

Pride and Prejudice: The book, the serial, the movie – a comparison

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I 1: Jane Austen

Jane Austen, born on December 16, 1775 in Steventon, Hampshire, ¹ is one of the best known and most read novelist in English literature. She has written six novels altogether ², which are mainly read by women of all ages. Although her success during her lifetime wasn't quite as big as it is today, she's nevertheless said to be one of the "most noted and influential novelists of her era". ³

Especially vaunted are her accurate descriptions of characters and relationships, as well as her irony and general "sparkling social comedy" ⁴. Generally spoken, Jane Austen's novels tell love stories, but always with something more in mind than romance, especially since she was against intensely passionate romance herself. In addition to the theme of love, also "friendship, honor (...) self-respect" ⁵ and money are important in her novels. Although she died 1817 at the age of 41 and never married ⁶, marriage also is always evident in her work, especially when it comes to the fact that finding a suitable husband was one of the main goals in the women's lives.

I 2: Pride and Prejudice: General information and summary

Surely the most famous novel written by Jane Austen is *Pride and Prejudice*. It was initially called *First Impressions* and already written between 1796 and 1797, but not published until 28 January 1813 ⁷, after it had been rejected when Austen had first intended to publish it.

Pride and Prejudice is also basically a love story that deals with the theme of marriage. In addition to that, social classes, their differences and prejudices towards each other are a central theme of the novel. Protagonist and also Jane Austen's favourite heroine ⁸ is Elizabeth Bennet, a 20-year-old girl, who is described as an intelligent and witty person. She lives in the late 18th century in a rather modest estate called Longbourn with her parents and her four sisters. The beginning of the story shows a, especially for Mrs Bennet, exciting event: the arrival of a "young man of large fortune" ⁹. This new neighbour starts up the story, because Lizzy's elder sister Jane begins to fall in love with him and also because his good friend, Mr Darcy, quickly gains the disrespect of the Bennet family, especially Elizabeth.

1) Austen, 1994, page 1

2) See: Austen, 1994, page 1

3) Wikipedia: Jane Austen, page 1

4) Austen, 1994, page 1

5) Wikipedia: Jane Austen, page 3

6) Wikipedia : Jane Austen, page 2

7) Wikipedia: Pride and Prejudice, page 1

8) Austen, 1994, page 1

9) Austen, 1994, page 5

In the course of the story she has to rethink her opinion of him, as well as her feelings. As the title predicates, the problems between the two main characters mainly stem from their own pride and the prejudices they have towards the other one.

I 3: Pride and Prejudice: Importance of the book

As *Pride and Prejudice* is without doubt one of the best known books in English literature, its importance is still recognisable today, especially since a lot of themes in it are rather up to date and therefore also interesting to modern audiences. This fact is for example shown by a poll, conducted by the BBC concerning 'UK's Best-Loved Book': *Pride and Prejudice* became second, with *The Lord of the Rings* on top. ¹

Considering this importance and actuality, it is not surprising that, out of all six novels by Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* is the one that has been template for most movies and TV series. The first actual filmed version was made in 1940, starring Laurence Olivier as Mr Darcy and Greer Garson as Elizabeth. Until today, there have been six TV adaptations made by the BBC ², as well as numerous modern movies, based on *Pride and Prejudice*, the most significant one surely being *Bridget Jones*, with the male protagonist, as a homage, also named Darcy and being played by Colin Firth, who portrayed Darcy in the BBC version from 1995. The latest adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was made in 2005 made by Working Title. As those two last mentioned versions are the most recent ones that actually implement the story of *Pride and Prejudice*, this shall be a comparison between them and their implementation of the novel.

II 1: 95 BBC Version: General information

Sue Birtwistle, producer of BBC's '95 version of *Pride and Prejudice* decided to make an adaptation of Jane Austen's most popular novel after attending a preview screening of *Northanger Abbey* ³, one of Austen's less popular novels. Although he knew that they were "taking a risk when filming it" ⁴, writer Andrew Davies, whom she told her plan, was instantly enthused by the idea and agreed to adopt it, especially since *Pride and Prejudice* is also one of his favourite books. As the last BBC adaptation of this novel had been in 1980, the two of them felt that it could "bear revisiting." ⁵

The serial was nominated for numerous awards, amongst others for the BAFTA – The British Academy of Film and Television Arts - Awards and Emmy Awards. Jennifer Ehle even won the BAFTA in 1996 in the category 'Best Actress'. ⁶ In addition to that, it became number 99 in a list called '100 Greatest British Television Programmes' made by the British Film Institute. ⁷

1) Wikipedia: *Pride and Prejudice*, page 5

2) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page v

3) Wikipedia: *Pride and Prejudice*, page 4

4) See: DVD, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1995, Making Of

5) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page vi

6) IMDb.com: Awards for "*Pride and Prejudice*" (1995) (mini), page 1

7) BFI.org: TV 100 List of Lists no 99, page 1

II 2: The '95 BBC Version: General information – Main cast

Due to the fact that *Pride and Prejudice* is so popular, it was very important to find actors that most of the people could accept as portraying Elizabeth and Darcy. The director, producer and their casting director were looking for someone with “wit, charm and charisma”¹ and obviously found these attributes in their main impersonators – Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet, who was picked out of a lot of actresses and Colin Firth who was, because he already was a rather established actor, not cast at all; the script was merely sent to him.

III 1: The 2005 Version: General information

Although the really famous and widely loved BBC version of *Pride and Prejudice* was still evident in the minds of people, Universal pictures in association with StudioCanal decided to bring “the glorious world of Jane Austen (...) back to the big screen”² in terms of a Working Title Production. It is actually – and concerning the popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* rather surprisingly - the first feature film version since 1940, although there have been several TV adaptations. In the Academy Award season of 2005/2006, the newest version of *Pride and Prejudice* received four nominations, including ‘Best Actress in a Leading Role’ for Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet.³

III 2: The 2005 version: General information – Main cast

With the big success of the recent BBC version and the originating, so called ‘Mr Darcy Hype’, it was a rather difficult task to find actors for Elizabeth and Darcy that again were acceptable and of course also convincing. For the filmmakers it was especially important to find actors that had about the same age as the characters they were going to play – unlike it was the case with most previous versions. With Keira Knightley, when filming 21 years old as Elizabeth Bennet and Matthew Macfadyen, who was at that time just one year older than the 28-year-old Mr Darcy he was portraying, they found just what they were looking for and additional two actors who, as director Joe Wright says, “were just wicked together”⁴

1) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 15

2) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Noted (PDF), page 2

3) Wikipedia: *Pride and Prejudice* (2005 film), page 2

4) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

IV 1a: Main differences – Intention

When filming a novel, especially one as well-known as *Pride and Prejudice*, differences can be observed between every adaptation that is made. These differences mainly arise from different opinions concerning the actual message of the book and therefore originating rather different intentions of what an adaptation should be about.

