

The development of Christian morality in Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy: A comparative study of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* and its 2005 film adaptation

O desenvolvimento da moralidade Cristã em Elizabeth Bennet e Mr. Darcy: Um estudo comparativo do romance *Orgulho e Preconceito* e sua adaptação cinematográfica de 2005

El avance de la moral Cristiana en Elizabeth Bennet y el señor Darcy: Un estudio comparativo de la novela *Orgullo y prejuicio* y su adaptación cinematográfica de 2005

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the development of Christian morality in the characters of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by the renowned English writer Jane Austen and its representation in the 2005 film adaptation, directed by Joe Wright. The methodological approach adopted was qualitative, developed through a comparative analysis of the literary work and the film. Therefore, this study is based on the theories of religiosity in Jane Austen's literature, also in the field of adaptation between media and in film analysis, which explore the studies of intertextuality and polyphony in the novel. Based on this theoretical framework, this study analyzes how both characters experience a process of moral transformation throughout the literary and film narrative, overcoming pride and prejudice and developing self-reflection, repentance, forgiveness, and personal growth. Consequently, the findings reveal that Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy experience a process of moral development based on Jane Austen's Christian perspective. For this reason, some stages of their journey were preserved in the adaptation, while others were altered or omitted in order to adjust to contemporary cinema conventions. In conclusion, the film adaptation offers a new perspective on this moral development, maintaining central aspects while also promoting narrative updates.

Keywords: Jane Austen; *Pride and prejudice*; Christian morality; Film adaptation; Comparative analysis.

Resumo

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar o desenvolvimento da moralidade cristã nos personagens Elizabeth Bennet e Mr. Darcy no romance *Orgulho e Preconceito* (1813), da renomada escritora inglesa Jane Austen, e sua representação na adaptação cinematográfica de 2005, dirigida por Joe Wright. A abordagem metodológica adotada foi qualitativa, desenvolvida por meio de uma análise comparativa da obra literária e do filme. Portanto, este estudo se baseia nas teorias da religiosidade na literatura de Jane Austen, também no campo da adaptação entre mídias e na análise cinematográfica, que exploram os estudos da intertextualidade e da polifonia no romance. Com base nesse marco teórico, este estudo analisa como ambos os personagens passam por um processo de transformação moral ao longo da narrativa literária e cinematográfica, superando o orgulho e o preconceito e desenvolvendo a autorreflexão, o arrependimento, o perdão e o crescimento pessoal. Consequentemente, os resultados revelam que Elizabeth Bennet e o Sr. Darcy passam por um processo de desenvolvimento moral baseado na perspectiva cristã de Jane Austen. Por esse motivo, algumas etapas de sua jornada foram preservadas na adaptação, enquanto outras foram alteradas ou omitidas para se ajustar às convenções do cinema contemporâneo. Em conclusão, a adaptação cinematográfica oferece uma nova perspectiva sobre esse desenvolvimento moral, mantendo aspectos centrais e, ao mesmo tempo, promovendo atualizações narrativas.

Palavras-chave: Jane Austen; *Orgulho e preconceito*; Moral cristã; Adaptação cinematográfica; Análise comparativa.

Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar el avance de la moralidad cristiana en los personajes Elizabeth Bennet y Mr. Darcy en la novela *Orgullo y prejuicio* (1813), de la célebre escritora inglesa Jane Austen, y su representación en la adaptación cinematográfica de 2005, dirigida por Joe Wright. El enfoque metodológico adoptado fue cualitativo, desarrollado mediante un análisis comparativo de la obra literaria y la película. Por lo tanto, este estudio se basa en las teorías de la religiosidad en la literatura de Jane Austen, también en el campo de la adaptación entre medios y en el análisis cinematográfico, que exploran los estudios de intertextualidad y polifonía en la novela. Basándose en este marco teórico, este estudio analiza cómo ambos personajes pasan por un proceso de transformación moral a lo largo de la narrativa literaria y cinematográfica, superando el orgullo y los prejuicios y desarrollando la autorreflexión, el arrepentimiento, el perdón y el crecimiento personal. En consecuencia, los resultados revelan que Elizabeth Bennet y el señor Darcy pasan por un proceso de avance moral basado en la perspectiva cristiana de Jane Austen. Por esta razón, algunas etapas de su trayectoria se han conservado en la adaptación, mientras que otras se han modificado u omitido para ajustarse a las convenciones del cine contemporáneo. En conclusión, la adaptación cinematográfica ofrece una nueva perspectiva sobre este avance moral, manteniendo aspectos centrales y, al mismo tiempo, promoviendo actualizaciones narrativas.

Palabras clave: Jane Austen; *Orgullo y prejuicio*; Moral cristiana; Adaptación cinematográfica; Análisis comparativo.

1. Introduction

Throughout the centuries, societies have gradually developed new approaches to literature. Since the 20th century, a phenomenon has risen inside the literary field, which consisted of transposing the literary narrative into other formats, such as audiovisual, which is known as adaptation (Lourenço, 2018). In this sense, adaptation is a phenomenon that is involved in various spheres of society, such as literature, cinema, theater, leisure and, nowadays, also in the virtual space through a variety of media formats (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 22).

