Beyond Philology No. 22/3, 2025
ISSN 1732-1220, eISSN 2451-1498

https://doi.org/10.26881/bp.2025.3.07

The nostalgic chronotope of the English country house in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Death Comes to Pemberley*

URSZULA TERENTOWICZ-FOTYGA

Received 18.12.2024,
received in revised form 8.07.2025,
accepted 10.07.2025.

Abstract

The article proposes to discuss the representations of Pemberley as an expression of the country house ideal in *Pride and Prejudice,* Jane Austen's novel and its 1995 adaptation, and in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, P. D. James's book and the television series, in the context of manorial nostalgia. I want to argue that by changing the genre and reinterpreting the principal conflicts and characters, the sequel redefines significantly the nostalgic impulse associated with Austen's novel. A comparative analysis of the changing patterns of manorial idealizations across the four narratives will demonstrate how the nostalgic chronotope is constructed and deconstructed and how the semiotic modelling of space changes in response to the intermedial translation between fiction and film. The paper will locate the analysis in a broader context of the country house literary tradition and manorial representations in heritage films.

Keywords

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, adaptation, country house ideal, nostalgia

Angielski arystokratyczny dwór jako nostalgiczny chronotop w powieściach *Duma i uprzedzenie* i *Śmierć przybywa do Pemberley* oraz ich serialowych adaptacjach

Abstrakt

Artykuł ma na celu omówienie różnych reprezentacji Pemberley jako ideału angielskiego, arystokratycznego dworu. Analiza nostalgicznego wymiaru tego toposu oparta jest na powieści Jane Austen *Duma i uprzedzenie* oraz jej serialowej adaptacji z 1995 roku, jak również powieści P. D. James *Śmierć przybywa do Pemberley* i opartego na niej serialu telewizyjnego. Zmieniając gatunek i reinterpretując główne konflikty oraz postacie, sequel znacząco redefiniuje nostalgiczny wymiar tej przestrzeni wyraźnie obecny w powieści Austen. Analiza porównawcza zmieniających się wzorców idealizacji w czterech narracjach ma na celu ukazanie, w jaki sposób nostalgiczny chronotop jest konstruowany i dekonstruowany oraz jak semiotyczne modelowanie przestrzeni zmienia się w odpowiedzi na intermedialne tłumaczenie pomiędzy fikcją a filmem. Artykuł osadza analizę w szerszym kontekście angielskiej tradycji literackiej oraz filmowej związanej z ideałem arystokratycznego dworu.

Słowa kluczowe

Jane Austen, *Duma i uprzedzenie*, *Śmierć przybywa do Pemberley*, adaptacja, idealizacja, nostalgia

1. Introduction

From the 1980s, Jane Austen's novels and their film adaptations have been central for the debate about English nostalgia and its close relations with heritage. The works were often criticised for creating a "fantasy version of England" and promoting "a skewed view of English life by privileging the upper class, showing a monocultural society, [and] indulging in nostalgia for

an England that never existed" (Troost 2007: 87, 80). The polite, rural community, imbued in a slow-paced rhythm of life, portrayed in the films and the novels was said to promote a perfect "retreat from the present, […] offering images of stability at a time of upheaval and a sense of continuity in a time of change" (Hill 1999: 74–75).

Austen's resonance with the discourse of nostalgia has been discussed by numerous critics and the spatial iconography of the English country house remains central to many of these analyses (see e.g. Higson 2011, Collins 2001, Dames 2001). The grand estate, the central locus of Austen's artistic universe, functions as a perfect embodiment of the nostalgic chronotope. Whether championed as an emblem of national identity, the locus of tradition and a sense of continuity or criticised for offering an imaginary escape from the turbulent present, it remains crucial for the debate about idealized visions of the past. In the context of Austen's adaptations, critics addressed questions that are central for the heritage debate: "what we are nostalgic for and why now. […] What speaks so effectively and eloquently in these remakes to present-day needs and fantasies? What plots, what texts, what scripts are these films, rewrites, and objects (re)making?" (Pucci and Thompson 2003: 2).

Building on and extending these analyses, the article proposes to focus on the contemporary revisions of the nostalgic chronotope by examining the intertextual dialogue with Austen's most idealistic representation of the ancestral home, the aristocratic seat of Fitzwilliam Darcy.[1] The comparative analysis will focus on the representations of Pemberley in *Pride and*

[1] Mikhail Bakhtin in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" uses the concept of the chronotope to analyse "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 1981: 84). For him, the chronotope is the structural pivot of the novel; it functions as "the organizing center for the fundamental events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (Bakhtin 1981: 250).

Prejudice, the novel and the 1995 adaptation, and in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, the book and the television series. It will be argued that by changing the genre and reinterpreting the principal conflicts and characters, P. D. James's novel and its adaptation redefine significantly the nostalgic impulse associated with the country house ideal. A comparative analysis of the changing patterns of manorial idealizations across the four narratives will demonstrate how the nostalgic chronotope is constructed and deconstructed and how the semiotic modelling of space changes in response to the intermedial translation between fiction and film. The article builds on my earlier research into Jane Austen's dialogue with the country house literary tradition and the first part, focusing on Pemberley as an expression of the ideal estate, summarizes the findings formulated in more detail elsewhere (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2018). These initial remarks offer a conceptual and analytical foundation for the detailed analyses of the intertextual and intermedial redefinitions of the manorial chronotope in James's novel and the two adaptations.

2. Constructing the ideal: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

As I demonstrated in more detail elsewhere (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2018), when read in the context of manorial literary tradition, *Pride and Prejudice* can be interpreted as Austen's most significant dialogue with the country house ideal, inherited from the seventeenth-century country house poem. G. R. Hibbard (1956: 159) explains that at the core of the country house poem is "the deep concern with the social function of the great house in the life of the community and in the understanding of the reciprocal interplay of man and nature in the creation of a good life". The defining principle of the country house ideal is thus ethical; the estate is meant to represent a proper attitude to life, to nature and to other people. The theme is dramatized in two interrelated motifs: the harmonious coexistence of man and nature and the

principle of noblesse oblige. The first emphasizes the natural beauty and serenity of the landscape, the second the role of a benevolent owner and his responsibility for the well-being of the community. When combined, they offer a positive contrast to luxurious yet morally corrupt estates represented, for example, by Mansfield Park and by the menacing houses in gothic fiction.

The two motifs crucial for the construction of the country house ideal are well developed in *Pride and Prejudice*. Although the reader is informed about Darcy's wealth early in the novel, the few descriptions of the estate that Austen provides clearly play down the luxury and splendour of the house. In fact, the interiors of Pemberley house are left undescribed throughout the novel and the focus is firmly on the natural and unaffected beauty of the landscape. What is more, the role of Darcy as an ideal master, taking care of his servants and tenants, is brought centre-stage. Linked to the aesthetics of the picturesque (Batey 1996: 67–77) and functioning as a metonymic embodiment of its owner, the country house generates a number of idealising and nostalgic meanings. At a symbolic level, it represents an ideal home, a well-functioning country house community and a proper relation between nature and civilisation. At the level of the plot, it brings the resolution of the novel's principal conflicts. In effect, the novel reflects well "the main principles of the country-house ethos, as expressed in the country house poems – that the greatness of the house consists not in the splendour and luxury of the buildings but in the greatness, morality and hospitality of the owners and that the beauty of the estate lies not in art and artifice but in nature" (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2018: 306). As Alistair Duckworth aptly argues, the vision of Pemberley as "an admirable model of society" stands in contrast to Mansfield Park, which is often interpreted as Austen's most critical engagement with the patrician order (Duckworth 1994: 140–141). While Mansfield Park represents a deplorable triumph of individuality, Pemberley symbolizes "a model estate, possessing those indications of value that Jane Austen

everywhere provides in her descriptions of properly run estates [of] a traditional, social and ethical orientation" (Duckworth 1994: 122–123). It stands for the value of the community, which overcomes social fragmentation and personal disparities, the differences "between classes in the context of society as a whole, between minds in the smaller context of the home" (Duckworth 1994: 116).