Generally spoken, the people involved with the BBC version tried “to be as accurate as possible, but (...) always felt it was more important to go for the spirit of the original book” ². As so many people, especially in the United Kingdom, have read *Pride and Prejudice*, it was surely important not to change the tone and spirit of the novel when adopting it – otherwise it would surely have been rather un-successful. They wanted, however, to offer a sort of interpretation, especially in terms of exploiting “the possibilities of visual storytelling” ³, mainly because of their intention to make it “as vivid and lively (...) as possible” ⁴

Despite the fact that they wanted to be really accurate, the decision was made to transfer the story from being mainly about Elizabeth to one about Mr Darcy ⁵ by means of little scenes that bring him into the foreground and tell the audience things about his character, as well as his past.

The intention of the producers of the 2005 version differs from those of the earlier versions, especially the BBC productions, as they wanted to neglect the “television drama stereotypes” ⁶ and rather concentrate on the real 18th century life. And, as the novel is known and loved worldwide, they found it rather useless to reinvent the story and instead tried to present it “as it was written” ⁷ and with actors that were suitable for Jane Austen’s descriptions, especially, as mentioned, when it comes to their age.

As well as for the team of the '95 BBC version, it was important for producer and director of this newest version to “be as honest as possible” ⁸, but not only to the book itself. Their aim was also to tell a story about the real life of people living in the 18th century, shown especially by depicting the Bennets and their family life. As Longbourn, their home, is shown in a rather messy and grubby way, with people – and occasionally also animals - running around, screaming and laughing, we can see a family life that is common to most people, which is appropriate to screenwriter Deborah Moggach’s interest in “the family dynamic” ⁹ in matters of identifying with the characters.

1) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 8

2) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page viii

3) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 2

4) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 2

5) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 3

6) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 4

7) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 4

8) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 6

Among these plans, it was also intended to film the story in a completely different way, compared to its predecessors, and “treat it as a piece of British realism” ¹, as director Joe Wright explains, because he saw Jane Austen as “one of the first British realists” ² – writing only about the things she knew.

Contrary to the '95 version, this one was intended to be Lizzy's story. From the first scene on, the audience sees everything through her eyes – her whole environment, as well as Mr Darcy and his character features.

Concluding it can be said, that generally both versions started with the same intention, especially when it comes to the aim of showing real people and also tell the story of *Pride and Prejudice* as it was told by Jane Austen. As different methods were used, however, despite similar intentions, different atmospheres were achieved. In addition to that the main message, as well as the main character changed, concerning the fact that the 2005 version is mostly about Lizzy, whereas the 1995 version rather tells Darcy's story.

IV 1b: Main differences - length

The most apparent difference between this two versions is certainly their length. As the BBC produced theirs for television, intended for six episodes, each having a length of about 45 minutes, and later three double episodes of 90 minutes each, they achieved an extent of 270 minutes altogether. This is more than twice as much as the length of the Working Title Production, which is 127 minutes long, suitable for a movie shown in cinemas.

The fact that the '95 version is that long is certainly an advantage. It allowed the producers to remain really close to the events of the novel without having to cut scenes out. When watching this version, one can observe that virtually every scene of the novel was filmed, which of course couldn't be done in the version of 2005 with only half the running time available.

Another benefit the BBC filmmakers had, is that they were also able to add a few scenes. These scenes don't change the story line or have a grave importance, but they accomplish a certain effect. For one thing, they were obviously used to describe Mr Darcy's personality and also to depict him in a different way than Lizzy and most of the other characters see him. His human side is shown ⁵, which stands in total contrast to his actions in public.

1) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 5

2) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 6

3) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 4

4) Workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 4

5) see: Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 5

He can, for example, be seen in a bathtub, which is a really personal and private moment. The audience gets to know that there are “many portraits of Darcy”¹, earlier than Lizzy does, therefore the main aim of these scenes seems to be to make the audience liking and understanding him better. According to Sue Birtwistle, her intention was to “help to build the transition from the proud and arrogant Darcy (...) to the thoughtful and loving Darcy”², because the novel was often criticized in this regard and the “seemingly sudden change in character.”³

Another point is, that because of the bigger length, the development of feelings on Lizzy’s as well as on Darcy’s side can take longer and is therefore more plausible. Their initial dislike exists for a long time and changes rather slowly and also at a later point. To show this development, there were also a few scenes added, little encounters between the two of them, as well as scenes showing one of them watching the other one from away. This sequences, although there weren’t written by Jane Austen, fit in the story line and help the audience to understand and comprehend the change of feelings happening. The film-makers of this version generally wanted to make a few “backstage scenes”⁴ not only to show Darcy, but also the other characters as “real human creatures”⁵, which is definitely an advantage for identifying with the characters and understanding their actions and feelings. Most of these scenes were only possible because of said big length.

Another advantage is that a rather important, second story line was shown as well – Mr Wickham’s story. Watching the serial, the audience gets to know a lot about him and his character, especially when it comes to women. This wasn’t pictured in the 2005 version, which may lead to a slightly misjudging of his character. Jane Austen also told a lot about him in the novel, mainly because discovering his real character is again important for understanding Mr Darcy.

The newer version also has a few additional scenes, especially between Lizzy and her sister Jane. Their closeness and intimacy is shown, which is also a really important part of the story.

But because of the shortness in length, the change of Mr Darcy can’t be made that plausible and so it was seemingly necessary to make him less unbearable, even at the beginning of the movie and show his affection towards Lizzy earlier. This can be seen as a disadvantage compared to the BBC version, although the credibility was preserved and the story remained plausible.

1) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 5

2) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 6

3) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 6

4) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 5

5) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 5

Little additional scenes, however, support the whole atmosphere that was aimed at – such as the first touch of Elizabeth and Darcy, when he is helping her into the carriage or showing the sad look of Mr Bingley and also Mr Darcy when leaving Netherfield in their carriage. Because of the length there wasn't the time to make a lot of invented scenes – but those that were integrated are well-placed and therefore achieve, with less time available, almost the same effect as the '95 version did.

All in all, the difference in length obviously matters in regard of the closeness to the book and at points it is certainly an advantage in terms of understanding certain coherences. The credibility of the change in feelings, however doesn't suffer in the 2005 version, because measures were taken to prevent a too sudden change, especially concerning Mr Darcy's behaviour. As it was often stated, only having about two hours to tell the story of *Pride and Prejudice*, Working Title did a really good job. ¹

IV 2a: Comparison of essential scenes – The beginning

The first sentence and generally the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice* is surely one of the best known in English literature. In the first chapter, Jane Austen tells a lot about the central family of the novel, the Bennets, without giving a lot of descriptions and therefore mostly by means of a conversation between Mr and Mrs Bennet. The first sentence spoken by Mrs Bennet informs her husband “that Netherfield Park is led at last” ² and that the young man who has rented it has a large fortune, which is considered as “a fine thing” ³ by her for her daughters, because she has the firm intention that he's going to marry one of them.