With the great influence of literature on society and the gradual advance of technology, new and modern resources, instruments and devices provoked inevitable changes in the representation of the arts by individuals. This expanded possibilities for creating adaptations for other popular formats, such as cinema (Diniz, 2005).

From this scenario, contributions from this research can be envisioned such as to enrich the advancement of studies in the area of adaptation between literature and cinema, since this work aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* novel and its 2005 film adaptation, in order to analyze how the development of Christian morality in Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy was adapted from the novel to the film.

To achieve the objective mentioned, this research intends to identify the four stages – pride as evidenced in Mr. Darcy and prejudice as revealed in Elizabeth Bennet, followed by self-examination, repentance with forgiveness, and ultimately, moral transformation -- of Christian moral development in Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* novel, in order to analyze if Elizabeth Bennet's and Mr. Darcy's stages of Christian moral development were preserved, altered, or omitted in the 2005 film adaptation, based on a qualitative approach with a bibliographical and an interpretative nature.

This article aims to analyze the development of Christian morality in the characters of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by the renowned English writer Jane Austen and its representation in the 2005 film adaptation, directed by Joe Wright.

2. The Phenomenon of Adaptation

According to Hutcheon (2013), the term *adaptation* stems from the word *adapt*, that means “adjust, alter, make appropriate” (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 29, author's translation), whose origin highlights the transformative nature of the adaptation phenomenon, emphasizing that adaptation involves changes rather than a simple repetition of the original work. In this sense, every adaptation results from a primary source, due to the intertextual relationship between the original narrative and its respective adaptation, since both works dialogue with each other through the transposition of the story or elements of the novel, such as characters, into the cinematic format.

Likewise, another important adaptation's definition, stated by Hutcheon (2013) as well, portrays a new modern characteristic of this phenomenon of adaptation: independence, which is evident when she describes adaptation as "repetition, but repetition without replication" (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 28, author's translation). Thus, it is assumed that the act of adaptation is connected to a new form of interpretation, which can be related to content, genre or media, such as from a book to a film, creating a new work, in accordance with Lourenço (2018). As also Cerqueira (2023) confirms:

It is possible to observe that literary adaptations, as interpretative rewritings of the original work's set of signals, are independent and they may present elements of addition, replacement and possibly suppression in relation to the literary work used as a departure point in the process of constituting the new work. (Cerqueira, 2023, p.21, author's translation).

In other words, the scholars Hutcheon (2013), Lourenço (2018) and Cerqueira (2023) argue that even if an adaptation is based on a famous literary composition, it becomes a new and independent work, such as the 2005 film adaptation directed by Joe Wright. Although, there is a mutual feature between equivalence and independence of distinct media's adaptations, which is the similarity of them with their original works, that means, there is an intertextual bond between them. This is due to the fact that adaptations vary in format and language, although they still reflect the essence of the original work, since "when we announce the work is an adaptation, we openly declare its relationship with other work(s)" (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 27, author's translation).

In light of this, Kristeva (2012) conceived the term intertextuality to clarify the intrinsic relationship between two texts of different media, in which one communicates with the other. This is particularly evident in the case of audiovisual adaptations, which have connections with their respective original literary works. Kristeva (2012) validates this idea by stating that "[...] the entire text is constructed from a mosaic of references, and every text is an absorption and transformation of another text." (p. 142, author's translation). From this perspective, the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice* film can be understood as intertextually connected to its homonymous novel, as it absorbs and transforms elements of the original text within a cinematic format.

From this perspective, it is possible to support there is an inherent intertextual nature in the phenomenon of adaptation, which is constituted of an intertextual dialog due to the resonance between the original literary work to the film adaptation, likewise considered "palimpsestuous" works, as defined by Genette (1997). This is reinforced by Ermarth (2001, as cited in Hutcheon, 2013, p. 30, author's translation):

Adaptation is a form of intertextuality; we experience adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through the memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation. [...] Thus, adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative, a second work that is not secondary - it is its own palimpsestic thing (Hutcheon, 2013, p.30).

Therefore, in the light of this vast scenario, Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* and its modern audiovisual adaptation from 2005 can be understood as part of a dialogue between literature and cinema. This relationship illustrates how literary narratives are reinterpreted in cinema, revealing the possible connections between the two media, which are further examined in the following section.

3. Connections Between Literature and Cinema

The advent of technology enabled individuals to incorporate it into various areas of society in order to foster others, such as literature. Consequently, the representation of literature was innovated due to the interaction with the new modern media, such as the cinema. This process is understood as intermediality, which means "[...] thinking simultaneously about media and the relationship between media" (Ramazzina-Ghirardi, 2022, p.14, author's translation), since it emphasizes the dialogue between different media forms and how they influence one another. In this perspective, a film adaptation establishes an intermedial relationship in which literary and cinematic elements interact and reshape meaning.

