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INTRODUCTION

I have chosen to write my thesis on the recent productions of Jane Austen's novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. My interest in Jane Austen started in school where I studied *Pride and Prejudice* for my Intermediate Certificate and subsequently *Emma* for my Leaving Certificate. My interest in costume design by then had already begun and I hope now to continue my studies in this area concentrating on historical costume for film.

When referring to any of Jane Austen's novels I have used italics and for the productions I have underlined the title. I started my research by re-reading the books and watched again all the productions. I read biographies on Jane Austen and read her letters. I visited her restored house in Chawton. I read about the time she lived in and looked at dress of that period. I looked at how important clothes were to Jane Austen and to what extent they feature in her novels. I was also lucky enough to visit Cosprop in London, who own the costumes for all recent productions and there I was able to get a first hand look and photographs of the costumes.

After looking at all the productions of Jane Austen novels including previous versions I decided to concentrate on writing about two of the recent productions, Pride and Prejudice and Sense and Sensibility. There is unfortunately just not enough space to do justice to all the productions. I wanted to look in detail comparing two productions and the role of costume in them. Therefore I chose my favourite, Pride and Prejudice and I chose Sense and Sensibility because I think they are similar in their aims, but different in their achievements.

I have begun by looking at the background and history surrounding Jane Austen and her life (1775-1817). I have used her letters to her sister Cassandra to show how she used her life and experiences as an inspiration for her writing. I have also taken



from her letters references to fashions of her time and taken a brief look at the history surrounding the clothes during this time. I have chosen to look at the costumes in Pride and Prejudice first and to discuss their role in terms of the adaptation, in terms of authenticity and finally the media surrounding them. I have looked at the costumes in Sense and Sensibility in terms of authenticity and their role in the adaptation. In my conclusion I have analysed what role the costumes have played in each production.

There is little material written on the subject of costume design and its role in the motion picture business and a lot of what has been written concerns classic Hollywood cinema and the silent era. With regard to Jane Austen there is of course extensive published work about her and the novels she wrote and the different literary meanings. As far as the adaptations go there is a reasonable amount of published work from newspaper reviews. A book about the serialisation of Pride and Prejudice, called *'The Making of Pride and Prejudice'* was published, with a chapter devoted to the costume design, and hair and make-up design. In this chapter it discusses how the costumes and fabrics were researched from original clothes and costume plates. It looks at how they were made to suit the overall look of the production and the individual characters by choosing colours and fabrics to underline their character traits. Because of the importance of the costumes in Pride and Prejudice the balance of my analyses is in their favour.



CHAPTER 1 : Jane Austen

Jane Austen: Her Life; Her Letters; Her Novels



Figure 1 : Jane Austen by Cassandra in pencil and watercolour. c. 1810



FIGURE 2 : Jane Austen by Cassandra in watercolour. 1804

The central characters in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* are two sisters with contrasting personalities but who are nonetheless very close friends. Through circumstances beyond their control they are not wealthy and have only a small dowry. So their only chance of happiness by nineteenth century standards as they grew up was to marry a financially secure husband. Jane Austen herself was in this situation, born in 1775 in the village of Steventon, the seventh of eight children of a country parson, Reverend George Austen. Jane Austen and her only sister Cassandra, were very close friends and shared everything. In figures one and two are drawings of Jane Austen by her sister Cassandra.

It is through her letters¹ to Cassandra, written when they were separated, visiting relatives, that we have an insight into Jane Austen's life and her times. Though Cassandra destroyed the more personal of the letters, they are still rich in detail about Jane Austen's life in this period. Jane Austen, in her letters, wrote about day to day events and the affairs of her family take up a large part of the news. What is relevant

¹First published in 1842 by R.W. Chapman



here though, are her frequent references to fashions of the day, who was wearing what, and how she managed to keep up to date with fashions by constantly re-trimming, re-dyeing and remaking her clothes and accessories. She often asks Cassandra for advice and here is just one such example where Jane Austen discusses what was to be worn at a social gathering:

".. I took the liberty a few days ago of asking your black velvet bonnet to lend me its cawl, which it very readily did, and by which I have been enabled to give a considerable improvement of dignity to my cap, which was before too *nidgetty* to please me. I shall wear it on Thursday, but I hope you will not be offended with me for following your advice as to its ornaments only in part. I still venture to retain the narrow silver round it, put twice round without any bow, and instead of the black military feather shall put in the coquelicot² one, as being smarter; and besides coquelicot is to be all the fashion this winter. After the ball I shall probably make it entirely black.....

Wednesday. I have changed my mind, and changed the trimmings of my cap this morning; they are now such as you suggested; I felt as if I should not prosper if I strayed from your directions, and I think it makes me look more like Lady Conyngham now than it did before, which is all what one lives for now."³



FIGURE 3 : A selection of hats from November 1799.

²I can find no references to this word, though presumably it is some sort of feather, the direct translation from French to English is 'corn poppy'.

³Le Faye, 1995, Letter, 18 December 1798



Lady Conyngham was the Prince Regent's influential mistress. In the next letter Jane Austen goes on to comment on how her cap was openly admired. Her letters show us how important clothes and fashion were to young ladies in this period. Fabrics were chosen from the linen draper, either bought in one of the large shopping centres like London or Bath or locally bought in a store like 'Fords' in *Emma*. If one couldn't afford to have the dresses made up for one, as the Austens sometimes couldn't, then one made them from patterns passed between families and friends. Jane Austen complained of the difficulty of making up clothes:

I cannot determine what to do about my new gown; I wish such things were to be bought ready-made. I have some hopes of meeting Martha at the christening at Deane next Tuesday, and shall see what she can do for me. I want to have something suggested which will give no trouble of thought or direction.⁴

and in *Sense and Sensibility* the Steele sisters while staying with the Dashwoods in London pass some of their days by:

"... taking patterns of some elegant new dress, in which her [Fanny Dashwood] appearance the day before had thrown them into unceasing delight."⁵

Jane Austen travelled between relatives and enjoyed holidays in seaside towns where she encountered many different societies, her letters show that she regularly commented on peoples' behaviour, appearance and dress. As in *Pride and Prejudice*, where in both the novel and in the dramatised version, the Bingley sisters, (fig. 4) discuss Elizabeth's appearance, (fig. 5) when she arrives at Netherfield after walking three miles to see her sister Jane who is sick:

Mrs Hurst : "...her appearance this morning, she really looked almost wild."

Miss Bingley : "I could hardly keep my countenance. What does she mean by scampering about the country because her sister has a cold. Her hair, Louisa....."

⁴Le Faye, 1995, Letter 24 December 1798

⁵Austen, 1811, S & S, Chapter 21 p.116



Mrs Hurst : "Well her petticoat. I hope you saw her petticoat brother, six inches deep in mud, I'm absolutely certain."

Miss Bingley : "it seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence." Both sisters nod in agreement.⁶

This dialogue differs slightly from the text in the novel which is as follows:

"I shall never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked almost wild." "She did indeed, Louisa. I could hardly keep my countenance. Very nonsensical to come at all! Why must *she* be scampering about the country, because her sister had a cold? Her hair so untidy, so blowsy!"

"Yes and her petticoat; I hope you saw her petticoat, six inches deep in mud, I am absolutely certain; and the gown which had been let down to hide it, not doing its office."⁷



FIGURE 4 : The Bingley sisters discuss Elizabeth's appearance.



FIGURE 5 : Elizabeth as she arrives at Netherfield, with her petticoat six inches deep in mud!

⁶Screen play by Andrew Davies

⁷Austen, 1813, P & P, Chapter 8 p. 33



There is very little difference between the dramatised version and the original text. The main difference being in the dramatisation the last sentence has been left out. This sentence refers to the practice of tying up the skirt so it would not get dirty while out walking. If the petticoat had got a little dirty it was covered by the skirt which had subsequently been let down to its normal position. This is of course not done any more and contemporary audiences probably would not understand the reference, so the script writer Andrew Davies has omitted it.