In addition to the conversation, there is some information given about Mr and Mrs Bennet at the end of the chapter to characterise them. Contrary to his wife's excitement about the new arrival, Mr Bennet is quite unimpressed. Although he of course always planned to visit Bingley, he tells her that he sees “no occasion for that” ⁴ and afterwards keeps his visit secret as long as possible.

Sue Birtwistle, Producer of the '95 BBC Version chose to add a “little opening sequence which isn't in the book at all” ⁵ to introduce Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy to the audience before the other characters get to know them. They are shown on horseback, looking at Netherfield and having a conversation about Bingley's decision to take it. Because of their dialogue, there's also a slight characterisation of the two of them made and the first sign of their difference in character shown.

1) reelviews.net: Review: *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

2) Austen, 1994, page 5

3) Austen, 1994, page 5

4) Austen, 1994, page 6

5) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 2

As they ride away, Lizzy watches them from a hill, of course without having any idea about their identity. As she's leaving to go home, some of her character features are shown by her running downhill and therefore expressing some of her vitality, which is an essential attribute of hers.

Sue Birtwistle and Andrew Davies justify this additional scene because of their will to "offer an interpretation of the novel"¹ instead of remaining so close to the book that it would seem like "a series of pictures alongside of the dialogue"².

After that sequence, the conversation between Mr and Mrs Bennet about Mr Bingley is shown, which was adapted rather closely to the book and let some time elapse until the visit is paid.

Deborah Moggach, screenwriter of the 2005 version, added a little opening scene as well. Elizabeth is walking around at dawn, reading a book, eventually entering her parental home and overhearing a conversation between her parents about the new tenant of Netherfield Hall.

By choosing this beginning, it is achieved that the audience sees the Bennets through the eyes of Lizzy, which helps to identify with her and get to know the family, especially concerning her way of seeing them. Said conversation about the new arrival in the neighbourhood is again really close to the wording of the novel. The fact that Mr Bennet has visited Mr Bingley already, is seemingly again a matter of length, as it would have taken too much time to stick as close to the novel as the '95 version did.

Comparing the two versions concerning the beginning, it can be said that there has been a slight alteration both times. Each beginning is discriminative and also differs in terms of obtaining different things. The BBC version introduced Darcy and Bingley rather early, whereas the Working Title production adheres to the intention to tell Lizzy's story and therefore started with her. Regarding the rest of the beginning, both remained, especially when it comes to the dialogue, rather close to the novel. The first sentence of the novel "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife"³, which is rather famous, was completely neglected in the 2005 version, whereas it is said by Lizzy in the BBC adaptation with a slight change of the wording.

IV 2b: Comparison of essential scenes - Meryton assembly

A very important scene for starting up the story and introducing the characters, is the first ball that is actually happening: the Meryton assembly. When reading the book, one could easily think of this scene as being rather unimportant, because of its shortness in length. Jane Austen used only about three pages to describe the scene and also didn't give a lot of details. The reader gets a description of the newly arrived owner of Netherfield, Mr Bingley, his family and his good friend Mr Darcy. Contrary to most of the other scenes in the novel, there's only one dialogue.

1) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 3

2) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 2

3) Austen, 1994, page 5

Mr Bingley is described as “good-looking and gentlemanlike” ¹, but soon Mr Darcy seems to be more interesting, because of his “fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien” ² and the fact that he earns about twice as much money per year as Bingley. This of course leads the ladies to the conclusion that Darcy is more amiable than his friend. However, the society is soon disappointed, because of his crude manners and the fact that he doesn’t talk or dance with anyone but his own party.

To the Bennet family, especially Elizabeth and Mrs Bennet there’s also one action of him that makes them dislike him: When talking to Bingley, he insults Lizzy by describing her as “tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*.” ³ Because of this remark, Lizzy makes out his character for herself and decides that she doesn’t like him either.

The producers of the ’95 version found this scene “pivotal in setting up the story, and so the decision was taken to build it up substantially” ⁴. Its importance for the story is shown by doing it rather detailed in order to achieve certain effects.

One thing is of course to fix Darcy’s character “as proud and disagreeable” ⁵, which is obtained by showing him as he was described by Jane Austen. He seems rather bored and arrogant, but also a bit uncertain, which can be observed when watching him closely. He’s just standing in the background and watching the people dancing. As written in the novel, the only time Darcy is talking in this scene is, when Bingley wants him to dance instead of standing around. He refuses, because of his disliking towards the present society. His insult of Elizabeth, which happens in said conversation is adapted almost word-for-word from the book, because it of course is rather important for the later story, the fixation of his character and Lizzy’s attitude towards him.

Another point is that the ball scene is a good opportunity to introduce the characters to the audience and make their relationships understandable ⁶. There are a lot of incidents that tell a bit about the five Bennet girls and their characters, as well as their relationship among each other. The difference in character concerning Bingley and Darcy is displayed through their different behaviour. While Bingley is having a good time and dancing, his friend is merely standing around, looking discontent. The only time, he’s actually seen dancing, is with Caroline Bingley.

The filmmakers of the 2005 version also granted this scene a lot of importance. But despite the fact that they also remained rather close to the book, especially when it comes to the dialogue, there are a few things that differ from the novel, as well as from the older version.

1) Austen, 1994, page 10

2) Austen, 1994, page 10

3) Austen, 1994, page 11

4) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 6

5) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 6

6) see: Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 6

For one thing, it's the fact that Mr Bennet also attends the ball, which isn't the case in either the novel and the BBC version. This fact could be seen a sign for a slightly different interpretation of his character, but also as a sort of artistic freedom.

Mr Darcy is, of course, shown as a rather arrogant and inapproachable person, but Lizzy's first impression is that he "looks miserable" ¹. Despite his apparent aversion against the society and his rather rude non-greeting of the Bennets, he's later talking to them, and especially to Lizzy. After her witty remark about his earlier comment of her only being tolerable, he seems to be very impressed by her. In addition to that, he seems to be quite fond of her anyway, since the moment he first sees her, which can be observed when he's walking past her and looking at her sort of shocked or surprised. He is overall talking a lot more in this version than in the novel, as well as in the BBC version.

As in most of the scenes of the movie, the audience again sees everything through Lizzy's eyes. Mr Darcy isn't seen clearly, until Lizzy sees him ², which makes the whole scene more subjective.