In the midst of the 19th century, technological advances contributed to the rise of cinema. Simultaneously, literary works were incorporated and transformed for this new format in a phenomenon referred to as cinematographic adaptation. This is supported by Diniz (2005), who mentions that:

Since the appearance of cinema, the new form of art has been able to narrate, with its own resources, a story previously told in novels and short stories. From this point on, the practice of transforming a literary narrative into a filmic narrative has been widespread, to the point that nowadays the majority of films do not originate from an original script, created especially for the cinema, but from a literary work (Diniz, 2005, p. 13, author's translation).

In addition, Brown (2016) agrees with Diniz (2005), when he points out that the cinematographic system is recognized for "gathering ideas, words, actions, emotional subtext, tone, and all other forms of nonverbal communication and translating them into visual terms" (Brown, 2016, p.20). For this reason, a novel and a film are two distinct genres, which implies there are differences in their format, structure and composition as well, although both have connections, relevance and popularity, which is the case of *Pride and Prejudice*.

In consequence, a relationship between those two works, referred to as adaptation, simultaneously is peaceful and somewhat complicated. As evidenced by De Noronha (2010):

[...]The adaptation of literary works to the cinema, a form of textual intersection between two media, despite being a frequent practice, has inspired fierce polemics since the beginnings of the seventh art. Although considerable progress has been made in recent years, prejudices persist, both at academic level and, in particular, in terms of criticism from the public and erudite cultural circles. (De Noronha, 2010, p. 10-11, author's translation).

Alongside the authors Brown (2016), Diniz (2005) and De Noronha (2010), Lourenço (2018) likewise concur about the transformative feature of cinematographic adaptations, as well as with the positive or negative impact of these changes on public reception of the adaptation, which occurs frequently since the beginning of this phenomenon. Besides, in the contemporary world, it is important to emphasize the influences of cultural aspects and new social discourses in several aspects of the adaptation process from literature to cinema enhanced by the modernity, in terms of fidelity and literal translation of the novel to the film. As Diniz (2005) states:

The adaptation process is [...] bi-directional as it involves translating literary works and other cultural products into film, but also other types of text, including the filmic text, into the verbal text. Intertextuality and ideology are the concepts that underlie this contemporary proposition (Diniz, 2005, p. 17, author's translation).

In this sense, elements such as culture, language, historical contexts, objectives, audience and worldview are a part of the audiovisual adaptation process, as well as it is affected by them. Subsequently, the next topic focused on the religious aspects in Jane Austen's works, in terms of Christian morality, specifically on *Pride and Prejudice* novel.

4. Religion in Jane Austen's Literature

Jane Austen was a renowned English novelist of the 18th and 19th centuries, who wrote and published the novels *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), and, posthumously, her family published *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and *Persuasion* (1818), in the midst of the Georgian era.

As other women writers, her novels suffered rejection due to influence of the social, political, historical and religious context of the time in which her writings were produced and published, even if her family supported her works, as Reef (2014)

reports. Although, she was consolidated as a famous and recognized writer, whose works have become timeless classics. This is due to as explained by Reef (2014, p.22) as well:

Jane Austen wrote in simple language and focused on her characters. Her novels reveal a deep psychological understanding of how people think, behave, and express themselves. Although she wrote about men and women of her own time and place, her characters still ring true, as the author captured the essence of human nature (Reef, 2014, p.22, author's translation).

Jane Austen's literary works also represent the principles that predominated in Georgian society through her unique storyline compositions and the characters' morality development in her novels, which was founded on a religion referred to as Anglican Christianity. In accordance with Giffin (2002, p.24) who states: "in all of her novels, Austen offers a mainstream Anglican commentary on the social and economic and moral issues of her period". Consequently, Christian Anglicanism's moral perspective influenced Jane Austen's life and, consequently, her literature as well.

In accordance with Giffin (2002), Toal (2017) likewise argues that Jane Austen was influenced by Christian Anglicanism throughout her lifetime, as well as, this religion values appears subtly in her literature, particularly in the construction of her characters. Both Giffin (2002) and Toal (2017) discuss the central principles of Christian Anglicanism, which include the centrality of love for one's neighbor, valuing human dignity, moral decision-making grounded in virtue ethics, and a strong emphasis on social justice. Furthermore, Anglican morality recognizes the reality of human sin and therefore emphasizes God's grace and forgiveness as the foundations of Christian life. Jane Austen incorporates these religious principles and values into her character development, such as the case of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy.

As Eagleton (2009) supports, religion is considered an important element of culture, the development of critical thinking, social, moral and ethical values, as well as influencing interpersonal relationships and the artistic and literary production of a society, such as Anglican Christianity in nineteenth-century England, which influenced Jane Austen's writing.

In this sense, Jane Austen received inspiration from the Anglicanism doctrine inherited through her family, especially her clergyman father, Reverend George Austen, since she was born. For this reason, besides the influences of social-economic context of the period, Jane Austen was an extraordinary novelist as well as an Anglican Church member (Reef, 2014).

