a reference to a fairy tale that alerts readers to the naïve nature of Georgiana. The young girl, who literally venerates her brother Will (as she calls him), gradually pieces together an intimate and affectionate portrait:

" […] una persona seria, forse anche *troppo* seria, strapieno di capacità e di intelligenza, sempre in grado di tenere in pugno la situazione, e di prendere le decisioni giuste. […] E, nonostante il suo carattere riservato, come tutti gli volevano bene! […]

[11] Ibidem.

[12] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by P. Rogers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 10 (I, 3).

[13] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 3. Here, Carabas could also signal a cross-reference to the Marquess of Carabas, a character in Benjamin Disraeli's novel *Vivian Grey* (1826) which, upon publication, became famous in England. A *roman à clef* about fashionable and political life in the country, *Vivian Grey* is a novel where real life and fiction superimpose, and thus recalls Georgiana's ideal of Pemberley as a fabulous realm. See A. Diniejko, *Benjamin Disraeli's "Vivian Grey" as a Silver-Folk Novel With a Key*, in "The Victorian Web", web address http://victorianweb.org/ victorian/authors/disraeli/diniejko.html.

Era stato davvero 'il fratello migliore del mondo'."[14]

Georgiana's words conjure up Darcy as a good, loyal and noble man, always capable of taking the right decision and, most importantly, virtuous enough to continue his father's administrative work on the estate. Georgiana emphasizes further the good qualities of her brother by claiming that not a single person in the whole of Pemberley Park would have a bad opinion of him; on the contrary, everyone would demonstrate affection and gratitude. In this respect, we are very far from the first impression that Darcy gives at the Meryton ball. There, readers are not allowed to appreciate his amiable qualities. In *Pride and Prejudice*, through Austen's clever depiction of the scene, and especially due to Mrs Bennet's judgment, Darcy's "character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and every body hoped that he would never come there again".[15] Observers of the scene inevitably share this first impression and sympathize with Mrs. Bennet, at least until the author gradually begins to unveil Darcy's true character. At this stage, readers are made to re-negotiate their impressions and re-interpret the author's intentions.

In *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, Darcy appears as a narrator in the second chapter. The setting has shifted from Pemberley to Netherfield and, thanks to the flashback technique, Moore-Dewey has him recall the events and feelings of the Meryton ball:

" […] era stata un'orribile tortura. La sala, insopportabilmente calda, era gremita all'inverosimile di gente di ogni sorta e di ogni età; nell'abbigliamento pretenzioso, nell'atteggiamento affettato o chiassoso della maggior parte delle signore, predominava una totale mancanza di buon gusto; la musica era di scarsa qualità, ed era soverchiata dalla risate e dallo strepito... ma ciò nonostante tutti i presenti […] si lanciavano nelle

[14] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., pp. 2-3.
[15] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 11 (I, 3).

danze con uno zelo degno di miglior causa."[16]

From the outset, we perceive how his reserved character and need for frequent isolation have been put to the test at Netherfield. His body and spirits have been overwhelmed (and almost suffocated) by the situation. Removed from his *terrain connu* of Pemberley and London society, he finds it difficult, almost impossible, to feel at ease in a different milieu. We feel Darcy's nearly overpowering sense of physical oppression in the hot room, full of loud women. Most significantly, he is exasperated by murmurs of his having "diecimila all'anno!".[17] Thus, unlike in *Pride and Prejudice*, where readers identify and agree with Elizabeth's point of view, here we gradually enter Darcy's mind and begin to understand, and possibly justify, why the source text painted him as "haughty, reserved, and fastidious" and why "his manners, though well bred, were not inviting".[18]

In addition, Moore-Dewey goes as far as to give readers access to Darcy's physicality as they are allowed to follow his daily activities such as hunting and walking through fields and woods. On the day after the Meryton ball, for example, Darcy tries to relax and forget the unpleasant evening by wandering in the woods, energetically "allontanando con il manico del frustino un ramo di rovo carico di more lucenti, che si protendeva a sbarrargli il cammino".[19] In examples such as these, Mr. Darcy is a reflection of, or a counterpart to, Austen's Elizabeth. In point of fact, if we think about the original text, readers may remember that it is Elizabeth who tends to engage in physical exercise, the most relevant example being her walk from Longbourn to Netherfield. On that occasion, Elizabeth walks alone "crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping

[16] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 11.
[17] Ibidem, p. 3.
[18] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 17 (I, 4).
[19] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 9.

over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity".[20] And Elizabeth's journey is not just a walk, but an "act of relocation", more precisely, one of those "acts of translation" designed by Austen which serve as "movements beyond limits and boundaries and thus encapsulate the pervasive restlessness of many of her male and female figures".[21] Viewed in this perspective, and figuratively speaking, the same happens to Mr. Darcy in *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*: during his walks he finds his path blocked by brambles, a metaphor for the obstacles he will have to overcome in order to come to terms with his feelings towards Elizabeth.

3. *Begli occhi scuri*

As in *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy is soon fascinated by Elizabeth's "begli occhi scuri", and dangerously drawn to her personality: "quel miscuglio di ingenuità e franca provocazione che costituiva il tratto più notevole del suo carattere".[22] As Moore-Dewey's narrative progresses, Darcy reveals to his sister Georgiana to what extent he admires Elizabeth, and describes her as a woman in whom

> " […] cultura e intelligenza si uniscono a una naturale eleganza e a una speciale bellezza; gliene deriva nel complesso un notevole fascino, di gran lunga superiore a quello di molte signore di città di mia conoscenza."[23]

However, Darcy is careful enough to describe also the less satisfactory aspects: Elizabeth's dreadful relations. Mr. Bennet is portrayed

[20] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 36 (I, 7).

[21] D. Saglia, *Austen and Translation: National Characters, Translatable Heroines, and the Heroine as Translator*, in "Novel: A Forum on Fiction", 46, Spring 2013, p. 11.

[22] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 38. "*B*egli occhi scuri" is the translation of Austen's words "dark […] fine eyes": cf. J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 26 and p. 30 (I, 6).

[23] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 42.

as “un signore di scarse sostanze, che appare poco in società […] la madre e le altre sorelle non mettono insieme tra tutte il buonsenso di un’oca da cortile!”[24] Inevitably, as readers know, Darcy’s feelings grow against his will and shall be openly revealed only at Rosings. In *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, it is only after listening to Elizabeth playing the piano, that Darcy considers his own sentiments: “dunque era così, non c’era più nulla da fare, inesorabilmente *l’amava*?”[25] Though he is initially unable to become reconciled to his own feelings, Darcy soon gives in and realizes that Elizabeth “occupava in quel momento completamente la sua mente e il suo cuore”.[26] At this stage, readers cannot say whether Darcy is conscious or not of his profound emotions but the proposal – “un’eventualità che aveva deliberatamente eluso”[27] – is, in reality, a few steps away.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen dedicates a whole chapter to this pivotal moment and gives readers a complete picture of the scene as experienced by the female character. In contrast, she merely offers readers a few glimpses of Mr. Darcy’s feelings: “he came towards her in an agitated manner […] He *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security”.[28] Austen’s transcription of Darcy’s impatience and ardent emotions through body language reminds readers that the physical dimension is always present in her novels, even though the narratives tend to depict it through subtle and minute references or forms of indirection:

> “His complexion became pale with anger, and the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature. He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips, till he believed himself to have attained it. […]

[24] Ibidem, p. 51.
[25] Ibidem, p. 108.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] Ibidem, p. 116.
[28] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., pp. 211-212 (II, 11).

As she pronounced this words, Mr. Darcy changed colour; but the emotion was short, and he listened without attempting to interrupt her while she continued.

[…]

'You take an eager interest in that gentleman's [Mr. Wickham] concerns,' said Darcy in a less tranquil tone, and with a heightened colour."[29]

In *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* the proposal is spread over two chapters. The former sets the scene and readers perceive Darcy's contrasting feelings before he proposes to Elizabeth. However, the whole scene is fully re-told in retrospective in the following chapter, as Darcy recalls the most delicate moments and reconsiders Elizabeth's harsh words. The section presents frequent references to and quotations from the hypotext, in particular from the dialogues. For instance, Elizabeth's famous reply is presented in *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* as a free translation of the original text:

"In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, however unequally they may be returned. It natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could *feel* gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot—I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I am sorry to have occasioned pain to any one. It has been most unconsciously done, however, and I hope will be of short duration."[30]

" […] in simili circostanze […] è buona norma manifestare la propria gratitudine per i sentimenti che sono stati espressi, per quanto possano essere ricambiati. Ma io non posso. Non ho mai cercato il vostro apprezzamento, e certamente me l'avete offerto molto malvolentieri. Mi dispiace di essere causa di sofferenza per chiunque, ma è stato fatto inconsapevolmente, e spero che la cosa non durerà a lungo."[31]

Moreover, Moore-Dewey interestingly borrows Austen's comments on Mr. Darcy's facial expression, and translates the body metaphor with "un violento rossore".[32] Drawing on the hypotext, also Moore-Dewey focuses on Darcy's physical features, thus reinforcing his passionate and

[29] Ibidem, pp. 212-214 (II, 11).
[30] Ibidem, p. 212 (II, 11).
[31] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio,* cit., p. 123.
[32] Ibidem, p. 125.

emotional image. At the same time, Moore-Dewey's technique of retelling everything through the point of view of the male hero, rehabilitates the proud Mr. Darcy Austen has initially presented. Indeed, her narrator gradually reveals to the reader his difficulties in overcoming his pride, his sense of humiliation (and possibly shame), his feeling of powerlessness and immense distress, especially when he ponders over Elizabeth's opinion of Mr. Wickham:

> "Wickham! Al sentire quel nome si era sentito soffocare. Ancora Wickham, sempre Wickham, per tutta la vita, a mettersi di traverso tra lui e quello che aveva di più caro! In un istante, rivisse l'umiliazione provata nel vedergli occupare un posto immeritato nell'affetto del padre – al quale mai si sarebbe abbassato a denunciarne il carattere – il senso di impotenza che l'aveva colto davanti al tentativo di sottrargli l'affetto e la fiducia di Georgiana... e adesso, Elizabeth!"[33]

4. *Georgiana: Catherine Morland under false pretences?*

As already mentioned, Georgiana is the second main narrator of the novel, where she functions as a counterbalance to Darcy's voice, or better, as an external observer of the plot. She is the first reader and interpreter of her brother's feelings, and, even though her interpretation is not objective, it is thanks to her point of view that readers gradually become sympathetic to the male hero. In particular, Moore-Dewey's rewriting develops Georgiana through sustained intertextual references to *Northanger Abbey*: "una libertà maggiore l'ho avuta con Georgiana […] le mie lettrici più avvertite troveranno in lei qualche indebita somiglianza con Catherine Morland".[34] Georgiana shares Catherine's fascination with old abbeys and castles. In *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* Miss Darcy spends part of her summer holidays at Dunsmoore Castle and she soon voices her excitement: ("un

[33] Ibidem, p. 124.
[34] Id., *Nota dell'Autrice*, ibidem, p. 242.

vero castello, con le torri, e le segrete!")[35] And later, having arrived at Dunsmoore:

> " […] se Georgiana avrebbe preferito scoprirvi ancora qua e là qualche porta che cigolava, qualche antico lampadario fuligginoso in ferro battuto, qualche muro diroccato, ebbe il buon gusto di tenere per sé questo inopportuno rammarico."[36]

As an innocent young girl, she likes to compare Pemberley to the enchanted realm of Carabas, an ideal place where everything is calm, beautiful, and virtually uncontaminated: she goes as far as to define herself "la più fortunata delle donne, per aver ricevuto dalla sorte il privilegio di vivere in quel mondo incantato".[37] Moore-Dewey repeatedly and skillfully exploits the dimension of the fairy tale to give voice to the thoughts of a young adolescent for whom reality and fiction superimpose and even coalesce. Georgiana is terrified by the idea that someone could spoil this perfect place: she is afraid that Elizabeth Bennet, this outsider, might have captured more than her brother's eye and, therefore, finds her presence most alarming. While considering what might have happened at Rosings between her brother and Elizabeth, she compares her thoughts to a tangle that she cannot unravel: her misgivings and her assumptions seem to converge into the plot of a detective novel, which might be entitled "Il mistero di Rosings".[38] She therefore tries to become an investigator herself, echoing young Catherine Morland's aspiration to play the detective;[39] and,

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[35] Id., *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 144 and J. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, edited by B. M. Benedict and D. Le Faye, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 83 (I, 11): "'What, is it really a castle, an old castle?' […] 'But now really—are there towers and long galleries?'".

[36] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 148.

[37] Ibidem, p. 193.

[38] Ibidem, p. 132.

[39] For an interpretation of *Northanger Abbey* as a proto-detective novel, see L. M. Dresner, *The Female Investigator in Literature, Film and Popular Culture*, Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, McFarland, 2006.

as soon as she gathers enough clues, she starts to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

In *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* Georgiana shares another feature with the protagonist of *Northanger Abbey*, one which is also typical of most Austen heroines: the fondness for reading (Austen never refers to Georgiana as an avid reader of fiction, only as an accomplished young woman).[40] Often seeking a silent place to read and be alone, she has her own secret place in Pemberley's garden, a tiny "*cabinet*"[41] where she can read, enjoy moments of solitude and let her imagination run free. Moore-Dewey reprises Austen's distinctive preoccupation with reading, [42] a theme that appears clearly in all her six novels: the romantic Marianne from *Sense and Sensibility* is an avid reader of Shakespeare's sonnets, while the same love for poetry is displayed by the mature and more rational Anne in *Persuasion*; Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* is a subscriber to a circulating library, "a renter, a chuser of books".[43] Among Austen's heroines, however, Catherine Morland embodies the most innocent and naïve type of reader; it is because of her deeply imaginative mind that she gets carried away with plots, and ends up superimposing real people or events on to fictional characters and happenings. Austen believed that literature could afford

[40] Female accomplishments included dancing, singing, playing music, drawing, painting, fashionable modern languages, decorative needlework, the art of conversation and letter-writing. Knowledge of the *belles lettres* was also desirable, and included approved essays, drama, poetry, travelogues and historiography, as well as the knowledge of the books of the day. See G. Kelly, *Education and accomplishments*, in *Jane Austen in Context*, edited by J. Todd, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 252-261.

[41] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., p. 190.

[42] See C. Farese, *Le eroine di Jane Austen e l'ambiguo incantesimo della lettura*, in *Jane Austen. Oggi e ieri*, a cura di B. Battaglia, Ravenna, Longo, 2002, pp. 181-193 and O. Murphy, *Jane Austen the Reader. The Artist as Critic*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

[43] J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, edited by J. Wiltshire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 461 (III, 9).

much deeper insights into the "knowledge of human nature",[44] but she was also conscious of the risks of misreading: in *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, Moore-Dewey spares Miss Darcy from the experience of misreading, since the young woman is most of the time innocently caught up in her fictional plots, but eventually reads her brother's mind (and, consequently, his relationship with Elizabeth) correctly.

5. *Paratexts and afterword*

Another outstanding feature of *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* is its use of paratexts,[45] which bear on and direct our interpretation of the novel. The first paratextual element we come across is the author's pseudonym: readers are initially drawn to think that the novel is written by an English-language writer and this undeniably locates it in the much wider context of rewritings and re-mediations of Austen from the English-speaking world. Other frequently used paratextual elements are epigraphs, which introduce each chapter. Epigraphs boast a long history and have been a recurring feature of novel writing, virtually from the eighteenth-century onwards. As an instance, for those novels belonging to the Gothic tradition, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* – those literary creations which Austen mocked in her *Northanger Abbey* – epigraphs were a staple feature. Contemporaries of Austen, such as Walter Scott, were keen on epigraphs: he used them liberally in his historical novels.

In this rewriting epigraphs play a fundamental role on two levels. Besides their significance in terms of setting the atmosphere of each section

[44] Id., *Northanger Abbey*, cit., p. 31 (I, 5).
[45] See G. Genette, *Seuils*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1987.

of the rewriting, epigraphs show in fact Moore-Dewey's legacy with the literary tradition of the long eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature. Thus, the author aligns herself with those novelists who sought to make use of epigraphs to demonstrate their public of readers that their work was part of the literary conversations and debates. The sentences quoted in the epigraphs are all taken from nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature in English: several belong to Austen's works, but many are from Elizabeth Gaskell (*North and South* and *Wives and Daughters*), Charles Dickens (*David Copperfield* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*), George Eliot (*Middlemarch*), Lewis Carrol (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), Francis H. Burnett (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *The Secret Garden*), Virginia Woolf (*Night and Day*). Epigraphs are chosen to function as an introduction to the chapter, as well as a cross reference to another text or novel featuring a similar scene. In some cases, the epigraph is not merely an introduction to and a preview of the chapter, it is also alluded to in the chapter itself. Chapter X, for instance, is introduced by an epigraph taken from Austen's *Persuasion*:

> "An hour's complete leisure for such reflections as these, on a dark November day, a small thick rain almost blotting out the very few objects ever to be discerned from the windows, was enough to make the sound of Lady Russell's carriage exceedingly welcome."[46]

What follows, in *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, reads like a continuation of the epigraph. Mr. Darcy is in the same meditative situation as Anne in *Persuasion* and realises that Mr. Bingley has just arrived (in Anne's case, it was Lady Russell). In *Persuasion*, Anne is tormented by "anxious feelings"[47] owing to her fear of meeting Captain Wentworth after Louisa's accident in Lyme. The same happens to Mr. Darcy who is anxiously

[46] J. Austen, *Persuasion*, edited by J. Todd and A. Blank, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 133 (II, 1).

[47] Ibidem, p. 139 (II, 1).

thinking about a way to escape this unwanted situation, as well as trying to persuade Bingley of Jane Bennet's indifference towards him. Interestingly, the chapter ends with some sentences that clearly echo Anne's feelings in *Persuasion*: "Darcy si trovò da solo, a contemplare dalla vetrata il paesaggio invernale, quasi completamente cancellato dalla fitta pioggerella sottile".[48] These last words clearly echo those which appear in *Persuasion* and which Moore-Dewey chose for her epigraph.

Other outstanding paratextual devices in *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* are the illustrations, which function both as a supplement to and as an expansion of the written narrative. The images provided in Moore-Dewey's re-working are taken from the second Dent edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, illustrated by the brothers Charles Edmund and Henry Matthew Brock, and published in 1898. The ten-volume Dent edition was immensely popular and the illustrations – "pen and ink drawings tinted in watercolour and reproduced […] by six-colour lithography" – were much appreciated by readers because they offered an "exact representation of period costumes and interiors"[49] in Jane Austen's times. Moore-Dewey's choice to select the six Brock illustrations might have different reasons. In a way, it seems to reinforce an uninterrupted dialogue between her text, the hypotext and one specific predecessor, the illustrated second Dent edition of *Pride and Prejudice*. Furthermore, they certainly satisfy the need of some readers to enrich their reading experience with a visual aid. Moreover, since such illustrations never appeared in print in an Italian edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, they are popularised among the great public of Austen admirers for the first time, thanks to this rewriting. At the same time, it should be noted that this choice seems to demonstrate to what extent modern

[48] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, cit., pp. 68-69.

[49] D. Gilson, *Later publishing history, with illustrations*, in *Jane Austen in Context*, cit., p. 138.

rewritings are indebted to and inspired by the numerous and wide-ranging re-mediations of the author and her works.

Finally, a further, distinctive paratextual device is the afterword. In Austen's production, the author rarely seems to reflect on her own activity of being a writer, and her narrators never openly addresses her audience (in contrast to, for example, Charlotte Bronte's characteristic addresses to her readers in *Jane Eyre*).[50] It is mainly in Austen's private correspondence that we sense (and read about) her preoccupation with her readers' opinions of her works, and it is thanks to her family's recollections that we are allowed some glimpses into her working habits.[51] *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* features a *Nota dell'Autrice* that reveals a great deal about the nature of this re-working, starting from the author's choice of language, voice and style. Moore-Dewey states that she had the disadvantage of "non poter mai giocare con l'effetto sorpresa", ending up with a text that would constantly invite the reader to return to the hypotext: "un costante confronto con il libro – o piuttosto, con *tutti i libri* nati dalla *sua* penna",[52] a clever game dedicated to fervent Austen admirers in scattering her own narrative with quotations from the six novels as a way of creating her own "patchwork".[53] The author discusses here her own decisions about the reshaping of characters; we have already mentioned the re-modeling of Georgiana, however it is the figure of Mr. Darcy who poses the most significant problems: Moore-Dewey works rather extensively on the dialogues,

[50] There is perhaps one example in the famous opening lines of the last chapter of *Mansfield Park* ("Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can"), where the author seems to address her audience and this comment might be intended as a self-conscious reflection on her own activity. However, nothing of this kind survives in her narrative. Cf. J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, cit., p. 553 (III, 17).

[51] See J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, cit., pp. 81-89 and pp. 116-119.

[52] P. R. Moore-Dewey, *Nota dell'autrice*, cit., p. 240.

[53] Ibidem.

carefully chooses the words and expressions that the male protagonist would have said. The author's strong devotion to Austen's characters, in particularly with Darcy, reveals the degree of proximity that may develop between a reader and a literary character.

The afterword also offers reflections on the tone and language of the novel. For instance, Moore-Dewey admits that she had to decide how to address her characters. As the English language lacks the difference, typical of Italian, between the use of the informal "tu", the more formal "lei" and the old-fashioned "voi" form, she has had to decide on the degree of (in)formality in her dialogues. Another concern was the linguistic register of her narrative, and especially the need to avoid anachronisms, metaphors, idioms and common sayings that are now part of everyday language but were unknown to Austen's readers.

It is now clear enough to what extent these issues lay bare the metafictional import of *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*. They also disclose the wide range of considerations and second thoughts that lie behind the process of rewriting a classic text, and more specifically the crucial questions at the core of contemporary rewritings of Austen. Twenty-first century readers perceive the works of Jane Austen as extremely modern, especially for their themes. Thematically speaking, they address recurrent questions and problems which are still relevant today – from gender hierarchies to the subversion of norms and social conventions, the *Bildung* of the female characters who strive to find their own place in the world, or controversial aspects such as the marriage market, and money as the main engine of society. If these, in being present-day issues, can work as strong points or "resources of the narrative text", the composition of any rewriting, also

inevitably reveals the "limits"[54] of the source text, those aspects which are culturally, temporally and linguistically bound. In the case of *Pregiudizio e orgoglio*, however, readers do not find such a clash between past and present; the rewriting, instead, reveals the author's ability to take on the challenge and turn those limits into strong points and lay bare Moore-Dewey's great capacity of telling the story through another point of view and translating it for another culture, another language, and another time.

Pregiudizio e orgoglio is a remarkable pastiche, borrowing from the vast world of Jane Austen – from her narrative and style to her choice of language (all the more difficult because 'translated' into Italian) and sharp ironic tone. Moreover, the author makes plain her debt to the great English tradition of novel writing, from the Victorians to the Modernists. The frequent interactions of texts signal the extreme richness of this rewriting, which puts together scenarios from several novels, creating a dialogue between different texts and traditions, overcoming boundaries of time and space and demonstrating how works that have their own specificity (and that may seem to have nothing in common) can instead be pieced together to generate new meanings. Furthermore, a re-writing such as *Pregiudizio e orgoglio* compels readers to become detectives and gain pleasure from identifying the dispersed references and quotations that are woven into the chapters. Perhaps, this skillful game resembles Austen's in *Emma*, "a comedy of mystery and puzzles",[55] where, at each new reading, readers are challenged to guess and find new elements to decode the characters' intentions.

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[54] A. R. Scrittori, *Rewriting Jane Austen*, in *Re-Drawing Austen: Picturesque Travels in Austenland*, edited by B. Battaglia and D. Saglia, Napoli, Liguori, 2004, p. 262.

[55] D. Lodge, *Reading and Rereading "Emma"*, in *A Truth Universally Acknowledged. 33 Reasons Why We Can't Stop Reading Jane Austen*, Edited by S. Carson, London, Penguin, 2009, p. 181.

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MADDALENA PENNACCHIA

RECREATING JANE: "AUSTENLAND" AND THE REGENCY THEME PARK

Twenty years have passed since the first broadcasting, in the autumn of 1995, of the BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice*, adapted for the screen by Andrew Davies (script) and Simon Langton (direction). Starring Colin Firth, who soon became an object of desire for thousands of women viewers, the miniseries paved the way for a craze for all things Austen. The phenomenon was renamed *Austenmania*, and brought about a number of screen adaptations of Austen's books, that in turn generated a multitude of further appropriations and rewritings (sequels, prequels, fan-fictions and spin offs) for both printed page and screens (cinema, TV, computer). Even though the high tide of Austenmania has by now passed, there is no doubt that Austenian textuality has expanded enormously in the last twenty years; so much so that Jane Austen's six novels, together with her letters and unfinished works, have become the palimpsest of a large fictional world spreading through a net of interconnected media platforms, and inhabited

by characters changing and transforming over time and whenever they cross media boundaries.

The Austen-on-film industry, which was revitalized by Ang Lee's innovative adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* in 1995,[1] played a pivotal role in the creation of such a world: it reinvented Jane for the New Millennium, transforming her writing into audiovisual currency to be circulated in the creative economy that was launched at the end of the twentieth century.[2] It also played a part, however, in the process of transforming Austen into an easily recognizable and marketable brand of Englishness, a transformation that was allowed, if not endorsed, by Conservative as well as Labour cultural politics:

> "Both Margaret Thatcher's New Right governments of the 1980s and Tony Blair's New Labour government of the late 1990s sought to establish the UK as a forward looking, enterprising nation, without wanting to discard altogether established traditions, images and identities. Both recognized that the UK was an old country but both, in Blair's terms, wanted to rebrand it as young and vibrant."[3]

In the context of Blair's plan to re-shape Britain's image abroad by rejuvenating it, the British creative industries continued to exploit traditional images of green pastures, magnificent manor houses and civilized manners, though with a critical twist. From Thatcher to Blair, and despite a fiery critical debate on the 'correct' representation of Britain, the

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[1] See Ang Lee, *Sense and Sensibility*, Columbia Pictures Corporation – Mirage, USA – UK, 1995.

[2] It may be worth remembering, in this respect, that in the aftermath of his appointment as Prime Minister, in 1997, Tony Blair turned Thatcher's Department of National Heritage into a Department of Culture, Media and Sport, championing at the same time the organization of a Creative Industries Task Force; the latter was tasked with drawing a list of activities linked to the national creative industries with the purpose of calculating the effect these industries had on the domestic economy, and of planning their further development. See T. Flew, *Creative Industries: Culture and Policies*, London, SAGE, 2012.