Yet, as Raymond Williams's (1993: 31) study demonstrates, the idealization of the ancestral home is "inevitably a mystification". The principal blunder lies in the vision of "an innate bounty" (Williams 1993: 33) of nature seemingly giving off itself, whereby the estate is presented as "provident land […] in which all things come naturally to man, for his use and enjoyment and without his effort" (Williams 1993: 31). Moreover, the idealization of the country house community entails bracketing out of labour and the relations of power that the patrician order was based on. By focusing on the benevolence and responsibility of the landlord, it glosses over the drudgery of servants and tenants. The country house ideal, Williams argues, is inevitably rooted in a nostalgic mystification of the past, reflecting "a well-known habit of using the past, the 'good old days,' as a stick to beat the present […] to cover and to evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time" (Williams 1993: 12, 45).

The idealization of Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice* depends on bracketing out the social system that the estate stands for. By focusing on the landscape, portrayed as the pastoral harmony of man and nature, and on the representation of Darcy as an ideal landowner, the novel glosses over the feudal relations of power and the labour that goes into constructing the seemingly natural beauty of the estate. While servants are not completely absent, their work is not dramatized either. Mrs Reynold's function is limited to expressing her praise for the landlord; the gardener's work is shown only to enhance the natural character of the landscape; when tenants are mentioned, they are so only in the context of Darcy's benevolence. This is not to say that Austen's novel does not represent the social reality of the

time and numerous critics have convincingly argued otherwise. But if *Pride and Prejudice* portrays the problems and tensions of Austen's era, they are kept at a safe distance from Pemberley. The social critique is relocated to other spaces of the novel, both dramatically and symbolically. The problematic portrayal of hereditary laws affecting the lives of the Bennet sisters concentrates on Longbourn, the middle class rise in status and disregard for the principle of noblesse oblige is associated with Netherfield, the arrogance of the aristocracy is attributed to Lady Catherine de Burgh and her extravagant mansion. The only blame that Pemberley has to face is the blame of pride, which is ultimately cured by Darcy's transformation and by a distinction between improper pride (laid at Lady Catherine's door) and proper pride, justified and appreciated as an inherent part of noblesse oblige (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2018: 302–305). Once cured of the taint of improper pride, Pemberley can take on the full symbolic weight of the manorial ideal.

What is crucial for the construction of the ideal is the fact that the estate appears as an actual setting of the action only after the potential ground for criticism has been largely dispelled. Though Darcy's grand house is introduced early in the novel and referred to repeatedly in terms of praise, its representation is deferred in the plot, which allows the house to gradually gather layers of symbolic meanings.[2] At the beginning of the novel, it represents Darcy's affluence and high social position. As the action develops, the conversations about its unique beauty and impressive library, pointing to the collective effort of many generations, signal the sense of tradition, continuity and responsibility, associated with well-managed estates. The scene of Elizabeth's visit, the first actually located in Pemberley, develops further the motif of good lordship by painting an image of a happy, rural community and emphasizing the pastoral unity of man and nature inscribed in the landscape. The house

[2] Charles J. McCann (1964) examines in detail the relations between Pemberley and Darcy and discusses the structural function of the delayed appearance of Pemberley in the novel.

is portrayed as an emblem of good taste and proof of Darcy's responsible lordship based on the principle of noblesse oblige. Finally, at the novel's end, Pemberley comes to symbolize the union of Elizabeth and Darcy – not only the positive resolution of the love plot but also, and crucially, the harmony of their different personalities, the coming together of different classes and the promise of an ideal home and a happy family.

Thus, the principal reason why Pemberley can function so effectively as an embodiment of the country-house ideal, prompting nostalgic visions of the past, is the fact that the ideal is never tested at the level of the plot. In contrast to Mansfield Park, Pemberley is not the principal setting of the action and therefore it can stand as a "symbolic heartland" of the book (Crang 2003: 112). Though central for the novel's meaning, its representation as the site of action is not developed. Only two scenes are located in Pemberley and both centre on Elizabeth's visit, thus focus on formal occasions rather than everyday living. Darcy's responsible management of the estate, his care for the well-being of the community are not dramatized, they are only discussed by Mrs Reynolds. The happy union of Elizabeth and Darcy, prompting nostalgic yearning for an ideal home, is only a promise inscribed in the novel's happy ending, never verified at the level of the plot. In effect, Pemberley is not represented as "living space" but rather as "a static cameo" (Crang 2003: 114), a receptacle of values, hopes and dreams. Its principal function is to carry the symbolic weight of manorial idealization. The real danger of nostalgia, Svetlana Boym (2001) writes, "is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one", which is precisely what Pemberley offers the reader. The grand estate of Fitzwilliam Darcy is not a social actuality but an act of imagination not only because it is a literary and not a real house but because it is constructed as a symbol rather than an actual place at the level of textual reality.

3. Gothicizing the ideal: P. D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley*

P. D. James's novel *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011) is a sequel to *Pride and Prejudice;* it picks up the story a few years after the events portrayed in Austen's novel. The book dramatizes Elizabeth and Darcy's life in the grand house and thus, unlike in Austen's novel, the estate becomes the locus of dramatic action. Setting the plot in Pemberley has important consequences for the dialogue with the country house ideal. While *Pride and Prejudice* falls silent before the ideal has been verified, James's novel puts it to the test; the house is no longer a static image of manorial perfection but a bustling locus of daily life. What is more, as the title of the novel suggests, James chooses a different genre than Austen and by doing so evokes a different strand of manorial literary tradition, associated with the critique of the patrician order rather than its idealization.[3] Rather than making Pemberley the setting of a polite novel of manners, she revisits the gothic convention and builds dramatic action around a murder in the mysterious Pemberley woods, allegedly committed by Wickham. The act of violence causes a series of turbulences that bring the life of the community into a crisis and compromise the vision of Pemberley as a safe, enclosed space of pastoral harmony.

The aristocratic home is one of the central topoi in gothic fiction. Functioning as home and a social microcosm, it represents both a "building and family line" (Botting 1996: 2) and therefore its chronotope lends itself well to the dramatization of the two themes that are defining for the gothic convention – the burden of the past and the entrapment in space. James's novel concentrates on the first of these motifs. Darcy's family line is shown to have been tainted by a recluse great-grandfather, who ignored his obligations as a landowner, abandoned the house to

[3] For a detailed analysis of the two generic traditions in the country-house novel, see Terentowicz (2015).

live in a small cottage in the woods and who ended his life by committing suicide there. The story evokes the familiar gothic trope of burdensome past that continues to affect the present life of an aristocratic family. The seldom-mentioned ancestor, "who had abdicated his responsibility to the estate and the house [and] was an embarrassment to his family" (James 2011, book 2, ch. 1) casts a dark shadow over the family's history and contributes to Darcy's determination to protect Pemberley's reputation through responsible lordship.

> From childhood, Darcy had been aware that his father had feared that there might be some inherited weakness in the family and had early indoctrinated in him the great obligations which would lie on his shoulders once he inherited, responsibilities for both the estate, and those who served and depended on it, which no eldest son could ever reject. (James 2011, book 2, ch. 1)

But Pemberley is dishonoured not only by the recent murder and the great-grandfather's suicide, it is, to borrow Fred Botting's words, "rendered threatening and uncanny by the haunting return of past transgressions and attendant guilt" (1996: 7). The link between the past and the present is symbolized by the motif of a ghost, allegedly appearing in the woods when misfortune is about to strike. It is believed to be the ghost of Mrs Reilly, who committed suicide after her son had been hanged for poaching deer in a neighbouring estate. The grieving woman held Darcy's grandfather responsible for her son's death and cursed the whole family line. Since then, the woods are believed to be haunted; "her ghost, wailing in grief could be glimpsed wandering among the trees by those unwise enough to visit the woodland after dark, and this avenging apparition always presaged a death on the estate" (James 2011, book 1, ch. 4). The fearful figure is seen in the woods by two maids right before Danny's murder and interpreted as a bad omen for the Pemberley community. Structurally and thematically, the fate of the boy is thus linked with that of Wickham, who also faces hanging

for his crime. The sense of guilt about the fate of the little boy that haunts the family history contributes to Darcy's determination to save Wickham's life.