Therefore, Jane Austen – as an Anglican adept, who was actually a believer beyond just being influenced by society (Giffin, 2002) – naturally composed classic works that reflected the notions of this socio-historical context, from the construction of the story to the development of the characters, as confirmed: "Austen develops her characters and plots her stories through methods that evidence her Christian worldview." (Toal, 2017, p.11). As a result, this can be evident in the portrayal of the protagonists of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Jane Austen's most famous novel, which reflects her personal Christian beliefs.

Briefly, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* novel (1813) tells the story of the Bennet family, focusing on Elizabeth Bennet, a young woman known for her intelligence and independent spirit. The novel follows the gradual development of Elizabeth's relationship with Mr. Darcy, whose pride, combined with her initial prejudices, leads to misunderstandings between the two. However, throughout the narrative, both characters reflect on their attitudes toward each other and eventually change. In the end, the novel explores themes such as love, social class, and moral growth, particularly of the main couple.

Consequently, the next section focuses on exploring the role of Jane Austen's religious beliefs in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), specifically.

5. Religion in *Pride and Prejudice*

Among Jane Austen's renowned works, one of the greatest novels in English literature, published in 1813 by the title as *Pride and Prejudice* – after its first draft previously had the initial title as *First Impressions* (Giffin, 2002) – has achieved greater

international recognition in modern times due to its timeless themes, as well as the integration of Christian aspects present in the work that remain relevant to this context. This is confirmed by the authors Glory, Raju e Kumar (2021), who stated:

Jane Austen even after 200 years and her masterpiece *Pride and Prejudice* who and which has integrated religion and literature are very much relevant and require an analytical interpretation of the text applied in the context as the right role model for righteousness and religiosity which are the corner pillars to base and build character and human personality irrespective of the ego filled economic, political, regional, racial, and social status which are the leading themes in *Pride and Prejudice* of the younger contemporary generations the twenty-first century (Glory; Raju; Kumar, 2021, p.330).

Although *Pride and Prejudice* is Jane Austen's most famous composition, the influences of the author's religious beliefs do not emerge explicitly, on the contrary, they are manifested subtly throughout the development of the characters and the narrative. As evidenced by Toal (2017):

Religion in *Pride and Prejudice* mirrors Austen's, exhibiting the kind of internal piety veiled by modest outward expression that characterized Anglicanism and governed Austen's own practice in her writing. Her religion did not require superfluity of expression but rather humble introspection. (Toal, 2017, p.24).

Therefore, Jane Austen's Christian beliefs guided her characters' judgments, actions and inner transformations throughout her novels, which is the case of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. As Toal (2017, p.14) supports, when he affirms that "Austen permits her characters to mature through adversity and through recognition of their own shortcomings, leaving them wiser and better than when they started". Consequently, at the end of the story, the characters are not just different from what they were at the beginning, but they become more aware of themselves and others, as well as overcoming moral flaws and morally and emotionally more mature.

Thus, it is perceived the existence of an underlying theme that is not explicitly stated in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* novel: the Christianity influence. However, this theme is evidenced in her literature throughout her characters construction, as Giffin (2002) corroborates:

The theological message that Austen conveys to her readers is how a fallen (and continually falling) humanity is called to imitate the human character of the earthly Jesus, and to participate in the divine character of the risen Christ, and therein share the physical and metaphysical *soteria* that the imitation and the participation confer (Giffin, 2002, p.27).

Also Toal (2017) confirms that the novel *Pride and Prejudice* is not a declared religious work, although Jane Austen wrote her novel from a Christian moral construct, which is evident through her characters, who followed Christian morals throughout the narrative, such as the protagonists Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Finally, in order to develop this research, the next section presents the research method and the analysis procedures adopted throughout the development of this work.

6. Methodology

A documentary research was carried out in a comparative study (Pereira et al., 2018; Risemberg et al., 2026) with content analysis. For this purpose, this research is inserted in the field of literary studies and it employs the perspective of the qualitative paradigm in order to comprehend and interpret social, cultural, symbolic or literary adaptation phenomena (Minayo, 2025).

To achieve the proposed objectives, the research technique content analysis was used as its primary analytical method, as systematized by Bardin (1977), in which excerpts are selected from the literary work in which the characters' words, actions, and the narrative reflect values associated with Christian morality or the lack of them in the characters' personal development to compare them with the respective excerpts from the film adaptation.

The novel's findings were analyzed by an exploratory and interpretive nature, based on a literature review of how Christian morals are reflected and developed in the characters of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, as Gil (2019) states. Afterwards, the content analysis were conducted on the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen through selecting passages involving the moral development of the characters Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, based on the following specific thematic categories of analysis: pride, as presented in Mr. Darcy or prejudice, as evidenced in Elizabeth Bennet, followed by self-reflection, repentance for their actions accompanied by mutual forgiveness, and, finally, moral transformations.

The film adaptation's findings were selected through from the aforementioned excerpts, conducted by a comparative analysis of the two media formats, in order to categorize and interpret the manifestations of Christian morals' development in each media, also considering the temporal and social differences between both works, as Severino (2014) agrees.