Looking at the adaptation of this scene in both versions, it can be seen that they are really similar and also close to the book. One thing both producers had in mind was to show the ball rather "knees-up" ⁴, expressing the contrast between the people living in and around Meryton and the new neighbours. This difference is rather important, because money and property, as well as different social classes, are really important aspects in Jane Austen's novels. The Working Title production isn't as close to the book, as the older version, especially considering the facts mentioned above. Darcy's behaviour and his already shown interest in Lizzy is, as mentioned, maybe a matter of length.

IV 2c: Comparison of essential scenes - Mr Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth

As marriage is an important theme in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy's first proposal to Elizabeth is a rather important scene, also because it shows for one thing how the feelings of Darcy have changed and for another that there are still a lot of misunderstandings between him and Elizabeth.

Jane Austen described this scene rather elaborately and therefore used almost a whole chapter. It is set after Elizabeth had a conversation with Mr Darcy's cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, who told her that Darcy intentionally separated her sister Jane and Mr Bingley. After receiving this information, she is rather unwilling to see Mr Darcy and even thinking of reasons to dislike him even more. Mr Darcy chooses this rather unfitting situation to visit her at Mr Collins' house with the intention of a proposal.

1) see: DVD, 2005 version, chapter 1

2) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

3) see Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 6 & DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

Contrary to his normal behaviour, he is described to be in an “hurried manner” ² and therefore quite nervous. His proposal, however, is rather rude, because additional to his descriptions of how ardently he admires and loves her, he also mentions a lot of reason that speak against marrying her, which of course angers her and leads her to refusing his proposal. As he has seemingly “no doubt of a favourable answer” ³, her rejection is rather shocking and surprising to him. Her reasons, however, “ruining (...) the happiness of a most beloved sister” ⁴ and the misfortunes of Mr Wickham, seemingly committed by him, aren’t what he sees as her real motivation. In his eyes, she would’ve overlooked these offences “had not [her] pride been hurt by [his] honest confessions of the scruples” ⁵. After Lizzy is stating that she never wanted to marry him, since the moment she first saw him, the separate in a rather hostile way.

The version made by the BBC in '95 remains really close to the descriptions made by Jane Austen. A rather nervous Mr Darcy is visiting Lizzy in her room at Mr Collin’s house. He is walking, or even running, around uneasily and bringing forth his proposal in a rather hurried way. Lizzy’s reaction, however, is barely noticeable. While he is talking, she’s hardly showing any reaction, except for maybe surprise, and generally seems quite cold and aloof, although she is, because of the matters concerning her sister Jane and the fate of Mr Wickham, getting more and more angry with Darcy. After he left, her emotions become noticeable, she is almost crying while rethinking the incident, which is illustrated by repeating what he said by means of voiceovers. Mr Darcy’s feelings, because of what she said when rejecting him, are quite similar and he’s also once more rethinking her accusations.

The producers of the 2005 version decided to start a “much darker phase” ⁶ with the scene of Darcy’s proposal, mainly because Jane Austen often said about *Pride and Prejudice* that it was “too light and lacking in shade” ⁷. Therefore they used a completely different scenery, an Apollon temple, probably standing on the grounds of Rosings Park, Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s estate. After said conversation with Colonel Fitzwilliam, Lizzy is running there through the rain to compose her thoughts, when Mr Darcy approaches. He is again shown quite nervous and uneasy.

His proposal is also performed in a rather hurried way, because it was intended to show that “he’s prepared it (...), he’d thought about it and he’d rehearsed it” ⁸. The confession of his love however doesn’t only surprise Lizzy, but also himself, because it wasn’t planned.

1) see: Austen, 1994, page 146

2) Austen, 1994, page 147

3) Austen, 1994, page 148

4) Austen, 1994, page 149

5) Austen, 1994, page 150

6) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

7) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

8) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

In contrast to the older version, this one shows a lot of emotions and also physical attraction between the two of them. Even during their argument, Darcy is brought towards Lizzy and they almost kiss. At this point, it is obvious that they “really fancy each other” ¹, but because of her pride and of course because of Darcy’s misdeeds, Elizabeth can’t accept him.

His explanation to the matter of Jane and Bingley however differs from the book, as he explains his will of separating them because of his thoughts of Jane being indifferent. The lack of propriety shown by the other Bennets, as well as the fact that Mrs Bennet spoke of an “advantageous marriage” ² in public affirm his opinion that separating Jane and his friend was “for [Bingley’s] own good.” ³

The change of scenery in this sequence may be a bit surprising, but considering the general mood of the scene, it is rather suitable. The heavy rainstorm and uncommon surroundings help to increase the emotionality and of course to darken the entire mood of this scene and the resulting resentment between Elizabeth and Darcy.

Taking both versions into comparison, the BBC version again remains closer to the book, but the interpretation offered by the producers of the 2005 versions is conducive to the story and fitting. The wording is adapted rather closely and the general content of the scene is existent, so the change in setting, as well as the additional physical attraction is certainly a gain. Definitely an advantage for the newer version is the fact that the emotions shown are really credible and illustrate the inner strife of Elizabeth and Darcy concerning their emotions towards each other. They can’t really decide whether they despise each other or not. In the BBC version one could easily think of them, especially Lizzy, as being indifferent and hardly moved by the whole scenario. Jane Austen herself described the two oft them quiet emotionless at the beginning of their argument, which however changes in the course of the scene. Therefore it is justified to show emotions in an adaptation, also because the audience can comprehend the feelings more easily.

IV 2d: Comparison of essential scenes – Elizabeth’s visit to Pemberley

When writing about Lizzy’s first glances of Mr Darcy’s estate Pemberley, Jane Austen described the surrounding landscape, as well as the exterior of the house, very detailed. By doing so, she gave the reader the chance to imagine everything very clearly, but also to understand Lizzy’s reactions when seeing everything.

1) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by Joe Wright

2) see: DVD, 2005 version, chapter 9

3) see: DVD, 2005 version, chapter 9

As the last time Elizabeth and Mr Darcy had been talking to each other had been when she rejected his proposal, her feelings towards him at the time of her visit to Derbyshire aren't that friendly. Pemberley, and therefore the display of Mr Darcy's taste, shakes her prejudices and she even allows herself to think "that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!"¹ She's seemingly beginning to regret her rejection, but still has a picture of Mr Darcy formed in her mind that doesn't picture him in a good way. Yet she begins to rethink her firm opinion of him when listening to the praise of the housekeeper, Mrs Reynolds. The old lady describes her master as being "affable to the poor"², as well as "good-natured"³ and generally "the best landlord and the best master"⁴. When looking at his picture in the gallery, which shows him smiling, her feelings seem to be really agitated and confused and she begins to think of him "with a deeper sentiment of gratitude"⁵.