Furthermore, crucial for the investigation of both criminal cases is the role of Darcy's neighbour, Sir Selwyn Hardcastle, who is appointed the magistrate in Wickham's trial and whose father insisted on the most severe punishment of Mrs Reilly's son. Both his name, Hardcastle, and his castle-like mansion, described as "a large, rambling and complicated [Elizabethan] edifice" with small windows, narrow passages and tall elms surrounding the house like a barricade (James 2011, book 2, ch. 4) evoke the manorial gothic imaginary. The motif clearly dialogues with the familiar gothic trope of an evil aristocrat residing in a mysterious gothic castle, the antitype of a good landlord.

Although the gothic motifs are central for the novel's plot, in spatial terms they are relegated onto the periphery, represented by the wild and ominous Pemberley woods. The murder takes place deep in the forest and is discovered, appropriately for the gothic, during a dramatic expedition on a stormy night. It is also while walking in the woods, in the vicinity of the disreputable great-grandfather's cottage, that the maids meet the mysterious, ghostly figure. As the narrator writes, this part of the estate "induced a superstitious fear in the servants and tenants of Pemberley and was seldom visited" (James 2011, book 1, ch. 1). The peripheral space, belonging to the estate yet separated from the house, evokes a threat associated with gothic mystery, violence and transgression and the peripheralization of the gothic elements is not only spatial but also structural. As Camilla Nelson (2016: 383–384) explains, "the gothic elements that are weaved intermittently though the text – in the spectral hauntings, wild woodlands, bolting carriages, and spooked horses […] function like an aporia in the drama, a dimly realised violence at the fringes of the novel's consciousness".

James's modelling of manorial space is based on the structuring contrast between the house and the woods. The threat from the periphery endangers the stability of the community,

suggesting its transient, fragile character. The theme is introduced at the beginning of the novel, as Elizabeth is shown to be brooding over the enclosed safety of Pemberley, its beautiful architecture and perfect craftsmanship, representative of the best of the European civilization. Yet, the raging storm makes her sense the impending danger, doomed to threaten and destroy their peaceful life, the sense which the development of the action will soon substantiate:

> The wind was still rising and the two voices were accompanied by the moaning and howling in the chimney and the fitful blazing of the fire, so that the tumult outside seemed nature's descant to the beauty of the two blending voices and a fitting accompaniment to the turmoil in her own mind. She had never before been worried by a high wind and would relish the security and comfort of sitting indoors while it raged ineffectively through the Pemberley woodland. But now it seemed a malignant force, seeking every chimney, every cranny, to gain entrance. She was not imaginative and she tried to put the morbid imaginings from her, but there persisted an emotion which she had never known before. She thought, "Here we sit at the beginning of a new century, citizens of the most civilised country in Europe, surrounded by the splendour of its craftsmanship, its art and the books which enshrine its literature, while outside there is another world which wealth and education and privilege can keep from us, a world in which men are as violent and destructive as is the animal world. Perhaps even the most fortunate of us will not be able to ignore it and keep it at bay for ever. (James 2011, book 1, ch. 5)

Whilst the tension between the endangered home and the threatening periphery structures the spatial semiotics of the novel, the representation of the setting focuses primarily on the Pemberley woods as the locus of dramatic action. In fact, at the descriptive level, the house itself does not substantiate. Though at the beginning of the book, the narrator mentions the ostentatious luxury of Pemberley, neither the interiors nor the picturesque gardens that were the centre of Austen's idealization of Pemberley are described in James's novel. The only rooms that

merit some descriptions are the ones associated with the investigation: the guard- and gun room, which carry militant associations rather than evoke the image of manorial Arcadia. In one of the early scenes set within the country house, clearly dialoguing with the window scene in *Pride and Prejudice,* Elizabeth is shown to be looking out of the window. However, unlike Austen's Elizabeth, looking at the verdant, elegant Pemberley gardens, the character in James's novel sees only the mysterious, uncanny Pemberley woods, "in which the trees and bushes had been allowed to grow naturally [and which] induced a superstitious fear in the servants and tenants of Pemberley" (James 2011, book 1, ch. 1).

While Austen avoids describing the sumptuous interiors and concentrates on the natural beauty of the landscape to emphasize the ethical dimension of the idealized estate, James's omission has a different function. Transferring the gothic transgression and mystery onto the periphery of the estate accounts for the vision of Pemberley as a site of drama and mystery yet at the same time keeps the image of the house itself apart from the gothic tropes. *Death Comes to Pemberley* shuns the iconography of manorial nostalgia; it does not offer visions of picturesque harmony of nature or the splendour and elegance of the house. James's Pemberley is not an enclosed rural idyll of manorial glory, separated from the turbulence and conflicts of the time and offering a nostalgic return to the past; it is the space of danger and conflict, tainted by the past and present crimes, unsettled and threatened. Yet the gothic imagery does not invade the house itself. By keeping the threat at the periphery of the estate, the manorial ideal, though questioned and undermined, is salvageable. Thus, even though at the level of the plot gothic crime and guilt are shown to have threatened the life of the family, in terms of the manorial iconography, the ideal is there to be reclaimed once the threat has been revoked, as will be demonstrated below.

Another aspect crucial for James's dialogue with country house nostalgia concerns the historical and social context,

which in *Death Comes to Pemberley* is portrayed in more detail than in Austen's novel. The action begins in October 1803 and the turbulences caused by the war with France are shown to have a big impact on the life of the community.[4] The times are harsh and unwelcoming, food shortages and prices going up contribute to the poverty of the tenants and villagers, increasing the risk of turmoil and requiring charity work on the estate.

> The war with France, declared the previous May, was already producing unrest and poverty; the cost of bread had risen and the harvest was poor. Darcy was much engaged in the relief of his tenants and there was a regular stream of children calling at the kitchen to collect large cans of nourishing soup, thick and meaty as a stew. (James 2011, book 4, ch. 7)

When coming to London, Darcy searches for the signs that "the country was at war" and feels as if "he was entering an alien state, breathing a stale and sour-smelling air, and surrounded by a large and menacing population" (James 2011, book 5, ch. 1). Apart from the war with France and the threat of Bonaparte's invasion, the memories of the Irish rebellion offer an important historical background evoked in the context of Wickham's career in the army. The soldier got wounded in the battle at Enniscorthy and earned a medal for bravery, becoming "something of a national hero" (James 2011, book 4, ch. 1).

Crucial for the construction of the country house ideal is the fact that while in *Pride and Prejudice* the work of the servants is glossed over and their function consists primarily in substantiating Darcy's good lordship, in James's novel, in harmony with contemporary representations of the country house, from *The Remains of the Day* to *Downton Abbey*, downstairs is brought to the fore and into a dramatic conflict with upstairs. The plot hinges on Wickham's seduction of a servant girl and its impact on the life of Pemberley. Jameson dramatizes the

[4] The way James skilfully evokes the threat of the French Revolution resonates with Austen's parodic use of the motif in *Northanger Abbey*.

consequences of the scandal, showing the family's exclusion from the polite society and its effect on Georgiana's marriage prospects. Moreover, the life of the servants is shown as an inherent part of the functioning of the house. Elizabeth remembers how surprised she was on moving to Pemberley to discover "the family's involvement in the life of their servants" (James 2011, book 1, ch. 5). She contrasts the good relations in the estate with those in the London house of Mrs Hurst, whose "servants lived lives so apart from the family that it was apparent how rarely Mrs Hurst even knew the names of those who served her" (James 2011, book 1, ch. 5). Elizabeth concludes that even though the Pemberley servants are not part of the family like those at Longbourn, the Darcy family and their staff are bound "together in a common loyalty. Many of them were the children and grandchildren of previous servants, and the house and its history were in their blood" (James 2011, book 2, ch. 4).

