Articles

Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice: the Relationship between Text and Film

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Introduction

If Shakespeare is the king of the English classics, Jane Austen is the queen. Shakespeare's plays themselves are adaptations of various sources such as Holinshed's Chronicles, Plautus' Menaechmi and Boccaccio's Decameron, and they have been in turn transformed into films and novels. Jane Austen's novels have inspired many film directors and have been frequently adapted into films and television series. From 1995 to 1996, there were as many as six adaptations, including the highly successful Pride and Prejudice (1995), directed by Simon Langton and screenplay by Andrew Davis, and Sense and Sensibility (1995) with Ang Lee as director and Emma Thompson as screenwriter. Both novels were made into television series or films constantly afterwards; for example, Pride and Prejudice, directed by Joe Wright and adapted by Deborah Moggach was produced in 2005.

Interestingly, the film adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* has earned a good reputation, whereas the novel itself is often seen as inferior to *Pride and Prejudice*,¹⁾ which is the most famous and popular novel among Austen's works. While Ang Lee and Emma Thompson's *Sense and Sensibility* in 1995 was both commercially and critically successful, Wright and Moggach's *Pride and Prejudice* was not universally well received.²⁾ It has a polarized reputation: some have adored it, as is seen from the fact that it was nominated for four Oscar awards including Keira Knightley as Elizabeth for the best actress, and others not so much. Considering the contradictory reputation between the novels and the film adaptations, this essay aims to examine the relationship between the novels and the film adaptations and investigate the characteristics of successful film adaptations.

I. Sense and Sensibility

As for *Sense and Sensibility*, three major differences can be found between the novel and the film: the characterisation of the male protagonists, the role of the youngest sister Margaret and the relationship between Elinor and the youngest sister Marianne. First of all, as Mooneyham points out, in the novel, Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon are not striking characters as heroes.³⁾ When Edward first appears in the novel, it says:

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Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address. He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open affectionate heart. His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement.⁴)

From the beginning, Austen makes it clear that Edward is not physically attractive nor sociable. However, as soon as he is first introduced in the novel, readers are told that there is already 'a growing attachment' (17) between Elinor and Edward, Mrs. Dashwood's comments are uttered before Edward even speaks a word, so readers cannot learn how they became close and how they were attracted to each other. In the later episodes, as Marvin Mudrick remarks, there are no events that prove Elinor's praise.5) Therefore, readers can understand that Edward is amiable, has sense and is capable of being affectionate, but it is probably difficult for them to fully empathise with Elinor. It is more likely that the readers agree with Marianne who thinks that Elinor has blind partiality to Edward (21).

The same thing can also be said about Colonel Brandon. Austen describes Brandon as 'silent and grave', his appearance as 'not handsome' but 'not unpleasing', his countenance as 'sensible', and his address is 'gentlemanlike' (36). While Elinor has a high opinion of Colonel as well and she even thinks he is the only person who could be a pleasing company and friend among new acquaintances after her family moved to the Barton Cottage, again, Austen does not provide solid evidential stories for this.

In addition, both Edward and Colonel do not speak except when absolutely necessary—Colonel does not even have a proper conversation with Marianne. In fact, Austen sometimes avoids the direct speech even though they are part of the conversation (67, 100, 318). Consequently, Edward and Colonel's affection towards the heroines are little shown verbally in the text. Although the narrator, Elinor and other characters sometimes observe Edward's love for Elinor and Colonel's for Marianne, both heroes rarely show their feelings directly for themselves. Since the story is told mostly through Elinor's perspective, readers can learn how much Elinor loves Edward and how much she respects Colonel, but the lack of the display of affection from Edward and Colonel makes them less lively and attractive. This is further emphasized because Marianne's handsome lover Willoughby is depicted as a fairly open and active character, so that it becomes easier for readers to empathize with this passionate young couple.

However, in the film, as many critics and Thompson herself explains, Edward and Colonel appear more often and are more expressive.⁶⁾ Additional scenes in earlier part of the film for Edward, such as deepening the bond with Margaret in the atlas episode scene and the sword fighting scene, or reaching out to Elinor by giving his handkerchief to her, show how Edward and Elinor gradually develop their attachment.