Jane Austen reserves the discussion of fashions and clothes for the frivolous and light-hearted characters in her novels. The characters who seem to chat incessantly about dress are portrayed as silly and ignorant like Mrs Bennet, Lydia and Kitty in *Pride and Prejudice* and the Miss Steeles in *Sense and Sensibility*. Though it is discussed widely in her letters to Cassandra, Jane Austen seems to have felt it was not suitable conversation for intelligent ladies to dwell on in public and so it was reserved for private contemplation among ladies. Perhaps Jane Austen also felt that her novels would be taken more seriously and be more widely read if she didn't continually describe the dress of her characters. Elizabeth and Jane, or Elinor and Marianne are rarely concerned with dress. Though on one occasion Elizabeth 'had dressed with more than usual care.'⁸ It was for the Netherfield Ball where she had expected to meet with and dance with Mr Wickham. (fig. 6) In *Pride and Prejudice* Lydia and her



FIGURE 6 : 'Ahh, you look very well Lizzy,...'

⁸Austen, P & P, p. 76



mother, both comment on how well she looks, though her mother adds that 'you'll never be as pretty as your sister Jane, but I will say you look very well indeed.'⁹

Jane Austen achieved moderate success with her novels. Four were published during her life time and two published posthumously. She died on the 18 July 1817 at the age of forty-two from an unknown disease, thought to be a kidney infection. Her sister Cassandra in a letter to Fanny Knight wrote of Jane Austen after her death:

I *have* lost a treasure, such a sister, such a friend as never can have been surpassed. She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow; I had not a thought consealed from her, and it is as if I had lost a part of myself....¹⁰

Regency Fashions

Jane Austen wrote her novels to the backdrop of political upheaval and war. Before the French Revolution, fashion had been elaborate, richly decorated and exaggerated, with colourful styles for both men and women. Both wore heavily embroidered silks in rich colours. Both sexes were equally on display, though the figure was well disguised by padding and corsets. But informal fashion at this time had started to turn towards a feeling of comfort and country styles. Classicism and antiquity were important influences.

After the Revolution fashion was no longer strictly for the privileged individual. It was increasingly for the people, printed cottons and muslins with influences from working people's dress were worn. They were extensively worn in Paris, and then filtered throughout the country and to England. The fashion was for antique-style, high-waisted gowns gathered below the bust and falling to the floor in folds with the fullness at the back. Flat sandals and short curled hair, shawls draped over the

⁹Davies, P & P, 1995

¹⁰Le Faye, 1995, Letter Cassandra Austen to Fanny Knight Sunday July 18 1817



shoulders completed the look. Men interpreted the egalitarian styles by adopting the fashion of an English country gentleman, frock-coats, buff waistcoats, breeches, riding boots and unpowdered hair. (figs. 7,8)



FIGURE 7 : Princess Sophia by Henry Edridge. 1802



FIGURE 8 : Thomas, Earl of Haddington by Henry Edridge. 1802

The most shocking idea about these styles was that the body itself was on display. Through the light, the contours of the body could clearly be seen. Ladies' dresses were white and transparent, and few undergarments were worn. For one of the first times in fashion, the female body was not distorted by corsets and padding. The dresses followed the lines of the body without over emphasising it. Men's frock-coats were cut away at the waist, breeches were worn tight revealing the male physique. In a letter to her friend Martha Lloyd in 1814, Jane Austen describes her observations of fashions in London, for ladies at this time:

'I am amused by the present style of female dress; - the coloured petticoats with braces over the white Spencers & enormous Bonnets upon the full stretch, are quite entertaining. It seems to me a more



marked *change* than one has lately seen. - Long sleeves appear universal, even as *Dress*, the Waists short, and as far as I have been able to judge, the Bosom covered. - I was at a little party last night at Mrs Latouche's, where dress is a good deal attended to, & these are my observations from it. - Petticoats short, & generally tho' not always, flounced.- The broad-straps belonging to the Gown or Bodice, which cross the front of the Waist, over white, have a very pretty effect I think.¹¹



FIGURE 9 : Fashions for ladies from 1813.

Here she refers to the fashion in London for wearing long sleeves for dress as well as undress. In *Pride and Prejudice*, when Mrs Gardener, Elizabeth's aunt, arrives from London, 'the first part of her business on her arrival, was to distribute her presents and describe the newest fashions.'¹² Mrs Bennet after describing the

¹¹Le Faye, 1995, Letter 2 September 1814

¹²Austen, 1813, P & P, Chapter 25, p. 118



traumatic time she was having, comments on Mrs Gardiner's observations. '.....I am very glad to hear what you tell us of long sleeves.'¹³ In Pride and Prejudice Mrs Bennet makes a similar comment to Mrs Gardiner at a party at Mrs Philip's, Elizabeth's aunts, house. '...we are very pleased to hear what you tell us about the latest fashions for long sleeves.'¹⁴ Both Mrs Philips and Mrs Bennet wear short puff sleeves while Mrs Gardiner wears, elbow length lace sleeves. (fig. 10)



FIGURE 10 : Mrs Phillips, Mrs Bennet and Mrs Gardiner at the party.

For women white was deemed the most fashionable colour. As Edmund in *Mansfield Park* says to Fanny, 'A women can never be too fine while she is all in white.'¹⁵ But in reality for obvious reasons white was not practical to wear, and alternative colours were worn. During the day colours such as brown and purple were worn, Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra of plans to buy new dresses, 'brown cambric muslin, for morning wear; the other which is to be a plain very pretty yellow and white cloud, I mean to buy it in Bath.'¹⁶

¹³Austen. 1813, P & P, Chapter 25, p. 119

¹⁴Screenplay by Andrew Davies

¹⁵Mansfield Park by Jane Austen

¹⁶Le Faye, 1995, Letter 25 January 1801



CHAPTER 2 : Pride and Prejudice

The primary role of costumes in a production is to support the narrative. In a period production they also have the dual function of telling the audience what time the drama is set in, though this was not always the case. The costumes tell us basic information about the characters and according to Alice Evans Field they must be:

*'harmonised to the mood, be it tragedy or romance; they must add subtly to the grace of the wearer; and they must enhance to rhythmic flow of the story. Never must they call undue attention to themselves, unless for sharp definition of character.'*¹⁷

The costumes in Pride and Prejudice have a leading role. This is not just a period adaptation, or a classic serial, it is as *'the Radio Times* preferred to call it a 'costume classic'.¹⁸ The costumes in Pride and Prejudice have been used primarily to reinforce character traits and to set the time frame.

Authenticity of the Costumes

The BBC has produced this as an authentic and accurate reproduction of regency life in the early nineteenth century.¹⁹ The book *The Making of Pride and Prejudice* was published to show how they achieved this, as was a feature article in the *Radio Times*. The book 'by December was top of the non-fiction best seller list.'²⁰ In Pride and Prejudice the costumes have been used not only to help the narrative, but also to set the period. Unlike the 1980's version, which relied on furniture and interiors to locate the period, Roger Sales explains:

¹⁷Gaines, 1990, p. 195-6

¹⁸Sales, 1996, p. 228

¹⁹Sales, 1996, p. 236

²⁰Sales, 1996, p. 228



'Although this adaptation [1995] prided itself on the depth of its historical research, there is also a sense in which it did not draw so much attention to its artefacts, through close-ups or the use of action props, as happened in the 1980 one.....this was first and foremost a costume drama or classic.'²¹

But in creating a time frame with the costumes, the costume designer must be careful not to distract or alienate the audience. The overall look and the costumes must fit in with the audiences' perception of authenticity. 'True authenticity is in telling a living story'²² and therefore contemporary standards must influence the adaptation. If not the audience might be distracted by detail that is taken for granted today. For example as Peter Stanford points out:

'An actress playing a modest Jane Austen heroine would be required to shed a few teeth and stain the rest because toothpaste had yet to be invented.'²³

Adaptations are not social documentaries on the past, they are presenting the spirit of the novel in as true a light as possible, but in a way that is interesting and enjoyable for the audience.