Though renouncing a number of elements responsible for the construction of nostalgic visions of Pemberley, most importantly the iconography of manorial idealizations, the novel nevertheless remains faithful to Austen's interest in the country house ethos. The principle of noblesse oblige, the themes of charity and responsible ownership continue to play an important role in the narrative. As Darcy explains to Elizabeth:

> I was taught from childhood that great possessions come with great responsibilities, and that one day the care of Pemberley, and of the many people whose livelihoods and happiness depended on it, would rest on my shoulders. Personal desires and private happiness must always come second to this almost sacred responsibility. (James 2011, Epilogue).

Throughout the narrative, Darcy expresses and demonstrates his sense of responsibility for the family, servant and tenants. During the ordeal of Wickham's trial, he is adamant that the anguish and distress do not "overshadow the life of Pemberley

or destroy the peace and confidence of those who depended on them" (James 2011, book 4, ch. 7). But the reappearance of Wickham in Darcy's life, bringing the threat of a scandal and evoking the memories of the near-seduction of Georgiana, casts a dark shadow over Darcy's marriage. While he does not regret marrying Elizabeth, as "it would be like regretting that he himself had been born" (James 2011, book 5, ch. 2), he admits that his pursuit of private happiness and personal desire clashed with the ethos associated with his position. As he says, when marrying Elizabeth he acted "in defiance of every principle which from childhood had ruled his life, every conviction of what was owed to the memory of his parents, to Pemberley and to their responsibility of class and wealth" (James 2011, book 5, ch. 2).

What is crucial for the present considerations, the transgressive motifs, such as the suicide of the reclusive great-grandfather and the murder in the woods, are contextualized principally in terms of Pemberley's reputation. Elizabeth's husband maintains that if Wickham "were convicted and hanged, Darcy himself would carry a weight of horror and guilt, which he would bequeath to his sons and future generations" (James 2011, book 5, ch. 2). The importance of Pemberley's repute is also emphasized by other characters. Colonel Fitzwilliam's involvement in covering the fact that Wickham fathered Louisa's child was prompted by his wish to protect Darcy's good name, the need to prevent "a bastard child of George Wickham [from] living on the Pemberley estate" (James 2011, book 6, ch. 1). A similar concern is expressed by Mrs Bidwell, distressed at the prospect of her daughter bringing a "stain on Pemberley, […] the disgrace for Louisa, for us all" (James 2011, book 6, ch. 1). Louisa herself accepts that for her father, an old and faithful servant of the family, "the prospect of bringing disgrace on Pemberley would be worse […] than anything that could happen to her" (James 2011, book 6, ch. 4).

Typically of the manorial tradition, the theme of noblesse oblige is given a nationalistic angle whereby the country house

ideal is meant to represent symbolically the condition of England. As one of the characters says:

> The peace and security of England depends on gentlemen living in their houses as good landlords and masters, considerate to their servants, charitable to the poor, and ready, as justices of the peace, to take a full part in promoting peace and order in their communities. If the aristocrats of France had lived thus, there would never have been a revolution. (James 2011, book 4, ch. 6)

Significantly, although in James's novel the power relations mystified by the manorial ideal are not as deeply buried as in Austen's, they are not questioned either. Pemberley remains an embodiment of the manorial order and the hierarchies that were in place at the time of the novel's action. As Nelson (2016: 382) aptly notes:

> Pemberley, in the hands of James, is rendered as "Pax Pemberley." That is, as an overtly political vision of a hierarchical communitarian society, underwritten by an ideology of sanctified Englishness, in which prosperity and security are things to be bestowed by a master on the loyal among his servants, and the master's right of privilege is legitimated and re-inscripted by recourse to the values of noblesse oblige.

It is, Nelson continues, an essentially conservative vision, which is particularly striking in the representation of the female characters. James refocuses the novel in a way that marginalizes Elizabeth and puts Darcy in a more central role. Women characters are not important either in the unfolding of the plot, or in solving the mystery. What is more, unlike in Austen's novel, they "are often placed far away from the novel's centre of consciousness" (Nelson 2016: 382). What is even more surprising, James portrays Elizabeth in a very ambivalent way by questioning her motivations and suggesting that she has married Darcy for money. As she muses: "would she herself have married Darcy had he been a penniless curate or a struggling attorney?

It was difficult to envisage Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy of Pemberley as either, but honesty compelled an answer. Elizabeth knew that she was not formed for the sad contrivances of poverty" (James 2011, book 1, ch. 5).

The conservative perspective of the novel is substantiated in the conclusion. With all the conflicts solved and Elizabeth and Darcy brought back to the peaceful gardens of Pemberley, the manorial space of "wealth and education and privilege" (James 2011, book 1, ch. 5) is once again kept safe from the dangerous world lurking in its periphery. Ultimately, neither the external nor the internal transgressions threaten the life of the manorial community, nor do they undermine the relations of power that the patrician order stands for. The nostalgic image of peace and harmony, though not a reality at the level of the story, is once again offered as a promise inscribed in the novel's happy ending. The novel concludes with a familiar trope of manorial Arcadia as Darcy and Elizabeth admire "a view across the water to Pemberley House" with the trees in "full luxurious leaf, while the banks of summer flowers and the sparkling river combined in a living celebration of beauty and fulfilment" (James 2011, Epilogue).

4. Visualizing the ideal: Andrew Davies's *Pride and Prejudice*

Film adaptations of Austen's novels have been central for the construction of the country house as a nostalgic chronotope. The late twentieth-century Austenmania contributed significantly to the creation of the figurative language of heritage films by offering "the spectacle of class privilege – grand houses, landscaped grounds, lavish interiors [and] extravagant costumes" (Higson 2011: 143–144). The view of "an imposing country house seen in extreme long shots – sometimes an aerial shot – and set in a verdant landscape of gently rolling hills" (Higson 2003: 40) came to constitute a powerful signifier of idealized past. What is significant for the present considerations,

manorial spaces in film adaptations tend to have a more distinct presence than in the novels. As Andrew Higson (2003: 50) explains, the film must place the action spatially in a way that the novel need not; while literary narratives can skim over descriptions of space, the mise en scene in the film must have them represented. In effect, as Suzanne Pucci (2003: 139) argues in reference to Austen, "[d]iscursive sites of the country home in the novel acquire in the medium of film a striking and dominant visual presence". Studies of heritage film demonstrate the ways space tends to become a character of its own, with camera lingering over places and objects in separation from the action: "The effect is to transform narrative space into heritage space: that is, a space for the display of heritage properties rather than for the enactment of dramas" (Higson 2003: 39). The visual spectacle of grand, luxurious houses and lush, peaceful landscapes, unburdened by the historical context or political tensions, creates attractive projections of imaginary past:

> Heritage space in movies is by definition staged and invented. Its myopic pastness frequently may be regarded as sanitizing and distorting the past, but audiences seem to respond to the feel-good factor and the "good" memory images they experience. […] Core heritage films, then, are about both reading and showcasing the token nature of landscapes and costume props, about ruralist nostalgia that harks back to the neo-Romantic "picturesque" ideal developed in response to the threats posed by revolutions and industrialism since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The main function of period authenticity is to avoid dissonance in savoring the past utopia. (Voigts-Virchow 2007: 130)

One of the pitfalls of heritage adaptations of literary classics, Higson argues, consists in reducing the critical edge of the novels. In the context of manorial representations, the "pleasures of pictorialism" tend to gloss over the satirical undertones or "radical intentions" of the novels (Higson 2003: 81). Heritage films "construct such a delightfully glossy visual surface that it is often much more difficult to attend to the ironic perspective

and the narrative of social criticism" (Higson 2003: 81). In effect, the critical edge or ambivalent tones that often define literary portrayals of the patrician order tend to be subdued or even lost.