This research analysis was developed by Hutcheon (2013), Cerqueira (2023) and Lourenço (2018), who explored the adaptation field. Also Kristeva (2012) that explained the dialogic and intertextuality relationships between media. In addition, Brown (2016), Diniz (2005), De Noronha (2010), Lourenço (2018) and Ramazzina-Ghirardi (2022), who discussed the connections between literature and cinema. Lastly, Eagleton (2009), Giffin (2002), Glory, Raju e Kumar (2021), Reef (2014), Toal (2017) that portrayed religiosity in Jane Austen's literature, such as in *Pride and Prejudice*.

7. Results and Discussion

The Christian moral developments of the two protagonists are confirmed by Toal (2017, p. 19), who stated that *Pride and Prejudice* novel “[...] demonstrates the capacity for personal growth in classical and Christian virtues, but its story also features characters who unswervingly demonstrate questionable virtue under the guise of religiosity”. In this sense, by means of the content analysis technique in *Pride and Prejudice* novel, the construction of the characters Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy reflects Jane Austen's Christian beliefs and social perspectives, displayed in four key stages throughout the chapters of the book.

In this sense, in the novel, the four stages of Christian moral development in Elizabeth Bennet were: prejudice, self-reflection, repentance of her past actions with forgiveness of herself and Mr. Darcy, and ultimately her moral transformation. Regarding Mr. Darcy, the four stages of his Christian moral development in the book were: pride, self-reflection, repentance of his past actions with forgiveness of himself and Elizabeth Bennet, and finally his moral transformation. Together, these parallel journeys in the novel illustrate how Austen integrates Christian perspectives into her narrative: through personal growth of her characters.

After the content analysis of the novel, the comparative analysis demonstrated that the 2005 film adaptation, directed by Joe Wright, preserves the moral development of both characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, in the same four stages of the book: prejudice, as evidenced in Elizabeth Bennet and pride, as presented in Mr. Darcy, followed by self-reflection, repentance for their actions with mutual forgiveness, and, finally, moral transformations.

In this sense, the film preserved the first stage of each character: prejudice and pride. However, there are alterations, omissions, and softening in certain scenes of the film when compared to their respective excerpts from the novel for both protagonists, as the film focused more on the romantic relationship between the protagonists to the detriment of their moral development from a Christian perspective in the following stages: self-reflection, repentance with forgiveness, and moral transformation.

For this purpose, to illustrate the analysis of those protagonists' developments, the following topics are focused on the two characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Additionally, each topic is divided into four subtopics corresponding to the four stages of Christian moral development of the protagonists through the content analysis of the novel, as well as, followed by a comparative study with the 2005 film.

7.1 Elizabeth Bennet's Christian Moral Development: a comparison between the novel and the 2005 film

The protagonist of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* novel, Elizabeth Bennet, is one of the most famous female protagonists in English literature, portrayed as a woman with intelligence, irony, moral and critical thinking. For this reason, she became a timeless and influential literary character for representing various themes, such as religious ones, which are not often recognized. As a result, Elizabeth Bennet's construction reflects the influence of Jane Austen's religious beliefs, evident in this character's speeches, attitudes, and her importance to the development of the narrative.

As Toal (2017) highlights, Jane Austen expresses her Christian values and morals in a veiled manner through her novels, which was characteristic of Christian Anglicanism period, such that Elizabeth Bennet "[...] progresses from a point of lesser virtue and wisdom to a place of elevated character." (Toal, 2017, p.12). Therefore, she is portrayed by Jane Austen as a character who experiences a process of self-discovery and ethical transformation throughout the narrative, which reflect implicit moral and Christian values, presented in the following four stages both in the book and in the 2005 adaptation.

In order to conduct the comparative analysis of this research, the next subtopics cover the four stages of moral development of Elizabeth Bennet.

7.1.1 Elizabeth Bennet's prejudice

In chapter five, Jane Austen indirectly introduces the first appearance of Elizabeth Bennet's lesser virtue in the novel: her prejudice towards Darcy's pride. This occurred after Elizabeth Bennet overhears a conversation in which Mr. Darcy speaks disrespectfully about her, refusing to dance with her, which she perceives as arrogant pride. Although his comments are not directed at her, they offend her pride and lead her to form a negative and prejudiced opinion of his character, which is confirmed by Toal (2017).

This description is corroborated in the following excerpt from the novel during a conversation between her best friend, Charlotte Lucas, and Elizabeth Bennet about the aforementioned occurrence in chapter three:

"His pride," said Miss Lucas, "does not offend me so much as an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud."

"That is very true," replied Elizabeth, "and I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine." (Austen, 2008, p. 23)

In the excerpt above, Jane Austen presented a character who has a strong critical sense, is independent, and witty at the beginning of the novel. For this reason, it is evident Elizabeth Bennet's first misimpression of Mr. Darcy, who harmed her pride and self-esteem, leading to the emergence of her prejudice against him, instead of avoiding his words or forgiving him for them, in the light of Anglican Christianity. This is explained by Reef (2014), who said Jane Austen's writing expresses emotions and conflicts of her characters through capturing the essence of human nature.