In the production of Pride and Prejudice, the costume designer Dinah Collins, has taken great care in reproducing authentic costumes for all the characters in the style and cut of the period 1810 - 1815. Everything right down to their underwear and accessories have been taken into consideration and reproduced in order to give as authentic a silhouette as possible. Muslin fabrics for the dresses were printed using original patterns from the time and dyed pale colours, by Amy Caswell, a textile and print graduate. Hairstyles were modelled on original drawings and makeup kept to a minimum in keeping with the period.

²¹Sales, 1996, p. 237

²²Stanford, 22 September 1996

²³Stanford, 22 September 1996



The costumes of the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, are central. All the other characters' costumes compare and contrast to hers. Dinah Collin, the costume designer, describes the reason for choosing her colours:

'I wanted to create a wardrobe that complemented the direct and practical aspects of her character. I chose colours that had an earthiness to them - a lot of browns, for example...'²⁴

Jane Austen had her own views about the colours that Elizabeth Bennet (Mrs Darcy), should wear. Jane Austen visited a portrait exhibition in London and in a letter to Cassandra, describes how she looked for portraits resembling her characters, Elizabeth and Jane Bennet:

'I went to an Exhibition in Spring Gardens. It is not thought a very good collection, but I was very well pleased - particularly with a small portrait of Mrs Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her Sister, but there was no Mrs Darcy:.....Mrs Bingley's is exactly herself, size, shaped face, features & sweetness; there never was a greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown, with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favourite colour with her. I dare say Mrs D. will be in yellow.'²⁵

In Pride and Prejudice Elizabeth Bennet's (Mrs Darcy) warm brown tones, worn with cream and white are perhaps a slight twist of Jane Austen's wishes. Jane Bennet (Mrs Bingley) wears white muslin gowns, though unfortunately we never see her in any green or green patterns, or wearing green accessories.

In figure eleven Elizabeth wears one of her key outfits. She wears a curry coloured spencer, over a white striped muslin empire line dress, with matching gloves and bonnet. The muslin dress is fitted to the bust with a low cut rounded neckline. The sleeves are three quarter length and the dress is buttoned up the centre back.

²⁴Birtwistle, 1995, p. 52

²⁵Le Faye, 1995, Letter 24 May 1813



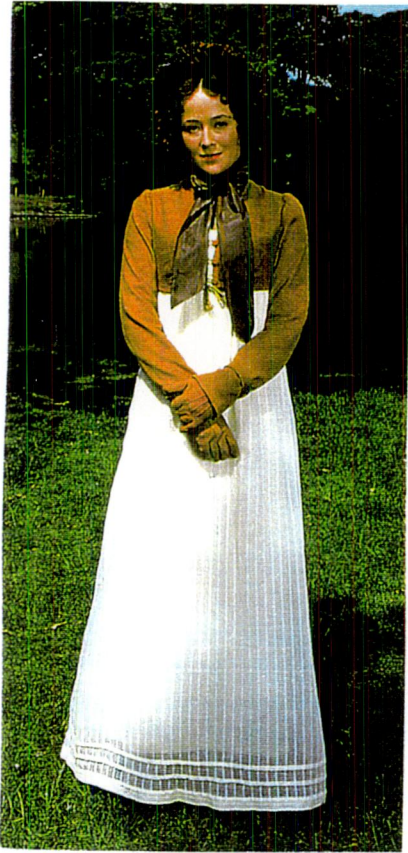


FIGURE 11 : Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice.

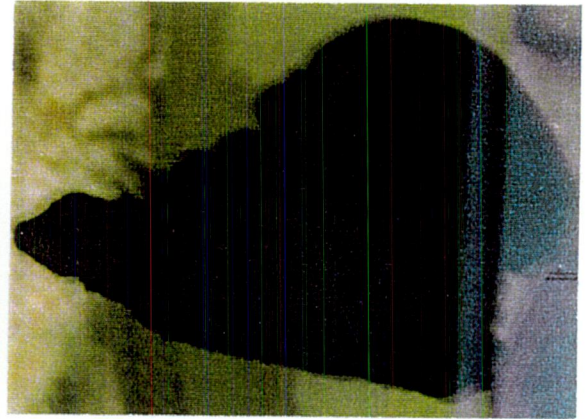


FIGURE 12 : The hat on display in Jane Austen's restored house in Chawton. (apologises for the poor quality photograph)

It is full length with the petticoat underneath a couple of inches shorter to highlight the pattern at the hem. A corset is also worn underneath. The spencer is cut on the same lines as the bodice of the dress with a small stand collar. It is fastened with buttons and loops, and is tied under the bust. The sleeves are full length reaching down below the wrists with a band buttoned around the wrists pulling the sleeves slightly in. Elizabeth's gloves are fitted, in perhaps suede, matching the colour of the spencer. Her bonnet is in a warm spicy brown colour with long dark brown ribbons tied under her chin and it 'has a scrunchy look.'²⁶ It is based on one on display in Jane Austen's restored house in Chawton.

²⁶Birtwistle, 1995, p. 52



Elizabeth's outfit is in the fashionable style of the time, with minimal detail and classic lines. Dinah Collin describes the look she wanted for Elizabeth:

'Overall I wanted a nice, straightforward look that was pretty but not fussy. And since Elizabeth is a very active girl, it was quite important that she had clothes that allowed her to move very easily and naturally.'²⁷

There is no denying that she has achieved this. Not only has she created a set of authentic costumes in character with Elizabeth, she has created a wardrobe for her, clothes to live in. Jennifer Ehle who played Elizabeth discusses her wardrobe:

'The wardrobe people were wonderful to me, and gave me a wide-ranging selection of dresses to choose from -- just like Elizabeth would have done every day. She'd have had her favourites too. There was one little dress I used to wear alot -- just as today you'd pull on a favourite pair of Levi's or a well-worn T-shirt...They were also very comfortable to wear....My daily mix-and-match became part of the pleasure of making the series.'²⁸

When Elizabeth walks towards the camera, as she moves the light is caught through her dress silhouetting her figure, emphasising her freedom of movement and illustrating how daring the fashions were for ladies at this time.



FIGURE 13 : Elizabeth catches the light through her dress as she walks with Mr Darcy and he proposes to her for a second time.

²⁷Birtwistle, 1995, p. 52

²⁸<http://www.aetv.com/specials/pride/pride3a.html>



Mr Darcy is the male protagonist. In Pride and Prejudice his character has been developed more, we see him behind the scenes, out enjoying sport with Mr Bingley and Mr Hurst and staying in, in the evenings with the Bingley party. We also see him on his own, coping with his love for Elizabeth.



FIGURE 14 : Collin Firth as Mr Darcy in Pride and Prejudice.