The 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, which due to its phenomenal success had a huge impact on the writer's reception and became an important reference point for all visual dialogues with the novel, illustrates well the construction of the nostalgic chronotope. In a comparative analysis of the 1940 and 1995 adaptations of the book, Elisabeth Ellington (2001: 91–92, 104) examines the ways the two films "capitalize on the 'visual pleasure' of the text" and "nostalgia for Old England", concluding rightly that while in the first film "Austen's pastoral elements" are downplayed, in the 1995 series, landscape imagery is significantly developed and becomes the principal character. "Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet is superseded by the real star of the show, Old England, bucolic and gorgeous [...] timeless and rustic, and exploited to the fullest by the makers of period-piece films such as this" (Ellington 2001: 93).

The adaptation remains faithful to Austen's idea to keep the ideal of Pemberley away from social concerns and to locate the critique in other manorial spaces. The satirical representation of Netherfield, the plot centred on Mr Collins as the heir of Longbourn, the memorable portrayal of Lady de Burgh and her grand house carry the burden of social criticism and allow the peaceful, verdant landscapes of Pemberley to project an attractive, marketable vision of English gentility, deprived of social tensions and conflicts. It represents the essence of the nostalgic chronotope by offering "history without guilt [that] suffuses us with pride rather than with shame" (Kammen; qtd. in Boym 2001).

The scenes located in Pemberley, like those in the novel, take only a small portion of the plot and concentrate on Elizabeth's visits. Her first sight of the estate reconstructs the iconic heritage moment as she approaches the house through the winding road and sees the impressive mansion gradually emerge from behind the foliage (Episode 4, 38:00–39:30). The

carriage stops at a particularly spectacular viewpoint and the camera moves from Elizabeth's enchanted face to the grand building surrounded by a verdant park. The scene contains all the "markers of the artistic English landscape: the winding road, the artificially enhanced stream [and] the careful arrangement of vistas" that gradually reveal the grandness of the house (Troost 2006: 482). Elizabeth and the Gardiners take a walk in the gardens and are given a tour of the house, including the library, the portrait gallery and the music room (Episode 4, 39:40–42:30). Unlike in the novel, in which descriptions of the interiors are deliberately vague, the series cannot help representing them, even if it does not turn the spectacular interiors of Sudbury Hall into a feature of its own by separating the representation of space from dramatic action. In the portrayals of Pemberley house, predominantly medium shots tend to include both characters and background interiors, without lingering over the house's grand scale, sumptuous rooms or lavish decorations.

While in Austen's novel, Pemberley interiors are never described and the focus is on the landscape as an embodiment of the perfect unity of man and nature, emphasizing the ethical aspect of the country house community, the 1995 adaptation combines interlacing views of the inside and outside of the house to construct a complete vision of the estate. As Linda Troost 2006: 488) aptly notes in reference to Elizabeth's portrayal:

> Langton provides a memorable and romantic long shot of the house as viewed across the lake, as if it were part of an organic landscape. Many shots feature the elegant interior of Pemberley (filmed at Sudbury Hall), but we also see Elizabeth ignore these objects; looking out of a window […], she is anxious to form a "personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze," namely, Darcy's lawn, ponds, and garden, not his furniture or marble staircases.

The interior and exterior scenes offer a complementary perspective on Pemberley as an embodiment of the country house ideal. The harmonious, natural landscape symbolizes the bucolic harmony of man and nature, emphasized further by the scene of Darcy's dive into the pond (Episode 4, 44:00–44:39). The conversation with Mrs Reynolds during the tour of the house concentrates on Darcy's role as a benevolent landlord, kind master and loving brother. Together, they capture the two constitutive elements of the country house ideal, the harmonious coexistence of man and nature and the principle of noblesse oblige and reflect well Austen's representation of the manorial ethos.

Appropriately, the series is faithful to the hypotext in giving the natural world rather than the interiors of the house greater dramatic and symbolic presence. The long shots of the estate, together with the famous pond scene added to the story, have the viewers linger nostalgically over the natural beauty of Pemberley. What is more, combining the shots of the landscape and the characters' response to its beauty becomes a way of defining the two protagonists and their changing relationship. The series juxtaposes the scenes of Darcy and Elizabeth appreciating the lush natural landscape of the estate in the interweaving scenes presenting Darcy approaching the house and Elizabeth admiring the views from the house and the garden (Episode 4, 42:39–45:30). The scenes clearly function as a dramatic and symbolic way of bringing the two characters together; dramatically, they are building up to the moment of their unexpected encounter, symbolically, they suggest their unity in the shared admiration for the natural world.

Even though at the symbolic level the representation of Pemberley represents the different aspects of the country house ideal, the series clearly prioritizes the visual spectacle and the romantic plot over social criticism. As in heritage films, "a delightfully glossy visual surface" makes it "more difficult to attend to the ironic perspective and the narrative of social criticism" (Higson 2003: 81). The theme of noblesse oblige, crucial for

Austen's novel, in Andrew Davis's adaptation is clearly marginalized. The focus is on the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy rather than on the idea of the country house as "a model for humane relationships on a larger social scale" (Wayne 1984: 173). Even when the scene concentrates on Darcy's good lordship, as in the conversation with Mrs Reynolds, the camera focuses on the faces of Elizabeth and Mrs Gardiner, suggesting their changing opinions about Pemberley's owner. The series does not engage with the principle of noblesse oblige in the way Austen's novel does. As Troost (2006: 495) aptly notes,

> For [Austen], the key to Darcy's real character is not his wealth but his role as landlord and master. Pemberley is an estate for the people who live and work there; it is not merely a "showplace" designed to overwhelm visitors and put them in their places. In the novel, we see noblesse oblige at work. […] None of the adaptations emphasizes this side of Darcy. Unlike Austen, we in the modern era do not care about the economics of a great house and its household, nor do the directors try to draw attention to such topics. We would rather see the man behind the house.

The 1995 series, widely claimed to update and eroticise Austen, lets the love plot take the upper hand. In the portrayal of Pemberley, the focus is on bringing the two characters together rather than on developing significant equivalents of literary engagements with the country house ethos. The harmonious space of the estate is first and foremost a place where the two characters overcome their mutual prejudice and come together. Nostalgia for the past is in this case constructed principally around the promise of an idealized relationship; images of bucolic Old England, speaking of the freedom of nature while suggesting rather than representing the achievement of civilization, function principally as a proper context for the love plot.

5. Balancing traditions: Juliette Towhidi's *Death Comes to Pemberley*

The adaptation of James's novel is, as Nelson aptly pointed out, an interesting case of "an adaptation of an adaptation" (2016: 380). The BBC mini-series rewrites significantly James's novel, redefining the major conflicts, the function of individual characters and the resolution of the mystery plot. But the narrative also offers an interesting remodelling of Pemberley, which negotiates the different and often conflicting interpretative dominants of the hypotexts it dialogues with, most importantly the gothic framework of James's novel and the nostalgic impulse of the 1995 series.

The series retains the novel's interest in the social and historical context. The experience of the Irish rebellion is an important theme in the characterisation of Wickham and the resolution of the mystery plot. His bravery in the battlefield and the status of a national hero are discussed by different characters, including Darcy and Mrs Bennet, and are used to support the claims of his innocence. Although the impact of the war on the economic situation of the estate's servants and tenants is not a significant theme in the series, the revolution in France and the threat posed by Bonaparte's army are discussed in the context of Pemberley's stability. For example, Colonel Fitzwilliam criticizes Alveston's radical views on women's rights, arguing that they can lead to a similar situation as in France (Episode 1, 21:05–21:22). Echoing these views, Hardcastle blames Darcy's father for Wickham's depravation, claiming that raising servants beyond their station is wrong because it threatens the stability of society rooted in firm social hierarchies (Episode 1, 39:17–39:40).