[3] A. Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema. Costume Drama since 1980*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 49.

heritage industry and the film industry continued to thrive by drawing on each other. Evidence of this alliance can be found in the 1998 British Tourist Authority *Movie Map* of the UK, an innovative promotional tool that acknowledged the phenomenon of film-induced tourism and the influence of film on destination image. On the map, the locations of costume dramas – films set in the past and usually shot at properties belonging to the National Trust – regularly appeared, together with the locations of movies set in the present and more openly following the cultural trend of Cool Britannia. As far as costume drama as genre is concerned, therefore, the map further supports the marketing of the English countryside as the perfect travel destination for consumers of Austen's life and novels and their film adaptations.[4]

The fact that Austen fans or Janeites can travel almost anywhere to follow in the steps of 'authentic' or 'adapted' Jane and thus enjoy a "mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty"[5] is a truth easily verifiable online. The Wayfarers, for instance, a well-established walking tour company founded in 1984, offers a walking tour of *Jane Austen's Country* that will take customers "to many of [Austen's] haunts, including the village of Steventon where her father was Rector, and the gentle rolling countryside that forms the backdrop to much of her work";[6] while the Brit Movie Tours website still gives the possibility to book a

[4] See M. Pennacchia, *Adaptation-induced Tourism for Consumers of Literature on Screen: the Experience of Jane Austen Fans*, in "Almatourism. Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development", Special Issue Film-induced Tourism, 6, 4, 2015, pp. 261-268.

[5] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York and Abingdon-Oxon, Routledge, 2006, p. 114.

[6] *Jane Austen Country. Insiders' guide to Jane's family life*, web address www.thewayfarers.com/jane-austen.

BBC *Pride and Prejudice* four-day Tour of Locations.[7] If these are among the classic Austen packages on the market, new and more creative proposals for Janeites are beginning to appear online, such as the *Jane Austen Weekends*, held since 2013 at the Governor's House in Hyde Park, Vermont, which are described on the website as

> " […] a literary retreat that will slip you quietly back into Regency England in a beautiful old mansion where Jane herself would feel at home. […] Just imagine the interesting conversation with a whole houseful of Jane's readers under one roof. Weekend guests have commented that they wish there had been a tape recorder under the dinner table so they could replay the evening again and again. It won't just be good company; it will be the 'company of clever well-informed people who have a great deal of conversation'. It will be the best! It's not Bath, but it *is* Hyde Park and you'll love Vermont circa 1800." [8]

The quotation from *Persuasion* is perfect for the ideal buyer of this packet.[9] Of course, Vermont is definitely not England, but what difference does it make for the experience of the passionate Austen fan? Is the time spent in this kind of Regency theme park or on a film set less valuable than the time spent in the authentic sites of Austen's life? Does authenticity lie in the place or in the experience the visitor is enjoying? Is the need to participate bodily in Austen's world merely the last frontier of consumerism or does it have something to do with the ultimate meaning of art and literature and the way it can transform our lives?

These are not easy questions to answer, but *Austenland*, a novel written by the American writer Shannon Hale, may help us reflect on such issues because it deals precisely with the psychology and behaviour of an

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[7] See *Pride and Prejudice Tour of Locations – 4 days*, web address www.britmovietours.com/?s=pride+and+prejudice&x=7&y=14.

[8] *Jane Austen Weekends*, web address www.onehundredmain.com/events/jane-austen-weekends/.

[9] J. Austen, *Persuasion*, edited by J. Todd and A. Blank, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 162 (II, 4).

Austen fan.[10] The book was published in 2007 and soon enjoyed such a considerable success in the world of Austen fandom that it was followed by a sequel in 2012, *Midnight in Austenland*, and then adapted for the big screen in 2013 by the author herself (screenplay) and Jerusha Hess as film director.[11] Presenting itself as a chick-lit rewriting of *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel tells the life and adventures of a "thirty-something" New Yorker single who works as a graphic designer at a magazine:

> "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a thirty-something woman in possession of a satisfying career and fabulous hairdo must be in want of very little, and Jane Hayes, pretty enough and clever enough, was certainly thought to have little to distress her."[12]

The economic independence of the adapted heroine – that puts her in a completely different social position with respect to Austen's original heroine – is ironically downplayed as soon as it is inserted into the revised quotation of the famous opening of *Pride and Prejudice*; the narrator focuses instead on Jane's disappointing love life, which has been fashioned by Austen's sentimental education and, consequently, seems to be ruled by a repeatedly frustrated need to find the perfect, lifelong relationship:

> "At a very young age, she had learned how to love from Austen. And according to her immature understanding at the time, in Austen's world there was no such thing as

[10] Interestingly, the term *Austenland* was first used in 2004 within the context of interarts studies: "a vast, virtual territory in a state of continuous expansion and reconfiguration. Its constantly refined terrain is composed of the picturesque, views and prospects, drawings and sketches, portraits and 'likenesses' accumulated by readers and critics in their explorations of Jane Austen and her works" (B. Battaglia and D. Saglia, *Introduction: Picturesque Maps of Austenland*, in *Re-Drawing Austen. Picturesque Travels in Austenland*, edited by B. Battaglia and D. Saglia, Napoli, Liguori, 2004, p. 1).

[11] See J. Hess, *Austenland*, Fickle Fish Films – Moxie Pictures, UK – USA, 2013.

[12] S. Hale, *Austenland*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2007, p. 1.

a fling. Every romance was intended to lead to marriage, every flirtation just a means to find that partner to cling to forever."[13]

As the narrator makes clear from the beginning, the point is that ever since the screen adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's intelligent and ironic writing, showing with meticulous wit her characters' virtues and faults, has been turned into a visually entrancing world, peopled by perfectly handsome Mr Darcies. It has become a romance utopia to which women like Jane wish to escape whenever their daily life feels too dull:

"Jane had first read *Pride and Prejudice* when she was sixteen, read it a dozen times since, and read the other Austen novels at least twice […] but it wasn't until the BBC put a face on the story that those gentlemen in tight breeches had stepped out of her reader's imagination and into her nonfiction hopes. Stripped of Austen's funny, insightful, biting narrator, the movie became a pure romance."[14]

We are told that Jane watches the BBC *Pride and Prejudice* over and over again on DVD and that she does it secretly, because she feels guilty and embarrassed about her addiction to the physical sensations the film adaptation is capable of arousing. At the same time, like all true addicts, she cannot get rid of the need and is hungry for more. To ask for more is, on the other hand, what all fans do and, to be sure, the market is ready to give them what they are looking for. This is all the more true in the so-called age of "convergence", a phenomenon that stems from three factors:

" […] the flow of contents across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experience they want."[15]

[13] Ibidem, p. 18.
[14] Ibidem, p. 2.
[15] H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York and London, New York University Press, 2006, p. 2.

Interestingly enough, the turning point of Hale's novel happens precisely when an eccentric old aunt of Jane's leaves her a strange gift in her will: a non refundable three-week vacation at Pembrook Park, an exclusive English country resort in Kent where "the Prince Regent still rules a carefree England",[16] as the advertisement leaflet recites. Jane decides to take her once-in-a-lifetime chance and go to Austenland, "the Area 51 of vacation resorts",[17] because she thinks she will be cured of her excessive Austenian fantasies by living them to the full, thus being purged of them in a sort of Aristotelian catharsis.

In the novel, therefore, Jane is represented as passing from reading, to viewing, and then participating in the text through a growing involvement of her own body. Reading, viewing and participating, these are the three modes through which stories can be narrated and engaged with in contemporary culture. In the "telling mode", that of literature, "our engagement [with a story] begins in the realm of imagination, which is simultaneously controlled by the selected, directing words of the text, and liberated"; in the "showing mode", as in film adaptations, "we are caught in an unrelenting, forward-driving story […] from the imagination to the realm of direct perception – with its mix of both detail and broad focus";[18] in the third mode, the participatory one, we become agents and engage with a story in an interactive way: we may rewrite it, for example as in fan fiction, or we may plunge into it either through a few of our senses, as in videogames, or with our whole body, as in theme parks, "where we can walk right into the world of a Disney film, and virtual reality experience,

[16] S. Hale, *Austenland*, cit., p. 13.
[17] Ibidem, p.15.
[18] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, cit., p. 23.

where our own bodies are made to feel as if they are entering an adapted heterocosm".[19]

Austenland may rightly be considered a kind of "adapted heterocosm", but it is certainly more than a simple heritage theme park, or a Disneyfied version of the Regency era. If in theme parks people can enjoy a safe amusement ride through a fictional land, with no actual danger or consequences for their lives, in Pembrook Park certain risks are taken. In order to enter Austenland Jane has to sign a confidential agreement with Mrs Wattlesbrook, the owner and mistress of the place, where she accepts to be given a new name, Miss Earstwhile, dress up in Regency clothes (starting with corsets and drawers), and behave according to the social conventions of the time, minutely listed in the booklet that comes with the vacation packet. This will be the only way to engage bodily with an Austenian storyline, as Mrs Wattlesbrook explains to her guest:

> "It is imperative that these social customs be followed to the letter. For the sake of all our guests, any person who flagrantly disobeys these rules will be asked to leave. Complete immersion in the Regency period is the only way to truly experience Austen's England."[20]

There are "*n*o scripts. *N*o written endings", at Pembrook Park and "an unexpected meeting with a certain gentleman"[21] (also included in the packet), will be tailored to the customer's needs; moreover, there will be a grand finale, a ball, where anything may happen. In this respect, Mrs Wattlesbrook's agreement very much resembles the contract between writer and reader in the popular genre of romance. *Pride and Prejudice* is

[19] Ibidem, p. 51.
[20] S. Hale, *Austenland*, cit., p. 22.
[21] Ibidem, p.13.

"generally considered the foundation text of modern romance",[22] the Ur-text of Harlequin or Mills and Boons' novels, where the reader is sure to find the same plot over and over again: girl meets boy, the couple overcomes an obstacle, they live happily ever after. If Mrs Wattelsbrook agrees to offer Austenland's visitors the realization of their romantic fantasies, however, there must be, on the customer's side, an obligation to collaborate willingly with the process, by accepting the idea of suspending "disbelief" and playing a role in the fairy tale:

> "A ball – things happen at a ball. Cinderella happened at a ball, Jane might happen. She felt hopelessly and wonderfully fanciful. The sun on her face, the bonnet ribbon under her chin, a wrap around her arms, and a hatted-and sideburned-man at her side, all lent to perfect suspension of disbelief."[23]

What Jane actually agrees to when she signs the confidential contract is to perform a role in the plot outline that Mrs Wattlesbrook has contrived for her guests; in other words, she agrees to be part of the show and interact with professional actors. Interestingly, among the genuine Regency amusements that are offered at Pembrook Park (croquet, sewing, playing cards, walking in the park and, of course, the final ball) home theatricals are also included, thus allowing Pembrook visitors to enjoy further their immersive experience using a love play-text to give voice to their own desires. It is Colonel Andrews, one of the theme park characters, who cheers up the small group of ladies bored by the relentless rain by saying:

> "I've brought the very thing from London, a script from some little play or other called *Home by the Sea*. There are six parts, three pairs of lovers, just right for us, and it

[22] M. Wherry, *More than a Love Story: the Complexity Of the Popular Romance*, in *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*, Edited by C. Berberich, London and New York, Bloomsbury Academics, 2014, p. 56.

[23] S. Hale, *Austenland*, cit., p. 130.

will give us something to pass the time before the ball, so let's rehearse and put it on for Lady Templeton."[24]

Even though "it's hardly Shakespeare",[25] as Jane puts it, the tried and true device of the play-within-the play still has the power to bring forth metafictional speculations on the nature of performance and authenticity, or more specifically on the distinction (or confusion) between "genuine emotion and the impersonation of feeling",[26] an issue that, if it is at the core of *Mansfield Park,* it is also highlighted in Hale's novel, when, for example, Jane and Mr Nobley, the Austenland's version of Mr Darcy, happen to see Lady Amelia, one of the visitors, and Captain East, together in the garden:

> "Captain East and Amelia were silhouetted by starlight. They stood in front of a bench, and he was holding both her hands.
> 'Are they acting?' asked Jane, 'I mean, rehearsing for the theatricals?'
> 'They do not appear to be speaking at the moment'
> He was right. They were completely occupied with staring into each other's eyes. […] If they were acting, they were doing a mighty fine job.
> 'You think it's real…' said Jane.
> 'It is not right to watch.'"[27]

Mr Nobley, who is an actor in real life and whose job is to play a part at Pembrook Park, paradoxically behaves like Edmund in *Mansfield Park*, censoring theatre for its dangers and opposing the idea of staging the play. An actor, however, might have a better understanding of the power of theatre on human beings and how the experience not only of watching but acting in a play might affect people. In this context, it is absolutely appropriate that Mr Nobley earnestly declares his love to the heroine on

[24] Ibidem, p.128.
[25] Ibidem, p.138.
[26] D. Marshall, *True Acting and the Language of Real Feeling: "Mansfield Park"*, in "Yale Journal of Criticism", 3, 1989, p. 88.
[27] See S. Hale, *Austenland*, cit., p. 140.

stage, in the course of *Home by the Sea*, when the audience and fellow performers think he is just acting. Only Jane and Mrs Wattlesbrook notice, on and off stage respectively, that he has slightly changed his lines, but Jane can only tantalizingly wonder if, in doing so, he has let his true self appear for a moment. After all, she thinks: "movie actors fall in love with each other on the set all the time. Is it so outlandish to suppose it might happen to me?"[28]

Since Jane is not simply watching a show, but is taking part in one, she also contributes to its creation, even subverting the plot Mrs Wattlesbrook had organized for her with a final *coup de théâtre*. By experiencing this immersive form of tourism and leisure activity, Jane therefore changes the social environment around her, while also being changed by it beyond Mrs Wattlesbrook's control. Unexpectedly for Jane, but necessarily for the genre, her holiday turns out to be exactly what the advertisement promised: a life-changing experience. From this point of view, Hale's novel is extremely thought provoking, because it reveals what contemporary customers of the leisure and tourism industry more or less openly desire and what the market is trying to offer:

> "Consumers are increasingly striving for experiences. As products and services have become interchangeable and replicated, the search for unique, compelling and memorable experiences in the context of tourism has become a key notion. In tourism marketing, the concept of the experience economy has long provided a valuable vehicle to design, stage and deliver experiences to consumers and gain competitive advantage […] The concept of the experience economy has evolved, as consumers have become more active and empowered in playing a part in co-creating their own experience in quest for personal growth."[29]

[28] Ibidem, p. 135.

[29] B. Neuhofer and D. Buhalis, *Experience, Co-creation and Technology: Issues, Challenges and Trends for Technology Enhanced Tourism Experiences*, in *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism Marketing*, Edited by S. McCabe, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, p. 124.

However fake the Regency England of Austenland may appear, the odd recreational activity the heroine experiences on her visit truly helps her to re-create herself, that is, to become more aware of her needs and desires and so refashion her life accordingly. The last pages of the novel may be read in this perspective. While Jane is waiting to take off, Mr Nobley breathlessly rushes into the aircraft cabin, sits next to her and introduces himself with his real name, saying that notwithstanding his fear of flying he is ready to follow her anywhere if she accepts his proposal to be near her for a time:

> "'So,' he said, 'is New York City our final destination?'
> 'That's home.'
> 'Good. There's bound to be work for an attractive British actor, wouldn't you think?'
> 'There are thousands of restaurants, and those waiter jobs have high turnover.'
> 'Right'
> 'Loads of theatres, too. I think you'd be wonderful in a comedy.'"[30]

If at the beginning of the novel the economic independence of the heroine is clearly downplayed, things change at the end: the fact that Jane has got a well-payed job in New York while her Mr Darcy will have to start his career from scratch in the Big Apple represents a considerable change in the Austen marriage plot in terms of new power relations between genders; it is a refreshing plunge into the variety of real life situations. In conclusion, if we refrain from dismissing *Austenland* as a simply escapist fairy-tale, we will unexpectedly find that it is also an instructive story of female personal growth and even empowerment.

[30] S. Hale, *Austenland*, cit., pp. 190-191.

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OLIVIA MURPHY

WRITING IN THE SHADOW OF "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE": JO BAKER'S "LONGBOURN"

The afterlives, adaptations and adulterations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, first published in 1813, are legion. They vary enormously in degree of popularity, quality, plausibility and – one might argue – sanity. Before beginning this paper (in January 2015) I made a cursory investigation of the most recent *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations listed on Amazon's website. The new year had already ushered in *Steady to His Purpose: A Pride and Prejudice Variation* by the suspiciously Austenian-sounding Cassandra B. Leigh,[1] *Untamed and Unabashed: Lydia Bennet's Story* by Liza O'Connor[2] and *Pemberley Lake: A Pride and Prejudice Novella* by Dona Lewis, with the daunting series title of *The Pemberley*

[1] See C. B. Leigh, *Steady to His Purpose: A Pride and Prejudice Variation*, Amazon Media, 2015, web address https://www.amazon.co.uk/Steady-His-Purpose-Variation-Prejudice-ebook/dp/B00S33RJQO.

[2] See L. O'Connor, *Untamed and Unabashed: Lydia Bennet's Story*, New Authors Online, 2015, web address https://www.amazon.com/Untamed-Unabashed-Lydia-Bennets-Story-ebook/dp/B00S481WGQ.

Assignations, Book I.[3] I made it as far back in the catalogue as November 2014, at which point I was brought up short by *Mr Darcy's Dog Ruminates: "Pride and Prejudice" through the Eyes of Julius Caesar, Darcy's Dog* by Y. M. Whitehead.[4]

Jo Baker's *Longbourn* (2013) sits very awkwardly amidst this dubious company of unauthorizable sequels, variations, and pornographic vignettes. The novel is better understood as participating in a postmodern tradition of critically inflected re-writing of canonical texts, whose best known examples are Jean Rhys's imagined 'backstory' for *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Rochester, *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John Maxwell Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), in which characters from Daniel Defoe's *Roxana* and *Robinson Crusoe* share an island and a narrative. And yet: in *Foe* and *The Wide Sargasso Sea* the reader is asked to re-encounter characters already well-known (at least by reputation), to imagine other interpretations of their histories as originally presented by their creators. *Longbourn* requires of its readers something very different, in asking them to engage imaginatively with the lives of characters that the source text, *Pride and Prejudice*, almost entirely overlooks. The central characters of *Longbourn* are little more than names in *Pride and Prejudice*, and unmemorable names at that: Sarah, Mrs Hill. More often than not, they are known not by any name at all, but by function only. They are the housekeeper, the footman, the butler, and the maid.

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[3] See D. Lewis, *Pemberley Lake: A Pride and Prejudice Novella (The Pemberley Assignations, Book I)*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015, web address https://www.amazon.com/Pemberley-Lake-Prejudice-Novella-Assignations /dp/ 1505893682.

[4] See Y. M. Whitehead, *Mr Darcy's Dog Ruminates: 'Pride and Prejudice' through the Eyes of Julius Caesar, Darcy's Dog*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014, web address https://www.amazon.com/Mr-Darcys-dog-ruminates-Prejudice/dp/1503065456. A dog, even one named Julius Caesar, is of course anatomically incapable of rumination.

This last, the housemaid Sarah, is the heroine of *Longbourn*. As the novel shadows the plot of its source text so too does Sarah, in some respects, shadow her mistress Elizabeth Bennet. I mean this literally, in that Sarah accompanies Elizabeth to London and Kent, and eventually to Darcy's estate Pemberley. There are also many more subtle ways, however, in which Baker's heroine functions as a foil, a shadow, to Austen's:

> "Skirts rustling, Elizabeth moved towards the dressing table, to see herself in the mirror there. Sarah followed her, smoothed the dress's yoke onto china collarbones, using only her left hand, so as not to risk staining the muslin. On the right, a blister had burst and was weeping.
>
> 'You look very lovely, Miss Elizabeth.'
>
> 'All your hard work, Sarah, dear.'"[5]

It is Sarah's hard work, and the equally hard work of the other three Longbourn servants, that provides the central motif of the novel. Sarah's life is one of unpleasant and unremitting labour, from hauling well-water and lighting fires hours before dawn, to emptying chamber pots and scrubbing filthy underclothing, to rendering pig fat for soap and curling ladies' hair with fire-heated tongs. This work is invisible in *Pride and Prejudice*, a novel that, as is customary with Austen's writing, offers very little in the way of description and rarely refers to any but the most trivial domestic activity.

This is arguably a function of Austen's stylistic choices: many contemporary novelists employ far greater levels of detailed specificity without achieving Austen's reputation for realism. Perhaps less understandably, such labour is equally invisible in most mainstream reception and adaptation of Austen's work, that nevertheless begins from the assumption that Austen's novels require us to imagine her characters

[5] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, London, Doubleday, 2013, p. 59.

"as actual beings", and their histories as, somehow, historic.[6] This is no recent phenomenon: Austen herself recorded that one early reader of *Emma* (1815) was "convinced that I had meant M^rs^ & Miss Bates for some acquaintance of theirs — People whom I never heard of before".[7] Imagining the characters and actions of *Pride and Prejudice* as somehow 'real' leads implicitly in *Longbourn* to inferences of *how* those real lives might be lived. The comment in *Pride and Prejudice* that the "shoe-roses" for the Bennets to wear to the ball at Netherfield "were got by proxy"[8] becomes, in *Longbourn*, a miserable and rather dangerous mission for Sarah, "a slow, reluctant trudge"[9] to Meryton that leaves her soaked to the skin and covered in mud. By contrast, the notes to the heavily annotated Cambridge University Press edition of the novels give a definition for "shoe-roses" but offer no suggestion as to what "got by proxy" might mean in this context.[10] *Longbourn*'s attention to this imagined – and nevertheless perfectly historic – detail of Regency existence is superficially its greatest strength. It is what sets it apart, not only from Austen's original but also from other literary and filmic adaptations of the novel. Joe Wright's 2005 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, with its peripatetic sow and swampy courtyard, showed Longbourn as a working farm in a clear attempt to create an atmosphere distinct from the elegant Augustan prettiness of the 1995 BBC television series.[11] Wright's film, the miniseries *Lost in Austen* (2008) and the 'reality' television series *Regency House Party* (2004)

[6] J. Wiltshire, *The Hidden Jane Austen*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. IX.

[7] J. Austen, *"Opinions of Emma"*, in Id., *Later Manuscripts*, edited by J. Todd and L. Bree, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 237.

[8] Id., *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by P. Rogers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 98 (I, 17).

[9] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, cit., p. 132.

[10] See J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 490.

[11] See J. Wright, *Pride and Prejudice*, StudioCanal – Working Title Films – Focus Features, UK, 2005 and S. Langton, *Pride and Prejudice*, BBC, UK, 2005.

approach, perhaps, closer than most other Austeniana to discussions of the messy practicalities of life in the early nineteenth century, but they fall far short of *Longbourn*'s often literally visceral realism.[12]

The reader's introduction to Sarah is on washing day, where she must scrub the famous mud off Elizabeth Bennet's petticoats. There are also the bloody napkins of five young women to boil in the copper, along with the more heavily soiled (because harder used and less often changed) clothes of the servants themselves. Just as in *Pride and Prejudice* the reader is first introduced to the Bennet family via dialogue, so too in *Longbourn* we hear the Bennets before we catch sight of them. The first chapter of Austen's novel, however, is almost exclusively dialogue, with no location or physical description offered to the reader. In contrast, *Longbourn* gives us a particular location in space and time from which to eavesdrop on the Bennets: as Sarah is carefully negotiating the back stairs with a full chamber pot.[13] Where Austen eschews description, elaboration, or particularity, Baker offers specific, concrete detail.

Throughout *Longbourn*, the familiar events of *Pride and Prejudice* are shown in their impact on Sarah and her fellow servants. Baker writes of Bingley's advent:

> "A young, unmarried gentleman, newly arrived to the neighbourhood. It meant a flurry of excited giggly activity above stairs, it meant outings, entertainments, and a barrowload of extra work for everyone below."[14]

Such work is for the most part endured rather than enjoyed by the much put-upon Longbourn servants, who entertain no Burkean notions of feudal loyalty or respect for their betters. At one point Sarah seeks the

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[12] See D. Zeff, *Lost in Austen*, Mammoth Screen, UK, 2008 and T. Carter, *Regency House Party*, Channel 4, UK, 2004.

[13] See J. Baker, *Longbourn*, cit., p. 25.

[14] Ibidem, p. 51.

pastoral support of the clerical Mr Collins, who dismisses her concerns and commends her to her duty, before she leaves his room with yet another full chamber pot:

> "This, she reflected, as she crossed the raining yard, and strode out to the necessary house, and slopped the pot's contents down the hole, *this* was her duty, and she could find no satisfaction in it, and found it strange that anybody might think a person could. She rinsed the pot out at the pump and left it to freshen in the rain. If this was her duty, then she wanted someone else's."[15]

References to such earthy bodily realities as these are occasionally made by earlier eighteenth-century satirists (Lemuel Gulliver's attempt to extinguish the Lilliputian fire springs to mind), but they fall outside the purview of the polite novel from the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. Leopold Bloom's visit to the privy in the second book of *Ulysses* is a frank riposte to the conventional squeamishness of nineteenth-century realist literature. *Longbourn* reminds its readers frequently of the bodies Austen barely mentions. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy notes to himself that Elizabeth's figure is "light and pleasing",[16] but in *Longbourn* we see Elizabeth dressing, "rais*ing* her arms, exposing the dark musky fluff underneath".[17]

Baker's more pressing concern in *Longbourn*, however, goes beyond these skirmishes against conventional realism and its genteel silences. The novel seeks to redress the elision of history – or, more accurately, the elision of the history of England's majority population – from the popular conception of the late Georgian period as it has been transmitted through adaptations of Austen's work. The economic violence of the period, made known most vividly to us through the poetry of William Blake, John Clare,

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[15] Ibidem, p. 128.
[16] J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, cit., p. 26 (I, 6).
[17] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, cit., p. 59.