Mr Darcy is wearing one of his central outfits. (fig. 14) His character can clearly be seen through his costume. He wears a dark grey frock coat, with tan breeches, and an nearly black waistcoat. His shirt and neck tie are white, he also wears riding boots, gloves and a top hat. Over all this he wears a long grey coat. His frock coat is double breasted, cut square away at the waist into knee length tails at the back. It is probably made from a wool fabric. The waist coat is single breasted with a stand collar. His tan breeches, made of suede, are fitted to the knee with a front fall opening and laced up the back. They are buttoned at the knee for maximum fit. His grey coat is made of linen. It is double breasted and fitted to the waist like his frock coat. It is full length with a centre back vent and inverted pleats either side, with a button at the top. There



are two side pockets and three buttons at the sleeve hem. This coat was a late addition to Mr Darcy's wardrobe. Dinah Collin discusses the relevance of this coat:

'I think the long, grey linen coat we made for him during filming was an important addition. Even though it is completely accurate for the period, it looks like something you could buy today, and this gives it a kind of contemporary relevance.'²⁹

His costume is sombre and serious. He is able to hide his shyness behind it, giving an image of snobbishness. It was important to make sure the audience took his clothes seriously and as Dinah Collin says 'that they did not diminish his strong virile quality'³⁰

Contrasting costumes in Pride and Prejudice



FIGURE 15 : The Netherfield party arrive at the Meryton assembly.

As already discussed the costumes are used to emphasise character traits and contrast characters. The most obvious contrast in Pride and Prejudice must be between the Bennets and their Meryton friends and the Netherfield party (Mr Darcy, Mr Bingley, his two sisters and Mr Hurst). This is dramatically shown when we see the Netherfield party for the first time. (fig. 15) They enter the Meryton assembly and the room falls painfully silent for a moment, before Sir William Lucas rushes up to

²⁹Birtwistle, 1995, p. 53

³⁰Birtwistle, 1995, p. 52



greet them. The costumes and the behaviour of the Netherfield party, their life style and income, are greatly different to that of the people they have just joined. Their costumes underline this.



FIGURE 16 : The Bennet sisters with Charlotte Lucas at the Meryton Assemble.



FIGURE 17 : The topaz crosses send by Charles to his sisters Jane and Cassandra Austen in 1801. Jane Austen's is the one on the right.

All the ladies at the ball are dressed in pale coloured evening dresses. Most though not all are muslin dresses. In figure sixteen we can see Kitty, Elisabeth, Jane and Charlotte Lucas at the ball. Kitty's dress is a pale blue muslin covered dress with ribbons in her hair. Charlotte's silk grey-blue dress is simply trimmed with gold braid and tassels. Jane's dress is in a golden satin. It has a v-neck and short puffed sleeves decorated with a vandyked trim. It buttons up the back and has side back pleats. With her dress she wears long white gloves as was customary, a small pearl drop necklace and earrings, and ribbons tied round the bun in her hair. Elisabeth's dress is made of cream satin and it is low cut with a square neck line. It has embroidery on the bodice at the neckline, on the short sleeves and around the hem. She also wears with it long white gloves, a small ornament at the back of her hair and a small cross on a chain. This cross appears to be similar to ones given to Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra by their brother Charles in 1801. (fig. 17) Jane Bennet's dress is the most elaborate of all the girls, yet it is still quite simply decorated and they all wear very little ornamentation in their hair.





FIGURE 18 : The Bingley sisters at the Meryton Assemblé.

The Bingley sisters, (fig.18) are more elaborately decorated and adorned. Miss Bingley's dress, an antique gold colour, in shot silk is rich in colour and trims. The bodice sparkles, with silk gathered over the bust and three decorative diamond buttons down the centre front. Layered orange bows decorate the armhole and a bow decorates the back, where the skirt gathers in to a small train. She wears long white gloves, her necklace is large and her head dress elaborate. Her head dress has shot silk twisted round in a turban style with diamonds randomly sewn onto it. At the side there is a flower of fabric with a feather and diamond brooch at the centre. It has a mixture of large feathers rising up out of the side of it.

Mrs Hurst's dress (Miss Bingley's sister) is equally elaborate. Also in shot silk, it is tangerine in colour. The bodice is low cut with a sweet heart neck line covered in lace. It is edged in gold and has gold bows in the centre front and at the sleeve head where there is also a lace decoration. There is a band of lace at the hem and a bow with long ribbons at the back of the dress. Mrs Hurst also wears long white gloves and a large necklace, her head dress is similar to her sisters. The twisted fabric is twisted round twice with large ostrich feathers rising from the back.



There is no doubt that the Bingley sisters are very wealthy and wear clothes to emphasise this. Their costumes are used to display their wealth and status in society, high above that of the Bennets plus the fact that they are from the city and wear fashionable city clothes as Dinah Collin points out:

'...with the Bingley sisters; we felt we could point out the differences in wealth and class by contrasting their wardrobes with the pretty simplicity of the Bennet girls'.³¹

The colours and trimmings contrast strongly with the rest of the ladies at the assembly. The Bingley sisters are two of the few ladies in the room wearing large feather head dresses. The Bingley sisters look like they have stepped out of a fashion magazine; their fashion influences are medieval and gothic, they look affluent and exotic. By comparison the Bennet sisters, while wearing the fashionable antique, simple styles look understated and rural.



FIGURE 19 : Mr Darcy at the Meryton Assemble.



FIGURE 20 : Mr Bingley at the Meryton Assemble.

³¹Birtwistle, 1995, p. 53



There is less of a contrast with the men of the Netherfield party and the other men at the Meryton assembly. Even between Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy, their costumes differ very little. The main difference between the two are the colours they wear. Mr Darcy wears saturnine colours underlining his snobbish and antipathetic nature. Mr Bingley wears warm colours and textures emphasising his open friendly character. At the assemble, (fig. 19, 20) we get our first real introduction to them, Mr Darcy wears a black coat with black breeches and a dark waistcoat. Mr Bingley wears a dark blue coat wears white breeches and a cream textured waistcoat. Mr Darcy's character was fixed by all of Meryton society, 'He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world...'³² Whereas Mr Bingley was deemed to be, 'young, wonderfully handsome, (and) extremely agreeable'³³



FIGURE 21 : Mr Darcy looks out the window at Elizabeth in his dressing gown.



FIGURE 22 : The pelisse on display in Jane Austen's restored house in Chawton which originally belonged to her.

In the dramatisation, extra backstage scenes have been added to help the audience relate to Mr Darcy, so he is not just seen as a snob with an inflated self opinion. In some of the scenes, his clothes have been used to maximise the effect. In the scene where Darcy takes a bath, the audience sees him with out his starched shirt