What is crucial for the present considerations, in contrast to the novel, the series very consistently associates undemocratic views with unlikeable characters, which suggests a less conservative take on social relations than in James's book. Hardcastle, the epitome of a gothic aristocrat, becomes an

advocate of patrician hierarchies as a warrant of national stability. As he says in the context of the murder investigation, "[t]he security of England depends on gentlemen being allowed to live peaceably in their homes as decent landlords and masters. If the aristocrats of France had followed our example, they wouldn't have found themselves severed at the neck" (Episode 1, 45:08–45:19). In the novel, similar words, quoted above, are expressed by Clitheroe, a well-respected and likeable lawyer and not in the context of Wickham's guilt but Henry Alveston's plans of finding a wife and settling down on his estate (James 2011, book 4, ch. 6). Thus, the context and in effect the overall meaning of these words are much more positive as they do not carry the air of critique of social equality that is clearly present in the novel. What is more, in the film, Hardcastle's undemocratic views are juxtaposed with Mrs Reynolds's words that "the Hardcastles aren't much liked at Pemberley" (Episode 1, 41:52) due to their involvement in the execution of Mrs Reilly's son.

Similarly to the novel, the relations between the estate owners and the servants are at the centre of the story and the work of the household staff is presented both in the context of the ball and in the plot centring on the Bidwells. The first episode opens with the scenes showing Pemberley servants at work, preparing food for the ball, cleaning the silver and putting the house in order. The series goes to some length to present both Elizabeth and Darcy as respectful and appreciative of their staff. Darcy praises the old servant, Bidwell, and expresses his concern for his son, Will (Episode 1, 7:15–7:30). Elizabeth is shown to thank their staff for the hard work they have put into the preparation of the ball (Episode 1, 3:32–4:15). Thus, as in James's novel, the principle of noblesse oblige and the good relations between the family and the servants remain an important theme. However, there is also a suggestion that Pemberley is more democratic and less formal than in James's narrative. It is suggested not only by the negative contexts associated with undemocratic opinions but also, and most significantly, by the representation of the female protagonist. Anna Maxwell Martin's natural

demeanour and unpretentious, unaffected manner of acting are meant to represent Elizabeth's natural, friendly attitude to servants and tenants and signal a broader redefinition of her narrative role and characterization.

Nelson is right to argue that among the most significant changes introduced in the series are those in the portrayal of Elizabeth. While in James's novel, the role of the female characters is marginalized, the film brings Elizabeth back centre-stage, in terms of the dramatization of the plot and the resolution of the murder mystery. In the series, her role is central in saving Wickham's life; she is the one to hear the culprit's confession and bring the evidence to London in a dramatic climax. "By bringing Elizabeth back to the centre of dramatic consciousness, as actor and agent, the […] series represents a return to a more female-centred drama" (Nelson 2016: 390). Though the climax of the plot, in which Elizabeth "snatch[es] an innocent Wickham from the clutches of both the rabble and the hangman" is "historically anachronistic" (Nelson 2016: 390), it suggests a more progressive perspective on social relations than those represented in its hypotexts. What is crucial for the present considerations and will be demonstrated below, Elizabeth is shown to be central not only in the resolution of the plot but also in the life of the country-house community, which is different not only from James's novel but also new to Austen's story.

Elizabeth's role is well captured at the beginning of the series, when she is first seen with her husband amidst the bustle of the preparations for the ball. In the scene, Darcy dashes into the room roaring at the level of the noise that prevents him from working, only to encounter Elizabeth's unfazed look. To his self-indulgent explanation, how natural it is for the master of the house to be irritated on the eve of the party, Elizabeth responds: "Perhaps some traditions need updating" (Episode 1, 5:20–6:30). Darcy relents and cheers up, shedding, as if by the touch of a magic wand, the role of an aristocratic tyrant. The scene, in a truly ingenious way, echoes Darcy's transformation portrayed in Austen's novel. Here, the proud and arrogant aristocrat turns

into a loving and caring partner not in a matter of months, as in *Pride and Prejudice*, but phrases. Georgiana, observing the scene, marvels at the change Elizabeth has brought to Pemberley, emphasizing further her transformative influence suggested by the scene (Episode 1, 8:15–8:20). The opening inscribes itself well in the trend to update the mores and manners of Austen's era, departing further from the stiff manner of the aristocracy portrayed in the early adaptations. But the function of the scene goes beyond that. In contrast to James's novel, the film makes Elizabeth central for the life of Pemberley, not only in solving the murder mystery but also in managing the house and, more importantly, in actively redefining the rules and traditions of the patrician order to make them more inclusive.

The democratizing impulse that Elizabeth introduces into Pemberley is shown to redefine the country house ethos, which traditionally concentrates, as it does in *Pride and Prejudice*, on the role of the landlord. In the series, Elizabeth is shown to be involved in all aspects of Pemberley's life. When Hardcastle wants to spare Elizabeth the details of the murder, Darcy protests, arguing that he has no secrets from his wife (Episode 1, 45:27–45:32). What is more, while James's novel has both Darcy and Elizabeth engage in charity work, in the series it is Elizabeth that is consistently portrayed as a figure of care and benevolence. She is shown to be visiting the Bidwells, giving support to the mother and her critically ill son. It is due to her close relations with the family that she manages to convince Will to confess to unwittingly murdering Captain Danny, which effectively saves Wickham's life. Furthermore, she is the one to discover that Louisa is the mother of the baby and initiate the process of uncovering the truth about the father. Elizabeth supports the girl in searching for the mysterious soldier by contacting the regiment and in trying to secure the baby's future. Unlike in the novel, not Darcy but Elizabeth summons the servants to inform them about the murder. Her words, complementing Darcy's harsh manner, aim to give them comfort and reassurance in the face of the crisis. While in the novel, the third person

narrator summarizes Elizabeth's words, in the series her extended monologue functions as a strong expression of the Pemberley ethos and the support for all its inhabitants:

> We would like to thank you all for the many hours you've spent preparing for the Lady Ann Ball. It is the great regret of Mr Darcy and myself that it should be in vain, and for so tragic a reason. We rely, as always, on mutual support and devotion that is at the heart of our lives here at Pemberley. Have no fear for your safety, or for the future. Pemberley has weathered many a storm in its long history, and this one too, will pass. (Episode 2, 7:40–8:09)

In fact, the emphasis on the transformative role of Elizabeth goes to such lengths that it can occasionally become not only historically anachronistic but also unconvincing to many viewers. For example, when visiting Will, the son of a coachman, Elizabeth claims to offer him true friendship (Episode 1, 14:00–14:20). Viewers complained that throughout the series, she is shown to be wearing only two plain dresses, which make her look like a servant rather than the lady of the house (Nicol 2013; Ross 2013, Moviechat). While in the 1995 adaptation, costumes were used to eroticise Austen's characters, Elizabeth's clothes in Daniel Percival's adaptation are clearly meant to signal her way of undermining patrician hierarchies. In addition, as Nelson aptly points out, the lack of petticoats, styled hair and stylish clothes heralds the series' focus on the female agency. Yet, the fact that Elizabeth is the only one to carry the burden of gritty realism jars on several levels. Firstly, her nondescript attire and dishevelled hair contrast not only with Georgiana's ethereal, refined style and Darcy's elegance but even with the arresting presence of the vibrant, though socially inferior, Mrs Younge. Secondly, and crucially for the present considerations, it clashes with the representation of the house.

In contrast to James's novel, in which the undescribed interiors never really substantiate for the reader, the representation of Pemberley in the BBC adaptation takes full advantage of

the stately home's grandness and glamour. While James saves the ideal by transferring the locus of dramatic action onto the mysterious periphery of the estate, in the series, the imposing country house remains at the centre of the narrative. It is true that the film cannot help representing what in the novel may be left vague and indeterminate yet the adaptation of *Death Comes to Pemberley* not only locates more scenes within the house but clearly dialogues with the visual language of the heritage film. The dialogue is underlined by the choice and use of locations, as the Pemberley estate is created from a combination of the most iconic and grandest English houses, Chatsworth and Castle Howard. The first is the location of Pemberley in the 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, the latter features, for example, in the two adaptations of *Brideshead Revisited*, the iconic heritage films. *Death Comes to Pemberley* uses the most impressive locations from both estates, including the exteriors, the Painted Hall and Sculpture Gallery from Chatsworth and the Great Hall, Antiques Passage and the Temple of Four Winds from Castle Howard, creating a powerful spatial mash-up of stately grandness.[5] A number of dramatically important scenes are set in the impressive Great Hall of Chatsworth, captured in long and extremely long shots. These include the arrival of the hysterical Lydia after the turbulent ride through the woods (Episode 1, 26:00–28:00) and the emotional conversation between Darcy and Georgiana, in which he accepts he was wrong in insisting on her marriage to Colonel Fitzwilliam and apologizes for doubting Elizabeth (Episode 3, 32:58–33:54). In this sense, the grandness and opulence of the hall clearly functions as a way of emphasizing the dramatic importance of the scenes.