William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley and their ilk, has long been traced through Austen's novels.[18] The wider Austen industry, however, seems to enjoy her novels as Winston Churchill once did, as a respite from reality:

> "What calm lives they had, those people! No worries about the French Revolution, or the crashing struggle of the Napoleonic Wars. Only manners controlling natural passion as far as they could, together with cultured explanations of any mischances."[19]

The "crashing struggle" of the Peninsula War, at least as experienced by one individual, finds a central place in *Longbourn*. James Smith – who has deserted the army (a capital offense) and found work as footman to the Bennets – at first believes he is safely hidden in the countryside, only to find the war and its preparations encroaching into Hertfordshire: "There were troops everywhere these days. It made you twitchy; you could not turn round without seeing a red coat and a Brown Bess".[20] James is filled with fear and bitterness by the family's closeness to the militia officers billeted in Meryton, a group that, as the novel shows, are quick to enforce brutal discipline on their underlings, but who have themselves little chance of seeing dangerous action:

> "If only Wickham was in the regulars, James thought [...] he could allow himself the pleasure of imagining the pretty young fellow sent off to fight in Spain. He could imagine him caught by *guerillas* and strung up from a tree, his cock cut off and stuffed in his own mouth, left bleeding and to the mercy of the wolves. That'd take the shine off him a bit."[21]

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[18] See M. Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975 and C. L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

[19] W. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 5: *Closing the Ring*, London, Houghton Mifflin, 1952, p. 377. Churchill is here remembering having *Pride and Prejudice* read to him while he was ill, in December 1943.

[20] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, cit., p. 223.

[21] Ibidem, p. 227.

The militia's ostensible purpose was to safeguard England in the event of a Napoleonic invasion. Once this threat had largely passed, they were deployed against those deemed by the establishment to be dangerous agitators. James, unwisely, mocks Wickham: "I dare say you will get your hands bloody soon enough. Situation's promising in the north. Slaughtering mill-hands: proper job for a man, that".[22] Along with this reference to the violent suppression of the early stirrings of the labour movement in the newly industrialized north, *Longbourn* reminds us of the more unobtrusive, but nonetheless equally significant economic changes of the Romantic period. "This used to be common land", says Sarah of a sheep paddock, "*t*here were houses here".[23] Sarah, it is revealed, is the daughter of a weaver, a cottage industry newly superseded by the mechanization of textile manufacture. Sarah has memories "of a man who sat indoors over a shuddering loom, a book balanced on the frame".[24]

Domestic economic realities share space in *Longbourn* with those of global trade, and particularly the so-called Triangular Trade between Britain, Africa and the Caribbean in manufactured goods, slaves and sugar. The news that Bingley's fortune is from sugar sends the little maid Polly into confectionary daydreams: "I bet they have peppermint plasterwork, and barley-sugar columns, and all their floors are made of polished toffee".[25] The reality is hinted at by the arrival of the Bingley's "distressingly handsome"[26] footman:

> "So he was what they called a black man, then, even though he was brown? An African? But Africans are cross-hatched, inky, half-naked and in chains. That plaque

[22] Ibidem, p. 181.
[23] Ibidem, p. 296.
[24] Ibidem, p. 63.
[25] Ibidem, p. 57.
[26] Ibidem.

she had seen at the parsonage, hanging in the hallway: *Am I not a man and a brother?*"[27]

The plaque – possibly one of those manufactured by Wedgwood – gestures to slavery as an abstract political and religious issue. The handsome footman, who becomes Sarah's first suitor, does not fit later stereotypes of the freed slave, but rather is as individuated as any other character in the novel. Like *Longbourn*'s other characters, however, he reflects the novel's historical context, demonstrating how inescapably enmeshed in history is the life of every individual. This is ultimately revealed, not through his skin, but through his name:

> "'Ptolemy Bingley. At your service.'
> His first name was strange enough, but: 'How can you be a Bingley?'
> 'If you are off his estate, that's your name, that's how it works.'"[28]

Ptolemy, it is implied, is the illegitimate son of the late Mr Bingley senior and one of that man's sugar-producing slaves, and thus – at least genetically – a brother to the Mr Bingley of *Pride and Prejudice*. His unusual degree of courtesy and self confidence mark him out, to repurpose a term from *Emma*, as a "half-gentleman",[29] and his presence in the novel gestures to the complexities of racial and class identity that conventional historical accounts overlook.

In its explicit acknowledgment of the realities of late Georgian life, of land enclosure, industrialization, illiteracy, war, rural poverty and grinding drudgery, *Longbourn* embeds its characters in the economic and historic fabric of its time. Many readers have identified this strategy in

[27] Ibidem, p. 54.
[28] Ibidem, p. 97.
[29] J. Austen, *Emma*, edited by R. Cronin and D. McMillan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 213 (II, 6).

Austen's novels too, of course, and not always with delight. W. H. Auden wrote in *Letter to Lord Byron* (1937):

> "You could not shock her more than she shocks me;
> Beside her Joyce seems innocent as grass.
> It makes me most uncomfortable to see
> An English spinster of the middle-class
> Describe the amorous effects of 'brass,
> Reveal so frankly and with such sobriety
> The economic basis of society."[30]

Most adaptations and commentary on Austen's novels, however, seem by preference to ignore those realities of which the author was so clearly aware. To redress this, and in so doing to reclaim the histories and the subjectivities of the millions of women and men whose experience has been largely forgotten or ignored, is *Longbourn*'s ostensible aim. In twenty-first century parlance, *Longbourn* is *Pride and Prejudice* for the ninety-nine percent. Baker has written that the servants in *Pride and Prejudice* "are—at least in my head—people too";[31] she has mentioned that her grandmother, like millions of other English women from the Middle Ages until the mid-twentieth century, was "in service".[32] *Longbourn* can thus be seen to participate in a vogue for fictionalized lives of servants: a review of the novel for "The New Yorker" argues that "*w*e are now in the grip of another servant renaissance",[33] citing the success of films such as *The Help* (2011), *The Butler* (2013) and the television series *Downton*

[30] W. H. Auden, *Letter to Lord Byron*, in Id., *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings: 1927-1939*, edited by E. Mendelson, London, Faber and Faber, 1977, p. 171.

[31] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, cit., p. 366.

[32] I interviewed Jo Baker on 21 February 2014, at the Perth International Writers Festival.

[33] R. Margalit, *Life Downstairs*, in "The New Yorker", 31 December 2013, web address http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/life-downstairs.

Abbey (2010-2016).[34] The way in which such fictions are understood as an interconnected genre is perhaps best summed up in the film *Sabrina* (1995), where a chauffeur, approached affectionately by a housekeeper, accuses her of "watching *Remains of the Day* again".[35] While *Longbourn* does belong to this genre, its engagement with *Pride and Prejudice* forces its poetics into a somewhat different course.

There are moments in *Longbourn* that bring home the great difficulty, if not hubris, of its literary task. This is expressed in the novel as the problem of how to make substance out of a shadow; or in other words, how to make the unremembered, unthought-of Sarah and her colleagues as real as the characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, whose cultural weight is greater than that of most historical human beings. In the free indirect speech that Austen invented and which Baker makes use of, this is made out to be a psychic risk for Sarah herself:

> "The room was dull now, and meaningless, with the young ladies gone from it. They were both lovely, almost luminous. And Sarah was, she knew, as she slipped along the servants' corridor, and then up the stairs to the attic to hang her new dress on the rail, just one of the many shadows that ebbed and tugged at the edges of the light."[36]

Sarah's lack of social, physical and economic importance – the understanding that to others she is either invisible or transparent – impinges on her sense of self and reality. In the 1840s the equally fictional Jane Eyre stakes her claim to humanity: "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure,

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[34] See T. Taylor, *The Help*, Reliance Big Entertainment – 1492 Pictures – DreamWorks, USA, 2011; L. Daniels, *The Butle*r, Laura Ziskin Productions – The Weinstein Company, 2013; J. Fellowes, *Downton Abbey*, Carnival Films – Masterpiece, UK, 2010-2016.

[35] S. Pollack, *Sabrina*, Paramount, USA, 1995. Pollack's film is itself an adaptation of Billy Wilder's 1954 film of the same name. Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* (London, Faber and Faber, 1989) was adapted into a highly acclaimed film by James Ivory, Merchant Ivory Productions – Columbia, UK-USA, 1993.

[36] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, cit., p. 62.

plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! — I have as much soul as you — and full as much heart!".[37] For much of *Longbourn*, however, Sarah's sense of her own insubstantiality threatens to engulf her. Her first encounter with Mr Darcy (and also the reader's) comes more than half way through the text, with his visit to Elizabeth at Hunsford parsonage, accompanied by his cousin, and is telling:

> " […] the two gentlemen filled the doorway, and stepped through it, and moved past her, and did not so much as glance her way – for them the door had simply opened itself. […] She watched their glossy boots scatter her tea leaves across the wooden floor. The two gentlemen were so smooth, and so big, and of such substance: it was as though they belonged to a different order of creation entirely, and moved in a separate element, and were as different as angels."[38]

Sarah's impression is, in some senses, literally true. Mr Darcy, with his fortune and his massive estate, is of more substance than a housemaid with only a few slowly accumulated shillings and some hand-me-down frocks to her name. Well fed and well looked after from birth, Darcy is also more physically substantial than any other character in the book, while Sarah has been undernourished and overworked for much of her life. The maid is effectively invisible to Darcy:

> "Sarah could not have even slowed his progress, no more than one of the evening shadows could trip him up. She stood there on the threshold, feeling quite transparent: the brassy polish of the doorknob seemed to shine through her hand; the evening blue leached right through her. […] she stood aside just in time, or he would have walked straight through her."[39]

To make Sarah fictively substantial, to make a heroine of her, Baker turns to the novelistic conventions within which Austen worked. Sarah is

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[37] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, edited with an introduction by Q. D. Leavis, London, Penguin Classics, 1987, p. 281.

[38] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, cit., p. 215.

[39] Ibidem, pp. 218-219.

made substantial – to herself, at least, if not to the reader – by the attention that men pay to her. At first she attracts the notice of Ptolemy Bingley: "it was wonderful to be noticed; it was giddying […] She felt as though she was more *there*, simply because he noticed that she was".[40] Sarah's narrative shadows Elizabeth Bennet's insofar as Ptolemy eventually proves a distraction from the central mechanism of the plot, the romance between Sarah and the Longbourn footman, James. Accompanying Elizabeth into Kent, and away from Hertfordshire for the first time, Sarah thinks:

> "I would write you a letter, James. If I had paper. If I had ink […] about Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy, who is such a polished meaty thing that he makes me slip, for a moment, out of this world entirely, and I become a ghost-girl who can make things move but cannot herself be seen. I would write about how you make me be entirely in myself and more real than I had ever thought was possible."[41]

Sarah's relationship with James is not only crucial to the plot, it also demonstrates the few enviable elements of Sarah's life. Unlike the Bennet sisters, along with the other Longbourn servants Sarah has a degree of personal, and physical freedom. She has greater sexual liberty (and, indeed, pleasure) than is available to her mistresses. Without attracting notice or censure, she deliberately begins a sexual relationship with James: "daylight, and his presence, made her flush. The things that she had done with him, in the dark".[42] In contrast, it is Jane Bennet's "queasy look" after news comes of her youngest sister's elopement that suggests "she had some uneasy half-suspicion of what men and women might do together, if they were but given the opportunity: there was disgust there, as well as distress".[43] Sarah's destiny is, perhaps unavoidably, as sexualized as any woman's in *Pride and Prejudice* as, indeed, the history of women has

[40] Ibidem, p. 116.
[41] Ibidem, p. 218.
[42] Ibidem, p. 177.
[43] Ibidem, p. 301.

usually been understood in terms of their relationships to men. She is nevertheless made to be as capable of pursuing the destiny of her choice as any twenty-first century woman. To Mr Darcy, Sarah's pursuit of independence may only render her "an unconsidered household item that had abruptly ceased to function",[44] but to the reader her choices add up to a feminist claim for women's autonomy, regardless of class.

What might we add, finally, about Baker's claims? Towards the close of *Longbourn*, its juxtaposed imagery of shadow and substance gives way to a new motif, one Baker presumably draws from the name of the Bennets' home. The word *bourn* means a limit or boundary, and hence a goal or destination: like Elizabeth Bennet's, Sarah's destination is long in the seeking. This meaning evolved, however, from an older one meaning river or stream. It is this idea that comes to preoccupy the narrative in its final stages. Doling out the servants' wages "with all the usual ceremony",[45] Mr Bennet muses:

> "'What is life but constant change? Did not Heraclitus say—' He paused, and thought better of it. 'Well. Well. You are a good girl, Sarah.' […] She bobbed a curtsey, and took her money up to her room. […] If she could find it, and it was writ in English, she would borrow Heraclitus from the library, at the next opportunity."[46]

On their eventual return to Longbourn, many years after Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy, Sarah explains Heraclitus to James. "He said […] you can't step into the same river twice".[47] *Longbourn* may begin as an exercise in tracing the shadows of *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel that Austen herself, in a letter to her sister, ironically complains is "rather too light &

[44] Ibidem, p. 355.
[45] Ibidem.
[46] Ibidem, p. 327.
[47] Ibidem, p. 365.

bright & sparkling" and "wants shade".[48] *Longbourn*'s efforts to bring the contents of those shadows to light are admirable. By the novel's conclusion, however, it has emerged from the shadow of *Pride and Prejudice*. No one can step into the same river twice, just as no one could recreate *Pride and Prejudice*. By stepping into Austen's plot, however, Baker succeeds in creating a new fiction, and a new way of thinking about a much beloved, and much abused story. If *Longbourn* imitates anything in *Pride and Prejudice*, it is in challenging Austen's readers to re-examine those truths which are universally acknowledged.

[48] J. Austen, *Letters*, Collected and Edited by D. Le Faye, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2011[4], p. 212 (letter to Cassandra Austen, 4 February 1813).

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PENNY GAY

READING THE AUSTEN PROJECT

The Austen Project: Jane Austen Re-imagined to give it its ambitious full name, proposes to pair six bestselling modern authors with Jane Austen's six complete works: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park*. Publishers HarperCollins claim: "Taking these well-loved stories as their base, each author will write their own unique take on Jane Austen's novels".[1] So far, Joanna Trollope's *Sense & Sensibility* (2013), Val McDermid's *Northanger Abbey* (2014), and Alexander McCall Smith's *Emma* (2014) have been published. Seeming to excite (pro or contra) only the fans, whether of Austen or of her famous re-writers, the project's reception has been muted. Short reviews in newspapers take the novels at the face value of the publishers' claims and tend to suggest with faint praise that the books are 'fun' for the Austen fan; longer discussions on Jane Austen websites and

[1] *The Austen Project series*, web address www.goodreads.com/series/113943-the-austen-project (HarperCollins' separate website publicising the series seems to have been withdrawn).Curtis Sittenfield's *Eligible: A Modern Retelling of "Pride and Prejudice"* was published in 2016, too late for consideration in this discussion.

blogs spend most of their space complaining about omissions and wrong choices by the modern authors.

Scholars of adaptation, however, might well consider these re-writings by different authors (one English, two Scottish) a gift to test their theories on. This essay is an attempt to offer some possible staging posts in that project. It is not an attempt to make critical and aesthetic judgements (though these will no doubt be implicit), but rather to look at the technical problems that arise in making an adaptation *in the same genre* as the original (i.e., not a film, not a stage-play, not an opera, etc, but another *novel*).

It is worth noting that the authors so far published are generally considered to be highly accomplished, best-selling, much loved, but not quite top-rank 'serious' novelists; middle-brow entertainers, in fact. This distinction is based on a factitious snobbery, one even noted early in Austen's own career: "there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them".[2] As any Austen enthusiast will tell you, she is a supreme and subtle stylist, and those who would imitate her must at least meet the criteria of her own mission statement:

> "'And what are you reading, Miss — ?' 'Oh! It is only a novel!' replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame.– 'It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;" or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language."[3]

[2] J. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, edited by B. M. Benedict and D. Le Faye, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 31 (I, 5).

[3] Ibidem.

Here, incidentally, Austen is warmly praising two female novelists who are her contemporaries, Frances Burney and Maria Edgeworth – not classics from the past century of novel publishing by such masculine masters as Henry Fielding or Laurence Sterne. There is no sense of inferiority in Austen's implicit inclusion of herself and her ilk among the respected and popular writers of fiction.

If Austen's criteria, with their insistence on fine psychological insight and excellent writing (with a persistent dash of wit), are not met by a re-telling – an adaptation in the same genre – what we have is merely fanfic (and there are myriad examples of that genre).[4] Fanfic usually takes the characters further, into an expansion of their world, and importantly changes or develops the plot according to 'fan' desires – most commonly, sexual fantasies that the original would never have countenanced. Stylistically, the norm seems to be to pastiche the original, i.e. to attempt an imitation of the original writer's prose style; the commonest failings are simple historical solecisms (failures in fact-based research), and errors in tone or voice – what one might call a vulgarising of the original's "best-chosen language". Modern re-tellings in which the historical period is changed are, by contrast, a very rare endeavour, and their challenges obviously set the bar much higher than does the historical pastiche, though the two areas of potential disaster remain broadly the same.

In regard to the Austen Project, there is no publicly-available information about the publisher's guidelines, about the delimiting of what can and can't be done with the original novel in these modern re-imaginings. We have only a few comments from the individual authors, and a number of questions that arise from our experience of reading the original

[4] A check of listings on Jane Austen fan websites (which will also take the reader to some examples of non-print-media fanfic) reveals a vast sub-industry of sequels and (fewer) re-tellings, mostly of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Jane Austen texts. For example, whose voice does the reader hear in the narrative's rendition of events? What is the difference, affectively, between the style and tone of the original novel and that of a contemporary writer who is *not* writing a pastiche but re-telling the story in modern terms? Equivalences in plot and characters are easy enough to do, and the re-imaginings so far published provide the modern reader with some delighted and/or surprised recognitions of apt new facts about the characters' lives and situations. But Austen's famous irony, her rendering of the heroine's thoughts from inside but also beside the character's viewpoint, her oblique critiques of her society and its manners – can they be re-imagined and re-rendered successfully? In the following two sections, I discuss these issues in regard to Joanna Trollope's *Sense & Sensibility* and Alexander McCall Smith's *Emma.*

1. *Jane Austen and the (fictional) facts of life: "Longbourn"*

As all historians know, the history one chooses to tell depends on one's selection of the known facts. In that respect, novels that eschew fantasy (as Austen's do – quite consciously, in the case of *Northanger Abbey*) are little different from history, whether it is set in the past or the present. Such novelists create fictional characters by giving them an environment and a situation, and then developing them via the plot's interaction with other characters, who have their own environments and situations. Generally the characters are given the power of speech and movement to facilitate the plot. Degrees of difficulty in the sub-genre of re-tellings include: how far (or close) the new narrative is to the original as regards characters and the historical context; how idiosyncratic or individualized the writer wants to make the character while still retaining her or his role in the plot. It is, indeed, something of a minefield.

By way of introducing the issue of facts in fiction in the modern re-imaginings, I propose first to look briefly at Jo Baker's well-received re-telling of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Longbourn* (2013), a novel which is told from the perspective of the almost unmentioned servants – the taken-for-granted – of Austen's novel. In writing this novel, Baker has a serious critical objective; almost, one might say, deconstructive: to dig deep into the fault-lines that Austen chooses to pass over. Austen knows they are there, which is one of the reasons why close reading of her texts is always rewarding: think of what Lydia's offstage antics in Brighton and London casually reveal of sexual debauchery, gambling, the power of money, and the decadence of the military defenders of the nation during the Napoleonic wars. Or, in *Emma*, Jane Fairfax's bitterness about the psychological equivalence of governessing and slavery ("There are places in town, offices, where inquiry would soon produce something. Offices for the sale — not quite of human flesh — but of human intellect");[5] and the text's constant anxiety about anything French. Emma's world is a very fragile one, threatened by the effects of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, with the ongoing Napoleonic wars making invasion a real possibility; and it is interesting to contemplate, as I do below, how McCall Smith represents this fragility in his 2014 re-telling.

Baker's novel is robustly factual – as though she were rubbing the modern reader's nose in realities that nostalgic Janeites choose to ignore. In a postscript she points out that she starts with "ghostly presences"[6] – her job is to reanimate them as people, characters whose experience of the world is very different from that of the gentry with whom they are nevertheless so intimate:

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[5] J. Austen, *Emma*, edited by R. Cronin and D. McMillan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 375 (II, 17).

[6] J. Baker, *Longbourn*, London, Doubleday, 2013, p. 445.

"They deliver notes and drive carriages; they run errands when nobody else will step out of doors — they are the 'proxy' by which the shoe roses for Netherfield Ball are fetched in the pouring rain. […] When a meal is served in *Pride and Prejudice*, it has been prepared in *Longbourn*."[7]

But importantly, their stories only partly coincide; Baker provides a rich back-, forward-, and under-story; she thus avoids the fetishisizing of Austen's original narrative, and performs a smarter version of the romantic 'continuation' genre by insisting on the reality of historical *continuum*: "*Longbourn* reaches back into these characters' pasts, and out beyond *Pride and Prejudice*'s happy ending".[8]

Let us look briefly at Baker's invention (in the sense of bringing to light) of new facts. The novel's first chapters are full of them. It is mildly disconcerting but also refreshing to read the bravura evocation of washing day that takes up the novel's first chapter. For the first time in Austenland, an aspect of the 'facts of life' which after all underlie the romance genre (i.e. physical heterosexual relations) is brought to our notice: bodily fluids, particularly menstruation. As a woman reader, I often wonder how the unmentioned recurrence of the monthly period must have affected both female writers and their female characters. Is the ubiquitous 'headache' or 'feeling unwell' a well-recognised euphemism for the unmentionable fact of female monthly bleeding?

Austen was no prude; she could refer to the facts of sexual life in barely-veiled euphemisms: "I w^{d} recommend to her [M^{rs} Deedes] & M^{r} D. the simple regimen of separate rooms" [9] after the birth of their eighteenth child. In *Pride and Prejudice* Lydia, in casually announcing her elopement

[7] Ibidem.
[8] Ibidem.
[9] J. Austen, *Letters*, Collected and Edited by D. Le Faye, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2011^{4}, p. 330 (letter to Fanny Knight, 20-21 February 1817).

with Wickham, writes to her younger sister: "I wish you would tell Sally to mend a great slit in my worked muslin gown".[10] The *double-entendre* is no accident: the metaphor recurs in *Mansfield Park* as Fanny tries to stop the still-virginal Maria from going through the locked gate with Henry Crawford: "You will hurt yourself, Miss Bertram," she cried; "you will certainly hurt yourself against those spikes — you will tear your gown — you will be in danger of slipping into the ha-ha".[11] Various women's reputations in the novels are ruined by their giving in to sexual passion outside of the bonds of marriage – but Austen is more interested in the social effects than the physical effects of sexual desire. She comes closest to the latter, perhaps, in the description of Marianne's illness after Willoughby has inexplicably put an end to their romance: a 'fact' that Joanna Trollope represents convincingly with Marianne's tendency to suffer violent asthma attacks.

The physical constrains the daily lives of nineteenth-century servants as strongly as their class situation does, and Baker brings these facts to the reader's attention in vivid prose that is very different from Austen's narrative style. Baker calls into play facts that have been made available to modern readers by the work of modern historians (named in her *Acknowledgements*). She has her male protagonist go as a soldier to the Napoleonic wars, surviving a vividly evoked set of realistic horrors to return against all odds and marry his lover Sarah (one of the Longbourn servants). The same character, James, turns out to be the bastard son of Mrs Hill the housekeeper and the unhappily married Mr Bennet. James's illegitimacy – and therefore invisibility – cleverly complicates the

[10] Id., *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by P. Rogers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 321 (III, 5).

[11] Id., *Mansfield Park*, edited by J. Wiltshire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 116 (I, 10).

Austenian fact, vital to the plot, that the pompous Mr Collins is the *legal* heir to Longbourn, due to an entail (which always requires a long explanatory note in editions of *Pride and Prejudice*). An illegitimate son – the historically common alternative inheritor (a plot-point used, for example, by Henry Fielding in *Tom Jones*), does not suit the genre of fiction that Austen choose to write.

The pattern of representing every fictional fact in a given novel is the necessary basis of the Jane Austen Project, in which the characters and, largely, the plot of a specific Austen novel remain, but the whole is set in the present day (a different project from Baker's exploration of the history of the original novel's period). Inevitably, other facts must be introduced to explain the characters' situations, behaviours and motivations. How much leeway does the writer have within these given bounds, and others less easy to define? The characters may not change their psychology and personality – that would be a betrayal of the readers' emotional connection to these well-loved characters. Situations and environments have to be found that mimic the original in their effects on the characters. Somehow, an air of verisimilitude has to be created, so that the reader finds the story convincing and engaging, even while some part of our consciousness is all the time judging the re-telling against the original.

2. *The art of exposition: some contrasts between the authors*

On examining the two re-tellings under discussion in this essay, *Emma* and *Sense & Sensibility*, it becomes immediately obvious that each author (McCall Smith and Trollope) is confidently calling upon tropes that characterise their own fictional world. Trollope, famous for her hugely successful stories of the agonies, anxieties, and pleasures of life and relationships among members of the English middle class, deftly places her

Austen-created characters as though they were just on the sidelines of her own imaginative world, waiting to be called into play. Like a lot of recent novelists concerned with the prosperous British middle classes, she shows them as defined not only by education and profession, but more quirkily by *things* (hence the somewhat patronising description of such works as Aga Sagas). Characters, that is, are as much defined by their taste as by their actions. This tendency to evoke images that might appear in a catalogue from a high-class interior decorating establishment or department store is a characteristic of Trollope's fictional technique. Austen, by contrast, rarely tells the reader what her characters are wearing or how their houses are decorated – and when she does, she makes a point of showing her lovable characters' preference for the old-fashioned; it is her satirised vulgar characters who are up-to-date with the latest fashions in desirable objects.[12]

These distinctions are particularly relevant in *Sense & Sensibility*[13] because the initial impulse for the story is that the main characters in both versions, the Dashwood women, are forced to move from a large, gracious and comfortable estate to a country cottage. Austen begins her novel with a chapter describing the familial and financial relationships of a matrix of characters around the Dashwood women, moving then into a brief description of the essential characteristics of Elinor, Marianne, and Mrs Dashwood on the 'sense' to 'sensibility' scale (Margaret, the youngest, is

[12] What Austen can suggest with a character's obsession with fashionable things is deconstructed with brilliance in David Miller's analysis of Elinor and Marianne's encounter with Robert Ferrars in the jewellery shop (*Sense and Sensibility*, II, 11): Robert's ignoring the sisters while he concentrates on his purchase of a toothpick-case becomes a sign of his "unheterosexuality", his refusal of the romance plot (even though Austen – the author-as-god – uses Robert's dandyism ultimately to allow her plot to triumph). See D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen, or the Secret of Style*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 9-20.