³²Austen, 1996, P & P, Chapter 3, p. 12

³³Austen, 1996, P & P, Chapter 3, p. 11



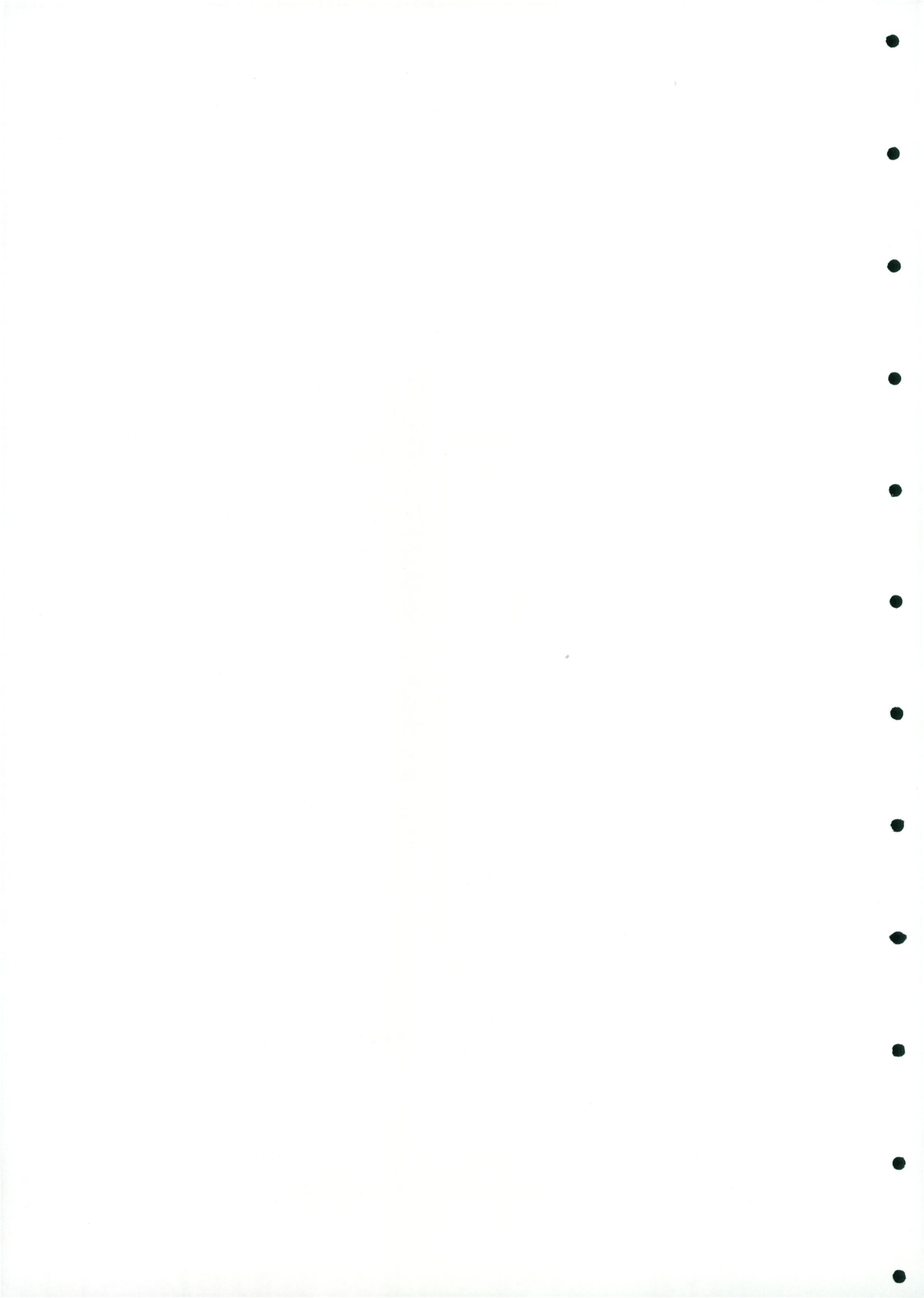
and neck tie, no frock coat and breeches. Without his clothes on to remind the audience of his aloofness, he looks just like any ordinary man. He gets out of the bath and his servant helps him with his dressing gown and he looks out the window and sees Elizabeth playing with a dog. The colour and pattern of his dressing gown (fig.21) appears to be similar to the pelisse on display in Chawton Cottage, which originally belonged to Jane Austen herself. (fig.22)



FIGURE 23 : Darcy writes to Elizabeth after she refuses his first proposal of marriage

In the scene where Darcy writes a letter to Elizabeth after she has rejected his proposal, his clothes have been used to reinforce his state of mind. (fig. 23) He is surprised by her refusal and annoyed and frustrated at her reasons for it. So he is determined to explain his actions and motives in the offences she has accused him of. The letter is distressful for him to write as he must relate circumstances about his sister and Mr Wickham, he would rather forget. As he relates the painful story of Mr Wickham's dealings with his family, he has taken off his frock coat and neck tie. (fig. 23) When he has finished he is in his open shirt washing his face, getting ready to give Elizabeth the letter.

Darcy discards his clothes as he writes the letter, emphasising his vulnerability. Collin Firth explains his understanding of Darcy's feelings in this scene:



'The fact that he writes her a letter explaining himself and disclosing some very personal information - which is ostensibly a tremendously out-of-character thing to do - suggests this. (that he has changed as a result of Elizabeths refusal) I think he suffers enormously as a result of her rejection because he loves her.'³⁴

He is letting Elizabeth see him, the personal side of his character through his letter, which the audience is allowed to see for themselves. This helps them to understand his turnabout in behaviour towards Elizabeth. He becomes less of an enigma to us.

Another scene in which we see this is in the swimming sequence. The difference between the private Darcy and the public Darcy is further emphasised as the script writer Andrew Davies describes:

'He heads to the lake and decides to dive in - 'a brief respite from duty, and from the tumult of his tormented and unhappy feelings', Andrew writes in the stage directions. We then follow Darcy underwater - not absolutely vital, one might think, but again it was a visual way of communicating a different picture of Darcy 'cleaving through this other element, a natural man, free of the trappings of culture'. In that brief moment, one is reminded that Darcy, for all his responsibilities as the owner of Pemberly, is actually a young man. And, by intercutting Elizabeth staring at his portrait with the flesh-and-blood Darcy the audience sees, one is able to point up the idea that there are many portraits of Darcy...'³⁵



FIGURE 24 : Mr Darcy goes swimming in Pemberly and 'takes a breif respite for duty'.

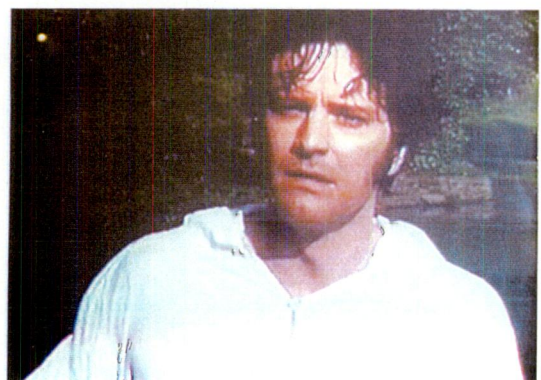


FIGURE 25 : Mr Darcy unexpectedly meets Elizabeth at Pemberly.

³⁴Birtwistle, 1995, p. 104-105

³⁵Birtwistle, 1995, p. 5



Before Darcy dives into the water, he strips off down to his shirt and breeches. (fig.24) Intercutting him in this state of undress with the painting where he looks stiff and formal in his clothes, shows the audience the difference between the public Darcy and the private Darcy. This is highlighted when he unexpectedly meets Elizabeth, walking the grounds of Pemberly. (fig.25) He is still just wearing his shirt and breeches. He meets her, and is surprised and lost for words. Yet, he tries to appear polite and friendly, under the, no doubt, very embarrassing circumstances. Collin Firth tells of Darcys task as this meeting occurs.

'He needs to show her in about three minutes flat that he is prepared to be apologetic and tender and amenable and unsnobbish.'³⁶

Seeing Darcy in just his shirt and being nice, the audience and Elizabeth can see the private Darcy for what he really is. Seeing him not fully dressed in this scene helps the audience identify with him and when they next see him dressed properly, they will see how the real Darcy hides behind his clothes and his wealth.

The Costumes and the media

There was a lot of media attention surrounding this production of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. It originally started because there were reports that this adaptation was going to have 'steamy sex scenes and a "full-frontal view" of Mr Darcy getting out of a bath. Substantiated or not, these remarks caused uproar.'³⁷ Of course the reports were not true, though Andrew Davies did 'want to make the plot sexier.'³⁸ Media interest continued throughout production and airing of the dramatisation. Everything with regard to, and about Jane Austen was up for discussion, 'not just in the media and fashion pages of the national press, but [she] also made regular

³⁶Birtwistle, 1995, p. 104

³⁷The Economist, 3 November 1990, p. 106

³⁸The Economist, 3 November 1990, p. 106



appearances in financial reports, medical briefing, sports coverage and elsewhere.³⁹ Constantly, headlines such as; 'Empire lines, An Austen-inspired return to romanticism'⁴⁰; 'Price and prejudice'⁴¹; and 'Enduring Prejudice...'⁴² could be seen in the newspapers and magazines.