The series offers extreme long shots of the house viewed across the lake or seen from a carriage rolling down the hill, characteristic of heritage portrayals of stately homes. In one of

[5] For details about the film's locations, see https://www.castlehoward.co.uk/DB/news-archive/bbc-death-comes-to-pemberley-castle-howard-on-scre and https://www.chatsworth.org/news-media/chatsworth-on-film/death-comes-to-pemberley/.

the first scenes of the series, an extreme long shot shows two maids running down the hill towards the house surrounded by the verdant greenery of the park (Episode 1, 1:50–2:00). In the series' conclusion, Elizabeth and Darcy return home in a carriage and the impressive view of Pemberley house and the surrounding gardens gradually comes to their view (Episode 3, 56:55–57:24). In several scenes, not present in James's novel, Elizabeth and Darcy are shown taking a walk in the Pemberley grounds, with long and extreme long shots capturing the house, the lake and the elegant landscape of the estate. The views of the majestic Chatsworth House and the grounds of Castle Howard often create the background of the action. For example, at the arrival of Elizabeth's parents, the camera portrays the entrance to Chatsworth House by moving slowly away from the characters and up the impressive facade of the building (Episode 1, 17:20–17:50). The scene of Elizabeth's emotional conversation with her sister Jane, in which she remembers Darcy's first proposal, was shot in The Temple of the Four Winds in the impressive park of Castle Howard (Episode 2, 30:50–33:05). In another scene, shot in Castle Howard's Walled Garden, Elizabeth is shown picking flowers for the ball and speaking with Colonel Fitzwilliam about his intention of marrying Georgiana (Episode 1, 9:40–12:00). The scenes, added to James's novel and spatially placed in the impressive locations of the grand estates, clearly evoke the visual language of the heritage film.

What is more, typically for the heritage film, the series uses the motif of a ball to showcase the seductive splendour of the interiors and the artefacts, especially in the opening scenes. Representing the preparations for the ball becomes an opportunity to linger over the finery of the works of art, the elegance of the tableware and the richness of the food. While the servants are shown busy at work, the camera glides over the grand gallery of family portraits, the collection of silver cleaned for the party and the sumptuous culinary victuals. When Elizabeth goes to the kitchen to check on the preparations, we are shown the spectacular cakes, soups and game prepared for the ball

(Episode 1, 3:32–4:15). At the same time, the series goes to some length not to divorce the spectacle of the mise en scene from narrative motivation, which is well illustrated by the first scene located in the Pemberley interiors. The camera follows the young Fitzwilliam Darcy as he sprints through the grand rooms, manoeuvring among the busily working servants. The scene lets the viewers catch a glimpse of Pemberley's wealth but it also shows that the grand house is not a static locus of dreams and aspirations but is first and foremost a family home (Episode 1, 2:05–2:25).

Like Davis's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, the series uses the natural landscape to portray the characters and their relations. The 1995 series associated the romantic element with the natural world, portraying the unity of Elizabeth and Darcy against the background of Pemberley's verdant grounds. In *Death Comes to Pemberley*, the opposition of nature and civilization, symbolized by the exterior and interior settings, is used to represent the conflict between love and duty, which is illustrated well by the two proposal scenes. Colonel Fitzwilliam's unwelcome proposal to Georgiana, which she accepts as a matter of duty, takes place in an imposing, opulent room, portrayed in a long shot that captures fully its overwhelming grandness (Episode 3, 12:20–13:40). In contrast, Henry Alveston's much-awaited declaration of love, happily accepted by Georgiana, takes place outside, against the background of Pemberley gardens (Episode 3, 58:10–58:40). Similarly, while Elizabeth and Darcy's arguments usually take place inside, often in constricted passages between rooms, the moments of harmony and family happiness tend to be set outside, against the lush, natural landscapes. In the concluding scene of the series, the broad shot of Pemberley and its verdant grounds creates a background for the happy resolution of both love plots (Episode 3, 58:10–60:00).

The visual emphasis on the country house ideal dialoguing with heritage films is accompanied by playing down the novel's gothic tropes, as seen vividly in the representation of the ghost.

Although the series starts with a scene in which two maids see a ghostly figure while walking in the Pemberley woods, its gothic character is deliberately weakened. In the novel, the encounter takes place in the night, during a full moon; in the series, it is the middle of the day and instead of the frightening darkness, we see the lush greens against the summer sun (Episode 1, 0:01–1:50). The brief drama of the encounter is soon cured by the image of the country house Arcadia as the next scene shows the maids running down the hill towards the grand house (Episode 1, 1:50–2:00). What is more, unlike in the novel, the supernatural is promptly explained away as Elizabeth encounters the mysterious figure, who proves to be a very real, flesh and blood woman (Episode 1, 15:04–16:10). The ghost scenes do not create the suspense either visually or through the background music, whose peaceful tone harmonizes well with the bucolic representation of the grand house. Similarly, Elizabeth's ominous feelings about the impending danger, doomed to threaten and destroy the peaceful life of Pemberley, which in the novel presage the dramatic unravelling of the plot, in the series are limited to a short exchange between Elizabeth and her father. As he expresses the sense of comfort he draws from the civilizing books and the solidity of the house, she responds by saying that "it is easy to forget the chaos and darkness of nature lie so close" (Episode 2, 15:40–15:56). Thus, in contrast to the novel, which locates the scene in the evening, during a raging storm, in the series, the words are exchanged during the day, in a sun-lit library and end up exuding the mood of melancholy rather than ominous threat.

Similarly downplayed is the visual representation of the murder mystery. While a few scenes are set in the night in the mysterious Pemberley woods, the series avoids adding the sensational atmosphere by building up the suspense or introducing dramatic music. What is more, the scenes in the woods are intercepted with the ones set in Pemberley house, showing Elizabeth taking care of Lydia and waiting for the return of the search party. In addition, the night scenes located within the house

evoke the mood of rich opulence rather than gothic threat. They showcase the interiors steeped in rich candle light, romanticizing the mise en scene rather than evoking gothic mystery and suspense. In effect, by weakening the gothic tropes and using the visual language of manorial nostalgia, the series renegotiates in important ways the interpretational framework of James's novel, which reflects a broader shift of narrative focus.

The adaptation redefines significantly the locus of narrative drama in a way that has important consequences for the representation of Pemberley as an embodiment of the country house ideal. As Nelson (2016: 387) aptly notes, "the thrill of the BBC series lies less in the murder plot, or the story of the haunting, and more in the way that the mystery throws the Darcy's marriage into turmoil. The suspense of the series has less to do with the actual murder and more to do with the spectacle of the great romantic couple of English literature drifting apart then coming back together". In contrast to the novel, the series focuses on the dramatization of the ethical dilemma of love versus duty, defined in the context of the country house ethos. The question of Darcy's pride, understood in terms of Pemberley's respectability, which in *Pride and Prejudice* is seen most clearly in the scene of the unfortunate proposal, becomes the centre of the series' meaning. Unlike in James's novel, the country house ethos is dramatized as a conflict of the main protagonists, with Darcy speaking for duty and Elizabeth insisting that Georgiana marries for love. The murder brings into Pemberley not only Elizabeth's vulgar relatives but also Wickham, awakening afresh the rumours of his near-seduction of Georgiana and elopement with Lydia. As a result, Darcy begins to question his decision of marrying Lizzy, which brings the marriage into a severe crisis. His insistence that Georgiana marries the conservative, aristocratic Colonel Fitzwilliam rather than the progressive lawyer she is in love with functions as an auxiliary conflict highlighting the crisis in his relations with Elizabeth. It culminates when Georgiana, realizing the threat to Pemberley's respectability, decides to reject Alveston and accept the proposal of Colonel

Fitzwilliam. In a dramatic conversation with Elizabeth, she explains her decision in terms of her duty to Pemberley and her monologue becomes yet another expression of the country house ethos formulated by a female protagonist. As she says, "I'm a Darcy, Elizabeth! This place, this family, was not sustained or built by people doing what they want! It's bigger than you or I, or any of us! We play our part, so it may continue after we're gone. I'm choosing to do this, Elizabeth!" (Episode 3, 48:17–48:36).