[13] Trollope's title uses the ampersand rather than Austen's *and*, thus cleverly suggesting the modernity of the world her characters inhabit, with its communications defined by mechanized shorthand.

only thirteen and not functioning as an adult on this scale as far as Austen is concerned). Austen's second chapter consists entirely of a dialogue between their half-brother John Dashwood and his wife, the rapacious Fanny, in the course of which his intention to give his sisters £1000 each is whittled down to "helping them to move their things, and sending them presents of fish and game, and so forth, whenever they are in season".[14] This is a blackly comic satire on human avarice and self-interest, and it is the first indication in Austen's published works of her ability to render character simply through what individuals *say*, a combination of their idiolects and their monomanias. This will become, in her most technically complex novel, *Emma*, published five years later, the brilliant indirect style of narration utilizing Emma's point of view, which presents probably the biggest challenge (at least so far) in the Austen Project. Trollope has an easier task, one that she comfortably slips into by telling the story from the very first pages largely via dialogues between her characters; the accomplished and experienced novelist finds it no problem to create their idiolects. But as well as the financial and social facts which, like Austen, she needs to get established, Trollope rather cheekily riffs on a tiny motif supplied by Austen that indicates the last straw of Fanny Dashwood's covetousness:

> "'When your father and mother moved to Norland, though the furniture of Stanhill was sold, all the china, plate, and linen was saved, and is now left to your mother. Her house will therefore be almost completely fitted up as soon as she takes it.'
>
> 'That is a material consideration undoubtedly. A valuable legacy indeed! And yet some of the plate would have been a very pleasant addition to our own stock here.'
>
> 'Yes; and the set of breakfast china is twice as handsome as what belongs to this house. A great deal too handsome, in my opinion, for any place *they* can ever afford to live in. But, however, so it is.'"[15]

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[14] J. Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, edited by E. Copeland, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 13 (I, 2).

[15] Ibidem, pp. 14-15 (I, 2).

In Trollope's hands Austen's masterly invocation of the unavoidable physicality of table china – so useful in its multiplicity, so solid yet so fragile, and so unavoidably on display at every meal – becomes an opportunity for anchoring her modern Dashwoods into their material world just as precisely: the china symbolises the irreducible facts of their lives. Trollope shows she is more self-aware than her critics would allow when she cleverly flaunts this particular appearance of her characteristic 'domestic furnishings' trope in the novel's opening chapter:

> "While they waited, they switched their collective gaze to the scrubbed top of the kitchen table, to the sponge-ware jug of artless garden flowers, randomly arranged, to their chipped and pretty tea mugs.
>
> […] Elinor glanced now across the kitchen to the huge old Welsh dresser, which bore all their everyday mugs and plates […]
>
> […] John glanced at them both and then looked past them at the Welsh dresser where all the plates were displayed, the pretty, scallop-edged plates that Henry and Belle had collected from Provençal holidays over the years, and lovingly brought back, two or three at a time.
>
> John moved towards the door. With his hand on the handle, he turned and briefly indicated the dresser. 'Fanny adores those plates, you know.'"[16]

Thus, using her method of defining characters through the objective correlatives of their household furnishings (and there is, in passing, a savage critique of Fanny's decorating tastes),[17] Trollope's narrative arrives at exactly the same point as Austen's does: the situation of the Dashwood women, about to be moved from their comfortable physical existence by a malicious force – but also about to encounter the novel's unworldly and ungrasping male lead, Edward Ferrars, whom Elinor loves for his quiet good taste and gentle intellect. With his introduction to the reader, the exposition of the narrative is complete.

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[16] J. Trollope, *Sense & Sensibility*, London, The Borough Press, 2013, p. 4, p. 13 and p. 21.

[17] See ibidem, p. 15.

McCall Smith's *Emma*, by strong contrast, establishes his principal character Emma's situation not via dialogue regarding their immediate real-world situation (as Austen and Trollope both do), but in an unexpected focus, for sixty or so pages, on her father. Mr Woodhouse's background and profession, his life-story, his interest in science and health, offer a different category of significant facts from Trollope's, but serve a similar expository or placing function. Instead of "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich",[18] we are given:

> "Emma Woodhouse's father was brought into this world, blinking and confused, on one of those final nail-biting days of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was a time of sustained anxiety for anybody who read a newspaper or listened to the news on the radio, and that included his mother, Mrs Florence Woodhouse, who was anxious at the best of times and even more so at the worst.
>
> […] From an early age he showed himself to be a fretful child, unwilling to take the risk that other boys delighted in and always interested in the results when his mother took his temperature with the clinical thermometer given to her by the district nurse."[19]

This introduction is cheekily self-conscious: it announces, 'This is not Jane Austen's novel – did you think it was, for half a sentence? It is *mine*' – and McCall Smith then goes on to demonstrate for many chapters his concern for the background facts that will explain Emma's situation and subsequent behaviour. The "world"[20] of Emma is "this world" — the world of the Cold War at its most tense, which is itself the extreme end of the spectrum of the 1950s-60s belief in the possibilities of technology: in Mr Woodhouse's case, vitamin therapy, fad diets, small-scale inventions to improve the already comfortable life of the middle classes. McCall Smith places the new Emma with pinpoint precision, not in the present of the

[18] J. Austen, *Emma*, cit., p. 3 (I, 1).
[19] A. McCall Smith, *Emma*, London, The Borough Press, 2014, pp. 1-2.
[20] J. Austen, *Emma*, cit., p. 3 (I, 1).

early twenty-first century, but in the bonds of her immediate lineage and class.

The invocation of the magazines "The Lady" and "Country Life", as facilitators of the continuation of the class markers that distinguish Emma and her micro-society, is particularly apt (the glossy journals still exist today, doing their vital work for a small segment of UK society that persistently survives – Miss Taylor is recruited from the advertisements for nannies that are still to be found in "The Lady"). The arrival of Miss Taylor, and the early years of her home-schooling Mr Woodhouse's two daughters, is also narrated in extensive detail. The Scottish governess is undoubtedly an avatar of McCall Smith's Edinburgh philosopher-detective, Isabel Dalhousie;[21] like her, she is given to brisk and witty rationality but has an evidently warm heart. A brief observation from a minor local character confirms the reader's suspicions:

> "The conviction that she was right — the firm disapproval of those she deemed to be slovenly in their intellectual or physical habits — was something that Mrs Firhill believed to be associated with her having come from Edinburgh.
>
> 'They're all like that,' a friend said to her. 'I've been up there — I know. They think the rest of us very sloppy. They are very judgemental people.'
>
> 'I hope that doesn't rub off on the girls,' said Mrs Firhill. But I suppose it will. There's Emma already saying *cadit quaestio* — and she's only six."[22]

Thus McCall Smith makes his point about education (*not* random circumstance) being in part responsible for Emma's small-town adventures (Austen does this briefly, via a reminiscent conversation between Miss Taylor and Mr Knightley in chapter 5 of her novel). He also takes care to invent an intrinsic character trait in Emma: she likes to arrange things so that they look beautiful – but is always *re*-arranging them. This is the

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[21] Isabel Dalhousie is the principal character of McCall Smith's popular *Sunday Philosophy Club* series set in Edinburgh.

[22] A. McCall Smith, *Emma*, cit., p. 23.

background to her twenty-first century need for a college education, European travel and a proposed career as an interior decorator, all of which takes place before Miss Taylor's marriage and the start of the Austenian plot. Isabella, too, has her backstory spelt out: no university for her, but an immediate job "with a firm of fine-art auctioneers that specialised in providing employment for the daughters of county families".[23] It is in London, with all of the social life that Isabella craves. Mr Woodhouse's old-fashioned plan to "marry her off"[24] via a photograph in "Country Life" backfires with delicious irony when Isabella takes up with the society photographer, John Knightley.

McCall Smith's investment in explaining Mr Woodhouse's character automatically makes him brighter than Austen's original; he is an eccentric and a gentle conservative rather than a one-note hypochondriac. McCall Smith does a similar thing with the introduction of Mr Weston in chapter 7 (covered by Austen in a couple of paragraphs in her second chapter): James Weston's backstory, including the emotional trauma of giving up his son Frank, is told with empathetic intelligence. This develops, through chapters 8 and 9, into the story of the rapid courtship of Mr Weston and Miss Taylor, and their moving into Randalls together before their marriage. At this point in McCall Smith's novel we have reached the beginning of Austen's novel: the exposition – and explanation – of the heroine's situation is complete. Austen's situational beginning to her novel, with Emma and her father stuck, it seems, in a pre-Sartrean *huis clos*, lamenting the loss of "Poor Miss Taylor!",[25] is not rendered by McCall Smith until chapter 10 of his novel, almost one-third of the way through the book.

[23] Ibidem, p. 36.
[24] Ibidem, p. 40.
[25] J. Austen, *Emma*, cit., p. 6 (I, 1).

Beyond the obvious desire to 'place' the modern Emma very precisely, in terms of her upbringing and social position, it is tempting to speculate further why McCall Smith insists on providing full biographies of the male figures of Austen's story (both George and John Knightley also get many pages of backstory). McCall Smith is no slouch when it comes to creating strong female protagonists – witness Isabel Dalhousie or the wonderful Precious Ramotswe.[26] Why then this deliberate narrative delay? The novel is still called *Emma*, yet, as I commented earlier, McCall Smith strikes a deliberately perverse note in beginning it with the words "Emma Woodhouse's *father*". Perhaps this is the author's way of excusing himself for the project that he has got himself involved in: his Mr Woodhouse is the father of a headstrong young woman called Emma; McCall Smith is the creator, or father, of this modern *Emma*. He presents his novel's father figure as eccentric, lovable, a traditionalist, having encyclopedic interests in science and medicine and a good grasp of the demands of money and society, though a little old-fashioned by modern standards. This is a far cry from Austen's Mr Woodhouse, but close enough to what one might guess of McCall Smith's view of himself as author in this odd project. Both self-deprecating and self-justifying, this perspective also operates as a defence against the "monstrous regiment of women", as his compatriot John Knox[27] once labelled the queens of sixteenth-century Europe.[28] Here he may be defending himself against, for example, the largely female membership of Jane Austen Societies around the world, who might well be affronted that a

[26] Precious Ramotswe is the principal character of McCall Smith's *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series.

[27] See A. McCall Smith, *Emma*, cit., p. 72.

[28] See J. Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*, Geneva, n. p., 1558: a book attacking female monarchs, arguing that rule by females is contrary to the Bible.

male writer had been allowed to take on the mantle of the divine Ms Austen.

3. *The novelist's voice*

McCall Smith's strategy, as we have seen, is to insist on the reader's joining him in his version of the world, seeing things from his point of view as the omniscient narrator, and listening with the mind's ear to his voice. McCall Smith is particularly prone to the habit of editorialising, as a quick check of any novel in any of his multiple series will confirm; readers either love or hate his work for this authorial persona conspicuously offering witty and wise comments: "*t*he author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self".[29] The reader, nevertheless, can choose to resist this dominant voice, and thereby refuse to be the reader that the author wants. McCall Smith's *Emma* is a particular test of this author's power because of the greater authority (Austen's) that haunts it, and perhaps much of the critical distaste for this re-telling can finally be put down to the issue of his intrusive voice.

Joanna Trollope, on the other hand, has gone on the offensive in order to be self-defensive: in 2013 she made a YouTube video in which she says *Sense & Sensibility*

> " […] is most definitely a Joanna Trollope novel: it's got my voice, even though it's her characters […] they have to have a few jobs, they wear different clothes, they are very cognizant of modern technology, they do all the things that modern young (and older) people would do, but they are Jane's people."[30]

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[29] W. C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 138.

[30] *Joanna Trollope Talks Sense And Sensibility* (11 September 2013), web address www.youtube.com/watch?v=62cbBlEQoQI.

She also speaks of her novel as "a tribute, not an emulation".[31] She thus forestalls criticism by indicating that she knows her fanbase, and that it is comfortably different from that of the academic and Janeite readers of Austen. More interesting, however, is Trollope's insistence that "it's got my voice". None of the reviewers that I have located comment directly on this, but arguably it is at the root of the success or failure of the whole Austen Project: what we are reading is not fanfic, not pastiche, but a recognisable voice, not Jane Austen's, re-telling an old and familiar – and much-loved – story.

Clearly, neither of our authors proposes to emulate Jane Austen's unique voice; we need then to enquire whether their authorial voices are ultimately able to do the work that Austen's does. Here Trollope has had the easier task, as most readers agree that for all its many virtues and profound explorations of both society and the human heart, *Sense and Sensibility* is somewhat uneven in style, in particular, perhaps too easily reliant on glib irony such as is evident in the novel's last sentence:

> "Between Barton and Delaford, there was that constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate; — and among the merits and the happiness of Elinor and Marianne, let it not be ranked as the least considerable, that though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves, or producing coolness between their husbands."[32]

The move that the reader has to negotiate from satisfaction at the plot's romantic conclusion to a sarcastic aside from the authorial voice leaves an unpleasant taste: this author is too keen to show that she is cleverer than any of us who enjoy indulging in the surrogate delights of fiction, and who have accompanied her on this long journey. Trollope

[31] Ibidem.
[32] J. Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, cit., p. 431 (III, 14).

simply ignores this model, and her novel's conclusion is the more pleasing for it: it is a classic conclusion to a novel of hers, a dialogue between "contentedly" embracing lovers: "All", says Edward, "All. I'll settle for that".[33] Compare, however, the extraordinary final paragraph of Austen's *Emma*:

> "The wedding was very much like other weddings, where the parties have no taste for finery or parade; and Mrs. Elton, from the particulars detailed by her husband, thought it all extremely shabby, and very inferior to her own. — 'Very little white satin, very few lace veils; a most pitiful business! — Selina would stare when she heard of it.' — But, in spite of these deficiencies, the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union."[34]

The improvement is as much a matter of tonal (i.e. musical) progression as anything more complex. The more temperate irony of the authorial voice ("very much like other weddings") passes briefly through amusing satire as Mrs Elton's irrepressibly opinionated voice intrudes one last time into the novel's acknowledged imperfect world. This slight discord morphs into a major key resolution with an authorial "But", allowing the reader to relax into an assurance of "the perfect happiness of the union". Even, indeed, to want to applaud, as though at the chorus's conclusion of a classic musical comedy.

McCall Smith does not match Austen's complex writing here. But he does something else, something in fact closer in tonality to Trollope's ending to *Sense & Sensibility*, but with a characteristic twist:

> "Emma was happy. She realised that happiness is something that springs from the generous treatment of others, and that until one makes that connection, happiness may prove elusive. In Italy with George, that thought came even more forcefully to her when, in a small art gallery in an obscure provincial town well off the beaten track, she

[33] J. Trollope, *Sense & Sensibility*, cit., p. 401.
[34] J. Austen, *Emma*, cit., p. 528 (III, 19).

saw a seventeenth-century picture of a young man giving his hand to a young woman. And the young woman takes it and holds it, cherishing it, as one might cherish something that is fragile and vulnerable, and very precious. The eyes of the young woman are not on the young man, nor upon the hand that she holds, but fixed on the one who views the painting, and they convey, as do so many of the figures in art that would say anything to us, this message: *You do it too.*"[35]

He begins with the inevitable satisfying conclusion, echoing Austen's "perfect happiness of the union", but instead of narratorial irony that shares awareness of the intrusions of an imperfect world, as a last move McCall Smith reminds us that art has a moral and educational function – by implication, his twenty-first century art as well as Jane Austen's 200-year-old art. It is a bold gesture to reinforce and justify the voice he has deliberately employed throughout this rewriting. As we have already seen, the evidence of narrative choices and style suggests he takes this commission seriously: if it is to be a re-telling, it is his opportunity to speak to a new audience. Nevertheless, the question remains (*quaestio non cadit*, one might say, in his manner): to put it crudely, is it possible to convey the same lessons if your teacher has a different voice?

As readers of Austen's novel know – and delight in the reading experience offered – almost all of *Emma* is narrated from Emma's point of view. Nevertheless the reader (at least after that first breathless reading) always knows more than Emma, and sees through her delusions even as she confidently articulates them. The reader shares a position of superiority with the implied author, reading her every observation from, as it were, a point of view just behind the character, slightly aslant – seeing just a little more than Emma herself can:

" […] the narration's way of *saying* is constantly both mimicking, and distancing itself from, the character's way of *seeing*. […] Narration comes as near to a character's psychic and linguistic reality as it can get without collapsing into it, and the character

[35] A. McCall Smith, *Emma*, cit., p. 361.

does as much of the work of narration as she may without acquiring its authority. […] free indirect style gives a virtuoso performance, against all odds, of the narration's persistence in detachment from character, no matter how intimate the one becomes with the other."[36]

To summarise, Austen's voice in *Emma* provides the reader with the experience of a virtuosic performance of the possibilities of free indirect style, and in doing so, gives the sophisticated reader greater pleasure, probably, than the more conventional satisfaction of the double motive of the plot, which is to get Emma to her own, unexpected wedding (plot as romantic comedy), and to get her to know herself truly, without the self-delusion and self-defensiveness of her cleverness. Can McCall Smith attain this psychic closeness? Does he even wish to? I think not. Much of his novel is *not* written from Emma's point of view; it involves conversations between other characters and information about them supplied by our chatty omniscient narrator. When we do encounter a passage in which Emma's point of view is represented by the free indirect style, and we see her misreading a situation and building her meddling plans on the misreading, it is not subtle. Not even a first-time reader could miss the fact that here Emma is fooling herself about her superior insight into character and situation, and her ability to run other people's lives for them:

"He [Philip Elton] must have seen her, though: no man could sit near Harriet at a dinner table and fail to notice that he was in the presence of exceptional physical beauty. And if he had noticed her in that way — which he must have done — then she would not have much work to do. All that would be required of her was the facilitating of a meeting; nature — passion — call it what you will — could be expected to do the rest."[37]

Misreading all the evidence, she continues to delude herself that she is aiding the courtship of Harriet Smith and Philip Elton:

[36] D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen, or the Secret of Style*, cit., p. 27 and p. 59.
[37] A. McCall Smith, *Emma*, cit., p. 176.

"She could understand Philip's inviting Harriet to the pub, but why would he invite her as well? Her puzzlement, though, was brief. She only had to think about it for a few moments before an obvious answer suggested itself: Philip, for all his good looks and eloquence, may have felt anxious about asking somebody out on what was obviously a date; men like that often suffered from a lack of confidence. Asking both of them was a way of paving the way for the next invitation, which she imagined would be extended only to Harriet.

'That's really good news, Harriet,' said Emma. 'I could tell he liked you, you know. It was perfectly obvious — right from the beginning.' She grinned at her friend. 'Men are so transparent. You can read them like a book.'

'He's very kind,' said Harriet.

Emma would not have chosen that description for Philip, but she was content to let it pass."[38]

McCall Smith here cleverly uses a quasi-Austen voice: it is clear even to the first-time reader that Emma is fantasizing and rationalizing her fantasy, with signals such as "She only had to think about it for a few moments before an obvious answer suggested itself", and standard worldly-wise clichés such as "men like that often suffered from a lack of confidence" (patently untrue for the character of Philip Elton in either McCall Smith or Austen).

Most of the time, however, Emma's point of view and her delusions are given no more space than the many other strands of narrative: the conversations between male characters, married couples, and servants that are never available to Austen's Emma. McCall Smith is an unrepentantly omniscient narrator, going where he wills in his fictional world. But on the sixth-last page of the novel he pulls off audacious trick that arguably matches the revelation of Frank and Jane's secret engagement in Austen – a fact that, as in Austen, is there for all to see if they are second-time readers of a detective bent: Harriet has never been in love with Mr Elton (hence the dismissive "He is very kind" in the scene just quoted), nor with Mr

[38] Ibidem, p. 222.

Knightley, and has ignored Emma's snobbish advice to look higher than Robert Martin, whom she has been seeing secretly all along. As for Emma's fear that Mr Knightley is courting Harriet, in fact Harriet has been following her mentor's example and doing some match-making of her own, encouraging Mr Knightley to declare his feelings for Emma and even bringing together the previous lovers Mr Woodhouse and Mrs Goddard (in this version an unreconstructed hippie). Thus, using his own preferred authorial persona, the pseudo-Victorian omniscient narrator with his wise comments on the world, McCall Smith has at the very end flaunted the fact that he knows more than we do – he just didn't choose to tell, thereby putting the reader in the position of Emma rather than (as in Austen) alongside the ironically knowing narrator.

Game-playing in a way that Austen might have enjoyed, McCall Smith refuses, finally, to solve the mystery of Jane Fairfax's piano. Having gleefully demonstrated his power as omniscient narrator of a world he has created, he now rubs the reader's nose in it by withholding clarification; supplying instead further evidence of the arbitrariness of assigning motive for any behaviour (what do we really know of other people's lives?):

> "Nobody ever worked out who gave her the Yamaha piano, but there were theories. One of these, put forward by Mr Woodhouse, was that the piano was bought by Miss Bates, who was only pretending to be poor in order to defeat her creditors at Lloyd's. […] 'That woman never fooled me,' said Mrs God, who claimed to be a good judge of character."[39]

This is the novel's second-last paragraph, and if we are looking for the irony interwoven into Austen's ending (quoted above), here it is to be found. "Mrs God" stands in not only for Mrs Elton, but also for Emma,

[39] Ibidem, p. 361.

who much earlier in the novel as she began her matchmaking, thought "it was rather as God might feel".[40]

Just as Trollope insisted that her *Sense & Sensibility* was a "Joanna Trollope novel", unrepentantly written in her "voice", Alexander McCall Smith demonstrates, by his massive pre-plot excursus and his constant narratorial musings, that his *Emma* was doing *his* artistic work, not Austen's. The individual voice of each contemporary writer comes through loud and clear, and as readers we may love or hate or be indifferent to them, but they are evidence of the writers' integrity. We should not expect them to imitate Jane Austen's voice, and our unique relationship with her via that voice. To call upon a musical analogy to try and define what sort of adaptation these re-tellings are, we might say that Trollope's *Sense & Sensibility* is the equivalent of an arrangement of a well-loved Mozart concerto for different instruments; McCall Smith's *Emma* offers variations on some themes from that extraordinary concerto.

[40] Ibidem, p. 140.

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DOMITILLA CAMPANILE

JAMES FRAZER, IL CINEMA E "THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME"

1. Pochi testi accademici conquistano una fortuna e un'influenza che superino la particolare cerchia degli studiosi; all'interno di questo gruppo già piuttosto esclusivo di opere, pochissime sono quelle che hanno ispirato e continuano a ispirare la produzione letteraria, artistica, la cinematografia, la musica di differenti Paesi. *Die Geburt der Tragödie* di Friedrich Nietzsche, per esempio, fa senza dubbio parte di questa ristrettissima categoria, e non mancano ricerche eccellenti che analizzano la sua importanza e le sue riprese nella cultura novecentesca. Resta, invece, ancora molto da indagare sull'influsso, rilevante ma per certi aspetti ancora sottovalutato,[1] che un'opera come *The Golden Bough* di Sir James George

[1] Si veda F. Dei, *La discesa agli inferi. James G. Frazer e la cultura del Novecento*, Lecce, Argo, 1998; Ch. Herbert, *The Golden Bough and the Unknowable*, in *Knowing the Past: Victorian Literature and Culture*,edited by S. Anger, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 32-51; S. MacCormack, *Pausanias and his Commentator Sir James George Frazer*, in "Classical Receptions Journal", 2, 2010, pp. 287-313; M. Sterenberg, *Mythic Thinking in Twentieth-Century Britain: Meaning for Modernity*, New York, Palgrave, 2013. Scettica è invece M. Beard, *Frazer, Leach, and*

Frazer (Glasgow 1854 – Cambridge 1941)[2] ha esercitato su un numero straordinariamente alto ed eterogeneo di lettori.

La prima edizione dell'opera, in due volumi con il sottotitolo *A Study in Comparative Religion*, uscì a Londra presso MacMillan nel 1890; la seconda edizione, in tre volumi con il sottotitolo definitivo *A Study in Magic and Religion*, è del 1900; la terza edizione, in dodici volumi ciascuno dei quali con un proprio titolo, fu pubblicata fra il 1906 e il 1915; è del 1922 la "abridged edition" in un volume. Almeno cinquantasette ristampe delle varie edizioni uscirono fra il 1890 e il 1955.[3] La presenza nella cultura novecentesca dell'opera frazeriana, costruita essa stessa come una sorta di viaggio e di *quête*, è stata ripetutamente riconosciuta dalla critica:

> "In the seventy-five years since *The Golden Bough* first appeared, it has become one of most influential works in the twentieth century. What is the most striking is the depth to which it has permeated the cultural strata of our time. In literature alone it touches nearly everything, from the most significant to the most ephemeral works. At one end of the spectrum is it well-known importance to works like *The Waste Land* and *Finnegans Wake*; as the other extreme is its perhaps largely unsuspected impingement on serious minor fiction like *Devil by the Tail* and *The City of Trembling Leaves*, prize novels like *Tower in the West*, and even Raymond Chandler detective stories."[4]

Il libro di Frazer ha avuto un ruolo davvero importante nella letteratura di lingua inglese, ispirando nell'anno stesso della sua prima

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Virgil: The Popularity (and Unpopularity) of "The Golden Bough", in "Comparative Studies in Society and History", 34, 1992, pp. 223-224.

[2] Sull'autore si veda R. Ackerman, *J. G. Frazer. His Life and Work*, Cambridge, CUP, 1987; Id., *The Myth and Ritual School. J. G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*, New York – London, Garland, 1991. Sull'opera si veda R. Fraser, *The Making of The Golden Bough. The Origins and Growth of an Argument*, Houndmills, Palgrave 2002.

[3] Si veda G. Bennett, *Geologists and Folklorists: Cultural Evolution and "The Science of Folklore"*, in "Folklore" 105, 1994, p. 33.