Seeing Elizabeth's sudden confusedness because of her feelings, it's no wonder that she is rather shocked and reserved when meeting Mr Darcy on the grounds, especially considering the fact that she didn't expect his appearance at all. His actions towards her, however, again surprise her, mainly the "alteration of his manner"⁶, which is cognisable during the whole meeting, also concerning his nice attitude towards Elizabeth's aunt and uncle.

When filming Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley, the producers of the '95 BBC version partly took a lot of artistic freedom, which was again made possible by the length they had provided.

When showing Lizzy's feelings when she is getting the first impressions of the estate, they remained rather close to the book, as well as with the housekeeper's praise. Lizzy is shown a bit doubtful, not knowing whether to trust the description given by Darcy's employee or not. While Lizzy is looking at the pictures of Darcy, it's rather hard to tell her emotions, because her facial expression doesn't give much away.

Rather interesting, however, are the scenes that are cut in when Lizzy is looking at Darcy's picture in the gallery and contemplating everything she thought to know about him: The audience sees an exhausted Mr Darcy dismounting his horse and diving into the lake to refresh himself. This little scene isn't in the book at all, but it helps the audience to compare Lizzy's picture of him with the actual, rather human Darcy.

During their sudden meeting, however, there are a few emotions visible – basically nervousness and, on the part of Lizzy, also upset and surprise because of Darcy's nice and polite behaviour.

1) Austen, 1994, page 187

2) Austen, 1994, page 190

3) Austen, 1994, page 190

4) Austen, 1994, page 190

5) Austen, 1994, page 192

6) Austen, 1994, page 192

The 2005 version also shows some changes of the scene, which may again be a matter of length but, according to the producers, also because of the found facility in Chatsworth House, their choice for displaying Pemberley.

Elizabeth's reactions, however, remain close to the book. She is really impressed when seeing Pemberley for the first time and wandering around in awe, admiring the splendour of the estate.

One major change that was made in this version is the sequence in the family gallery. As Chatsworth House offered a big sculpture gallery, director Joe Wright decided to show a bust of Mr Darcy instead of a picture, mainly because he found it "more interesting"¹, but certainly also because it is more real and gripping to Lizzy. The fact that the sculpture really looks a lot like Darcy seems to shock her and suddenly make her aware of his actual handsomeness.

Elizabeth's abrupt meeting with Mr Darcy is also pictured in a different way compared to the book as well as to the older version. When wandering around the estate on her own, she suddenly hears a song that her sister Mary often plays at Longbourn – the audience already heard it in the first scene. According to Joe Wright, the intention of adding this melody was to show "that finding the person you're supposed to be with is like coming home."² The song is played by Darcy's younger sister Georgiana on the piano.

As Mr Darcy shows up to greet his sister in an enthusiastic and loving way, Lizzy is really shocked, because she didn't expect him to show up, but also because of his actions, which she certainly would never have expected. She stumbled into a rather personal moment of Darcy and, as he sees her hiding behind a door, can't think of another action than running away.

The conversation between the two of them that ensues, after he is following her outside, is rather awkward, both of them are quite nervous – shown by the fact that they talk simultaneously and their answers are rushed and short.

In comparison, the adaptation of this scene in the BBC version seems to be closer to the book, despite the lake scene that is cut in. Still Joe Wright and his team capture the atmosphere of it rather well. The audience can see Lizzy's change of feelings rather well, but also get a glimpse of the side of Mr Darcy that wasn't known until that point – being a loving brother and that "his primary focus is his love of his sister whom he protects"³.

In both versions it was seemingly decided to start picturing Darcy in a different way. They did, however, use different methods. The older version shows the audience a rather human Darcy with normal percept – such as exhaustion. In 2005, a first glimpse of Darcy as a loving brother is granted, which may come rather surprising because of his former behaviour and attitude.

1) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

2) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

3) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

IV 2e: Comparison of essential scenes – The ending

The ending, or rather the last part, of *Pride and Prejudice* extends on four chapters altogether, starting with the 58th. After Mr Bingley proposed to Jane and Lady Catherine de Bourgh visited Longbourn, Elizabeth and Darcy finally confess their true feelings to each other while taking a walk to Meryton. Jane Austen wrote very detailed about that walk, giving most of the information by means of the dialogue, starting with Elizabeth thanking Mr Darcy in the name of her family for helping Lydia and Wickham – although she is still the only one who knows that Darcy, not her uncle, paid Wickham and made the marriage possible. Darcy, however, confesses that he “thought only of [her]” ¹ when doing it, that his “affections and wishes are unchanged” ² since his first proposal and asks her if her feelings have changed or she still despises him. As she now loves him as much as he loves her, they soon find themselves engaged and in a happy state, apologizing for their former misdeeds, but also explaining their actions and reasons for disliking each other.

Despite their happiness, they at first keep their engagement secret, the only two people that are informed are Jane and Mr Bingley. Elizabeth’s sister of course is rather surprised, because she never knew about Lizzy’s change of feelings towards Darcy. Jane Austen let some time elapse, before the secret engagement was unfolded to Mr and Mrs Bennet. Their reaction equal Jane’s: they are rather surprised, both in their own way, but still Mr Bennet gives his consent and is happy for Elizabeth – especially after being informed that Darcy paid for Lydia’s marriage and not Mr Gardiner, as it was assumed the whole time.

After that certain events, Jane Austen gave general information about the protagonists’ prospectively lives, from a conversation between Lizzy and Darcy on the subject of how they fell in love, to letters informing some relatives of the engagement and impending marriage. At last, the reader gets to know how everyone lives after the two marriages and also gets some information about Wickham and Lydia.

Concerning Mr Darcy’s final proposal and the scenes leading up to it, the producers of the BBC version remained rather close to what was written by Jane Austen. The walk to Meryton was shown and most of the dialogues, although certainly abbreviated, were adopted. In general, the last sequences of the serial were shortened, especially when it comes to the time between the engagements and the wedding.

Actually never written by Jane Austen was the wedding of Elizabeth and Mr Darcy – as well as that of Jane and Mr Bingley. In the TV series it is thus solved that a double wedding is displayed, also quite useful for showing the main characters, their opinion and sentiments about the marriage and, concerning Lady Catherine and her daughter, but also Wickham and Lydia, giving hints about how some lives may have changed and go on afterwards. This prospect that is granted offers a good ending in terms of somehow completing everything.

1) Austen, 1994, page 282

2) Austen, 1994, page 282

The ending presented by Working title was criticised as being “not true to the period of time”¹, mainly because of the time and place Elizabeth’s and Darcy’s meeting is happening. After Lady Catherine de Bourgh left Longbourn, it can be observed that Lizzy sees herself unable to go to sleep again and therefore getting up at dawn, deciding to take a walk around the fields. She’s meeting another insomniac: Mr Darcy, who seemingly was also disturbed by his aunt and her behaviour. Despite the fact that, as with Darcy’s first proposal, a rather unusual setting was chosen for the important conversation concerning the protagonists’ emotions, the wording was again adopted really detailed and therefore, regarding the content of the whole scene, nothing too grave was changed.