The transformation of Colonel Brandon from a gloomy middle aged man to a romantic lover seems to be a little bit more difficult. Austen introduces him to readers as follows:

He was silent and grave. His appearance however was not unpleasing, in spite of his being in the opinion of Marianne and Margaret an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five and thirty; but though his face was not handsome his countenance was sensible, and his address was particularly gentlemanlike. (36)

Elinor likes him, but to Marianne, who is seventeen, "thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony."(39) Colonel Brandon's tragic love in his youth is suggested from time to time and he admits that "It was *that* that threw this gloom" (195) for himself. Austen finally reveals that he used to be a passionate lover but that is not enough for Marianne to love him. Austen's comment is sarcastic when Marianne decides to marry him:

She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another!—and *that* other, a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event to of a former attachment, whom two years before, she had considered too old to be married—and who still sought the constitutionals safe-guard of a flannel waistcoat! (352)

Elinor's sense that 'a better acquaintance with the world is what I look forward to as her greatest possible advantage'(57) would be reasonable to the readers in the nineteenth century, but it would be hard to understand for some modern audience that Marianne's marriage with Brandon is the evidence of the triumph of sense over love.

Thus, Thompson revises Brandon suitable for a modern romantic film. Nachumi remarks:

Indeed, the movie works hard to create the impression that Brandon is the perfect romantic hero for Marianne. Specifically, Thompson's screenplay revises the novel so that Brandon's later actions mirror Willoughby's earlier behaviour.⁷⁾

Thompson adjusts the actions of Colonel Branden to be similar to Willoughby, such as saving Marianne in the rain and reading poems to her, presumably so that he could become more romantic and attractive than what he is in the text. Furthermore, before Colonel goes to the Barton Cottage to pick up Mrs. Dashwood for a sick Marianne, he says to Elinor, 'Give me an occupation, Miss Dashwood, or I shall run mad', whereas there are no actual words exchanged in the novel. In order to complete the attempt to make the heroes more prominent than Willoughby, as Samuelian mentions, Thompson completely excludes the scene of Willoughby's letter⁸⁾ and the long conversation with Elinor. Thus, Branden is not be overshadowed by an attractive Willoughby in the latter part of the film. Adding kind and heroic behaviours and spoken words to Edward and Colonel, as well as eliminating the risk of Willoughby's reappearance as a romantic hero, helps them to be transformed from silent and slightly boring characters into attractive and romantic heroes in the film.

Secondly, as Scohlz and Looser remark, the youngest sister Margaret has been changed most outstandingly in the film.⁹⁾ In the novel, Austen describes:

Margaret, the other sister, was a good-humoured well-disposed girl; but as she already imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance, without having much of her sense, she did not, at thirteen, bid fair to equal her sisters at a more advanced period of life. (9)

Thus, she rarely appears in the novel and is 'little more than a plot convenience, to provide a companion for Mrs. Dashwood whilst her elder sisters are in London'.¹⁰⁾ However, in the film, the role of Margaret becomes crucial in two ways. First, as already mentioned, through the scenes with Margaret, Thompson succeeds in making Edward an impressive and attractive character. Second, Margaret is given a role that is symbolic of a future when women can be more liberated. Collins argues:

What I would like to focus on now is the way in which Thompson infuses the character of Margaret with an utterly twentieth-century persona. ... Throughout the film, Margaret seems to have more freedom than her sisters, both because she is a child, and because it is she who represents the future generation in the

film.11)

This change for Margaret in the film has an important influence on the relationship between Elinor and Marianne as well. In the novel, as Hudson says, both Elinor and Marianne are much closer to each other than to Margaret:

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Margaret Dashwood is younger than her sisters; moreover, although she has a great deal of Marianne's romance, she possesses little of her sense. Consequently, Margaret is left out of the superior circle of Elinor and Marianne, since she is not the intellectual equal of her sisters.¹²⁾

This is clear from the fact that Elinor always cares about Marianne and Marianne expresses her esteem and affection for Elinor. Their affection towards each other remains unchanged but the relationship among the three sisters is slightly different in the film.

The change in the relationship among them is mainly caused by the adjustment of their ages. In the novel, Elinor is nineteen, Marianne sixteen, and Margaret is thirteen years old, while in the film Margaret is set to be two years younger. Although the ages of Marianne and Elinor are not clarified, Kate Winslet, who played Marianne, was nineteen, which is near the original age, but Emma Thompson, who played Elinor, was thirty-six at the time of production. Therefore, in terms of their ages, Marianne is nearer to Margaret, not Elinor. In addition, after her father's death, Elinor advises her mother about a new house and is concerned about the family's financial problems, such as the necessity of cutting the consumption of sugar and beef, and it is her who gives a farewell speech to their servants. Hence, Elinor can be considered to be more like a second mother figure rather than a little older sister who has more sense than Marianne.