The corresponding fragment above was adapted for the film with some alterations regarding characters and speeches. In the film adaptation, Elizabeth says the line "*I'd more easily forgive his vanity had he not wounded mine*" to Jane Bennet, her older sister, when the sisters are both lying on the bed discussing about Mr. Darcy, in contrast with the novel, in which she speaks these words during a conversation with Charlotte Lucas in a living room in Longbourn, Elizabeth's family property. Below is the record (Figure 1) of this mentioned scene from the film adaptation:

Figure 1 - Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Bennet discussing Mr. Darcy's speech.



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 00:14:05). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

In the 2005 film adaptation, the representation of this scene (Figure 1) from the novel was altered not only aesthetically and linguistically, but mainly in terms of the impact of Elizabeth's speech, as her words became more romantic and emotional, leaving the religiosity implicit and almost imperceptible in the film. This is in agreement with Hutcheon's (2013) proposal that adaptation should be understood not only as a "copy" of the original work, but also as a creative recreation that dialogues with the new cultural and aesthetic context in which it is produced.

Elizabeth Bennet's lack of Christian morals and virtues in the beginning of the novel is also confirmed by Giffin (2002, p. 95), when he stated that "[...] she has already formed strong prejudices against him, and because she is only interested in validating those prejudices". In light of this, even considering the historical, social, and religious context of 19th century England, this female protagonist voiced her displeasure with Mr. Darcy, also already formed her prejudiced opinion towards his actions concerning Mr. Wickham and the relationship between Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley. Lastly, rejected him as a potential suitor for marriage.

This is confirmed when Mr. Darcy confessed his romantic feelings for Elizabeth Bennet and how she replies him in the following excerpts of the chapter thirty-four:

[...] Mr. Darcy changed colour; but the emotion was short, and he listened without attempting to interrupt her while she continued:

"I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. No motive can excuse the unjust and ungenerous part you acted there. You dare not, you cannot deny, that you have been the principal, if not the only means of dividing them from each other—of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, and the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind."

[...]

"But it is not merely this affair," she continued, "on which my dislike is founded. Long before it had taken place my opinion of you was decided. Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham."

[...]

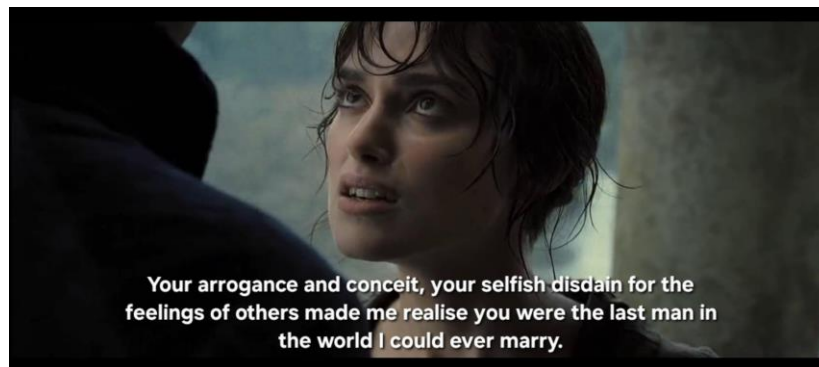
"From the very beginning – from the first moment, I may almost say – of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form the groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry." (Austen, 2008, p. 203-205).

Since the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth Bennet considers herself a strong judge of character and feels confident in her ability to interpret others. For this reason, she spent the most chapters of the book expressing negative opinions and

misconceptions about Mr. Darcy, viewing him as proud, arrogant, and morally distant, reinforced by the words of other characters in the plot, especially Mr. Wickham, as Giffin (2002) and Toal (2017) supported above.

This part in the film adaptation portrayed a subtle difference in Elizabeth's words, as in the film she says the line “*Your arrogance and conceit, your selfish disdain for the feelings of others made me realise you were the last man in the world I could ever marry*”. Despite the differences, her words still maintain the essence of the original speech in the book: expressing a negative opinion about Mr. Darcy by justifying the reasons for refusing his marriage proposal. Next, there is a record (Figure 2) of this mentioned scene in which Elizabeth Bennet's opinion of Mr. Darcy is voiced directly to him, similarly as in the novel:

Figure 2 - Elizabeth Bennet rejecting Mr. Darcy's proposal.



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:11:56). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

In view of the above, Brown (2016), in line with Diniz (2005), highlights that cinema transforms ideas, emotions, actions, words, and other forms of nonverbal language into audiovisual terms. Consequently, novels and films are distinct genres with differences in composition, even though they maintain connections, as shown in this scene (Figure 2) in the 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Therefore, either in the book or in the film, Elizabeth Bennet demonstrates her misimpression and prejudice toward Mr. Darcy, despite some changes in word choice, based on her critical judgment and her belief in Mr. Wickham words.

7.1.2 Elizabeth Bennet's self-reflection

In the chapter thirty-six, Elizabeth Bennet received a letter from Mr. Darcy, in which he revealed the truth about Wickham and his past actions and also he clarifies that he had misinterpreted the intensity of Jane Bennet's feelings for his friend Mr. Bingley, since she was not indifferent, as he had supposed. Through this revelation, Elizabeth undergoes a profound moment of self-reflection.