According to director Joe Wright, they actually had other ideas for the ending and, as shown in the '95 BBC version, have “weddings and lots of extras”². But the movie doesn’t show any of that. The last image the audience, at least across Europe, sees is that of Mr Bennet, being happy that his favourite daughter Elizabeth found her true love. This fits into the intention of the film-makers to show that “what’s important [are] the tender, honest emotions”³. The very last sentence of the movie, said by Mr Bennet, was adopted from the novel: “If any young men come for Mary or Kitty, send them in, for I am quite at leisure”⁴. Jane Austen wrote another two chapters after that, but the film-makers presented a quite open ending, letting the audience imagine the remaining things for themselves.

There was, however, made an alternative ending for the audience in America, showing Elizabeth and Darcy after their wedding, sitting near the lake belonging to Pemberley. They are pictured as a young couple in love, still amazed about what happened to them and happy to be together at last. Such a scene was never written by Jane Austen, her descriptions were kept rather vague at the ending. Therefore the original ending of the Working title production takes up her intentions better with an rather open ending. The only information that is given is the fact that Mr Bennet gives his consent and that Lizzy and Darcy, as well as Jane and Bingley are going to marry in the near future.

Despite said double wedding, the BBC version adopted most of the ending Jane Austen wrote rather detailed: the walk to Meryton, as well as Mr Darcy’s final proposal and the resulting engagement are shown as described in the book. The ending offered in 2005, however, shows none of that. The wording was adopted rather closely, but again, as in a lot of scenes of the movie, transferred in a completely different setting. The fact that they met at dawn, wearing their nightgowns, was often criticised for historical incorrectness, because in the 18th century, scenarios like that weren’t likely to happen or even allowed. This may be very true, but nevertheless, this ending is very fitting concerning the whole movie and its atmosphere.

1) IMDb.com: User ratings for *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), page 1

2) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

3) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

4) Austen, 1994, page 291

IV 3a: Importance of certain aspects in both versions - Letters

As it was the most common way of communicating at her time, Jane Austen integrated a lot of letters in her novels. *Pride and Prejudice* contains about 15 letters of varying length and importance. Especially in the last third of the book, letters are used for communication over long distances and discussing matters of importance.

The longest and most important letter is the one Lizzy receives from Mr Darcy. It is described as “containing two sheets of letter-paper, written quite through, in a very close hand. The envelope was likewise full” ¹. Also the dated time, eight o’clock in the morning, shows its importance for Darcy and his desire to explain himself to Elizabeth, after she has rejected his proposal. Jane Austen also showed the importance of the letter by using a whole chapter for it.

According to Sue Birtwistle, producer of the BBC version, “there is some evidence to suggest that *Pride and Prejudice* actually started of as an epistolary novel” ². She and her team therefore considered the letters as being very important and tried different ways of dramatizing them as visual as possible ³. To achieve this, they for example used voiceovers and flashbacks. By doing so, the audience gets a glimpse of the important information that is shown in a rather interesting and also sort of explaining way.

Mr Darcy’s letter, as it is very important, has about twenty minutes screening time, which is quite long for a single letter. But this sequence is really informative, because writer Andrew Davies emphasized its importance by using “a complex sequence of flashbacks and invented scenes” ⁴, which helps the audience to understand Darcy’s actions, feelings and also to comprehend “why he’s so wary and suspicious of other people” ⁵. The methods used to depict this letter are also used to show a slight change in Lizzy’s perception and attitude, because she has to admit that her family did indeed behave in a rather embarrassing way. At this point she begins to understand Darcy and his actions.

In the 2005 version, the importance of letters is of course also quite obvious. A few of the letters from the novel are integrated and dramatized in a similar way, as it was the case in the ’95 version. Because of said shortness in length, there are of course not that much letters mentioned.

1) Austen, 1994, page 152

2) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 7

3) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 7

4) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 10

5) see: DVD, 1995 version, Making Of

However, Darcy's letter to Lizzy also plays a rather important role. It's the only letter of which the content is completely mentioned. Instead of showing flashbacks, there are pictures of Mr Darcy riding away after giving the letter to Elizabeth and ones of her reading it – illustrating their emotions, especially their inner turmoil. To tell what is written in the letter, a voiceover by Darcy is used, therefore touching, because the emotions in his voice show how deeply the events moved him.

All in all, it is very obvious that the importance of letters was recognised in both versions and similar methods of dramatizing them were used, either to tell something about the characters or to show the emotions initiated by the written words.

IV 3b: Importance of certain aspects in both versions - Dances

Jane Austen used a lot of dances in *Pride and Prejudice* – mainly because at that time “dancing was absolutely central to their society”¹, as Louise West, education officer at *Jane Austen's House* in Chawton, Hampshire, explains. Balls and dances were great social events at that time.

Austen didn't give detailed descriptions of the dances in *Pride and Prejudice*, but she actually granted them a lot of space, especially when it comes to Elizabeth and Mr Darcy dancing together. At the Netherfield ball, the first real conversation between the two of them takes place and has some effect on their later relationship, as well as the view they have about each other.

The producers and writers of both recent versions spotted the importance of these dances for the story. According to Sue Birtwistle, producer of the '95 version, “Dance is both a reflection of society and a clue to the way people think and feel. (...) it is a very important element in *Pride and Prejudice*. Significant things happen during the dances”². Because of this, a lot of dances and balls were used in the older version, the most important one being said first dance of Lizzy and Darcy at Netherfield. The film-makers also intended to represent the relationship between the two of them by means of the dance: They move towards each other, go away, come together again and so on.³

Showing their rather complicated relationship in that way enables the audience a sort of visual implementation of the feelings that are mostly hinted throughout the story. It can also be observed that, despite their intellectual fight while dancing, there is at the same time something harmonic between them⁴. This fact shows that they indeed fit together rather well and seemingly only their pride and prejudices towards each other keep them from having a better relationship.

1) see: DVD, 2005 version, Bonus: The politics of dating

2) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 67

3) see: DVD, 1995 version, Making Of

4) see: DVD, 1995 version, Making Of

According to Joe Wright, director of the 2005 version, “to be able to use those dances in that way was a great way of forming collisions between the characters.”¹ It is quite obvious that they did so – not only relating to Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, but also with Jane and Mr Bingley or even Elizabeth and Mr Collins. The way people dance in the movie tells for one thing something about their personality, but also about relationships. The fact that Lizzy and Darcy are dancing in an harmonic way is telling as much as the fact that Lizzy is almost ignoring Mr Collins while dancing with him.