In terms of the representation of the country house ethos, the crucial turning point comes at the end of the series, with Darcy's realization he was wrong both with respect to Georgiana's future and in doubting his wife. Having found out about Colonel Fitzwilliam's involvement in covering Wickham's debauchery, he recognises his mistake and admits that Pemberley's reputation cannot come at the expense of personal happiness. That the change may be more substantial and permanent is suggested in the concluding scenes of the series, again redefining significantly the plot of the novel. Unlike in James's narrative, Darcy decides to let Louisa's baby stay at the estate, thus prioritizing the mother's love over Pemberley's repute. In this way, Elizabeth's democratizing impulse, undermining the strict patrician hierarchies, is confirmed and vindicated.

6. Conclusion

Austen's modelling of space in *Pride and Prejudice* constructs Pemberley as an embodiment of the country house ideal. With social tensions and criticism transferred onto other spaces and only a token of the plot actually located in the estate, Darcy's grand house functions as a symbolic locus of dreams, values and aspirations that prompt nostalgic revisions of the past. The 1995 adaptation of the novel expands the nostalgic effect of the patrician space and uses the figurative language of the heritage film to give Pemberley a strong visual presence that is missing in Austen's novel. Concurrently, the nostalgic chronotope is

distanced even further from the social concerns inscribed in the country house ethos and geared at the resolution of the love plot.

Death Comes to Pemberley redefines the narrative function of Pemberley by locating the core of the plot in Darcy's estate. Taking it down from the level of symbolic meanings and confronting with the historical context, the realities of life and, most importantly, with a major crisis, the narrative questions the idealized representation of the grand house. James's novel reinvents Pemberley in the convention of gothic fiction, undermining the nostalgic impulse inscribed in *Pride and Prejudice*. Though it builds on and extends Austen's inquiry into the social contexts of the country house ethos, *Death Comes to Pemberley* ultimately offers a conservative vision of manorial Arcadia, threatened yet ultimately left unscathed. By removing the crisis onto the estate's periphery and keeping gothic tropes and transgressions away from the house, it salvages the nostalgic potential as a promise inscribed in the novel's happy ending.

The adaptation of *Death Comes to Pemberley* negotiates between the interpretational framework of James's gothic story and the visual language of heritage films. On the one hand, the murder mystery is reinvented as a conflict of values central for the survival of the patrician order. While *Pride and Prejudice* builds the love plot around the motif of proper and improper pride, the series dramatizes the conflict between love and duty in terms of the crisis in Darcy's marriage. As the social context is developed, gothic tropes and motifs are played down. The series expands the ethical concerns of James's novel and redefines its conservative framework by turning Elizabeth into an agent of social change. At the same time, the series clearly dialogues with the nostalgic impulse of the heritage film. In contrast to the novels, it gives the interiors of the house significant visual presence and evokes romantic rather than gothic associations. In effect, the visual spectacle of the grand estate and its bucolic grounds, typical of heritage films, counterbalances both the progressive revision of the country house ethos and the transgressive theme of the plot.

References

Austen, Jane (1999). *Pride and Prejudice*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. (1981). "Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel". In: Michael Holquist (ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin, TX: Texas Press, 84–258.

Batey, Mavis (1996). *Jane Austen and the English Landscape.* London: Barn Elms.

Boym, Svetlana (2001). *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books. E-book.

Botting, Fred (1996). *Gothic*. London: Routledge.

Collins, Amanda (2001). "Jane Austen, film, and the pitfalls of post-modern nostalgia". In: Linda Troost, Sayre Greenfield (eds.). *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 79–89.

Crang, Mike (2003). "Placing Jane Austen, displacing England: Touring between book, history and nation". In: Suzanne R. Pucci, James Thompson (eds.). *Jane Austen and Co.: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 111–132.

Dames, Nicholas (2001). "Austen's nostalgics". *Representations* 73: 117–143.

Death Comes to Pemberley (2014). Dir. Daniel Percival, Writ. Juliette Towhidi. BBC Masterpiece.

Duckworth, Alistair M. (1994). *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Ellington, Elisabeth H. (2001). "'A correct taste in landscape': Pemberley as fetish and commodity". In: Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (eds.). *Jane Austen in Hollywood*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 90–110.

Hibbard, G. R. (1956). "The country house poem of the seventeenth century". *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19/1: 159–174.

Higson, Andrew (2003). *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama since* 1980. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Higson, Andrew (2011). *Film England: Culturally English Filmmaking since the 1990s*. London: I. B. Tauris.

Hill, John (1999). *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

James, P. D. (2011). *Death Comes to Pemberley*. New York: Knopf. E-book.

McCann, Charles J. (1964). "Setting and character in *Pride and Prejudice*". *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 19/1: 65–75.

Moviechat. *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Available at <https://moviechat.org/tt2951788/Death-Comes-to-Pemberley/58c890cbd1ea5c14707a6f0b/Elizabeth-Casting>. Accessed 21.10.2024.

Nelson, Camilla (2016). "Spooky Jane: Women, history, and horror in *Death Comes to Pemberley". Adaptation* 9/3: 377–392.

Nicol, Patricia (2013). "At home with Mr Darcy". *Sunday Times* 22 December. Available at <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/at-home-with-mr-darcy-ljqtwq6036z>. Accessed 10.10.2024.

Pucci, Suzanne (2003). "The return home". In: Suzanne R. Pucci, James Thompson (eds.). *Jane Austen and Co.: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 133–156.

Pucci, Suzanne R., James Thompson (2003). "The Jane Austen phenomenon: Remaking the past at the millennium". In: Suzanne R. Pucci, James Thompson (eds.). *Jane Austen and Co.: Remaking the Past in Contemporary Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1–10.

Pride and Prejudice (1995). Dir. Simon Langton, Writ. Andrew Davies. BBC.

Ross, Deborah (2013). "What bounders! They've murdered Jane Austen". *Daily Mail* 28 December. Available at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/event/article-2529520/DEBORAH-ROSS-What-bounders-Theyve-murdered-Jane-Austen.html>. Accessed 21.10.2024.

Terentowicz-Fotyga, Urszula (2015). *Dreams, Nightmares and Empty Signifiers: The English Country House in the Contemporary Novel*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Terentowicz-Fotyga, Urszula (2018). "Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as a dialogue with the country house ideal". In: Grażyna Bystydzieńska, Emma Harris (eds.). *From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria: Readings in 18th and 19th Century British Literature and Culture*. Vol. 6. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 295–311.

Troost, Linda V. (2006). "Filming tourism, portraying Pemberley". *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18/4: 477–498.

Troost, Linda V. (2007). "The nineteenth-century novel on film: Jane Austen". In: Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 75–89.

Wayne, Don E. (1984). *Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History*. London: Methuen.

Williams, Raymond (1993). *The Country and the City*. London: Hogarth Press.

Voigts-Virchow, Eckart (2007). "Heritage and literature on screen: Heimat and heritage". In: Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 123–137.

Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga
ORCID 0000-0002-3648-2924
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University
Katedra Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Plac Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej 4a
20-031 Lublin
Poland
urszula.terentowicz-fotyga@mail.umcs.pl