The costumes, as already stated played a big part in Pride and Prejudice and they also attracted a lot of media attention. Primary topics up for discussion were Elizabeth Bennet's bust line and Mr Darcy's trousers. According to the newspapers:

"tumultuous', 'terrific', 'heaving', 'bursting', and 'bounteous' bosoms were displayed in this adaptation of Pride and Prejudice. One of the first laws of heritage television is that ratings soar if necklines plunge. The costume classic has to have a super-abundance of what became known as 'the period bosom'.⁴³

As Fay Weldon scathingly remarks about the making of these adaptations, "Hey, guys, let's do 'Northanger Abbey.'", "Wow! Whose bosom do we cast?"⁴⁴ Elizabeth Bennet's bosom certainly lived up to expectations. Her cleavage far outclassed anyone else's in the production. She continually flouted the rules of the day by wearing no modesty piece during the day time, exposing her inches of cleavage.

'Morning dress was usually interpreted as high necked, long sleeved apparel but I regret this was by-passed in the BBC Pride and Prejudice serialisation where Jennifer Ehle, as Elizabeth was trussed up in gold lame most of the time.'⁴⁵

If we compare Elizabeth (fig. 26) to a painting of the time, (fig. 27) her bosom looks unnaturally forced up and she wears no modesty piece during the day. In the

³⁹Sales, 1996, p. 233

⁴⁰Maire Claire, November 1996, p. 182

⁴¹Keane, The Sunday Independent, 28 April 1996, p. 20

⁴²The Sunday Times, 15 December 1996, Section 5, p. 1

⁴³Sales, 1996, p. 230

⁴⁴Weldon, The New York Times, 8 October 1995, p. 15

⁴⁵Mc Carton, Letter, 7 October 1996



painting the girls' bust line is natural and she appears to wear no corset. This is how Jane Austen described the fashion at this time:

'Breasts *had* been forced up - but 'I learnt from Mrs Tickars's young lady, to my high amusement, that the stays are not made to force the bosom up at all; *that* was a very unbecoming unnatural fashion.'⁴⁶

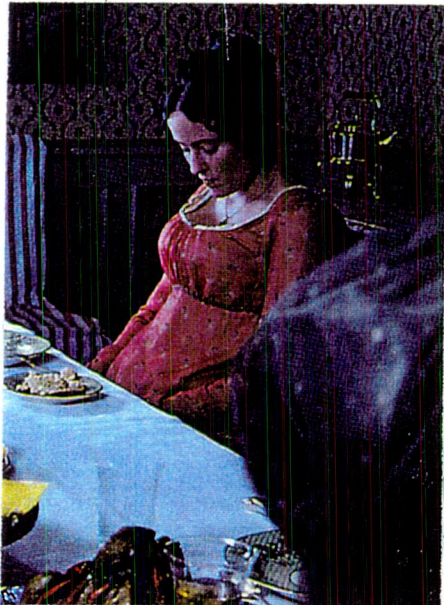


FIGURE 26 : Elizabeth 's uplifted bust line.



FIGURE 27 : The fashion of a natural bustline.
Mlles Mollien by Rouget. 1811

Though not all of the press concerning Elizabeth's uplifted bust was bad:

'There was an article in the *Daily Express* on the 19 October 1995 entitled 'Pride in Your Cleavage', which offered readers in search of the 'classic cleavage' the chance to win a bustier and matching briefs designed by Berlei. This company, which apparently had a rush on their boned corsets, promised in some of its promotional material that its garments would produce 'an authentic *Pride and Prejudice* cleavage'.⁴⁷

This lingerie company, Berlei, also went so far as to claim that they were in fact 'responsible for "giving a lift" to the eye-catching cleavage" of the actresses in the

⁴⁶Honan, 1987, p. 297

⁴⁷Sales, 1996, p. 230



series.⁴⁸ This was of course untrue and Berlei later retracted their statement and added, 'that Berlei's bustier bra was able to re-create the lift given to the Bennet girls in *Pride and Prejudice*, "without the necessity of wearing a corset".⁴⁹

Mr Darcy though, it seems attracted even more media coverage than the ladies of *Pride and Prejudice*. In the book *The Making of Pride and Prejudice*, a full length chapter has been dedicated to Collin Firth and his portrayal of Mr Darcy. He was described in the newspapers as a 'national heartthrob', 'dreamboat', 'dashing', 'dishy' and 'drop-dead gorgeous'..... and 'many newspapers devoted themselves almost exclusively to the question of why Darcy had caught the imagination of the viewing public.⁵⁰ The television critic A A Gill, after being invited to a Regency soiree, decided to find out by dressing in Regency costume for the day. It is one of the 'most popular fancy dress rented out by Angels [and Bermans, the costume hire company]. Mr Darcy has overtaken Robin Hood, Richard the Lionheart and Darth Vader to be top of the props.⁵¹ He attracted plenty of attention and his only explanation was that:

'It was the gear. It triggered a huge flush of Mills & Boon hormones. Four ladies commented coquetishly on the size of my cat flap.'⁵²

It seems Mr Darcy also had the same problem, his costume and body 'figured prominently in the gossip that circulated ceaselessly around the adaptation.⁵³ The main focus of the media attention was on the male trousers, which had reportedly been specially made for the production because the trousers that were available had not been revealing enough. *The Times* awarded Collin Firth and his trousers 'outfit of the year':

⁴⁸Frean, *The Times*, 30 April 1996

⁴⁹Frean, *The Times*, 30 April 1996

⁵⁰Sales, 1996, p. 231/ 233

⁵¹A A Gill, 5 May 1996, *The Sunday Times*, Style, p. 6

⁵²A A Gill, 5 May 1996, *The Sunday Times*, Style, p. 6

⁵³Sales, 1996, p. 230



'Nothing came close to Collin Firth and those trousers....The sight of Firth wearing button flap, full-front breeches sent women everywhere into fainting fits. The Regency dandy's preference for a snug fit added to the garment's charm.'⁵⁴

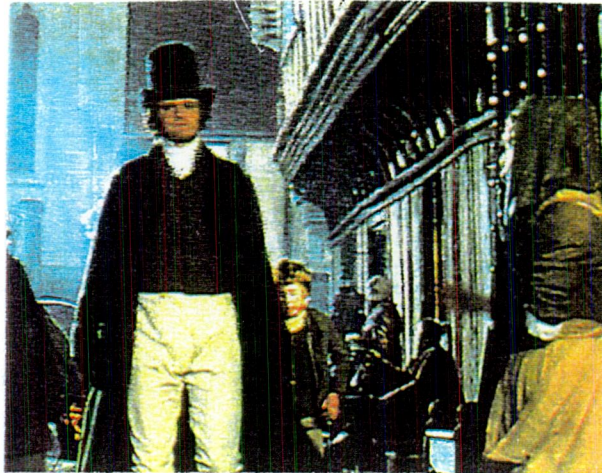


FIGURE 28 : 'Outfit of the year'. Collin Firth as Mr Darcy

The costumes certainly added to media interest in Pride and Prejudice, but it is not costumes alone that make a production, it is primarily the script writing, the directing and the acting. The costumes had a leading role in this production but not the principal one. As Stuart Jeffries points out, in the *Guardian*, costumes aside this is first and foremost and brilliant piece of dramatisation:

'For five minutes, if one could forget the frankly ludicrous trajectory of Elizabeth Bennet's bosom, forget that the soldiers' trousers were all-too-obviously' filled with the joys of Spring, and reveal in the display of acting and directing virtuosity that is a rare commodity on British television.'⁵⁵

⁵⁴The Times, 26 December 1995

⁵⁵Jeffries, 2 November 1995, *Guardian*,



Chapter 3 : Sense and Sensibility

The costumes in Sense and Sensibility do not have a leading role. They are there purely to help the narrative and set up a time frame. As in Pride and Prejudice high standards of authenticity have been followed by the costume designers, Jenny Beavan and John Bright. Their costumes have been set in 1800 - 1805, ten years earlier than Pride and Prejudice. The costumes (fig. 29) are similar in style and silhouette to those from a print from c.1800. (fig. 30) The costumes are less elaborate than in the print and the film accessories are minimal. The main reason for this may be that the Dashwoods are in mourning as their father has recently died.