[4] J. Vickery, *The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 3. Si veda anche l'acuta recensione di C. H. Moore, in "Classical Philology", 4, 1909, pp. 224-226.

pubblicazione il romanzo *The Great Taboo* del canadese Grant Allen[5] ed esercitando poi un'influenza decisiva sull'opera di Thomas Stearns Eliot e William Butler Yeats.[6] Una lista di nomi per i quali l'opera di Frazer ha rappresentato uno stimolo potente dovrebbe comprendere Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Edward Morgan Forster, Virginia Woolf, David Herbert Lawrence, William Golding, Harold Pinter, Robert Graves, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Wyndham Lewis, Robert Frost, Eudora Alice Welty, Zora Neale Hurston, fino ad autori più recenti come Antonia Susan Byatt ed altri ancora.[7] La presenza di *The Golden Bough* fa ormai parte del regime di attesa di chi intende rintracciare motivi mitici nei testi letterari: Frazer, come Freud, è entrato nel paradigma interpretativo della letteratura alta. Un'indagine visionaria e coinvolgente come la sua, che approfondisce temi di perenne interesse legati al dramma del dio che muore e risorge,[8] del potere e della successione regale, dei cicli vitali di morte e rinascita, del ruolo del maschio e della femmina di fronte alla natura, della creazione dei divieti sacrali e dei capri espiatori, fornisce materiali adatti per un'ampia gamma di interpretazioni.

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[5] Si veda G. Allen, *The Great Taboo*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1890 e G. Beer, *Speaking for the Others: Relativism and Authority in Victorian Anthropological Literature*, in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination. Essays in Affinity and Influence*, edited by R. Fraser, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1990, pp. 55-57.

[6] Per Eliot si veda L. Kelly, *"What are the Roots that clutch ?": Eliot's The Waste Land and Frazer's "The Golden Bough"*, in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination. Essays in Affinity and Influence*, cit., pp. 192-206. Il primo verso di una famosa poesia di Yeats ricca di riprese frazeriane, *Sailing to Byzantium* (1928), è usato da Cormac McCarthy per il titolo del suo romanzo *No Country for Old Men* (2005), da cui è stato tratto l'omonimo film di Joel ed Ethan Coen (2007).

[7] Si veda A. S. Byatt, *"The Omnipotence of Thought": Frazer, Freud and Post-Modernist Fiction"*, in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination. Essays in Affinity and Influence*, cit., pp. 270-308. Le ricerche si potrebbero estendere ad altre lingue e ad altri paesi: la *pièce* di Eugène Ionesco *Le roi se meurt* (1963), per esempio, possiede una forte componente frazeriana.

[8] Si veda L. Trilling, *Beyond Culture. Essays on Literature and Learning*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1967, p. 28.

D'altra parte *The Golden Bough*, salvo rare eccezioni, sembra passare inosservato agli occhi degli studiosi della cultura di massa.[9] All'opportuno riconoscimento del suo ruolo nel campo della grande letteratura non corrisponde una ricerca sulla sua presenza nella letteratura di consumo e in altre espressioni artistiche a grande diffusione. Neppure la sintonia fra l'opera del vittoriano Frazer e la controcultura degli anni Sessanta sembra aver suscitato molta curiosità: la canzone pubblicata nel 1968 da Jim Morrison e The Doors *Not to touch the earth* ("Not to touch the earth / Not to see the sun")[10] riprende esattamente i primi paragrafi di *Between Heaven and Earth*, il sessantesimo capitolo di *The Golden Bough* dove sono analizzati i *tabu* per alcuni sovrani come appunto "not to touch the earth" e "not to see the sun".[11]

2. La natura propria della letteratura di grande diffusione, d'altro canto, rende piuttosto oneroso l'impiego di quei metodi di analisi utilizzati per studiare l'influsso di Frazer nella letteratura alta. La difficoltà è obiettivamente aggravata dalla quantità e dalla diffusione dei materiali e, dunque, questo squilibrio critico non è privo di ragioni. Piuttosto che biasimare quanto non è stato fatto, però, è preferibile osservare i risultati già ottenuti, apprezzare le felici eccezioni all'indifferenza e proporre qualche sondaggio in nuove direzioni.

Uno dei temi centrali della grande ricerca frazeriana è rappresentato dall'indagine sul rito di successione del *Rex Nemorensis*. Un antico rito

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[9] Per una un profilo introduttivo si veda A. Rondini, *Letteratura di massa, letteratura di consumo*, Macerata, EUM, 2009.

[10] Cfr. The Doors, *Waiting for the Sun*, Elektra Records, USA, 1968. La canzone si conclude con i versi "I am the Lizard King / I can do anything".

[11] Cfr. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, London, MacMillan, 1922, p. 592 e p. 595. Sull'interesse di Jim Morrison per l'opera di Frazer si veda J. Hopkins – D. Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive. The Biography of Jim Morrison*, New York, Warner Books, 1995, p. 179.

latino, mai completamente caduto in desuetudine tanto da essere ripristinato dall'imperatore Caligola, regolava infatti crudelmente la successione del *Rex Nemorensis*, il sacerdote di Diana ad Ariccia presso il lago di Nemi.[12] *The Golden Bough* si apre proprio con la descrizione di questo rito:

> "Who does not know Turner's picture of the Golden Bough? The scene, suffused with the golden glow of imagination in which the divine mind of Turner steeped and transfigured even the fairest natural landscape, is a dream-like vision of the little woodland lake of Nemi – 'Diana's Mirror,' as it was called by the ancients. No one who has seen that calm water, lapped in a green hollow of the Alban hills, can ever forget it. The two characteristic Italian villages which slumber on its banks, and the equally Italian palace whose terraced gardens descend steeply to the lake, hardly break the stillness and even the solitariness of the scene. Diana herself might still linger by this lonely shore, still haunt these woodlands wild.
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> In antiquity this sylvan landscape was the scene of a strange and recurring tragedy. On the northern shore of the lake, right under the precipitous cliffs on which the modern village of Nemi is perched, stood the sacred grove and sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis, or Diana of the Wood. The lake and the grove were sometimes known as the lake and grove of Aricia. But the town of Aricia (the modern La Riccia) was situated about three miles off, at the foot of the Alban Mount, and separated by a steep descent from the lake, which lies in a small crater-like hollow on the mountain side. In this sacred grove there grew a certain tree round which at any time of the day, and probably far into the night, a grim figure might be seen to prowl. In his hand he carried a drawn sword, and he kept peering warily about him as if at every instant he expected to be set upon by an enemy. He was a priest and a murderer; and the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead. Such was the rule of the sanctuary. A candidate for the priesthood could only succeed to office by slaying the priest, and having slain him, he retained office till he was himself slain by a stronger or a craftier.

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[12] Le fonti classiche sono Ovidio, *Fasti*, 3, 261-266; Strabone, *Geographica*, 5, 3, 12; Svetonio, *Gaius*, 35; Pausania, *Graecae descriptio*, 2, 27, 4; Servio, *Ad Aeneidem*,VI, 136. Sul tema si veda *Les bois sacrés. Actes du Colloque International organisé par le Centre Jean Bérard et l'École Pratique des Hautes Études (V^e section), Naples 23-25 Novembre 1989*, Napoli, Collection du Centre Jean Bérard, 1993; *Nemi – status quo. Recent Research at Nemi and the Sanctuary of Diana*, edited by J. R. Brandt, A.-M. Leander Touati, J. Zahle, Roma, "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2000; C. M. C. Green, *Roman Religion and the Cult of Diana at Aricia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; F. Diosono, *Il 'rex nemorensis' tra mito, storia ed archeologia*, in "Bollettino dell'Unione Storia ed Arte", 102, 2010, pp. 7-16; Id., *Alle radici del 'rex nemorensis'*, in *Il Santuario di Diana a Nemi. Le terrazze e il ninfeo. Scavi 1989-2009*, a cura di P. Braconi, F. Coarelli, F. Diosono, G. Ghini, Roma, "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2014, pp. 73-84.

The post which he held by this precarious tenure carried with it the title of king; but surely no crowned head ever lay uneasier, or was visited by more evil dreams, than his. For year in, year out, in summer and winter, in fair weather and in foul, he had to keep his lonely watch, and whenever he snatched a troubled slumber it was at the peril of his life. The least relaxation of his vigilance, the smallest abatement of his strength of limb or skill of fence, put him in jeopardy; grey hairs might seal his death-warrant."[13]

Tra le felici eccezioni a cui si accennava, va in primo luogo ricordata la pionieristica ricerca di Michael Wood, che a oltre quaranta anni dalla pubblicazione continua a far comprendere vari aspetti del cinema americano degli anni Quaranta e Cinquanta: proprio il rito del *Rex Nemorensis* narrato da Frazer viene usato da Wood per spiegare alcune costanti del genere *western*.[14] Anche gli studi dedicati al film diretto da Francis Ford Coppola e sceneggiato da John Milius nel 1979 *Apocalypse Now*,[15] sono riconducibili a questa rara ma feconda linea di ricerca: essi indagano infatti la riproposizione del tema del *Rex Nemorensis* nel rapporto fra il capitano Willard e il colonnello Kurtz.[16]

Temi frazeriani, incluso quello del *Rex Nemorensis*, emergono in un film singolare e suggestivo come *The War Lord* di Franklin J. Schaffner (1965).[17] Nel film di Dario Argento *Suspiria* (1977)[18] un anziano

[13] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, cit., p. 1.

[14] Si veda M. Wood, *America in the Movies: or, "Santa Maria, it had slipped my Mind"*, New York, Basic Books, 1975.

[15] Si veda F. F. Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Coppola – United Artists, USA, 1979.

[16] Si veda, fra l'altro, P. Hidalgo, *Las raíces literarias de "Apocalypse Now"*, in "Arbor", 105, 1980, pp. 412-477; F. Viti, *Il primitivo secondo Kurtz. L'apocalisse dell'uomo civile nelle "culture della crisi"*, in "La Ricerca Folklorica", 10, 1984, pp. 91-100; M. Norris, *Modernism and Vietnam: Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now*, in "Modern Fiction Studies", 44, 1998, pp. 730-766; M. Niola, *Il teatro dei re*, in *Metamorfosi del mito classico nel cinema*, a cura di G. P. Brunetta, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011, pp. 319-335.

[17] Si veda D. Campanile, "*The War Lord" (F. Schaffner, 1965): Medioevo crudele e pagano*, in "Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni", 77, 2011, pp. 398-421.

[18] Si veda D. Argento, *Suspiria*, SEDA – PAC, Italia, 1977.

professore universitario definisce la permanenza della magia citando alla lettera ("quoddam ubique, quoddam semper, quoddam ab omnibus creditum est") il motto latino che Frazer impiegava per lo stesso argomento ("*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*").[19] Assai esplicito è poi il reimpiego di Frazer nel citato film di Coppola, che mostra *The Golden Bough* come uno dei libri conservati da Kurtz nella sua capanna),[20] sfruttando un debito già presente nel racconto di Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness*[21] che ha dato origine al film. John Milius, del resto, ha riutilizzato il mito del *Rex Nemorensis* nel film dal lui scritto e diretto *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), dove il crudele schema del passaggio di potere è uno dei motori della storia, ma è sapientemente variato: il culto ctonio e cannibalico officiato dal malvagio sacerdote non attrae il protagonista Conan, che riesce a vincere la tentazione di prendere il posto di Thulsa Doom dopo averlo ucciso.[22]

Non solo il cinema, del resto, testimonia la presenza di *The Golden Bough* nella cultura novecentesca più recente, letteraria e non letteraria: basti qui ricordare il notevole romanzo di Joseph Geary *Spiral* (2003), un'inquietante indagine sulla biografia di un pittore maledetto e su una serie di efferati omicidi.[23] Anche nella straordinaria epopea spaziale a

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[19] Cfr. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, cit., p. 56.

[20] Anche *From Ritual to Romance* di Jessie Weston (1920), un libro dipendente da Frazer, è nella biblioteca di Kurtz. Quest'ultimo, prima di essere ucciso, evoca il 'frazeriano' Eliot recitando i versi di *The Hollow Men*.

[21] Sul rapporto fra Conrad e Frazer si veda R. Hampson, *Frazer, Conrad and the "Truth of Primitive Passion"*, in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination. Essays in Affinity and Influence*, cit., pp. 172-191.

[22] Si veda D. Campanile, *Ethan, Rodrigo, Conan: per una genealogia degli eroi in "Conan the Barbarian" (John Milius, 1982)*, in "Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni", 76, 2010, pp. 560-588.

[23] Cfr. J. Geary, *Spiral*, New York, Pantheon Books 2003, p. 150: "It was all bundled up. Like Frank liked it. Blood sacrifice. You know, cut some poor cunt's head off to guarantee the rains. That sort of religion. Wounding and healing. The Golden Bough."

fumetti scritta da Alejandro Jodorowsky e disegnata da Juan Giménez, *La Caste des Méta-Barons* (1992-2003), è fatto largo uso dell'opera di Frazer: la successione al potere prevede, infatti, una lotta mortale tra il capo guerriero e suo figlio.[24] Nella *chamber opera* musicale *The Assassin Tree* (2006), commissionata al compositore Stuart MacRae dall'Edinburgh International Festival e dalla Royal Opera House, infine, il libretto di Simon Armitage è esplicitamente basato su una storia tratta da *The Golden Bough*.

3. Una delle più avvincenti riprese del tema del *Rex Nemorensis* è il racconto *The Most Dangerous Game* di Richard Edward Connell (Poughkeepsie 1893 – Beverly Hills 1949), uscito originariamente su "Collier's. The National Weekly" il 19 Gennaio 1924 e vincitore del prestigioso O'Henry Prize negli Stati Uniti: ripubblicato più volte e tradotto in molte lingue, continua ad essere una delle più famose *short stories* americane. L'autore, laureato ad Harvard, scrittore, giornalista e sceneggiatore, deve la sua fama soprattutto a queste pagine.[25] La polisemia del titolo (*game* in inglese significa sia gioco, attività sportiva o divertimento, sia selvaggina destinata a essere inseguita dai cacciatori) segnala subito che l'apparente linearità della trama racchiude in effetti una storia articolata a più livelli e dagli imprevedibili sviluppi.[26]

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[24] Si veda A. Jodorowsky – J. Giménez, *La Caste des Méta-Barons*, Paris, Humanoïdes Associés, 1992-2003, 8 voll.

[25] Si veda R. Connell, *The Most Dangerous Game*, in "Collier's. The National Weekly", 73, January. 19. 1924, pp. 5-6 e pp. 32-35. Sull'autore si veda *Author Richard Edward Connell Jr.*, all'indirizzo elettronico www.agct8.wordpress.com/about (con ulteriore bibliografia).

[26] Si veda T. W. Thompson, *Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game"*, in "The Explicator", 60, 2002, pp. 86-88 e Id., *Natural Selection in Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game"*, in "Interdisciplinary Literary Studies", 13, 2011, p. 207.

Il protagonista Sanger Rainsford, un giovane appassionato di caccia grossa, è in viaggio per il Brasile. Di notte, incuriosito da quanto ha saputo sui pericoli di un'isola nelle vicinanze e dal rumore di spari, si sporge troppo dal parapetto della nave e finisce in acqua. Con grande sforzo nuota fino a Ship-Trap, proprio quella famigerata isola, dove è accolto dal proprietario di un grande maniero, il Generale Zaroff, un nobile russo che è riuscito a fuggire durante la Rivoluzione con il patrimonio intatto e si è ricreato un'esistenza in questo luogo tropicale. Zaroff racconta la sua storia, la totale dedizione alla caccia e la depressione in cui era caduto quando si era reso conto che questa non rappresentava più una sfida ma una sorta di *routine*, giacché la sua stessa bravura e la certezza di poter sopraffare qualsiasi animale lo avevano privato di ogni brivido. Era indispensabile, allora, trovare una nuova preda in grado di tenergli testa: una preda fornita di ragione. Ecco dunque che navi fatte opportunatamente naufragare con falsi segnali e altri ospiti involontari forniscono al generale la preda auspicata. Anche Rainsford si dovrà prestare al gioco, o patire una morte umiliante a frustate per mano di Ivan, il fedele servo sordomuto di Zaroff: la vittima avrà un vantaggio di tre ore e la promessa della libertà se riuscirà a sfuggire al cacciatore per tre giorni. Rainsford cerca disperatamente la salvezza e dà fondo a tutta la sua esperienza di cacciatore. Prossimo alla fine, non ha altra soluzione che gettarsi in mare; questo apparente suicidio non appaga tuttavia Zaroff, poiché lo scontro è stato evitato. Ma Rainsford ritorna sull'isola a cercare Zaroff, che non esita ad attribuirgli la vittoria. Il giovane tuttavia non accetta e con grande gioia del generale insiste per battersi in duello. L'esito non è descritto, ma le righe finali del racconto non lasciano dubbi sull'identità del vincitore.

Il racconto, scritto in terza persona, adotta il punto di vista di Rainsford: al lettore è narrato quanto lui vede e prova, nulla di più; per questo motivo non è offerta alcuna descrizione del giovane, mentre Zaroff

è presentato in modo accurato secondo appunto le impressioni di Rainsford. La sua impeccabile presenza fisica, l'età, il suo aspetto e il leggero accento straniero, i denti appuntiti, lo accostano a uno dei più celebri protagonisti della letteratura fantastica: a differenza del conte Dracula di Bram Stoker, tuttavia, Zaroff è un *bon vivant,* ama la buona cucina e i vini raffinati, si veste dai migliori sarti inglesi e fischietta melodie di moda alle Folies-Bergère. L'opposizione primaria resta, in ogni caso, quella cronologica: Rainsford è giovane, il generale è vecchio, e questo dettaglio viene ripetuto troppe volte per essere casuale.

Il rito del *Rex Nemorensis* narrato da Frazer, il tema della sanguinosa successione rituale, struttura il racconto in modo tanto significativo da farlo apparire una riproposizione moderna. Se consideriamo che l'antico *Rex Nemorensis* era il sacerdote di Diana nel bosco di Nemi e che Diana era la dea della caccia, non possono sfuggire le analogie fra Zaroff e il signore del bosco:acqua, bosco e paludi determinano l'ecologia della grande isola tropicale, proprio come bosco e lago delimitavano lo spazio di Nemi. Nell'isola di cui è proprietario la vita procede secondo rituali prestabiliti e sono conservate scrupolosamente le vecchie abitudini nobiliari. Anche l'offerta di una sigaretta che profuma di incenso ("it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense")[27] contribuisce a accentuare nel generale russo tratti esoticamente sacerdotali. Rainsford non è da meno: anch'egli ha consacrato l'esistenza alla caccia e ha persino scritti libri fondamentali sull'argomento. Fin dall'inizio, del resto, i due protagonisti sono segretamente affini o interscambiabili, e Zaroff presta i propri abiti al naufrago che li indossa alla perfezione ("You'll find that my clothes will fit you").[28] Rainsford diventerà, infatti, il nuovo signore dell'isola, prendendo

[27] Cfr. R. E. Connell, *The Most Dangerous Game*, cit., p. 32.
[28] Cfr. *ibidem*.

il posto del vecchio sacerdote che aveva dedicato tutta la vita alla caccia come ad un culto religioso ("I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt […] My whole life has been one prolonged hunt").[29]

Nell'appassionante descrizione delle risorse messe in atto da Rainsford per sfuggire alla caccia, ritorna più e più volte l'impiego di rami strappati dagli alberi; proprio come in *The Golden Bough* (il titolo di Frazer vi fa allusione) le possibilità di successo nel duello di un giovane con il *Rex Nemorensis* erano legate al gesto di svellere un ramo da un particolare albero del bosco.[30] L'anticipazione di Zaroff ("One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed")[31] corrisponde allora alla successione finalmente avvenuta che conclude il racconto ("He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided").[32] La potente ellissi finale è certo più efficace di ogni possibile descrizione del duello, ma Connell non vuole lasciare dubbi sull'identità del vincitore. Lo sconfitto Zaroff è sbranato dai suoi cani, con una fine a quanto mai appropriata in un testo così segnato da tracce mitologiche: Diana lo ha abbandonato ed egli condivide la sorte di Atteone, il cacciatore dilaniato e punito dalla dea. Rainsford prende il posto di Zaroff diventando il nuovo signore dell'isola, del bosco e della palude, ma il lettore già comincia a chiedersi per quanto tempo potrà restarlo...

The Most Dangerous Game è all'origine di numerose versioni cinematografiche, a cominciare dall'omonima pellicola di Ernest B. Schoedsack e Irving Pichel (1932), che rimane il migliore adattamento.[33]

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[29] Cfr. *ibidem*.

[30] Si veda J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*,cit., p. 3 e *passim*.

[31] Cfr. R. E. Connell, *The Most Dangerous Game*, cit., p. 35.

[32] Cfr. *ibidem*.

[33] Si veda E. B. Schoedsack – I. Pichel, *The Most Dangerous Game*, RKO, USA, 1932. Rimandiamo a un nostro contributo, in preparazione,dedicato a questo film.

Questo film è particolarmente riuscito, soprattutto grazie all'innesto di motivi sadiani che si intrecciano al motivo del *Rex Nemorensis*. Qui Zaroff, non più generale come nel racconto ma nobilitato con il titolo di conte, è animato da pulsioni perverse e più sofisticate. Il premio finale, inoltre, non è la mera sopravvivenza, ma il possesso di una donna e l'isola si muta in un luogo inquietante dove si palesa la vera natura di ciascuno, non più solo lo spazio ove si gareggia per la vita. Più volte, infine, è messa in dubbio la sanità mentale di Zaroff, che in questo anticipa molte figure di *mad doctor* che hanno dato forma alla paura e alle inquietudini di generazioni di spettatori.[34]

[34] Sul film si veda, fra l'altro, R. Benayoun, *Le sadisme au cinéma – Zaroff ou Les prospérités du vice*, in "Présence du Cinéma", 6-7, 1960, pp. 7-12; G. Turner, *Hunting The Most Dangerous Game*, in "American Cinematographer", 68, 1987, pp. 40-48; B. Senn, *The Most Dangerous Cinema. People hunting People on Film*, Jefferson (N.C.), McFarland, 2014, pp. 13-22.

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SIMONETTA VALENTI

JEUX ET ENJEUX INTERTEXTUELS DANS "LE SOLEIL NI LA MORT NE PEUVENT SE REGARDER EN FACE" DE WAJDI MOUAWAD

1. *"Écrire dans les lacunes et les interstices de la tragédie grecque"*[1]

La gestation de *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face* tire son origine de la relation d'amitié et d'estime existant entre deux hommes de théâtre. Sollicité à plusieurs reprises par Dominique Pitoiset, metteur en scène et directeur artistique du Théâtre national de Bordeaux, Wajdi Mouawad affirme avoir commencé à travailler à la pièce qui devait paraître en 2008 chez Leméac,[2] en essayant de faire sien le "rêve de Dominique", comme le dramaturge Libano-Québécois l'appelle dans la

[1] Cf. D. Loayza, *Entretien avec Dominique Pitoiset. Une histoire de regard*, 22 mars 2008, dans "Théâtre contemporain.net", à l'adresse électronique www.theatre-contemporain.net/spectacles/Le-Soleil-ni-la-mort-ne-peuvent-se-regarder-en-face/ensavoirplus/.

[2] Voir W. Mouawad, *Le Rêve de Dominique*, dans Id., *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, Montréal – Arles, Leméac – Actes Sud, 2008, s. p.

préface de son œuvre.[3] Ce dernier consistait essentiellement en le désir de raconter, à travers une sorte de collage de certaines tragédies d'Eschyle, de Sophocle et d'Euripide, l'histoire de Thèbes, depuis sa fondation jusqu'à sa décadence.[4] Toutefois assez tôt la difficulté, voire l'impossibilité, d'une telle création s'est révélée aux deux hommes de théâtre, en raison de la manière fort divergente dont chacun des grands auteurs tragiques de l'Antiquité concevait le rapport aux dieux. Mouawad observe en particulier à cet égard que

> "*e*ntre l'époque d'Eschyle et celle d'Euripide, il y a un déplacement qui crée une désillusion. Si pour le premier il faut toujours obéir aux dieux, pour le second ceux-là, s'ils existent, se moquent de nous. Sophocle entretenant […] la position la plus profondément complexe, va du doute à la conviction, de l'aveuglement à l'égarement. […] Cette différence fondamentale du rapport au divin empêchait toute jonction entre les pièces écrites par l'un et par l'autre."[5]

Si donc conjuguer les diverses œuvres des Tragiques grecs apparaissait impossible, la volonté de créer une pièce qui puisse s'insérer dans les interstices de la tragédie grecque et des légendes mythiques qu'elle véhicule,[6] s'est néanmoins consolidée, permettant enfin à Mouawad d'identifier avec émerveillement ce moment, fondateur et mystérieux, dans le récit de l'enlèvement d'Europe par Zeus qui, tombé amoureux d'elle, ravit l'avenante jeune fille sur la plage de Sidon, la conduisant vers la mer.

Ce récit mythologique frappe l'imagination de Mouawad, moins parce qu'il constitue à ses yeux une sorte de récit primordial, remontant à la source même de la civilisation grecque et plus généralement européenne, que parce qu'il est inextricablement lié à son pays d'origine, le Liban, qui

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[3] Cf. ibidem.

[4] Parmi ces tragédies, Mouawad cite *Les Phéniciennes* d'Euripide, *Les Sept contre Thèbes* d'Eschyle, *Œdipe roi*, *Œdipe à Colone* et *Antigone* de Sophocle.

[5] W. Mouawad, *Le Rêve de Dominique*, cit., s. p.

[6] Voir J. de Romilly, *La Tragédie grecque*, Paris, P.U.F., 1973, p. 15 ss.

s'y trouve placé au cœur de la culture occidentale, à laquelle il semble fournir ses lettres de noblesse. Car, c'est bien à travers l'imaginaire de sa terre natale, fait "du soleil, de sa chaleur, de la mer, des arbres fruitiers, de la parole échangée et de l'enfance"[7] que Mouawad parvient à s'immerger dans l'histoire d'Europe et de son frère Cadmos qui, lancé à sa recherche et débarqué en pays étranger, arrive à fonder la légendaire ville de Thèbes.[8] À partir donc de la fascination exercée sur le dramaturge par cette légende, située dans les contrées solitaires et ensoleillées du pays des cèdres, Mouawad a pu s'approprier le "rêve de Dominique" :

> "Il a fallu cela, car sinon pas d'écriture possible. L'intimité, je l'ai trouvée dans le désir intuitif, inexplicable, de raconter encore l'histoire de Cadmos qui, parti à la recherche d'Europe, fonde Thèbes pour donner naissance à sa quête. Cadmos, c'était un territoire vierge, léger, comme un horizon dégagé. Aucune pièce d'Eschyle, Sophocle ou Euripide ne nous est parvenue pour raconter Cadmos, Laïos et Œdipe face au Sphinx."[9]

Ainsi l'auteur nous prévient-il que le rapport de son texte à l'hypotexte fondateur, représenté par les tragédies grecques et par les récits mythiques dont elles s'inspirent, se pose d'emblée sous le signe de la liberté et du désir de revisiter la tradition antique, afin de l'interroger et d'y discerner des réponses aux interrogatifs les plus cuisants qui tourmentent l'homme contemporain et qui demeurent étonnamment proches de ceux que les génies de l'Antiquité s'étaient posés. De cette confrontation avec les grands Tragiques anciens naît alors, sous la plume de Mouawad, un drame amplifié, acquérant bientôt les dimensions d'une trilogie, dont la

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[7] Cf. W. Mouawad, *Le Chemin change*, dans Id. et R. Davreu, *Traduire Sophocle*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2011, p. 13.