After finishing the letter, Elizabeth Bennet was confronted with a moment of revelation that her prejudice — driven by wounded pride — has led her to misjudge Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham and overestimate her own moral superiority. As a result, she began to develop self-reflection of her judgmental words, prejudiced feelings, and misguided opinions regarding the male protagonist, which led her to start regretting them.

Elizabeth's self-reflection moment is presented through her thoughts upon Mr. Darcy's letter, and she expresses new opinions about herself and her recent attitudes as well. This is described in the following excerpt below:

She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.
“How despicably I have acted!” she cried; “I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! [...] Till this moment I never knew myself.” (Austen, 2008, p. 220).

This admission represents not only a moral awakening but also an intellectual recognition. In Christian terms, it echoes the value of self-examination – a practice that leads to repentance and humility, important aspects of Anglican Christianity, of which Jane Austen was a believer. From this perspective, Toal (2017, p. 20) argues that Elizabeth Bennet’s self-reflection is intrinsically linked to Austen’s own beliefs, since “through her struggle to overcome her sin of prejudice against Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth Bennet’s internal conflict pervades the story and models a desire for self-reflection espoused by Austen herself.”

In the film adaptation, Elizabeth Bennet does not speak to herself in a moment of confusion immediately after reading the letter, as she does in the book. On the contrary, she confesses to her sister, Jane Bennet, days after reading Mr. Darcy's letter, showing genuine remorse in her tone, in which she only enunciates the following short line that in the book is expressed by the narrator: "*I've been so blind.*". Below is the record (Figure 3) of this mentioned scene from the 2005 film adaptation:

Figure 3 - Elizabeth Bennet confessing her misjudgment of Mr. Darcy to Jane Bennet.



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:43:44). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

In this scene (Figure 3), Elizabeth Bennet displays greater emotional sensitivity and romantic feelings through her tone of voice and emotional expressions, despite she still demonstrates consciousness about her prejudiced attitudes. This is supported by Diniz (2005), who explained that the process of adapting literature for cinema is influenced by cultural aspects, new social discourses, and also by the director’s perspective, such as Joe Wright, which may explain this change. While in the book, the character's moral and ethical reflections are more apparent, which may be related to the Christian Anglicanism of Jane Austen.

7.1.3 Elizabeth Bennet’s repentance of her actions and forgiveness of Mr. Darcy

In the book, from the receipt of Mr. Darcy’s letter onward, Elizabeth Bennet becomes more reflective and recognizes that her judgments were based not on truth, but on wounded pride and emotional reaction, which mirrors the beginning process of repentance, a key step in Christian moral development. As a result, her interactions with Mr. Darcy grow more peaceful, as she refocuses her perspective, which allows her to see Darcy in a new light and to evaluate herself more honestly. In Christian terms, this is a sign of authentic moral growth.

Following this, Elizabeth's moral development also encompasses forgiveness, when she learns of Darcy’s intervention in Lydia Bennet’s scandal, who ran away with Mr. Wickham while she was still a teenager. The next excerpt from the chapter fifty-eight confirms it:

“Mr. Darcy, I am a very selfish creature; and, for the sake of giving relief to my own feelings, care not how much I may be wounding your’s. I can no longer help thanking you for your unexampled kindness to my poor sister. Ever since I have known it, I have been most anxious to acknowledge to you how gratefully I feel it. Were it known to the rest of my family, I should not have merely my own gratitude to express.”
[...]

Elizabeth, feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances (Austen, 2008, p. 377).

She forgives Darcy for his initial arrogant attitude, and also forgives herself for misjudging him. In Christian terms, forgiveness is an essential moral response to human imperfection. Consequently, these are signs of Elizabeth Bennet's Christian maturity behaviors.

The excerpt above is represented almost at the end of the film adaptation, when Mr. Darcy goes to meet Elizabeth Bennet to apologize for his previous words and actions. Finally, she confesses to him that, indeed, she is the one who should apologize. In this sense, Elizabeth Bennet says the line: "*After what you've done for Lydia and, I suspect, for Jane, it is I who should be making amends.*". Next, there is the record (Figure 4) of this respective scene:

Figure 4 - Elizabeth Bennet expressing her forgiveness and gratitude to Mr. Darcy.



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:54:20). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

In the scene above (Figure 4), Elizabeth Bennet no longer sees herself as morally superior to Mr. Darcy. Although she does not explicitly enunciate her apologies, as in the novel, she conveys regret and forgiveness. As Genette's (1997) notion of "palimpsestuous" works and as it is reinforced by Ermarth (2001 apud Hutcheon, 2013), adaptations are new creations that echo earlier texts through variation, yet remain independent works. Therefore, her attitude above may illustrate moral development, which reflects the Christian understanding that true personal development requires confronting her own flaws and prideful self-assurance, which is in accordance with the aforementioned scholar.