FIGURE 29 : Sense and Sensibility, off to Delaford for a picnic.



FIGURE 30 : Fashions c. 1800

Mourning in the Regency

In the early nineteenth century mourning 'conventions were as stringent as the better-known requirements of the Victorian age.⁵⁶ These rules were set out for Court wear and 'Every fad and fashion of the aristocratic world was reproduced as carefully

⁵⁶Johnson, 1987, p. 19



as possible in middle-class homes.⁵⁷ Everyone who could afford it went into mourning. Fashion 'magazines included advice and illustrations of mourning dress, particularly if the Royal Courts were in mourning.⁵⁸ The length of mourning varied depending on your relationship to the departed. A wife was in mourning for over a year for her husband and children for at least six months for their father. During this time different stages of mourning were followed. 'First Mourning', 'Second Mourning', 'Ordinary Mourning' and then 'Half-Mourning'.⁵⁹



FIGURE 31 : Mourning dress. c. 1799

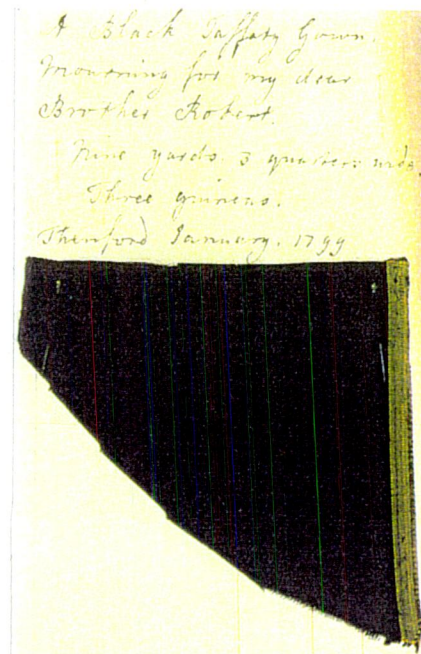


FIGURE 32 : A sample of bombazine from Barbara Johnson's Album. 1799

At each stage the person wore varying degrees of black, black with white and for Half-Mourning 'colours such as white, grey and lilac trimmed with black'⁶⁰ could be worn. Widows, for first mourning, wore 'plain black dresses, ...in the neo-classic style, with black and white accessories....Black cloaks and bonnets, with long, black crape veils thrown over the top and hiding the face were worn outdoors.'⁶¹ (fig.31)

⁵⁷Taylor, 1983, p. 121

⁵⁸Taylor, 1983, p. 123

⁵⁹Taylor, 1983, p. 302

⁶⁰Byrde, 1979, p. 22

⁶¹Taylor, 1983, p. 129



Men wore 'black cloth without buttons on the sleeves or pockets, plain muslin or long lawn cravats and weepers [white cuffs]....Men removed all their gilt buttons, buckles....and replaced them with dull black ones,⁶² and they wore black crape around their hats. When Elizabeth Knight died, Jane Austen who was looking after the Knight boys at the time, writes to Cassandra about their mourning clothes:

'Edward has an old black coat, which will save *his* having a second new one; but I find that black pantaloons are considered by them as necessary, and of course one would not have them made uncomfortable by the want of what is usual on such occasions...'⁶³

Clothes were expensive and it was costly to have new gowns made up. Often clothes were altered or dyed for mourning or if possible just accessories were purchased. As Jane Austen writes in her letters to Cassandra in 1808 and 1814 respectively:

'my mother is preparing mourning for Mrs E. K. [Jane Austen's sister-in-law Elizabeth Knight] - she has picked her old silk pelisse to pieces, & means to have it dyed black for a gown.'⁶⁴

'It may be hardly worthwhile perhaps to have the Gowns so expensively made up; we may buy a cap or a *veil* instead....'⁶⁵

Although black was the usual colour to be worn for mourning, sometimes brown was acceptable, as Jane Austen tells Cassandra in a letter, 'Almost everyone was in mourning last night, but my brown gown did very well,' fabrics used for mourning were 'bombazine and crape....they were of good quality but their dull finish was considered more suitable than the rich, glossy textures of other silks and satins.'⁶⁶ For her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Knight's mourning, Jane Austen writes that she is 'to be in bombazine and crepe...'⁶⁷

⁶² Taylor, 1983, p. 128

⁶³ Le Faye, 1995, Letter 24 October 1808

⁶⁴ Le Faye, 1995, Letter, Friday 7 October 1808

⁶⁵ Le Faye, 1995, Letter, Saturday 5 March 1814

⁶⁶ Byrde, 1979, p. 21

⁶⁷ Le Faye, 1995, Letter, 15 October 1808

Authenticity in the costumes

In Sense and Sensibility, we are first introduced to John and Fanny Dashwood. John is to inherit the Dashwood residence, and as Mr Dashwood has left the girls only a little money John has promised to help them. In figure thirty-three we see John and Fanny getting ready to travel and they are discussing exactly how much 'help' to give his half sisters. Both are dressed in black. John Dashwood is wearing a black double breasted frock coat with black breeches and stockings. His frock coat has no buttons on the pockets and appears to have none on the sleeves. His shirt and neck tie are white and his waistcoat is dark blue, covered in small white embroidered dots. The cuffs of his shirt do not show below the sleeve. Fanny wears a black gown with black lace frills on the bodice. Her sleeves are long. The fabric of her gown looks like silk, with a striped shine. We see them continue their conversation in their carriage on their way to Norland Park. (fig. 34) Again both wear black hats and accessories.



FIGURE 33 : John and Fanny Dashwood.



FIGURE 34 : John and fanny on their way to Norland Park.

Next we are introduced to Marianne and Elinor, John's poor half sisters. Marianne is sitting at the piano in Norland Park, in a large room playing a soft, melancholy tune; her father's favourite. She wears a purple dress with a small golden flower print. (fig.34) The dress is low cut and has a square drawstring neckline. It is gently gathered over the bust and has fitted three-quarter-length sleeves. The dress is full

length, the gathers are to the side of the dress with extra gathering at the back to create fullness throughout the back and through the train. The dress is worn with an organdie white modesty piece, tucked in around the neckline as was the custom of the day for day wear. Marianne also wears a black lace shawl around her shoulders. As seen at Cosprop, (fig. 36) the dress is worn over a pale silk pink petticoat which follows the same empire line of the dress and there is a small roll at the back of the petticoat to give extra fullness to the back gathers. A light corset is also worn under the petticoat. The dress has a front fall opening and draw string neckline, it is also weighted at the bottom of the side seams.



FIGURE 35 : Kate Winslet as Marianne Dashwood.



FIGURE 36 : Marianne's purple dress.

Elinor wears a blue dress. (fig. 37) The fabric appears to be a crepe. This dress follows the same silhouette as Marianne's, it has a round drawstring neckline gathering over the bust and below. The sleeves, also three-quarter-length, are set in and the shoulder seams are set towards the back with side back seams, this gives the effect of narrowing the back. The dress has no train and is slightly shorter than full length, exposing her shoes which are black slipper-like and worn with white stockings. Again it is worn with a modesty piece tucked into the neckline and it has a front fall opening.





FIGURE 37 : Emma Thompson as Elinor Dashwood.



FIGURE 38 : Jemma Jones as Mrs Dashwood.