The success of the film owes much to Thom-

son's interpretation of Elinor who has a rational and cool sense but does not lose attractiveness nor the sympathy of the audience. Thompson's maturity makes Elinor more attractive than she is in the novel because a nineteen-year-old calm and too sensible woman would be boring and less attractive to the modern audience than to the Regency readers. As Marianne accidentally says, 'your merit cries out upon myself' (247), we are likely to be tired of Elinor's virtues, but if she is more than ten years older than Marianne and a motherly figure, her sense will be more plausible and acceptable.

In the beautiful countryside scene added to the film where Elinor and Edward are riding horses and speaking, Elinor mildly complains about the situation of women in the Regency period:

Elinor:	You talk of feeling idle and useless.
	Imagine how that is compounded
	when one has no hope and no
	choice of any occupation whatsoever.
Edward:	Our circumstances are, therefore,
	precisely the same.
Elinor:	Except that you will inherit your for-
	tune. We cannot even earn ours.
Edward:	Perhaps Margaret is right.
Elinor:	Right?
Edward:	Piracy is our only options.

In the era when marriage with a rich man was the only way that enabled women to live a decent life, both Elinor and Marianne had to be depicted as being constrained by such a reality. In Austen's novels, the reality of her time is the prerequisite of the world of her novels, so Elinor's complaint is modest and the modern audience is incited to expect the coming age of hope in the youngest sister Margaret.

II. Pride and Prejudice

The policy behind the film production of Pride

and Prejudice in 2005 is opposite that of the film version of Sense and Sensibility in 1995: the actions and speeches of the protagonist Darcy have been cut unhesitatingly. Despite the well-known fact that Austen is reluctant to write heroes' courting scenes throughout her works, the novel has relatively a lot of staight expressions of love by Darcy to Elizabeth. Before the Netherfield ball, where Darcy asks Elizabeth for a dance, Darcy praises Elizabeth's eyes a couple of times, saying 'I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow', 13) or retorting a jealous Caroline plainly. Thinking nothing of Caroline's innuendo 'this adventure has rather affected your admiration for her fine eyes'(36), he cooly argues that her eyes have been 'brightened by the exercise'. In fact, Darcy often fixes his eyes on Elizabeth and Austen makes his partiality for Elizabeth clearer by stating, '[D]arcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her' (51), or 'He began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention' (57). These frequent indications of his interest in Elizabeth emphasizes how deeply Darcy has been charmed by her.

Furthermore, Darcy's characterization is well described by his vivid conversation and compassionate actions. In fact, *Pride and Prejudice* is the most conversational novel of all Austen's works and this is the only novel among her works where the hero verbally declares his love and asks a heroine to marry him, and Darcy actually does it twice. Moreover, for the sake of Elizabeth, he secretly searches and finds Wickham and Lydia and convinces Wickham to marry Lydia by giving him a large dowry. In those respects, compared to Edward and Colonel Brandon, it can be said that Darcy is clearly characterized as a passionate and devoted hero by Austen.

In contrast to the text, however, the film version of *Pride and Prejudice* in 2005 reduces the amount of Darcy's conversation. It is a sharp contrast to the notable and popular BBC version of Pride and Prejudice in 1995 which adds several additional actions to Darcy.14) Although it will be unfair to compare the two-hour-long film with more than five-hour-long TV drama series, the insufficiency of Darcy's characterization in the film is so conspicuous. Sometimes the audience may fail to grasp the intension of Darcy's speech because most of his speeches is cut and only the memorable and impressive utterances are left out of context. In the long sequential conversation scenes where Elizabeth and Caroline are walking in Bingley's house, for example, Darcy's blunt but thoughtful comments are not well demonstrated in the film. Along with the lack of Darcy's utterances about Elizabeth's eyes, these cuts of Darcy's speeches make it difficult for us to recognize his merits and interest in her before the Netherfield ball. Hence, his asking her for a dance seems rather abrupt, and the gradual change of Elizabeth's feeling for him becomes less convincing in the film.

If we regard the film as a romantic love story, it must be admitted that both Darcy and his rival Wickham are treated so lightly. They do not appear very often and do not speak much in the film. Before Wickham elopes with Lydia, he appears only one sequential scenes where Elizabeth and sisters meet him at Meryton. They encounter Darcy and Bingley, and then Wickham tells Elizabeth about his feud with Darcy. It can be said that the film puts less emphasis on Darcy and Wickham and their episodes.