[8] Voir R. Calasso, *Le Nozze di Cadmo e Armonia*, Milano, Adelphi, 1998, p. 69. C'est bien à ce volume, traduit en français et publié par Gallimard en 1991, que Mouawad puise, pour affirmer la centralité de la figure de Cadmos. Voir W. Mouawad, *Le Rêve de Dominique*, cit., s. p.

[9] Ibidem.

représentation sur scène couvre pratiquement six heures de durée.[10] Il s'agit d'une œuvre vaste et articulée, focalisant tour à tour chacun des héros qui ont vécu dans leur chair la malédiction, l'exil, et la solitude. En un mot, la tragédie.

Toutefois, de son aveu explicite, Dominique Pitoiset avait pensé, au tout début du projet, pousser Mouawad à se concentrer surtout sur le personnage d'Œdipe, que le directeur du Théâtre national de Bordeaux envisageait en tant que figure emblématique de la recherche de l'identité, suivant laquelle "le tragique devient inhérent au bien le plus propre et le plus intime de l'être mortel, c'est-à-dire à sa propre conscience".[11] En revanche, la composition de la trilogie mouawadienne a progressivement levé le voile sur des figures, aussi intéressantes et grandioses que celle d'Œdipe, que les fragments de la tradition tragique grecque parvenus jusqu'à nous n'avaient pas approfondies. Voilà pourquoi le travail acharné d'écriture entrepris par Wajdi Mouawad, loin de nous éclairer uniquement sur les destins ultimes de la magnifique ville aux sept portes, finit par jeter une lumière nouvelle sur l'homme, fragile créature, basculant entre vie et mort, sagesse et folie, lucidité et aveuglement, vérité et mensonge, aujourd'hui comme à l'époque d'Eschyle, de Sophocle et d'Euripide.[12]

L'analyse de *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, que nous allons affronter dans les pages suivantes, a donc pour but de montrer, à travers l'interprétation que Mouawad donne de la tragédie grecque,

[10] Notons, à cet égard, que Mouawad retrouve par là la structure originaire du théâtre grec, où chaque tragédie constituait la section indépendante d'une trilogie plus ample, fonctionnelle à faire suivre aux spectateurs le destin des héros qui y étaient représentés. Cf. J. de Romilly, *La tragédie grecque*, cit., p. 36 et Id., *Le Temps dans la tragédie grecque : Eschyle, Sophocle, Euripide*, Paris, Vrin, 2009, p. 12.

[11] Cf. D. Loayza, *Entretien avec Dominique Pitoiset. Une histoire de regard*, cit..

[12] Voir G. Durand, *Figures mythiques et visages de l'œuvre*, Paris, Berg International Éditeur, 1979, p. 28-29.

l'enrichissement qui dérive de cette confrontation avec l'hypotexte ancien, mettant clairement en relief l'originalité de sa création, mais aussi la dette que cet auteur entretient vis-à-vis des grands auteurs de l'Antiquité, non seulement du point de vue des contenus de son œuvre, mais aussi du point de vue stylistique. Comme si la fréquentation assidue de la tragédie ancienne parvenait à doter le dramaturge contemporain d'une possibilité d'expression nouvelle, où le souffle hautement lyrique des auteurs grecs contribue à vivifier la portée foncièrement poétique et épique de son théâtre.[13]

2. *Cadmos, la fondation*

Lorsqu'on parle d'intertextualité ou plus exactement de transtextualité,[14] une nécessité s'impose d'emblée au spécialiste : celle d'établir de quelle nature sont les liens que l'hypertexte – ou texte second – entretient avec l'hypotexte dont il s'inspire. Dans le cas de la trilogie de Wajdi Mouawad, il s'agit tout d'abord de l'intertextualité proprement dite et, en seconde instance, de la relation de paratextualité. Si la première d'entre elles se réfère à l'ensemble du texte mouawadien dans ses rapports aux tragédies anciennes et au contenu mythologique dont elles sont porteuses, la relation paratextuelle se rattache manifestement au titre du drame qui se fait l'écho d'une maxime de François La Rochefoucauld.[15]

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[13] Voir V. Rubira, *Les mythes dans le théâtre de Wajdi Mouawad et Caya Makhélé*, Paris, Acoria Éditions, 2014.

[14] Voir G. Genette, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré*, Paris, Seuil, 1982, p. 7.

[15] Cf. La Rochefoucauld, *Réflexions ou sentences et maximes morales* (édition de 1678), dans Id., *Œuvres complètes*, introduction par R. Kanters, chronologie et index par J. Marchand, édition établie par L. Martin-Chauffier revue et augmentée par J. Marchand, Paris, Gallimard, 1964, p. 406 (n. 26) : "Le soleil ni la mort ne se peuvent regarder fixement".

Pour comprendre l'utilisation que Mouawad fait des textes des grands Tragiques grecs, il faut donc revenir à ce mythe fondateur qu'est pour l'auteur le récit de l'enlèvement d'Europe par Zeus, métamorphosé en un éblouissant taureau blanc aux cornes dorées, en forme de croissant de lune. Présent notamment dans l'*Œdipe roi* et l'*Œdipe à Colone* de Sophocle, dont il constitue pour ainsi dire la toile de fonds et l'antécédent diégétique, ce récit assigne à Cadmos un rôle central, puisque ce personnage est le seul qui, parti comme ses frères à la recherche d'Europe, conformément à la volonté de leur père Agénor, non seulement leur survivra, mais donnera naissance à une nouvelle descendance, en fondant la ville de Thèbes.

Mouawad reprend alors à son tour la figure et l'histoire de Cadmos, dont il revisite certains mythèmes, en les approfondissant et en les réinterprétant. Avant tout, ce qui attire son attention c'est le nom du héros – Cadmos – qui en grec signifie 'l'oriental'. Or, cette provenance du personnage mythique d'une aire géographique qui n'est pas à proprement dire européenne, semble constituer aux yeux du dramaturge un élément extrêmement significatif puisqu'elle exalte le rôle hautement civilisateur de la culture orientale, vis-à-vis de la civilisation grecque et, plus généralement, occidentale. Une telle interprétation, bien qu'en ne s'écartant pas beaucoup de la *doxa*, met pourtant l'accent sur le rôle prépondérant que la civilisation orientale aurait joué, à l'origine, sur la grande culture hellénique, généralement considérée comme étant la source de la culture de l'Occident.

En effet, arrivé fortuitement en terre étrangère, Cadmos venu de la Phénicie ("L'étranger à jamais étranger / le barbare à jamais barbare")[16] est

[16] Cf. W. Mouawad, *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, cit., p. 42.

accueilli avec bienveillance par la population autochtone de l'île de Samothrace, qui en fera bientôt son roi en raison de ses vertus et de sa sagesse. C'est alors qu'en s'unissant en mariage avec la splendide Harmonie, fille d'Arès et d'Aphrodite, et en obéissant aux ordres de la déesse Pallas, Cadmos fonde en Béotie la ville de Cadmée, plus tard appelée Thèbes, destinée à devenir l'une des villes les plus florissantes de la péninsule grecque. Là, il veut établir une loi nouvelle, celle de l'accueil :

> "Vous m'avez fait votre roi
> c'est en roi que j'agirai
> mais c'est toujours en ami que je vous parlerai.
> […]
>
> Rappelez-vous :
> cherchant partout ma sœur
> je suis arrivé dans votre contrée
> suivant les pas fragiles de la génisse.
> Je vous ai appris ce que je savais
> vivre comme les oiseaux
> rêver avec les oiseaux
> Et certains parmi vous ont cru à mes paroles.
> Je suis arrivé pour vous dire
> 'C'est moi.
> Construisons ensemble une ville'.
> Certains ont hurlé ce mot :
> 'Étranger'
> et la guerre a éclaté qui a tout détruit.
> […]
> Écoutez ma voix :
> sur les ruines de nos discordes
> nous reconstruirons les lois d'un monde nouveau.
> Une ville ici s'élèvera et aura les couleurs de nos passions
> et parce que le mot 'étranger' nous a séparés
> l'étranger dorénavant sera notre Loi.
> Cette ville aura sept portes
> ouvertes chacune vers une des couleurs du ciel
> et nous serons ainsi tournés
> le jour la nuit durant
> vers les mouvements de ce qui est autre et différent."[17]

[17] Ibidem, p. 42-43.

En évoquant son périple à la recherche de sa sœur Europe, Cadmos rappelle avoir été amené à suivre la génisse indiquée par Pallas, qui lui avait suggéré le lieu de la fondation d'une cité nouvelle et s'adresse amicalement aux habitants de la naissante ville de Thèbes, en les exhortant à ne pas oublier que l'édification a eu lieu au prix d'une guerre sanglante, causée par une violente hostilité envers l'étranger. Voilà pourquoi, une fois la paix rétablie, Cadmos désire fonder, sur les ruines et les cadavres laissés par un conflit qu'il juge absurde, une ville nouvelle, où la cohabitation pacifique de peuples différents sera établie par la loi et où l'accueil de l'étranger deviendra la seule règle en vigueur. Thèbes sera alors la ville de la tolérance et de l'union du natif avec le barbare.

Comme on peut le voir, Mouawad a volontairement modifié certains traits du récit mythique. Premièrement, Cadmos apparaît dans *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face* comme le seul enfant d'Agénor et Téléphassa à avoir survécu à la quête d'Europe, non en raison de sa prouesse et de son habilité, comme c'était le cas dans la légende originaire, mais à cause de la requête avancée par ses frères avant de partir à la recherche de leur sœur. Persuadés d'aller à l'encontre de la mort, ces derniers auraient supplié leur père Agénor de garder auprès de lui Cadmos, encore enfant, afin d'assurer leur descendance. Quelques années plus tard, ayant découvert que tous les membres de sa famille ont péri dans la recherche vaine d'Europe, Cadmos adolescent décide de quitter la Phénicie.[18] Par son départ, le jeune héros trahit alors la promesse faite à ses frères de rester à jamais dans sa terre natale, car la disparition des siens lui a soudain révélé le manque de sens dans lequel est enveloppée la vie humaine. Dans les propos du héros résonne en effet, avec des accents

[18] Selon la légende, leur père Agénor avait péri aussi, se suicidant en proie à la folie, à cause de la perte de la fille Europe.

tragiques, la douleur déchirante de la perte, exprimée par le biais d'une série d'anaphores, fonctionnelles à mettre en relief, à travers les recours allitératifs, les assonances et les nombreuses rimes dérivatives, la seule vérité inhérente à l'existence de tout homme :

> "Tombe le monde
> tombent les promesses !
> Frère frère frère et père
> dorment dans leur tombe.
> Tombent tombent trop de tombes tombent
> avec elles les promesses !
> Je plante un couteau dans la trame de ma vie
> tout est abîmé
> ni promesse ni loi au jour du départ."[19]

Confronté à l'évidence de la catastrophe qui s'est abattue sur sa famille, Cadmos quitte donc volontairement le pays des cèdres pour parcourir les contrées du monde dans l'espoir de retrouver sa sœur Europe. Ce détail est extrêmement significatif, lorsqu'on le considère dans l'économie générale de la conception mouawadienne, où tout héros abandonne son lieu d'origine, à la suite d'une perte grave, sinon irréparable, comme c'est le cas pour d'autres personnages sortis de la plume du dramaturge.[20] La perte, et par là même l'expérience de l'absurdité de l'existence que font ces héros, les pousse en effet à sortir douloureusement de leur quotidien, à s'exiler de leur terre natale pour s'ouvrir à la découverte du monde et de l'altérité.[21] Et une telle découverte s'avère généralement positive et enrichissante puisque, pour Cadmos comme pour d'autres figures créées par Mouawad, le chemin parcouru

[19] Ibidem, p. 28.

[20] Voir F. Coissard, *Wajdi Mouawad. Étude critique d' "Incendies"*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2014, p. 55.

[21] Voir I. Patroix, *Identité et création dans l'œuvre de Wajdi Mouawad*, Thèse de Doctorat, Université de Grenoble, Grenoble, 2014, p. 200.

devient la source de rencontres inattendues et parfois fulgurantes de beauté. C'est bien ce qui arrive à son héros, dans la première pièce de la trilogie mouawadienne, intitulée *Cadmos*, qui reconnaît en la splendide Harmonie le don que Zeus a voulu lui faire pour le récompenser de son courage.

À l'aubaine d'Harmonie, élargie par le père des dieux, Cadmos répond du reste par un autre don important, le don de l'alphabet que le Phénicien apporte en cadeau de noces à son épouse et au peuple dont il est fait roi. Grâce à l'écriture, la ville de Thèbes et ses habitants pourront laisser une trace de leur présence dans l'Histoire, en construisant une mémoire culturelle collective qui permettra à leurs descendants de rappeler leur passé, de connaître leurs racines et d'éviter leurs erreurs, en se projetant enfin vers un avenir meilleur :

> "Mes amis
> écoutez-moi et ne vous chagrinez pas :
> notre ville brûlera un jour
> car toutes les civilisations brûlent.
> […]
> Mais personne ne pourra effacer ce que je vous offre ici
> ce cadeau que je lance au milieu de vous
> don parmi les dons.
> […]
>
> Trente pattes de mouches
> que vous apprendrez chacun ici à reproduire
> à prononcer et à répéter
> à déchiffrer et à réciter
> à comprendre et à aimer
> et à transmettre
> génération après génération.
> Voici les trente lettres de l'alphabet.
> Lumière des lumières
> chacun saura contempler dans ces formes noires
> les vestiges les plus profonds de ses rêves
> de ses désirs.
> Depuis la première forme *Aleph*
> jusqu'à la dernière *Ya*
> nous sèmerons sur la terre de vos ancêtres
> ces lettres mystérieuses
> pour inscrire notre mémoire

sur la stèle du temps."[22]

Cadmos nous apparaît donc dans la première pièce de la trilogie mouawadienne comme étant le fondateur, non seulement de la grandiose ville de Thèbes, mais par-dessus tout de la culture occidentale issue de l'hellénisme. Il est aussi l'homme du rêve, l'ami des oiseaux, qui sait s'élever au-dessus de la contingence, au-dessus de la violence et des guerres qui ponctuent l'Histoire, pour établir les assises d'une civilisation nouvelle, où les hommes venus de toute région de l'univers pourraient enfin vivre pacifiquement ensemble. Comme affirme l'auteur :

"Je me rends compte que ce dont je suis convaincu, malgré moi, et que malgré moi je raconte, c'est que le seul tranchant sur lequel nous pouvons nous tenir debout, en conservant une sorte de légèreté, tout en gardant la mémoire des douleurs passées, c'est de ne pas faire de cette mémoire le lieu du chagrin, présent et futur. Si la mémoire sert uniquement à tenir éveillées les douleurs passées pour subjuguer le présent, c'est faire de la mémoire le lieu d'une douleur qui emprisonne toute possibilité d'avenir. Oublier totalement les catastrophes serait l'erreur opposée.

Quand Œdipe finit par dire à ceux qui veulent jeter cette histoire : 'Nous vous en empêcheront', il le dit alors qu'il a tout perdu. Il reste debout sur le fil de la mémoire, sans faire de cette mémoire le lieu d'une oppression. 'Vous nous avez fait ça…', c'est ce qui se passe au Moyen-Orient, des deux côtés."[23]

À travers un style élevé, fort poétique et parsemé de figures rhétoriques, mais en même temps dépourvu de tout signe de ponctuation, et parfois même marqué par la présence d'expressions populaires puisées au langage contemporain, Mouawad parvient alors dans la première pièce de sa trilogie à revisiter le mythe de l'origine, en lui conférant un sens totalement renouvelé. Au destin inéluctable et mortel qui sied dans la tragédie grecque à tout être humain et à toute civilisation, le personnage de

[22] W. Mouawad, *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, cit., p. 44-45.

[23] J. Cambreleng, *Entretien avec Wajdi Mouawad*, 10 mars 2008, dans "Théâtre contemporain.net", à l'adresse électronique www.theatre-contemporain.net/spectacles/ Le-Soleil-ni-la-mort-ne-peuvent-se-regarder-en-face/ ensavoirplus/idcontent/12315.

Cadmos semble en fait opposer l'indication d'une voie inédite et nouvelle, celle de créer une civilisation, fondée sur une mémoire qui se veut prémisse d'un avenir de tolérance et de paix.

Une telle interprétation foncièrement positive du personnage de Cadmos se heurte cependant au destin qui touchera à sa descendance. Le fondateur de Thèbes n'est pas exempt en fait de l'erreur et c'est précisément en raison de sa faute que sa descendance sera soumise à la vengeance divine. Ce trait du personnage est bien mis en évidence par Mouawad dans les répliques finales de la première section de sa trilogie, au moment même où a lieu la célébration du mariage entre Cadmos et Harmonie, auquel – conformément à la légende originaire – assistent les dieux. Avant d'inviter ces derniers à prendre part au banquet, dans un mouvement d'orgueil, le Cadmos mouwadien affirme, face aux nobles et aux habitants de Thèbes, avoir la certitude que les dieux n'existent pas et que leur participation à cette fête nuptiale n'est que corollaire :

> "Fêtons
> les premières noces de notre jeune histoire
> celles qui verront l'union de l'étranger
> avec le natif de ce pays.
> Cadmos avec Harmonie !
> Fêtons !
> Et nous qui savons que les dieux n'existent pas
> faisons semblant un instant qu'ils existent
> et pour une fois
> pour la seule fois
> pour l'unique fois
> invitons ce qui n'existe pas à se joindre à nous qui existons
> pour que l'illusion et la réalité
> ensemble réunies
> puissent se retrouver attablées autour de la même noce
> et célébrer la grande joie des hommes.
>
> Faites entrer les dieux.
>
> *Entrent les dieux.*

Ils rejoignent les hommes.
Ils s'attablent ensemble."[24]

Ainsi se conclut la parabole accomplie par Cadmos, le fondateur de Thèbes, la magnifique. Ayant parcouru les contrées du monde pour retrouver sa sœur Europe, il a su affronter à toute sorte de dangers, faisant montre d'une sagesse et d'un courage qui lui ont valu de devenir roi, même dans une terre étrangère. Néanmoins, la conscience de sa valeur conduit Cadmos à l'égarement, car il croit désormais être devenu le maître de son destin, abandonnant toute foi en les dieux, transformés à son banquet nuptial en de simples comparses qui assistent impassibles à l'existence humaine. C'est donc à cause de ce suprême mouvement d'orgueil, qui finit par aveugler Cadmos, que la splendide cité aux sept portes sera condamnée à la destruction par les dieux et que la noble lignée fondée par Cadmos sera soumise à l'inéluctabilité du châtiment divin, comme le montrent bien les figures de Laïos et d'Œdipe qui dominent respectivement la deuxième et la troisième section de la trilogie mouawadienne.

3. *Laïos, la faiblesse humaine*

Dans la deuxième section de sa trilogie, Mouawad parcourt les étapes principales de l'histoire de *Laïos*, fils de Labdacos, né de Nictée, l'une des filles que Cadmos avait eues de son mariage avec Harmonie.[25] Ce qui l'intéresse, c'est tout d'abord le fait que Laïos est – une fois de plus – un exilé, un homme qui, comme son ancêtre Cadmos, est obligé à quitter sa terre d'origine afin de trouver refuge dans un pays étranger : ayant succédé

[24] W. Mouawad, *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, cit., p. 46.

[25] Labdacos est donc l'ancêtre éponyme de la dynastie maudite des Labdacides, à laquelle il donne son nom et à laquelle appartiennent Laïos, Œdipe, Étéocle, Polynice, Antigone et Ismène.

à son père Labdacos sur le trône de Thèbes, Laïos se voit en effet enlever le pouvoir par les jumeaux Amphion et Zéthos, doit quitter son royaume et finit par trouver refuge à la cour du roi Pélops. Voilà en effet le héros en proie au désespoir, face à la menace qui pèse sur lui et qui l'oblige à oublier ses origines et à cacher son identité :

> "LAÏOS. Je ne signifierai plus rien loin de ma patrie.
> LYCOS. Tu ne devras rien signifier !
> Tout taire
> tout cacher.
> Sur les routes barbares
> quand on te demandera ta source
> tu viens d'un pays où l'Étranger est roi."[26]

Mouawad insiste sur le fait que Laïos est un être en fuite, un homme dont l'identité profonde ne dépend plus désormais de son lieu d'origine, mais plutôt du chemin accompli pour s'éloigner de sa patrie natale où désormais sévissent la destruction et la violence :

> "Je quitte ma patrie à la force de mes hanches
> j'entends les cris de ma cité
> ses pleurs et sa terreur.
> Le sang qui coule est autant de secondes pour sauver ma vie.
> Rage et enrage contre la mort de la lumière.
> Pied gauche et pied droit
> dans un instant d'envol
> en ciseaux dans le ciel
> dans la course de violence !
> Arrachement arrachement
> catastrophe catastrophe
> sois sage et sauvage
> parle parle

[26] Ibidem, p. 48. Il n'est pas inutile de relever que Mouawad assigne à Lycos, l'oncle d'Amphion et de Zéthos, le rôle de tuteur et de conseiller de Laïos : Lycos est en fait celui qui recommande au souverain légitime de Thèbes de s'enfuir, de quitter la ville, de sorte à échapper à la furie sanguinaire qui incombe sur lui. Cela semble constituer un écart assez important par rapport à la tradition mythologique, selon laquelle Lycos monta lui-même sur le trône de Thèbes et ne joua pas – semble-t-il – le rôle de précepteur de Laïos.

ânonne
dans la respiration hoquetante du malheur
la puissance de la vie qui malgré tout continue et se poursuit.
[…]
Cours Laïos
ta vie est dans ce geste répété de l'enjambée."[27]

De toute évidence, Laïos incarne le type même du fugitif, de l'exilé volontaire de sa terre d'origine qu'il abandonne, la mort dans l'âme. À côté de l'emploi d'un style élevé et tragique, assurément digne d'un roi, la suite des recours sonores met en relief le sentiment de déchirement extrême éprouvé par le héros : la rage qui envahit cet homme, en train de quitter hâtivement son pays et les siens pour échapper à la violence dévastatrice de la guerre, est représentée par les allitérations et les répétitions tourmentées. Mouawad véhicule le tumultueux état d'âme du fugitif où, à un puissant instinct de vengeance et à une sourde rancune, se mêle également le désir impérieux de réagir à la mort, au néant, au manque de lumière qui l'assaillent et le poursuivent. Dans cette fuite débridée, dans cette course sans autre but que l'espoir du salut, réside donc toute la force du personnage de Laïos, dont la vitalité se résout dans "le geste répété de l'enjambée".

Dans le périple accompli par le fugitif, ce qui fascine Mouawad n'est pas seulement sa volonté d'échapper à la mort et aux horreurs de la guerre, mais aussi sa capacité hors du commun à conduire les chevaux qui lui obéissent de façon extraordinaire.[28] Or, cette facilité à communiquer avec les animaux est un trait qui contribuera de manière déterminante à lui attirer la sympathie et l'affection des Îliens et, tout particulièrement, des

[27] Ibidem, p. 49-50.

[28] Une telle syntonie avec les animaux, présente déjà dans la figure de Cadmos, amis des oiseaux, est un élément cher à Mouawad. Il suffit de penser à Wahhch Debch, le protagoniste de son dernier roman *Anima* (2012), qui parle, entend et dialogue avec des animaux de toute espèce. Voir S. Valenti, *Oralité humaine et oralité animale dans "Anima" de Wajdi Mouawad*, dans "La Torre di Babele", 11, 2015, p. 51-87.

enfants. C'est en fait désespérément agrippé au cou d'un cheval que Laïos rejoint un matin la côte des îles où règne le paisible Pélops. L'accueil que lui réservent leurs habitants est si amical, que le roi invite Laïos à rester dans ses terres tant qu'il le désirera. Installé à la cour de ce dernier, où il est traité avec tout le respect qui sied à un souverain ami, Laïos apprend alors aux habitants à élever les chevaux qu'il chérit, gagnant par là la sympathie de Chrysippe, le fils de Pélops, dont il tombe éperdument amoureux. D'abord, le Laïos mouawadien paraît résister à son penchant pour l'enfant, mais lorsqu'il découvre que la reine Hippodamie est au courant de son secret, sa passion semble se déchaîner dans toute sa violence, dévoilant soudain son inclination coupable :

"Laïos !
Je suis Laïos !
C'est mon nom !
Vérité horrible !
Mon cœur est si lourd ;
plein de désamour
désamour des amours
des amours inanimées !
[…]
Chrysippe l'enfant hurleur
est miracle parmi les miracles
vertige pour mes larmes
m'apparaissant
il traverse la transparence
courant jouant pleurant rêvant
[…]
Chrysippe fils de Pélops
mon second père !
Traître et lâche !
Monstre ou monstre
monstre !
Je suis tout cela
je ne suis que cela
entre dégoût et bonheur
douleur et extase !
Le dévorer
m'égorger !

Le caresser
m'écorcher !"[29]

Dans ce passage, riche d'effets rhétoriques, l'écrivain obtient un effet de bouleversement émotif extraordinaire, qui correspond certes au désarroi de son personnage, mais qui produit également chez le lecteur le sentiment d'une catastrophe intérieure irréparable, causée par le dévoilement de la vérité.[30] Mouawad est très sensible à cet aspect de la personnalité complexe de Laïos, qui nous est ici présenté dans sa faiblesse la plus grande, laquelle fait de ce héros un être ambigu et contradictoire, mais aussi foncièrement humain.

Toutefois, ce n'est que l'intervention d'Hippodamie, la deuxième épouse de Pélops, qui précipite la chute du protagoniste. En effet la reine, jalouse des attentions que son mari réserve à Chrysippe, pousse Laïos à retourner dans son royaume en compagnie de son petit éphèbe ;[31] aveuglé par son amour, il oublie alors complètement la prédiction du devin Tirésias[32] et court à sa perte : sa passion l'entraînera à la déchéance morale, tout en causant une terrible guerre entre les Thébains et les Îliens, ainsi que le suicide de Chrysippe. Thèbes sera presque détruite et la malédiction jetée sur Laïos par les dieux retombera fatalement sur sa descendance.