In this version, generally a lot of talking is happening during the dances. For one thing, because of the fact that it sometimes was the only place to talk to someone without, for example, their parents standing by, but also because balls generally provided a lot of things to talk about.

One really interesting sequence to show the special bond between Elizabeth and Darcy in this version is during their dance. They appear to be alone on the dance floor for a few seconds just staring at each other. They seem to forget everything around them and are lost in the presence of the other one, despite the fact that they just had a rather fierce argument.

The importance of dances for *Pride and Prejudice* can be observed in both versions as they were emphasised each time. They even had the same choreographer, Jane Gibbson, who obviously attached value to using dances true to the period of time, as well as expressing personalities and relationships by means of the dances.

IV 3c: Importance of certain aspects in both versions - Dialogues

Directors and screenplay writers likewise agree that dialogues written by Jane Austen are wonderful to work with when making an adaptation of one of her books – mainly because there are “very distinct patterns for all characters”² that help to identify the persons and also distinguish them from each other.

The film-makers of the '95 BBC version thought of Austen’s dialogues as being “wonderfully dramatic”³ and therefore wanted to use as much of them as possible, although they of course had to shorten certain “dialogue-intensive”⁴ scenes and instead tell a lot of things in a more visual way. The different patterns, however, were often adopted in order to characterise some persons – for example Mr Collins and his “pompous, pedantic”⁵ way.

Because of the fact that Jane Austen’s dialogues sometimes seem a bit un-naturalistic, another challenge was of course to make them credible for the period of time, but also making them suitable for a more modern audience. The only time, some dialogues were rephrased or paraphrased was when it seemed as if the words weren’t that easy to understand nowadays.⁶

1) see: DVD, 2005 version, audio commentary by director Joe Wright

2) see: DVD, 1995 version, Making Of

3) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 12

4) see: DVD, 1995 version, Making Of

5) see: DVD, 1995 version, Making Of

6) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 13

Deborah Moggach, screenwriter of the 2005 version, agrees in matters of Jane Austen's ability when it comes to writing dialogues. Therefore she also "paid extra attention to them" ¹ and despite having to cut some of them because of the length, she kept a lot of it, also because of the fact that people who love *Pride and Prejudice* know the dialogues by heart and would have been very upset when finding that some essential dialogue was missing. ²

The importance of Jane Austen's dialogues can be seen very clearly in both versions. In most scenes, especially the central ones, the wording was adopted almost exactly and, in matters of the newer version, also when everything else about the scene was changed. Sometimes the importance of dialogues is even more recognisable, due to the fact that in some scenes almost the only communality between both versions is the fact that the wording was adopted so exactly. Because of that fact it is quite obvious how essential Austen's dialogues are for the whole story and especially for characterisations.

V 1a: Remaining true to the book's atmosphere

Despite the fact that *Pride and Prejudice* is considered being one of the best-known love-stories in English literature, one shouldn't make the mistake of narrowing it to merely being a story about Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. Amongst others, money, property and intrigue also are really important. ³

Concerning the fact that, in addition to a love story, *Pride and Prejudice* also is a novel about social levels and their differences, the 2005 version definitely succeeded more in terms of making the contrast between the Bennets and the other, socially seen, higher families. The difference between Longbourn and the other houses provided in the '95 version is, despite the fact that the film-makers looked for visible differences in the sizes and furnishings ⁴, probably not that clear to the audience, wherefore the gap between those different social classes is likely to be estimated in a different way or even misunderstood.

Joe Wright and his team, in their approach to make everything look as real as possible, achieved an visible difference, especially when seeing Longbourn, which is rather looking like a big farm house, with a lot of animals and cloth-lines in the garden and therefore definitely not as noble as for example Netherfield Hall.

Jane Austen often criticised the romantic movement during her time. Therefore it's rather unlikely that she wanted her novel to be seen as being 'just' a love-story and consequently too romantic. Looking at both adaptations, it can be observed that especially the '95 versions has a rather high level of romance, especially when it comes to the ending.

1) workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 6

2) workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 6

3) see: Austen, 1994, page 2

4) see: DVD, 1995 version, Making Of

Seeing the fact that nowadays romance is so acclaimed and desired in movies and serials, it's not that surprising that for example the double wedding of the two eldest Bennet sisters is shown. But considering the fact that it's a novel by Jane Austen, those too romantic scenes are not that fitting. They also stand in quite a contrast to the fact that suitable emotions were neglected and not shown in most of the scenes.

In some points, the 2005 version also had a few, maybe too romantic scenes, also in regard to the ending. Concerning Austen's dislike towards romance, at that point both versions were maybe influenced too much by the fact that romance nowadays is important in terms of creating an successful movie or serial.

V 1b: Remaining close to the things actually happening in the book

When looking at the comparison of the two versions according to those selected scenes, one has to admit that the producers of the '95 BBC version certainly remained really close to the book, not only concerning the story line, but also concerning most of the scenes. Although there have been additions to show the more personal sides of the characters, especially of Mr Darcy, there were hardly any changes in setting, and often even wording made. The mixture of exactly adapted scenes and invented ones is really balanced and spot-on, so the audience understands the coherences, developments and reactions without having the feeling that anything unneeded was added or some scene is prosy.

Despite the fact, that the people responsible for *Pride and Prejudice* at Working Title often transmitted some rather central scenes in completely different settings and even cut some characters, such as Mr Bingley's second sister Mrs Hurst and her husband, they also remained as close to the book as it is possible for a movie without going beyond the scope of time.

In terms of remaining really close to the events of the book, the length of the '95 version most certainly is an advantage, because it is rather difficult to fit a novel of about 300 pages in a movie of two hours.

Generally spoken, remaining too close to the book is not necessarily the best solution – as stated by Sue Birtwistle: "All too easily an adaptation can lovingly copy a book scene by scene only to find that the final product is too literary and undramatic."² In order to make a 'good' adaptation, it is necessary to find a middle course between adopting important scenes, inventing new ones and cutting or shortening rather unimportant sequences.

1) workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes, page 7

2) Birtwistle, Conklin, 1995, page 2

V 2a: Comparison of popularity – money earned

It is rather difficult to draw a conclusion concerning the popularity of both versions according to the money earned – mainly because of their different genres of film making. As the 2005 version was produced for cinemas, it is rather easy to reproduce the box offices.

Considering the popularity of Jane Austen, and especially *Pride and Prejudice* in the United Kingdom, it's no wonder that the 2005 version adaptation easily “took the number one spot in the UK its first week” ¹, remaining there for three weeks altogether. The worldwide earnings aggregated over 100 million US dollars, featured on 1,335 screens ²

As the '95 BBC version was produced for television, published on video numerous times and later twice on DVD ³, it's rather difficult to get exact numbers of the money that was earned altogether. According to the numbers sold, however, the huge popularity can be seen, as the first “12,000 copies of the double-video set sold out within two hours of release” ⁴ and after one week already 70,000 copies were sold.