Not only the male characters but also the female ones—except for Elizabeth—are treated more fleetingly than in the novel. As has often been pointed out, the bond of sisters is one of the crucial themes in Austen's novels. As Hudson writes, 'The heroine forms a close alliance with a sister, a relationship that often proves highly conductive to their development as individuals'.¹⁵ *Sense and Sensibility* ends with this sentence: [A]nd among the merits and the happiness of Elinor and Marianne, let it not be ranked as the least considerable, that though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves, or producing coolness between their husbands. (353)

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth and Jane constantly confide in each other and discuss their important personal matters. At the end of the novel, it says, '[J]ane and Elizabeth, in addition to every other source of happiness, were within thirty miles of each other' (364). The main sisters in both novels finally settle in places near to each other and Austen implies that it is one of their sources of happiness. Sisterly love is indispensable for the happiness of Austen's heroines.

However, in the film Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth seems to keep a little distance even from Jane. She does not tell Jane about Darcy's marriage proposal and the subsequent letter on Wickham although this is probably the biggest turning point for her judgment on Darcy. Moreover, in the earlier part of the film, Elizabeth sometimes seems similar to her insensible younger sisters, sharing 'some of the giggling impulsiveness of Lydia and Kitty'.¹⁶⁾ Although the film starts with the scene where Elizabeth is reading a book and her hobby of reading is emphasized throughout, it seems that Elizabeth's youth is more emphasized. As Geraghty suggests, Elizabeth in the film seems less mature and has more room to improve than in the novel:

The development of her feelings for Darcy then is accompanied by learning how to grow up. She learns to hide her feelings from others, to be more aware of the dangers of her younger sisters' behaviour, and most crucially to move away from her father as she moves toward her future husband.¹⁷ Since there are less depictions of Darcy, Wickham and the strong sisterly bond with Jane, in addition to the emphasis on the immaturity of Elizabeth, this film adaptation seems to focus on the maturation plot of Elizabeth alone rather than on a love comedy involving her sisters and her friend Charlotte. Elizabeth in the film is more conspicuous and outstanding than in the novel. The impressive camera work taken from a helicopter with Elizabeth precariously standing alone on a desolate cliff symbolizes her solitary but resolute character. She is freer from the family and social bonds in general and more independent than in the novel.

Furthermore, several characters in the film, including Elizabeth, speaks more directly or strongly than in the novel. For example, after seeing Mr. Bingley's attachment to Jane at the Netherfield ball, Mr. Bingley's sister Caroline accusingly says, 'Charles, you cannot be serious'. Mr. Bingley himself also sometimes speaks in an informal manner. When he finally asks Jane to marry him, he says, 'First, I must tell you I've been the most unmitigated and comprehensive ass'. Also, when Elizabeth shows her surprise at Charlotte's marriage to snobbish Mr. Collins, Charlotte cries, 'Don't you dare judge me!' while Austen writes 'why should you be surprised, my dear Eliza?'(122)

As for Elizabeth, when she confronts Lady Catherine and is asked if she will promise not to accept Darcy's proposal in the future, she definitely says, 'I will not and I certainly never shall', and after that, to prying family members, she says, 'For once in your life, leave me alone!' Admitting that they are parts of her refutation against Lady Catherine's irrational and arrogant argument, these speeches of the film version possibly give a little more of an aggressive impression. Those utterances sound like what people in the twenty-first century are likely to use, but not people in the nineteenth century. As Geraghty points out, those additional or emphasized traits may suggest that Elizabeth in the film is more modern figure than in the novel.18)

Conclusion

It can be argued that those differences between the two films and the original novels are rooted in the differences of the features of the medium and the differences between the times. As Stam and Bluestone suggests, films require much more consideration about budget and making profit than novels.¹⁹⁾ It is natural that film makers make an effort to attract the audience, whereas novelists are allowed to pursue their creative intentions more freely without regard of the income at the box office. This does not mean Austen ignored the readers. She wrote her characters in accordance with the value and the viewpoint of her time. Mudrick argues about *Sense and Sensibility*:

Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon, the men who live by form. ... If Edward might break his secret engagement to the girl he no longer even likes or at least confide his problem to the girl he now loves, Elinor would be spared most of the anxiety that shadow her; if Colonel Brandon might for a moment qualify or set aside his code, which permits him to fight a duel with Willoughby but not to tell Marianne's family the truth about her prospective husband. Marianne's mistake would have been evident much earlier, at least to Elinor, and perhaps with considerately less, surely with less prolonged and bewildered, suffering for Marianne. But Edward and the Colonel are honourable, and honour is adherence to form: to formal betrothals, to the convention of personal reticence, to the gentleman's code which may call the evildoer to account on behalf of his past victims but not, apparently, of his future ones. ... and highest virtue is adherence to social forms at whatever personal cost.20)

For Austen's original readers, Edward and Colonel could be sufficient and worthy heroes because of their loyalty to the social norm. On the other hand, as Nixon points out, for the today's audience, especially for the female audience, it is more important to be expressive and passionate than to be loyal to the norm:

While Austen's male protagonists prove their worth by meeting a demand for social restraint, they prove their worth to moviegoers by meeting a demand for emotional display. Both the novels and films enact their respective time periods' visions of the correct balance between emotional display and restraint: Austen's vision of the late eighteenth century favours restraint; the films' vision favours display.²¹⁾

In addition, it is noteworthy that there is a tendency to focus on gender in the modern film adaptations. Geraghty mentions:

[C]lassic adaptations throw particular light on class and gender. In dealing with gender, classic adaptations often push contemporary debates about women and their position back into the past, and the figure of the heroine testing out her desire for independence is a familiar if sometimes anachronistic figure in classic adaptations.²²)

When this is taken into account, it is understandable that Thompson and Lee give a crucial role to Margaret as a representative of a freer female in the future generation in the film version of *Sense and Sensibility*. On the other hand, Moggach's and Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* focuses on Elizabeth's growth which is offered from her point of view.

The changes we have discussed above can be regarded as the result of different needs and targets between novels at the time of Austen and contemporary films. Considering the modern audience's tastes, the heroes of *Sense and Sensibility* are shadowy enough to need significant changes in the film adaptation. The protagonists, Edward and Colonel are often absent from the scenes, or do not stand out because of their reticent personalities even though they are present. Therefore, when Emma Thompson adapted this novel into the film, she increased their actions and made them more romantic and attractive while reducing the appearance of handsome and passionate Willoughby.

The adaptations for the women characters are also very effective. Margaret's role works to emphasize and add to Edward's attractiveness. Furthermore, she has become an active and more liberated character than her sisters and gives the audience the impression that she might be a symbol of the freedom of women in the future. In addition to Margaret's extended role, the age of Elinor, who is much older than in the novel, has a great influence on the sisters' relationship. Marianne seems to be closer to Margaret than in the novel, and Elinor can be regarded as a motherly figure rather than a sister close in age. Luckily, however, this change of Elinor's age contributes to recreating Elinor into a character who is more natural and acceptable to the modern audience while also adding integrity to the film. She has become the stable pivot of the story and charmed both the modern audience and Austen fans alike.

On the other hand, Pride and Prejudice's hero, Darcy, shows his affection to Elizabeth more openly than any other of Austen's heroes. He is intended to be seen as a romantic lover. However, in the film, the presence of both Darcy and his rival Wickham is minimized and the focus is fixed more on Elizabeth alone. Darcy's change of heart is not shown by his speech but mainly by the change of costume from stiff and formal clothes to a softer and casual appearance. In a sense, it is a very suitable method for films which make use of the power of images in a visually appealing way. Such techniques as the sudden obliteration of other people at the Netherfield ball, the close-up of Darcy's bare hand when he helps Elizabeth into a carriage, and the long shot when Elizabeth gazes many naked sculptures in Darcy's house convey messages

which reveal the characters' inner truth. They are truly cinematic scenes which suggest both Elizabeth and Darcy are fascinated with each other and they are not apathetic to physical attraction.

These cinematic representations, however, dilute Austen's detailed character description of Darcy and Elizabeth and the anxious outcome of their love. In the process of moulding Elizabeth into a more modern woman, her speech has become stronger than in the novel and the film has lost the original attractiveness of Elizabeth, who has a reserved, lively and playful disposition—a complex mixture of Elinor and Marianne.

It is true that only 'fidelity' to the original should not be pursued when we read or see adaptations, but it would be possible for a successful film to have a convincing power to the audience who has ever read Austen's novels. Even with much emphasis on images and cinematic features, and without Austen's witty repartee and sarcasm, it would be possible to recreate a self-realizing story of a young woman in the Regency era in the modern film of *Pride and Prejudice*, if the screenplay was revised more carefully and were well balanced with the superb cinematic techniques.

[Notes]

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