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[29] W. Mouawad, *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, cit., p. 67-68.

[30] Sur la révélation de la vérité qui serait le propre du tragique ancien voir P. Demont – A. Lebeau, *Introduction*, dans *Les Tragiques Grecs : théâtre complet avec un choix de fragments*, Traduction de V.-H. Debidour, Paris, Éditions L.G.F., 1999, p. 16.

[31] Selon la tradition mythologique Hippodamie, craignant l'ambition de son beau-frère Chrysippos, le fit assassiner et fut bannie.

[32] Rencontré sur sa route, avant même de rejoindre les terres des Îliens, Tirésias lui avait en effet suggéré de se suicider, afin de sauver la cité de Thèbes et ses habitants d'une malédiction certaine. Là encore, Mouawad modifie quelque peu la légende traditionnelle, suivant laquelle Laïos serait allé consulter l'oracle de Delphes, en espérant connaître la raison pour laquelle il ne réussissait pas à procréer en s'unissant à Jocaste.

Le dramaturge Libano-Québécois accentue donc, dans sa transposition, les éléments qui trahissent l'intime faiblesse de Laïos. Ce dernier nous apparaît comme un être en fuite, tristement à la merci des impulsions dont il est dominé, au point qu'il est disposé à sacrifier la vie et la tranquillité de son peuple dans le but de garder auprès de lui l'objet de ses désirs. C'est précisément cette passion qui le transforme en un individu lâche et inconséquent, incapable de réagir par un acte de responsabilité au sentiment qui l'emporte. En même temps ces sentiments incontrôlables l'interpellent au sujet de la liberté de l'homme et de sa capacité de reconnaître sa faiblesse et d'y porter remède. Le même interrogatif, posé d'une manière encore plus poignante, préside d'ailleurs à la figure d'Œdipe, dont Mouawad fait le symbole même de l'abjection que l'homme peut atteindre lorsque, dans son intime désir de découvrir la vérité sur lui-même, finit par être entraîné fatalement à sa perte.

4. *Œdipe, la vérité*

Dans la troisième pièce de la trilogie, *Œdipe*, le protagoniste développe les traits majeurs qui caractérisent le héros sophocléen. Si dans l'*Œdipe roi* le fils de Laïos et de Jocaste aspire de toute son âme à trouver l'être coupable ayant causé l'épidémie qui sévit dans la ville, dans le drame de Mouawad le héros s'entretient avec son conseiller et ami Héléos au sujet de sa véritable identité : ce qui le hante, c'est l'urgence de savoir, il voudrait connaître quelle est son origine, qui sont ses vrais parents, d'où il vient vraiment. Dans l'interprétation mouawadienne, Œdipe est donc avant tout l'homme confronté au mystère de son origine, un mystère qui exige d'être dévoilé, car il va informer l'existence entière :

"ŒDIPE. Rien ne compte que la vérité.

[…]
L'HOMME. Ne fonde pas ta vie sur elle.
Et vis dans l'amour de ceux qui t'aiment.
Qu'importe la vérité.
Qui peut dire connaître la source de son existence ?
Savoir être né de-ci de-là
cela n'atténue en rien le présent.
HÉLÉOS. Tu es prince de Corinthe Œdipe
tu en seras le roi.
Un roi juste
tous le pensent.
Que t'importe cette rumeur ?
ŒDIPE. Qui accepte de demeurer aveugle ?
[…]
HÉLÉOS. Que veux-tu faire ?
ŒDIPE. Chercher.
Trouver.
Oracle !"[33]

Si l'ami Héléos exhorte le jeune roi à aller de l'avant, à regarder à son futur, sans s'attarder sur le doute qui semble peser sur sa naissance, l'inconnu qui apparaît sur scène invite Œdipe à ne pas fonder son existence sur la découverte de la vérité, car, tout importante qu'elle soit, elle ne pourra jamais éclairer le sens ultime de son existence. La seule source de bonheur, celle qui assure à la vie de tout être humain une signification véritable, la rendant digne d'être vécue, n'est que l'attachement de ceux qui l'aiment. Ainsi, connaître la vérité sur son origine – semble nous suggérer Mouawad – ne suffit pas à combler l'insatiable besoin d'amour qui est le propre de tout homme.[34] Mais Œdipe demeure sourd à cet avertissement.

[33] W. Mouawad, *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, cit., p. 94-96.

[34] Cet aspect revient dans toutes les œuvres de l'écrivain : d'*Incendies* (2009) à *Forêts* (2009) et *Littoral* (2009), de *Visage retrouvé* (2002) à *Un obus dans le cœur* (2007), pour arriver aux ouvrages les plus récents, *Anima* (2012) et *Sœurs* (2015). La quête de l'origine et la problématique identitaire se posent chez Mouawad avec une urgence poignante ; cette quête renvoie pourtant toujours les différents personnages à la découverte d'une vérité plus profonde, qui est celle de leur capacité d'aimer et du don d'être aimé, parfois d'une manière totalement inattendue et gratuite. Voir I. Patroix, *Identité et création dans l'œuvre de Wajdi Mouawad*, cit., p. 200 ss.

Comme chez Sophocle, Œdipe incarne en effet l'incapacité de l'homme à voir la vérité telle qu'elle est. Si Cadmos, à l'apogée de son succès et de son pouvoir, avait été aveuglé par son amour-propre, arrivant à renier sa foi en les dieux ; si Laïos était marqué par un profond aveuglement, provoqué par sa passion coupable ; Œdipe est à son tour frappé par une forme d'aveuglement, comme si sa capacité de vision et son intelligence étaient enveloppées dans une brume épaisse. Cette condition d'ignorance profonde, typique de tout homme, est pour Wajdi Mouawad l'essence même du tragique. Face à la prédiction terrible de l'oracle, Œdipe refuse donc de voir et poursuit son chemin, courant vers sa perte exactement comme son père, à qui il emprunte d'ailleurs les mêmes mots :

"ŒDIPE. Je serai qui je serai.
Au chemin creux où je me trouve
je fais promesse :
jamais un pas en arrière
jamais ne s'accomplira
le misérable oracle.
Je quitte ma patrie à la force de mes hanches.
Pied gauche et pied droit
dans un instant d'envol
en ciseaux dans le ciel
dans la course de violence
arrachement arrachement !
Catastrophe catastrophe !
Sois sage et sauvage
parle parle
ânonne
dans la respiration hoquetante du malheur
la puissance de la vie qui malgré tout continue et poursuit.
Dans ce chemin creux
étroit comme la vie
je mets dans mes mollets lourds
toute ma fuite
oracle n'est pas destin !
Dieu n'est pas homme !
Je porterai mon claudiquement
loin de ceux qui m'ont donné la vie

à jamais dans la défaillance de mes certitudes."[35]

Voilà pourquoi Œdipe devient, aux yeux de Mouawad, l'emblème même de l'homme contemporain, seul face à la catastrophe qui est en train de s'abattre sur lui et qu'il n'accepte pourtant pas, persuadé comme il l'est de pouvoir modifier son sort. Œdipe est l'homme qui n'a plus aucune confiance en le Divin, qu'il arrive même à défier et dont il se sent le jouet ; un être qui finit par tomber dans son propre piège, aveuglé par son amour-propre et par sa puissance illusoire :

"ŒDIPE. Rage et enrage contre la mort de la lumière !
Je serai qui je serai !
Je tuerai qui je tuerai !
Mais je ne rebrousserai nul chemin :
un pas en arrière
c'est le retour à l'oracle."[36]

L'aveuglement d'Œdipe tient aussi au fait que ce héros s'avère incapable de soutenir la vision de la vérité, telle qu'elle se présente dans son essence terrible. Même si les dieux l'avaient prévenu quant aux crimes qu'il aurait pu commettre, Œdipe demeure en fait incapable de régir le poids de cette révélation et une telle impuissance est clairement signifiée par le geste symbolique de s'aveugler, que l'on peut interpréter comme une forme suprême d'autopunition pour les crimes qu'il n'a pas su éviter. Ce ne sera en fait qu'après que la catastrophe s'est abattue sur lui et sur les siens, qu'Œdipe accueillera enfin la vérité telle quelle, dans sa portée néfaste, avouant par là sa faute et les conséquences irréparables qu'elle a comportées. Et là réside pour Mouawad sa grandeur tragique :

[35] W. Mouawad, *Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*, cit., p. 99-100.

[36] Ibidem, p. 102.

“ŒDIPE. Qui peut dire ce qui se cache derrière ses yeux
Si ce n’est celui qui en retourne l’accélération ?
Les orbites déchirées
immobilisées.
Comme celui de la terre arrêtée dans sa course !
Fracas
cyclones d’images
cauchemars qui déferlent.
Je n’ai pas pu voir avant de voir !
Tuant mon père
je n’ai pas voulu reconnaître son visage.
Pénétrant ma mère
je n’ai pas voulu reconnaître son ventre.
Les dieux m’ont conduit jusqu’au seuil de la catastrophe.
J’ai vu.
Révélation.
Jocaste pendue
Étéocle Polynice fratricides
Antigone morte vivante
Ismène exilée !
Révélation.”[37]

Œdipe apparaît donc dans la section finale de la trilogie mouawadienne, encore davantage que dans les tragédies de Sophocle, comme l’homme de la conscience douloureuse du mal, l’individu qui, après avoir eu la révélation de sa faute, comprend enfin que son destin et celui de ses descendants est inéluctablement condamné à la destruction et à la mort, car les dieux lui imposent un châtiment qui retombera inexorablement sur lui et sur une partie de sa lignée.

Ainsi s’expliquerait pour Mouawad la chute de Thèbes, la ville resplendissante aux sept portes, fondée par le courageux Cadmos, entraînée dans une guerre absurde par la faiblesse de Laïos et détruite enfin par l’épouvantable épidémie que les dieux ont déchaînée pour punir Œdipe des crimes commis. Seuls ses épigones, rachetés par son profond repentir et par les souffrances endurées par les membres de sa famille, pourront sans doute

[37] Ibidem, p. 114.

un jour rappeler son histoire, en élevant ainsi un nouveau "palimpseste de beauté"[38] à leur ancêtre malheureux qui ne désire désormais que parcourir les contrées du monde pour apprendre à ses semblables à reconnaître l'état d'aveuglement dans lequel vit tout être humain :

> "ŒDIPE. Des hommes à tête de taureau
> débarquèrent sur cette plage
> pour enlever une femme à la chevelure splendide
> Europe sœur de Cadmos fondateur de ville
> Europe dont la disparition marqua pour ma civilisation
> le début de la grande catastrophe
> celle qui arracha les hommes à leur aveuglement
> pour les précipiter contre le mur éblouissant de la révélation."[39]

5. *Le titre*

Le titre que Mouawad a choisi pour sa trilogie (*Le Soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face*), tiré du célèbre recueil d'aphorismes de La Rochefoucauld où l'auteur se plaît à dévoiler les mobiles profonds des actions et des pensées humaines, nous apparaît alors dans toute la plénitude de sa signification.[40] Tout en gardant la même structure syntaxique utilisée par le grand moraliste, Mouawad modifie toutefois légèrement l'hypotexte, en substituant l'adverbe "fixement"[41] par la périphrase adverbiale "en face", fréquente en français courant. Cette simple modification est toutefois fonctionnelle à focaliser l'instant précis où le regard de l'homme reçoit de façon directe la clarté et la chaleur des rayons du soleil qu'il ne peut soutenir et qui l'aveuglent. Une telle réaction sera d'ailleurs suscitée chez l'être humain par la terrible vision de la mort qui représente son lot

[38] Cf. ibidem, p. 115.
[39] Ibidem, p. 117.
[40] Voir G. Genette, *Seuils*, Paris, Seuil, 1987, p. 87.
[41] Caractérisée, conformément à un usage fort littéraire, par l'omission de la particule *ni* devant le premier terme de la négation coordonnée.

inévitable, une vision face à laquelle il succombe. Aussi, par le biais de cette petite variation sur le texte originaire, le dramaturge contemporain non seulement arrive-t-il à réactualiser sa portée sémantique, mais par surcroît l'applique du même coup à la leçon sophocléenne.

La maxime n. 26, selon les spécialistes, est en relation directe avec la maxime finale du recueil de 1678 :

> "C'est nous flatter de croire que la mort nous paraisse de près ce que nous en avons jugé de loin, et que nos sentiments, qui ne sont que faiblesse, soient d'une trempe assez forte pour ne point souffrir d'atteinte par la plus rude de toutes le épreuves. C'est aussi mal connaître les effets de l'amour-propre que de penser qu'il puisse nous aider à compter pour rien ce qui le doit nécessairement détruire ; et la raison, dans laquelle on croit trouver tant de ressources, est trop faible en cette rencontre pour nous persuader ce que nous voulons ; c'est elle, au contraire, qui nous trahit le plus souvent, et qui, au lieu de nous inspirer le mépris de la mort, sert à nous découvrir ce que la mort a d'affreux et de terrible."[42]

Le message central que le moraliste voulait donner, visait essentiellement à désabuser l'être humain. Il désirait en effet l'arracher à la fausse image qu'il s'était fait de lui-même : celle du vaillant stoïque, capable d'affronter la mort et l'effroi qu'elle engendre par une sorte de désaveu qui lui ôterait son aura d'épouvante.[43] Et, pour ce faire, La Rochefoucauld n'hésitait pas à mettre en évidence le profond état d'aveuglement qui distingue l'esprit humain, toujours à la merci de son amour-propre.

C'est précisément un tel état qui a suscité l'intérêt de Mouawad, le poussant à faire de cette maxime le titre de sa trilogie. Cadmos se laisse en effet emporter par son orgueil, allant jusqu'à nier l'existence du Divin ; de même, Laïos, aveuglé par son inclination coupable vis-à-vis de Chrysippe et trop orgueilleux pour en demander pardon, finit par entraîner inutilement

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[42] La Rochefoucauld, *Réflexions ou sentences et maximes morales* (édition de 1678), cit., p. 470 (n. 504).

[43] Voir P. Campion, *Lectures de La Rochefoucauld*, Rennes, P.U.R., 1998, p. 29.

son peuple dans une guerre sanglante qui coûtera la vie à maints innocents ; enfin Œdipe, incapable de reconnaître la vérité, commet des crimes inouïs et finit par ôter sa vue, impuissant à soutenir la révélation brutale de son côté monstrueux. Tous les héros de la trilogie mouawadienne, sont donc frappés de formes diverses d'aveuglement, lesquelles mettent en relief l'essence foncièrement tragique de la condition humaine, suspendue sur l'abîme de sa destruction et pourtant incapable de l'envisager et d'y croire.[44] Mouawad associe précisément cette incapacité de voir de l'homme contemporain, face à la menace d'une catastrophe environnementale, à celle du héros sophocléen :

> "Les Dieux disent à Œdipe, Tu vas à la catastrophe. Ils ne l'arrêtent pas. La catastrophe, la dernière strophe, la fin te révèlera ton erreur. Il n'y a pas d'autre solution. T'arrêter en chemin ne mène à rien. Tout est question de révélation. Les Dieux encouragent les hommes à se tromper le plus vite possible. Quand ils comprendront, il sera trop tard, mais ils verront. Ils auront le sentiment de la révélation, de la lumière brûlante. La question actuelle de l'environnement, c'est très grec."[45]

[44] Voir A. Ferraro, *Le Cycle théâtral de Wajdi Mouawad (Littoral, Incendies, Forêts) ou comment détourner le mythe d'Œdipe*, dans "Ponts / Ponti", 8, 2008, p. 41-56 et A. Rodighiero, *La promessa del sangue: motivi edipici, dans "Incendies" di Wajdi Mouawad*, in *Edipo classico e contemporaneo*, a cura di F. Citti e A. Iannucci, Hildesheim – New York, Olms, 2012, p. 359-383.

[45] J. Cambreleng, *Entretien avec Wajdi Mouawad*, cit..

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MARIA ELENA CAPITANI

RE-MEMBERING THE BARD: DAVID GREIG'S AND LIZ LOCHHEAD'S RE-VISIONARY REMINISCENCES OF "THE TEMPEST"

The inherent capacity of theatre to reinvent itself across centuries is highly revealing about the natural resilience of this art form:

> "Theatre returns, it always does. It returns to places where it has already been before and to times in which it has already appeared. And while it does so, it sends us too, the spectators, to those places and times, performance after performance. Theatre also rewrites. It constantly does. It rewrites history, relationships, stories and rules. It refashions beliefs, recycles old and used objects and reassembles them into new embodied experiences. Above all, theatre repeats, and incessantly so. It repeats itself and the act of returning and rewriting, as though it were struck by an obsessive compulsion to reiterate and re-enact, again and again, the vestiges of its past. In so doing, it adapts itself to present contingencies and situations, like an animal species struggling to survive through evolution."[1]

[1] M. Laera, *Introduction: Return, Rewrite, Repeat: The Theatricality of Adaptation*, in *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat*, edited by M. Laera, London and New York, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014, p. 1.

The theatrical urge to self-reiterate is not the mere result of a survival instinct. Rather, it highlights the two-way relationship between theatre and the society in which it is produced, as well as the transformative power of this medium: "Theatre […] does not reshape its coordinates simply to remain alive or to remain itself through time, but also to change the world around it. Theatre, one could say, never stops adapting its features to the world and the world to its features".[2] The extraordinary ability of theatre to re-present itself by re-figuring its past relics and adapting its conventions to current issues helps us to understand the permanence – and proliferation – of revisionist artefacts on the contemporary stage.[3]

A prolific adaptor of various kinds of narratives, textual materials, as well as specific writers such as Ovid, Plutarch, or Holinshed, it is no surprise that William Shakespeare left us a uniquely intertextual output which has been defined as "a crucial touchstone for the scholarship of appropriation as a literary practice and form".[4] Constantly reinterpreted, rewritten, restaged, reshaped or – more generally – remade, the Shakespearean canon has challenged and crossed cultural, geographical, historical, and generic boundaries, becoming a multi-layered, protean, and transnational heritage, "an aggregate forever in flux".[5] Indeed, this extended Shakespearean *corpus* – a living organism transgressing borders and continuously (re)adapting itself to the world and the world to itself – can be considered as a privileged *locus* for investigating the poetics and

[2] Ibidem.

[3] See J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation,* Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 48: "Performance is an inherently adaptive art; each staging is a collaborative interpretation, one which often reworks a playscript to acknowledge contemporary concerns or issues".

[4] Ibidem, pp. 45-46.

[5] D. Lanier, *Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value*, in *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, edited by A. Huang and E. Rivlin, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 32.

politics of appropriation and its aesthetic and ethical dimension as a literary and cultural practice.

Along with *Othello* and *Hamlet*, *The Tempest* (1611) is one of those Shakespearean texts which have been reinterpreted, adopted and adapted most frequently over the centuries,[6] becoming "a play for all eras, all continents and many ideologies".[7] The reasons why *The Tempest* is still extremely appealing and relevant today are to be found in the distinctive features of the play itself. The last drama written entirely by Shakespeare – whose protagonist Prospero is believed to represent the Bard himself saying farewell to the stage – revolves around a series of extremes epitomising the play's "endlessly arguable nature".[8] To begin with, *The Tempest* features a deliberately vague setting: some critics argue that the Bard drew upon New World sources (in 1609 an English ship, the *Sea Venture*, was wrecked in Bermuda)[9] and located Prospero's enchanted island in the Atlantic, while other scholars domesticate the confusing geography of the play by placing it somewhere in the more reassuring waters of the Mediterranean Sea. This spatial ambiguity – or even "apparent placeless-ness"[10] – and interpretative elusiveness add to the exportability of the romance and encourage a multiplicity of readings and transformations.

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[6] See J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, cit., p. 52.

[7] V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, *Introduction*, in W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, edited by V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, London, Thomson Learning, 2006, p. 1. It is important to note that, through its exceptional variety of recontextualisations and renditions, *The Tempest* "has helped shape three contemporaneous movements – postcoloniality, postfeminism or postpatriarchy, and postmodernism – from the 1960s to the present" (C. Zabus, *Tempests after Shakespeare*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave, 2002, p. 1).

[8] V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, *Introduction*, cit., p. 1.

[9] See ibidem, p. 41.

[10] C. DiPietro, *Performing Place in "The Tempest"*, in *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now: Criticism and Theory in the 21st Century*, edited by C. DiPietro and H. Grady, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 85.

Another possible reason for the highly enduring potential of Shakespeare's play, whose plot unfolds between 2 p. m. and 6 p. m. ("The time 'twixt six and now"),[11] is its investigation of the notion of time. It is no coincidence that Shakespeare opts for the term *tempest*, rather than choosing its less formal Saxon equivalent *storm* (which is used only by vulgar characters such as the boatswain in the very first scene and Trinculo later in the play). The more elegant Latin etymology reminds us of the idea of *tempus*, a concept around which the whole play revolves.[12] In this light, *The Tempest* is the Bard's "most tightly structured play", which offers a type of symmetrical pattern wherein "several roles and events are parallel".[13] For instance, the topic of usurpation recurs three times: we are told that Prospero, the Duke of Milan, was overthrown twelve years earlier by his brother Antonio, who – together with Sebastian – now plots to assassinate the King of Naples Alonso, while Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo plan to murder Prospero. These variations on a theme exemplify well the importance of repetition in a play which is permeated with reflections and refractions, and – at the same time – embedded in the idea of recollection. Shakespeare himself

> " […] insists that his characters merely *remember* the events of the twelve years preceding. Although Miranda cannot recall enough to challenge Prospero's account, Caliban and Ariel do remember early events on the island; Caliban's recollections, in some particulars, challenge his master's, leaving the audience to speculate as to what really happened."[14]

The fact that many significant events are conjured up through words rather than (re)enacted on the theatrical stage, as well as the elliptical

[11] W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, cit., p. 166 (I, 2).
[12] See N. Fusini, *Vivere nella tempesta*, Torino, Einaudi, 2016, pp. 3-5.
[13] V. M. Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, *Introduction*, cit., pp. 14-15.
[14] Ibidem, p. 15.

narrative structure of *The Tempest*, stimulates the imagination of readers, spectators, and writers who are eager to discover more about past troubles and foretell future developments.[15] This fascinatingly elusive game of mirrors, played in a surreal and oneiric dimension in which past, present, and future overlap,[16] makes it impossible for a contemporary writer to resist the powerful urge to repeat and re-member, in the double sense of the term (to recall and to reassemble something – in this case, a hypotext, in a different way, after dismembering it).

1. *A Savage Reminiscence*

This analysis focuses on two re-visionary[17] appropriations of the Bard's highly resonant and exportable romance, David Greig's monologue *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, first performed by Graham Eatough at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 1991, and Liz Lochhead's *The Magic Island*, a rewriting of *The Tempest* for seven- to eleven-year-olds, commissioned by the Unicorn Children's

[15] Ibidem, p. 75: "In implicit disagreement with the observation that Shakespeare begins *The Tempest* at nearly its end, in many adaptations the play is merely an interlude between the events of the previous twelve years and the time since Prospero sailed home. 'What's past is prologue' (2.1.253)."

[16] See H. F. Brooks, *"The Tempest": What Sort of Play?*, in "Proceedings of the British Academy", LXIV, 1978, p. 37.

[17] This article draws upon the notion of re-visionary writing, as theorised by Peter Widdowson: "The term 're-vision' deploys a strategic ambiguity between the word *revise*: 'to examine and correct; to make a new, improved version of; to study anew', and *re-vision*: to see in another light; to re-*en*vision or perceive differently; and thus to recast and re-evaluate the 'original'" (P. Widdowson, *Literature*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 164). Widdowson pointed out that the term *re-vision* was coined by the American poet Adrienne Rich, who employed it to refer to a radical appropriation of the canon aiming at countering oppressive patriarchal culture: "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction […] We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (A. Rich, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision*, in "College English", 34, October 1972 [*Women, Writing and Teaching*], pp. 18-19).

Theatre and first staged in London in February 1993. Even if they differ from a variety of points of view, both Scottish *Tempests* retell the Shakespearean narrative through the lens of memory, trying to fill the gaps and reconstruct the story from a different perspective.

A Savage Reminiscence is the first play of David Greig, one of the most talented contemporary Scottish dramatists. This text, which remains unpublished, was conceived as a one-man show to be performed by Graham Eatough, who studied at Bristol University with Greig. In the early 1990s, the two young theatre-makers formed an experimental company, Suspect Culture, which produced groundbreaking work for more than a decade.[18] The transnational and palimpsestic quality of Greig's work is in keeping with the versatility of the prolific writer, who has collaborated with various artists and experimented with different forms and media. During his fertile artistic journey, Greig has also reworked a selection of Greek tragedies, including Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (2005), Euripides' *The Bacchae* (2007), and Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Women* (2016), as well as European sources, for example Camus's *Caligula* (2003).

Intriguingly, the Scottish dramatist seems to be interested in imagining what happens after the end of some of the most iconic Shakespearean plays, re-interpreting the past and creating new scenarios. Like *Dunsinane* (2010), Greig's re-visionary account of what happens after Macbeth's deposition and Malcolm's subsequent accession to the throne, *A Savage Reminiscence* can be defined as a *sequel* to *The Tempest*. In this appropriation, after being left alone on the island, a guilty Caliban takes centre stage and "embarks upon a gripping voyage of reminiscence",[19]

[18] See C. Wallace, *The Theatre of David Greig*, London and New York, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013, p. 16.

[19] S. Poole, [review of *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*], programme, Theatre Zoo, 1991, n. p.

recollecting some past events – in particular his rape of Miranda – from his own (traditionally) marginalised point of view. Extensively reconfigured and reinterpreted across centuries, Caliban is probably the character of *The Tempest* who has undergone the most significant critical metamorphosis.[20] While the setting of *The Tempest* is deliberately vague, in the opening stage directions Greig describes 'his' island as tropical and later locates it in the Bermuda area. The scene is set in the magician's cell, now vacated by Prospero (who has left all his precious books there) and inhabited by a self-aware Caliban and the wild nature of the island:

> " [...] nature is beginning to reclaim the place. Paint is peeling, vines have begun to creep across the bookshelves and a general accretion of dirt and sand has built up. In addition, the room is presently inhabited by an ex servant of the magician. To make life simpler, the servant has moved his bedding, his food and his firewood into the one room. The room bears witness to his habitation with a layering of mess.
>
> The room is filled with many books half unpacked from travelling crates. Some maps and charts have also been unpacked.
>
> The scene is dominated by a large oil painting in the renaissance style which hangs on the back wall. The painting is of a reclining nude".[21]

These detailed stage directions, helping the reader to cross historical and textual borders, function as a bridge between the Shakespearean narrative and Greig's re-presentation of past events. After the departure of

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[20] G. Walch, *"What's Past is Prologue": Metatheatrical Memory and Transculturation in "The Tempest"*, in *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, edited by J.-P. Maquerlot and M. Willelms, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 223: "Caliban has made an amazing career through the ages. In the course of that career, during which he managed to become Prospero's serious rival for critical attention, he graduated from Renaissance wild or primitive man, savage and slave to lecherous drunk, cannibal and savage monster reflecting European fears of the non-European world, but also noble being in the eighteenth century; to a victim of oppression from 1838, when the modern Caliban seems to have been born, ape and Darwin's missing link, downtrodden peasant and Saxon serf; to the 'Americanist Caliban' since 1898; Fritz or the Boche at the end of the First World War and finally colonialized black nationalist and Irish peasant."