Looking at those numbers, it can certainly be observed that, although a direct comparison can't be made, each version was a huge success and definitely earned a lot of money. The fact that the 2005 version was also published on DVD in 2006 should also be taken into consideration and even though exact numbers aren't available, certainly lots of copies were sold.

V 2b: Comparison of popularity – Interpretation of surveys

In spite of the fact that the earnings show a big similarity concerning the prosperity of both versions, it can be observed that the public has the tendency of favouring only one out of these two particular versions and simultaneously disliking the other one.

As the BBC version was made ten years ago, it of course had a lot of time to gain fans – which it succeeded in, even becoming “BBC's most successful drama ever” ⁵. Generally spoken, most of the people who saw this version first, share the opinion that it's the best adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* that was ever made and consequently seeing the 2005 version as “one of the worst” ⁶.

1) Wikipedia: *Pride and Prejudice* (2005 film), page

2) Wikipedia: *Pride and Prejudice* (2005 film), page

3) Wikipedia: *Pride and Prejudice* (1995 TV Serial), page 1

4) Wikipedia: *Pride and Prejudice* (1995 TV Serial), page 1

5) workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 4

6) IMDB.com: User comments on *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), page 1

Despite the fact that most people favour only one of these two versions, there isn't a representative survey to be found that deals with the question, which one is better liked.

The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), however, gives people the chance to rate both versions. Until now, for both versions altogether, 31247¹ people gave their rating. Because of the results it is recognisable that the '95 version seems to be judged higher than the new one – gaining an average rating of 9.4 out of 10². Ten points, the highest score possible, were given by 9134 out of 11546 people, which makes a percentage of 79.1.

The 2005 version on the other side scored comparatively bad with the audience. Despite the fact that with 19701 votes there had been more people voting, only 6734 of them, which makes 34.2 percent, gave the full score. Including the other votes, an average of 7.8 out of 10 resulted.³

Looking at the results of both ratings, it is quite obvious that in this case, the public has a higher opinion of the '95 version – which is reflecting the general opinion shown in numerous comments. This could be explained by the fact that, being made in '95, the BBC version had ten years to find a big discipleship. In those ten years, the fans certainly began to love the serial more and more and therefore it is only natural that they sort of despise a newly made version and think that it could never reach the ingenuity of their favourite adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.

V 3: Concluding comparison by means of own assessment

When forming one's personal opinion about movies and serials, especially when it comes to comparing two adaptations of the same novel, almost everything is based on personal likings. As the material is of course the same, the way of implementation matters, including atmosphere, usage of existing things and credibility.

As both versions have their advantages and disadvantages, regarding it objectively, one can't say that one is better than the other one. In my opinion, however, despite possible historical incorrectness, the 2005 version definitely is more credible, especially when it comes to emotions and generally picturing real people. In most scenes concerning Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, their emotions, from anger, to nervousness and amorousness, are evident and appropriate.

Contrary to that, the BBC version often has a total lack of emotional signs, which makes it hard to take certain scenes seriously and also to comprehend the feelings the characters have. Their reactions to different things almost seem similar, for example when Lizzy is insulted by Mr Darcy at the Meryton assembly, it doesn't seem as if she's caring. When she accepts his proposal, there are likewise few emotions.

1) see: IMDb.com: User Ratings on *Pride and Prejudice* 2005 and 1995

2) IMDb.com: User Ratings for "*Pride and Prejudice* (1995) (mini), page 1

3) IMDb.com: User Ratings for *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), page 1

Jane Austen may have described the protagonist as a witty and ironic person, but surely not as one without any emotions. In the '95 version it often seems so. Keira Knightley, however, played an Elizabeth that has all the attributes from the description of the novel, but also shows all sorts of emotions and therefore giving the character and the whole story credibility, allowing the audience to identify and feel with her.

“Passionate emotion” ¹, in terms of showing it too early, was surely something that was considered as being dangerous by Jane Austen ², but I don't think she intended to create characters that are incapable of, for example, showing their anger when arguing, which is a completely natural reaction and therefore should be shown as such.

Despite the fact that the intention the film-makers of the BBC version had, was to create an interpretation ³, they almost remained too close to the book to achieve that, although they added a few invented scenes. One could always argue if it's better to remain to the book as close as possible or offer an interpretation with a lot of artistic freedom. For me, the second variation has a bigger attraction, mainly because it's rather uninteresting to watch something that is so close to the book that reading the novel would have the same effect as watching the filmed version. Therefore I enjoyed the 2005 version, amongst other reasons, better. It's interesting so see how a simple change of setting can picture something in a quite different way.

When seeing a good adaptation only by means of its closeness to the book, one can definitely think of the BBC version as being almost perfect, considering the fact that there, as said before, weren't that many changes and most scenes were adapted. Despite that, surely not only the closeness to the book is important, but also, especially with stories that were written in the 18th or 19th century, the possibility to comprehend everything. As the story of *Pride and Prejudice* is of course rather well-known it maybe wasn't that necessary, but definitely not a mistake to transfer and alter certain scenes.

Concerning the credibility, and therefore the will to show real people, the 2005 version is most definitely the better choice. As director Joe Wright mentioned when talking about 'his' version of *Pride and Prejudice*: “A depiction which avoided the ‘chocolate box’ presentations that television veers towards” ³. In Jane Austen's times, as well as today, not everything was that tidy and perfect at it is often shown in the BBC version of *Pride and Prejudice*. In terms of giving the audience an understanding of the real life in the 18th century and showing a credible story, the Working Title production, at least in my eyes, did better and also remained closer to their initial intention of making it “real and gritty”. ⁴

1) Wikipedia: Jane Austen, page 2

2) see: Wikipedia: Jane Austen, page 2

3) workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 4

4) workingtitlefilms.com: *Pride and Prejudice* Production Notes (PDF), page 5

As closing words, it can be said that each of the two versions definitely is a good one – pursuant to the case that one clearly distinguishes between the intention and originating effect, as well as the overall message. Whether one chooses to like an almost exact adaptation that somehow shows a too perfect world or rather an interpretation that changed and cut a lot of crucial scenes, is an individual decision, based on personal likings and the opinion of what an adaptation should offer. Minding that, it's obvious that, because of the differences in intention and message, in both versions the material was approached in a different way. The comparison shows that a lot of different things can be made out of one novel and that each one has its advantages and disadvantages. A 'perfect solution' is certainly impossible when filming a book and therefore both versions are rather good and it's interesting to watch both of them, especially because of all these differences that are evident.

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