At this time we are also introduced to Mrs Dashwood (fig. 38), the girls' mother. She is distraught at the prospect of John and Fanny arriving to take over Norland Park. She is wearing what appears to be a black lace dress worn over a white linen dress of the same style. Her dress, similar to that of the girls, also has a rounded neck line and is worn with a white modesty piece. Her sleeves are elbow length with a frilled cuff. She also wears a black lace cap and black lace shawl.

It would appear at this time that John and Fanny Dashwood, and Mrs Dashwood are in first mourning. Elinor and Marianne are perhaps in half mourning, though a child didn't leave first mourning and go into half-mourning for a parent, for at least four and a half months. It is difficult to know how long Mr Dashwood is dead. We see John and Fanny setting out from London on their journey and no doubt it would have taken them a few days to arrive at Norland. There is no indication in the film as to how long they have left things before claiming the house as their own. In the novel Jane Austen writes only this:



'No sooner was his father's funeral over, than Mrs. John Dashwood, without sending any notice of her intention to her mother-in-law, arrived with her child and their attendants.'⁶⁸

People at that time were usually buried within the week of death and therefore presumably not more than two or three weeks could have passed when we are introduced to these characters. If the costume designers were following conventions of the time, both families would have be in first mourning as described.

But perhaps the costume designers felt that if the two families were to wear black for most of the film it would be distracting for the audience. So Mrs Dashwood and her step son, Mr Dashwood, are in full mourning. At this time in fasion 'nothing about mourning dress, either for men or women, must shine or gleam.'⁶⁹ Though Fanny is dressed in black too, her costumes are not plain, they are decorated with lace collars and shiney fabric. The medieval influence in her costumes and the colour also emphasise her mean, witch-like character. The Dashwood girls seem to wear an interpretation of mourning wear. Instead of wearing full mourning dress they have adopted just elements of it. This stops the two protagonists being distanced from the audience as the costumes help the audience identify with the characters. It would be very out of character for Elinor not to be dressed in mourning, considering she is constantly warning Marianne about the dangers of setting 'propriety at naught.'⁷⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that dark blue was considered correct for any stage of mourning, but Elinor's dress is very plain and the fabric is dull which is correct and she also wears a black lace shawl.

While at Norland, the principle characters continue to wear evidence of mourning. Mrs Dashwood, John and Fanny wear mostly black for undress and dress. The girls, Marianne and Elinor, continue to wear plain dresses with little or no

⁶⁸Austen, 1811, S & S, p. 4

⁶⁹Taylor, 1983, p. 128

⁷⁰Thompson, 1995, p. 106



ornamentation and black lace shawls. Elinor with her white muslin dress, wears a black ribbon bow at the centre of her neckline, (fig. 38). Mrs Dashwood and Margaret, her youngest sister, (fig. 40) also wear similar bows, Marianne wears none. The black of the bows are presumably a sign of mourning, though there is no evidence to support this.



FIGURE 39 : Elinor wears a black bow on her white muslin dress.

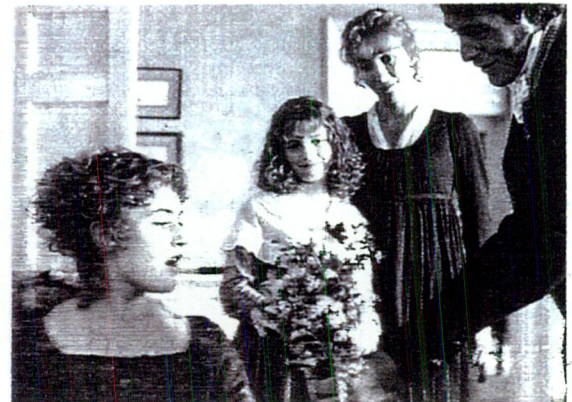


FIGURE 40 : Margret also wears a black bow.

After several months Mrs Dashwood and her daughters leave Norland and go to their new home at Barton Cottage. Elinor and Marianne no longer wear black. They continue to wear their plain dresses and while Willoughby is courting Marianne she wears only peach over white muslin dresses. Once he leaves her she goes back to wearing the same dresses as before. Mrs Dashwood is still in mourning wear. She remains in black and sometimes also correctly wears brown and burgundy.

Their costumes do not differ greatly from other characters in Sense and Sensibility. They do not stand out as being in mourning. Though there is one character who does and that is Colonel Brandon. He has no apparent reason for being in mourning. His character is withdrawn and melencholy. As can be seen in figure thirtynine he is dressed in black, with a fashionable stripped waistcoat. He wears the



colour of mourning everyday because his character is in mourning, for his lost love Eliza and the happiness that was denied to him.



FIGURE 41 : Alan Rickman as Colonel Brandon

Mourning is a central theme in the costumes in Sense and Sensibility, more obvious in some characters costumes than in others. It would seem that only Mrs Dashwood and John Dashwood are in mourning clothes throughout the film. Although Fanny is dressed in black, it seems more to emphasise her character traits rather than out of respect for her father-in-law. As already suggested the Dashwood sisters wear only elements of mourning wear while at Norland Park. The overall tone of the costumes is insipid. Dull fabrics have been used in muted tones for the principle characters with minimal decoration or ornamentation. Although it is not immediately obvious that the Dashwoods are in mourning costumes, on examination it becomes clear that they are wearing some elements of mourning.



CONCLUSION

Pride and Prejudice runs for six hours enabling it to dramatise the entire novel. Sense and Sensibility, with a bigger budget and larger target audience, runs for just over two hours. Because of this, the story and the language were more simplified than in Pride and Prejudice. Both productions have been highly successful. Each has used a different approach in adapting Jane Austen's novels.

Jane Austen wrote about life. Her novels are a satirical look at life that surrounded her. Jane Austen describes this world in her letters to Cassandra. These letters were never meant to be read by any one except Cassandra. So Jane Austen described life in detail as she saw it in her own words. Her novels are a formal expression of this.

Pride and Prejudice is a story about life. To make the novel appealing to a modern audience this dramatisation has looked to the world that Jane Austen was describing in her letters, rather than just to the novel as Sense and Sensibility has done. Sense and Sensibility is an adaptation of a classic novel and the audience are never let forget that. There is no feeling in it that they are watching real life in Regency England. Whereas in Pride and Prejudice, there is a feeling of watching a drama about real people, set in the 1800s.

The costumes in both adaptations have been authentically reproduced in the style and silhouette of the period. In Pride and Prejudice a certain licence has been taken with regard to the practice of wearing modesty pieces during the day, allowing the full focus of attention to be on the bosom, in particular Elizabeth Bennet. The costumes have a central role, working to underline character traits and to tell the audience about the different characters both individually and as a whole.



In Sense and Sensibility, although the costumes tell the audience about the characters and set the time, they are not a focus in the drama. The costumes are functional, their role is not important and they do not draw undue attention. Insipid costumes are used to show that the Dashwoods are in mourning, although I do not think that this is immediately obvious because Elinor, Marianne and Margaret do not wear the black of first mourning. The overall tone is dolorous.

In Pride and Prejudice the costumes are a focal point because they go beyond being merely functional, they become part of the characters. We no longer see them as period costumes telling us about the characters and the time. We regard them as clothes worn by people, as we would present fashions. The costumes have been so successful, that Regency styles have become fashionable for women's wear as a result of the Jane Austen revival.⁷¹ Pride and Prejudice is portraying the life that Jane Austen described in her letters. The costumes have placed the characters back in Regency England. Pride and Prejudice is a costume classic.

⁷¹See: Maire Claire, November 1996, p. 182 & February 1997, p. 99



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- Letter recieved from Sandie Ireland of Crosprop, dated 17 October 1996.
- Visit to Jane Austen's Restored House in Chawton. ^
- Visit to The Victoria And Albert Museum. ^