[21] D. Greig, *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, unpublished, n. p. I want to express my profound gratitude to David Greig for generously sharing his play.

all the other human characters appearing in the original play (his only offstage companion is the spirit Ariel), Caliban inherits his master's shelter – a messy and dirty room – and his intellectual legacy, consisting of volumes, maps, and charts. A Renaissance-style oil painting portraying a reclining nude dominates the scene, serving as a visual quotation which establishes a connection with the Shakespearean Age and, simultaneously, as a sexual innuendo alluding to Caliban's obsession with Miranda and to her rape, a traumatic event looming large over Greig's sequel. While the sexual abuse is only attempted in *The Tempest* ("PROSPERO: [...] thou didst seek to violate / The honour of my child"),[22] Greig rewrites the hypotext through Caliban's reminiscence, conjuring up the appalling crime verbally. In the sixth of the nine scenes into which *A Savage Reminiscence* is divided, the native – who is sitting by a sculpture representing Miranda on which he is working and that he will later destroy in a fit of anger – confesses what he has done to Prospero's virtuous daughter:

> "I had imagined her before. All sorts of things. The moment that she realised I loved her she would turn around and say... 'I didn't know... I've been waiting for you to say it'. And then bare skin and... I WANTED HER... for me to do the things I... I came up from the logs and they fell around me. I had the hammer in my hand. She was afraid. [H]er eyes were full of horror at me. I said I loved her I said, 'I LOVE YOU,' But all I could feel was her fear. [H]er fear crawling over my skin. Her fear sending power up my legs. Her fear... I had already committed the crime.
>
> She didn't scream immediately. There was silence first. Silence as she tried to breathe but she couldn't get the breath in to scream. It was as if there was a weight pushing down on her chest. I had the hammer raised but I didn't need it for her so I dropped it. I knew she didn't want me. BUT I THOUGHT I CAN DO THIS WHETHER SHE WANTS IT OR NOT. I HAVE THE POWER TO DO THIS.
>
> (At the painting.) Fuck you... fuck you... FUCK YOU".[23]

[22] W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, cit., p. 174 (I, 2).

[23] D. Greig, *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, cit., n. p.

Even if *A Savage Reminiscence* is far from being an in-yer-face play, Caliban's account is permeated with a considerable amount of violence, which is absent from the dreamy Shakespearean source but, in a sense, anticipates the kind of theatrical sensibility which will develop in mid-Nineties Britain.[24] However, despite the inherent violence in some of Caliban's most intense lines, it should be noted that this multi-layered text[25] constantly oscillates between different registers: "Greig's script is a dazzling mix of linguistic philosophy, literary jokes, and 'a certain earthy lyricism'".[26] Indeed, even if Greig stages a savage recollection, his re-figuration of the native exemplifies the phenomenon defined as 'the rise of Caliban'.[27] Therefore, it might be argued that *A Savage Reminiscence* belongs to that wave of twentieth-century postcolonial rewritings of *The Tempest* dethroning the figure of the Duke of Milan, here described negatively rather than positively, and reaffirming the subaltern character of Caliban. If, on the one hand, the monster-slave born on the island cannot suppress his primitive instincts leading him to rape an innocent, on the

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[24] See A. Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, London, Faber and Faber, 2001 and Id., *Modern British Playwriting: the 1990s: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations*, London, Methuen Drama, 2012.

[25] It is worth pointing out that other minor Shakespearean characters such as the witch Sycorax, the naïve Miranda, and the airy Ariel are evoked throughout Caliban's account and that Greig incorporates some explicit intertextual references into his meta-theatrical piece. For instance, the "Be not afeard. This isle is full of noises" speech is delivered at the end of scene 5, while some of Caliban's first lines in the original ("I must eat my dinner / This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother") are repeated in the final scene of Greig's witty piece: W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, cit., p. 232 (III, 2) and p. 173 (I, 2).

[26] S. Poole, [review of *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*], cit., n. p.

[27] C. Zabus, *Tempests after Shakespeare*, cit., p. 9: "As decolonization proved an absolute necessity by the 1960s, African and Caribbean postcolonial writers as well as European and Latin American dissenting intellectuals came to use the counter-hegemonic *idea* of Caliban in order to destabilize colonial sets of ideas and call for the deprivileging of Prospero-qua-colonizer. Despite the indignant reluctance of some to 'parody the imperialists,' it became *necessary* to wrest from the Shakespeare canon an emblem of postcoloniality and to rewrite *The Tempest* from Caliban's perspective".

other, he has become a cultivated man reading the philosophical work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, writing a book, drawing, sculpting, listening to Ariel's music and constructing maps the way Miranda taught him before the silence fell between them after the rape. As brutal as he can be, Greig's Caliban subverts colonial discourse ("DESTROY ALL THE IMPERIALIST PRISONS! I thought to myself")[28] and rebels against the man who colonised him, his island, and his story, dominating the canonical narrative as the undisputed protagonist of Shakespeare's play:

> "He wrote me in his play... did Prospero... I call it his play that is not strictly true of course he was a magician but he wasn't a genius. Still... it was his play. It belonged to him. He wrote me in his fucking play and made me watch it being done... BY ACTORS... He put my words together and got someone in to be me on the stage and then he showed it to me and it was all lies. I don't like to overstate this but I am more than that. There is more in me than that. I am not some howling, drunken salvage piece of driftwood. I live here".[29]

2. *The Magic Island*

Similarly, Liz Lochhead's *The Magic Island*, an appropriation of *The Tempest* for a very young audience which has never been published in the UK, is permeated with (slightly revised) quotations from, and allusions to, its hypotext, intriguingly enmeshed with contemporary references. Like Greig, Lochhead has rewritten a number of hypotexts and well-established narratives during her prolific writing career, including the genesis of Mary Shelley's *Frankestein* in her *Blood and Ice* (1982), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1985), Molière's *Tartuffe* (1986) and *Le Misanthrope* (re-baptised *Misery Guts*, 2002), Cechov's *Three Sisters* (2000), Euripides' *Medea* (2000) and – even more ambitiously – Sophocles' Theban trilogy (*Oedipus the King*,

[28] D. Greig, *A Savage Reminiscence or (How to Snare the Nimble Marmoset)*, cit., n. p.

[29] Ibidem, n. p.

Oedipus at Colonus, and *Antigone*), Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, and Euripides' *The Phoenician Women*, which were rearticulated in a single text entitled *Thebans* (2003). The former Scottish Makar (the national poet laureate)[30] is also the author of a variety of plays for children and young audiences / performers, such as *Shanghaied* (1982), *The Magic Island* (1993), *Cuba* (1997), and *Elizabeth* (1998): "*t*he challenge to adult authority, the charting of the successes and failures of the younger generation's quest for freedom and identity, run as powerful strands throughout Lochhead's theatre for children and young people".[31]

The Magic Island adapts Shakespeare's play to the needs and taste of a young audience by adopting some effective strategies. Lochhead's revisionist appropriation may be defined a 'memory play' reconstructing the story retrospectively through the eyes of Prospero's daughter. This rewriting, which "reconfigures the Renaissance politics as a feud within an Edwardian theatre family",[32] opens with the female protagonist Miranda in the outermost frame, addressing her young spectators:

"MIRANDA: I no longer live on the island. I'm not sad or anything, don't get me wrong, it's nice to live here. Honest. In the real world of wet Wednesdays and feeding the rabbit, and cleaning out the cage where we keep the doves, and mending costumes, and doing my practice, and making the tea for everybody. We take turns. I don't want you to think I'm complaining, I'm not some Cinderella sort that's right hard done to. Not me, not Miranda, not likely. Today it's my turn.

But, you know, earlier on... [...] I was delving in the hamper where we keep the cossys – No, I said 'hamper' not hamster, it's a rabbit we've got, take owt else out a top hat and everybody's disappointed – anyhow two or three of these greeny-silver sequins stuck to my hand and they reminded me of fish-scales, and that reminded me of the

[30] This prestigious position was established by the Scottish Parliament in 2004. In that year Edwin Morgan became Scotland's first official national poet, succeeded by Liz Lochhead in 2011 and Jackie Kay in 2016. See A. Scullion, *A Woman's Voice*, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Liz Lochhead*, edited by A. Varty, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 116.

[31] A. Varty, *Liz Lochhead's Theatre for Children and Young People*, ibidem, p. 105.

[32] Ibidem, p. 108.

island. It was magic on the Magic Island! Until I was twelve I always lived on the island, just me and my dad..."[33]

Miranda's first speech is extremely important, in that it sets the context by anticipating some of the major themes developed later in the play. For instance, the rabbit alludes to Prospero's ability as a stage magician who worked at the Empire Theatre (colonial overtones), some twelve years earlier, before his greedy brother Antonio, a theatre impresario, decided to invest their fortunes in a different field and embarked on a cinema venture. As a consequence, Prospero was cast out, got a job aboard the unsinkable *Titanic* as ship's entertainer and found himself, together with his two-year-old daughter, shipwrecked on this mysterious Magic Island. Re-imagining its Shakespearean source and simultaneously reflecting upon the idea of theatre itself, like Greig's text, Lochhead's play can be described as a highly intertextual and meta-theatrical artefact.[34]

After living her childhood in an all-male environment where no threats to the masculine hegemony are present, today's Miranda is a more self-confident and mature girl, who is brought back to "the real world of wet Wednesdays" and spends her days mending costumes, performing, and dispensing tea to music-hall artists. From Lochhead's feminist perspective, a naïve and subjugated female character such as Miranda needs to establish her adult identity by questioning her adored father's authority, thus finding

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[33] L. Lochhead, *The Magic Island*, in "Tess. Rivista di teatro e spettacolo", III, 2003, p. 49.

[34] A. Varty, *Liz Lochhead's Theatre for Children and Young People*, cit., p. 109: "It is theatre, the enacting of spectacular transformations, which achieves the healing change Prospero seeks, and which makes the meta-theatricality of the piece not simply an arch means of re-visioning Shakespeare, but a complete integration of form with content. At the heart of this mending is Prospero's wish to reveal the past, and the understanding of identity it holds, to his daughter. Aged fourteen, it is time for her to become integrated in a society larger than the microcosm Prospero has created around her on the Magic Island."

her own voice, through which the past can be re-appropriated and retold "with fresh eyes".[35] To "break" Prospero's "hold over"[36] Miranda, Lochhead gives her a friend to spend her time with on the island, Antonio's younger daughter Fernandelle, who replaces the Shakespearean figure of Alonso's son, Miranda's fiancé Ferdinand:

> "Music. Fernandelle and Miranda, both astonished, stare at each other and slowly circle, staring into the mirror of each other. A magical, silent moment. Prospero draws closer, watches. It is impossible to know how he feels about this meeting he has engineered.
>
> PROSPERO: Miranda!
>
> Fernandelle, astonished, looks at him then back at Miranda who has never taken her eyes off Fernandelle even when she answers.
>
> MIRANDA: Father?
>
> PROSPERO: What do you see, Miranda?
>
> MIRANDA: A friend.
>
> PROSPERO: A friend?
>
> MIRANDA: Yes. I never had a friend before.
>
> […]
>
> FERNANDELLE: I don't feel as if you are my friend, Miranda.
>
> MIRANDA: Of course I'm your friend, how can you…
>
> FERNANDELLE: No. I feel you are more than a friend. More like a sister."[37]

This moving encounter is orchestrated by Prospero in a highly theatrical way. Before Fernandelle appears for the first time in front of the audience, Miranda's father, "as if on stage in a theatre",[38] binds his daughter's eyes and, when the right moment comes, removes her mask, asking the astonished girl what she sees. Being described in the stage directions as a young figure "as almost identical as possible to Miranda in appearance",[39] Fernandelle serves as her cousin's double, stressing the specularity of these two characters. Seeing herself mirrored in someone

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[35] A. Rich, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision*, cit., p. 18.
[36] Ibidem, p. 19.
[37] L. Lochhead, *The Magic Island*, cit., pp. 125-131.
[38] Ibidem, p. 117.
[39] Ibidem.

else, Miranda embarks on her journey towards adulthood.[40] Brought up as an only child without any siblings to play with, Miranda has never had the opportunity to spend time with someone of her own age, while Fernandelle used to perform in the theatre with her sister Claribel:

"MIRANDA: I never had a sister…
FERNANDELLE: I did. I do. But I feel as if I'll never see her again. I've lost her, Miranda, lost her forever.
MIRANDA: Oh, Fernandelle…
FERNANDELLE: Her name was Claribel. Her name is Claribel. We used to be a double-act.
MIRANDA: What's a double-act?
FERNANDELLE: You know…in the theatre. Don't you know anything?
MIRANDA: No. Everything I practised with my Dad was … solo.
FERNANDELLE: Two's better! We sang in harmony…
MIRANDA: What's harmony?"[41]

Miranda – who has always been a soloist in her life and art – cannot understand the idea of double-act, of performing together and sharing the stage with someone who is not her beloved Dad. Thus, Fernandelle explains to her new friend what it means to be a duo:

"You don't ... I suppose you only ever learned the melody? Being on your own. Anyway, we sang harmony, did acrobatic dancing, diabolo, high wire work, and juggling. My father might've been a financial wizard, but we came from an old, old, theatrical family, you know!"[42]

Only establishing an intimate friendship with Fernandelle, with whom she will perform at the end of the play, when they are no longer on the Magic Island, Miranda recognises the importance of female solidarity

[40] A. Varty, *Liz Lochhead's Theatre for Children and Young People*, cit., p. 111: "The technique of doubling […] suggests how the self must recognise itself as both unique and other to take an adult role. Miranda, and indeed Fernandelle, must learn to recognise themselves from the outside as well as from within".
[41] L. Lochhead, *The Magic Island*, cit., pp. 133-135.
[42] Ibidem, p. 135.

and shared experience and asserts her independence from her domineering father Prospero.

Miranda's metamorphosis into a grown-up, the reduction in the number of *dramatis personae* (from more than 20 characters to 7) and acts (from 5 to 2), as well as Lochhead's focus on the theme of friendship and on the younger generation, are some of the techniques employed by the playwright to captivate her young audience sitting in the Unicorn Children's Theatre. After all, theatre for children (and young people) should not be considered as a different or separate art form.

Interestingly, Lochhead's rewriting ends on a very postmodern note: like at the start of the play, Miranda is in the spotlight, holding the rabbit in her hands. She has just finished reconstructing her story in front of the audience when Fernandelle, addressing the young spectators, says:

> "I tell you that island was a well-weird blooming lovely absolutely miraculous amazing place. I don't know what to make of it. I never did. I bet I could have told you a totally different true story. Same magic island. Different story."[43]

These words are highly revealing about the theatrical urge to (self)reiterate mentioned at the beginning of this article, in that they emphasise the circularity and endless repetition (with variation) to which canonical tales, such as Shakespeare's, are destined. As Greig's and Lochhead's early Nineties retellings of *The Tempest*, among many others, demonstrate, the Bard of Avon still lives in our present time through this remarkable proliferation and transnational dissemination of innumerable rewritings preserving the unique plurality and universality of his output. Thanks to its "remarkable resistance to interpretative closure",[44] unspecific

[43] Ibidem, p. 299.

[44] G. Walch, "*What's Past is Prologue": Metatheatrical Memory and Transculturation in "The Tempest"*, cit., p. 224.

location, and oneiric dimension, the Shakespearean romance in which the past becomes prologue, "with its poietic openness and textual productivity",[45] proves to be particularly suitable for rewriters in search of malleable narratives which can be dislocated and trasplanted into other contexts. Obsessed with their past, the characters of *The Tempest*, as well as the protagonists of *A Savage Reminiscence* and *The Magic Island*, are particularly prone to recollection:

> "Memories are shown [...] to be supremely important to the play, but not only the memories themselves. Amazingly what is also shown is the technique of managing, storing and recalling memories, a dramatic device designed also to emphasize the importance of memories to the world of the play."[46]

From a postcolonial and postfeminist perspective respectively, Greig and Lochhead re-route this 'memory play', whose loose end and vague locale stir the imagination, by rehabilitating and giving a resonant voice to the figures of Caliban and Miranda, thus "entering an old text from a new critical direction".[47] Through a complex web of intertextual references interwoven with more contemporary echoes, these two re-visionary reminiscences thus re-member and dismember their Shakespearean source problematizing any unimaginative subscription to the dramatic canon and simultaneously reflecting upon the concept of theatre itself.

[45] Ibidem, p. 237.
[46] Ibidem, p. 230.
[47] A. Rich, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision*, cit., p. 18.

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RECENSIONE / REVIEW

***'Open Access' e scienze umane. Note su diffusione e percezione delle riviste di area umanistica*, a cura di Luca Scalco, Milano, Ledizioni, 2016, pp. 109, € 18**

Se volessimo, in due parole, individuare l'obiettivo più nobile del movimento *Open Access*, potremmo prendere a prestito da Giacomo Leopardi una battuta del *Dialogo di Tristano e di un amico*: "Le cognizioni non sono come le ricchezze, che si dividono e si adunano, e sempre fanno la stessa somma. Dove tutti sanno poco, e' si sa poco; perché la scienza va dietro la scienza, e non si sparpaglia".[1] Questa idea di privilegiare la più ampia diffusione dei risultati della ricerca nella convinzione che tale disseminazione sia volano di un aumento delle conoscenze (perché è indubbiamente vero che la scienza va dietro la scienza) si è, tuttavia, scontrata storicamente con i legittimi interessi degli editori, cioè dei titolari dei mezzi di diffusione del sapere. La possibilità di contemperare i diritti di accesso dei cittadini alle conoscenze con le esigenze di tutela dell'iniziativa economica di natura privatistica, si è posta come un banco di prova significativo per le democrazie liberali dell'Occidente. In tal senso si può affermare che l'istituto della biblioteca pubblica rappresenta una risposta

[1] Cfr. G. Leopardi, *Dialogo di Tristano e di un amico*, in Id., *Operette morali*, introduzione e cura di A. Prete, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2006, p. 230.

senza dubbio significativa ancorché insufficiente, soprattutto in relazione alle specifiche esigenze della comunicazione scientifica e al mutato contesto tecnologico che caratterizza l'ultimo quarto di secolo. Questo per dire che non si può derubricare l'*Open Access* come una mera soluzione editoriale alternativa alla prassi vigente nel contesto accademico: se ha senso parlare di 'movimento' è perché i termini della questione vanno a toccare nel vivo il rapporto tra società e mondo della ricerca e, ancora oltre, le stesse libertà dell'uomo laddove, nell'articolo 19 della *Dichiarazione universale dei diritti umani* (1948), si afferma che ogni individuo ha diritto a "ricevere e diffondere informazioni e idee attraverso ogni mezzo e senza riguardo a frontiere".[2]

Ciò premesso, è noto come il *casus belli* in grado di accendere le polveri e quindi di portare alla formulazione dei principi contenuti nella *Budapest Open Access Initiative* del 2002,[3] sia stato l'aumento esorbitante dei costi di abbonamento alle riviste scientifiche dovuto al regime, di fatto monopolistico, dei grandi gruppi editoriali operanti nell'ambito delle scienze. È per sfuggire a questa forca caudina e, insieme, per alzare la testa di fronte a una gestione del processo editoriale del tutto indifferente al ruolo della sfera pubblica nei confronti della ricerca, e particolarmente restrittivo nei confronti dei diritti esclusivi degli autori, che il movimento *Open Access* ha proposto quelle forme alternative di pubblicazione che denominiamo come archivi istituzionali e riviste ad accesso aperto. Sono forme alternative non prive di criticità sia sul piano del processo di validazione dei prodotti della ricerca sia su quello gestionale, ma che hanno

[2] La *Dichiarazione*, firmata a Parigi il 10 dicembre 1948, si può consultare in versione italiana all'indirizzo elettronico www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/itn.pdf.

[3] Si veda il testo all'indirizzo elettronico www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/read.

avuto il merito di aprire più di una breccia in un castello, quello dell'editoria scientifica commerciale, che sembrava inespugnabile.

Naturalmente anche il mondo degli studi umanistici è stato coinvolto nel dibattito sul tema, seppur con qualche esitazione dovuta, fra l'altro, al maggior peso riservato alle monografie nei confronti degli articoli su rivista, al contrario di quanto avviene nell'ambito delle scienze. Malgrado ciò, come testimonianza del fatto che la discussione sull'*Open Access* è viva anche nel contesto umanistico italiano e come strumento per misurare le opinioni di differenti attori che si muovono attorno ad un argomento così complesso, si può sfogliare questo volumetto curato da Luca Scalco che raccoglie i contributi di una tavola rotonda dal titolo *Quale futuro per le riviste accademiche? Valutazione, 'Open Access', distribuzione* tenutasi a Padova, presso l'Aula Magna del Collegio Morgagni, nel novembre del 2014.

I due interventi iniziali mirano a definire il quadro di riferimento dell'*Open Access* in ambito umanistico e, in particolare, il ruolo delle riviste ad accesso aperto. Il contributo di Antonella De Robbio, studiosa proveniente da un ambito – quello della biblioteconomia – particolarmente sensibile al tema, ripercorre la storia del movimento e si sofferma sul ruolo della politica nei confronti dell'apertura dei risultati della ricerca. L'autrice sottolinea, in tal senso, il ruolo strategico svolto dall'Unione Europea come propugnatrice del principio fondamentale dell'accesso libero alle pubblicazioni derivanti da ricerche finanziate con il denaro pubblico. De Robbio esamina poi l'aspetto importante delle licenze aperte, strumento giuridico essenziale per rendere disponibili su archivi o riviste i lavori dei ricercatori, salvaguardandone i diritti morali e garantendo al contempo la massima circolazione delle idee. Nell'articolo successivo firmato da Paola Galimberti, responsabile dell'archivio istituzionale dell'Università di Milano, vengono toccati i punti più critici del rapporto tra *Open Access* e

scienze umane: innanzitutto il rapporto controverso che le pratiche bibliometriche, e il loro impiego nei procedimenti di valutazione, instaurano con un panorama di pubblicazioni estremamente eterogeneo, difficile da standardizzare e analizzare con indicatori quantitativi; in secondo luogo la mancanza di un'evidenza certa dei requisiti di qualità e trasparenza delle riviste aperte rispetto a testate caratterizzate da una lunga e consolidata tradizione in tal senso. Ciò non toglie che il movimento *Open Access* "rappresenta per le scienze umane l'occasione di essere veramente visibili e di esercitare un impatto nelle comunità scientifiche e sulla società intera",[4] a patto che si adottino criteri di valutazione meno tetragoni e più aderenti alle nuove forme di pubblicazione caratteristiche della comunicazione scientifica contemporanea.

A questo punto il volume dà voce a due rappresentanti del mondo editoriale. Alberto Zigoni presenta il punto di vista di una multinazionale dell'editoria scientifica, Elsevier: pur asserendo che "ad oggi non esiste ancora un'evidenza empirica inequivocabile a sostegno dell'ipotesi del vantaggio citazionale *tout court* delle pubblicazioni *Open Access*",[5] l'autore riconosce l'interesse che questa forma editoriale riveste nelle comunità scientifiche; proprio per questo Elsevier propone sia servizi di *partnership* (a pagamento) a sostegno delle pratiche di pubblicazione degli editori di riviste *Open Access*, sia la possibilità per gli autori di depositare il *pre-print* dei loro articoli nei rispettivi depositi istituzionali. Fulvio Guatelli, direttore della Firenze University Press, si sofferma invece su un punto nodale del dibattito, ovvero la sostenibilità economica dei processi di pubblicazione

[4] Cfr. P. Galimberti, *Fra comunicazione digitale e valutazione. Quale ruolo per l'Open Access nelle scienze umane?*, in *'Open Access' e scienze umane. Note su diffusione e percezione delle riviste di area umanistica*, a cura di L. Scalco, Milano, Ledizioni, 2016, p. 32.

[5] Cfr. A. Zigoni, *Open Access, distribuzione e valutazione: la prospettiva di un editore*, ivi, p. 34.

aperti: il tema è trascurato dalle carte fondamentali del movimento, che definiscono l'*Open Access* come un mero modello di fruizione e lasciano campo aperto alle soluzioni che garantiscano una copertura dei costi.

Gli interventi successivi si presentano come una rassegna di casi di studio: si va dalla presentazione della piattaforma OJS (Open Journal Systems) (una delle più diffuse a livello internazionale per la gestione dei periodici *Open Access*) e al suo impiego nell'Università di Torino, fino alla descrizione delle esperienze di alcune testate *on line*, nella fattispecie "Between Journal", "AvtobiografiЯ", "Lanx".

L'ultima parte del volume si apre con un articolo di Luca Scalco che presenta i risultati di un'indagine condotta sui periodici *Open Access* dell'Area 10: complessivamente numerosi, anche se alcune aree disciplinari sono ancora coperte dai soli periodici tradizionali. In ogni caso, ribadisce l'autore, "l'accesso aperto non è indizio di scarso valore, e pertanto può essere una buona scelta editoriale a fianco delle riviste cartacee di più lunga tradizione".[6] Enrico Zucchi, infine, illustra gli esiti di un questionario proposto agli studiosi di italianistica per rilevare le loro opinioni in merito alle riviste *Open Access*: ancora una volta il problema dei costi e i parametri di valutazione qualitativa risultano emergere come i temi centrali del dibattito. Concludono il volume una postfazione di Paolo Bettiolo, l'indice dei temi principali e l'indice degli autori con un breve profilo biografico di ciascuno.

Alberto Salarelli

[6] Cfr. L. Scalco, *Criteri per una scelta? Open Access di qualità in Area 10*, ivi, p. 90.

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