7.1.4 Elizabeth Bennet's moral transformation

From chapter fifty-nine, Elizabeth accepts Darcy's second proposal. At this point, Elizabeth's decision is no longer based on wounded pride, outside influences, or social expectations, but on a mature and moral appreciation of Mr. Darcy's character. This moral transformation is expressed in the following excerpt in the chapter fifty-nine of the novel, when Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Bennet are having a conversation about Mr. Darcy's second proposal:

"I do, I do like him," she replied, with tears in her eyes, "I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms."

[...]

Elizabeth, still more affected, was earnest and solemn in her reply; and at length, by repeated assurances that Mr. Darcy was really the object of her choice, by explaining the gradual change which her estimation of him had undergone, relating her absolute certainty that his affection was not the work of a day, but had stood the test of many months' suspense, and enumerating with energy all his good qualities, she did conquer her father's incredulity, and reconcile him to the match (Austen, 2008, p. 388-389).

This moment evidences the protagonist's emotional and moral maturity, characterized by the absence of resentment. As a result, Elizabeth allows herself to love Darcy without staying attached to the wounded pride of the past – an attitude possible after forgiving and overcoming both herself and Mr. Darcy. This behavior reflects a transformation based on Christian morality, especially the awareness of her own flaws, repentance, and mutual forgiveness, which are the basis of authentic spiritual maturity. Consequently, it is evident that the protagonist undergoes a moral transformation throughout the novel.

In the film adaptation, this respective scene also occurs between the protagonist and her father, Mr. Bennet, in a moment full of significance and emotion, as it consolidates the moral transformation that Elizabeth Bennet underwent throughout the narrative, mainly regarding her new perspectives of Mr. Darcy. When asked by her father if she really liked him, even after all the critical opinions she had expressed, Elizabeth Bennet speaks these lines, similarly to the novel: “*He's not proud. I was wrong. I was entirely wrong about him. You don't know him, Papa. If I told you what he was really like, what he's done...*”. Below is the record of this scene (Figure 5) in the 2005 film adaptation:

Figure 5 - Elizabeth expressing her new opinions about Mr. Darcy to Mr. Bennet.



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:57:27). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

The scene above (Figure 5) clearly shows the difference in Elizabeth's behavior and opinion of Mr. Darcy compared to the beginning of the novel. Since Elizabeth demonstrates self-reflection, repentance, and forgiveness, characteristics that highlight this character's Christian moral development, as in the novel as well. However, the film focused on a more romantic and emotional perspective, as this scene also expresses the intensity of the love nurtured by the protagonist as her morality also developed. As Kristeva (2012) argues, the film is considered an intertextual of the novel, while constituting a new work with its own adaptations.

In general, it is possible to recognise that Elizabeth Bennet goes through a journey of moral awakening that reflects her character development through the stages of prejudice, self-reflection, repentance with forgiveness and moral transformation, which may regard the influence of the author's Christian beliefs in the construction of the protagonist throughout *Pride and Prejudice* novel. Concerning the 2005 film adaptation, directed by Joe Wright, it adopted a more emotional and sensitive aesthetic language to represent this journey, softening the ethical impact and reinforcing the affective aspect. Despite the alterations and some omissions regarding the mentioned dialogue, the essence of Elizabeth's moral development rooted in Christianity remains recognizable in both versions.

7.2 Mr. Darcy's Christian Moral Development: a comparison between the novel and the 2005

The male protagonist of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* novel, Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, is introduced as a wealthy, intelligent, proud, reserved and a socially prestigious gentleman, known for his estate at Pemberley and his close friendship with Mr. Bingley. And also whose arrogance distances him from others, particularly Elizabeth Bennet. Despite his introspection, Mr.

Darcy also undergoes a significant moral transformation during the narrative, as did Elizabeth Bennet. For this reason, this research analyzed the Christian influences portrayed by his speeches, actions and his role in the narrative's development.

As Reef (2014) argues, Jane Austen focused closely on the details of human behavior with a deep understanding of how people act and express themselves in their social relationships, since she captured universal aspects of human nature. As a result, similarly with Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Austen portrayed Mr. Darcy as a character who goes through a journey of personal growth and moral development that implicitly aligns with the principles of Christian morality, such as overcoming prideful behaviors through self-examination, regret and forgiveness.

7.2.1 Mr. Darcy's pride

At the beginning of the book, Mr. Darcy's first appearance reveals a man marked by an arrogant sense of superiority flaw, emphasized by a strong sense of pride rooted in his social status and lineage in society. This is manifested for the first time, when "pride surfaces almost instantly in Mr. Darcy when, in his snobbish and superior attitude, he says to Bingley of Elizabeth, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me [...]" (Toal, 2017, p.22).

This is confirmed in the following excerpt from the novel during a conversation between Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, in which the protagonist denies to dance with Elizabeth Bennet at the Netherfield ball in chapter three:

"Come, Darcy," said he, "I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."

"I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."

[...]

"You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room," said Mr. Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

"Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."

"Which do you mean?" and turning round he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said: "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me." (Austen, 2008, p. 13-14)

In the excerpt above, it reveals not only Mr. Darcy's pride, but as well as his social prejudice, through judging Elizabeth Bennet and the whole Bennet family based on social class, connections, and appearance of refinement, rather than moral character, since "in his choice and opinion for peripheral and physical appearance, Mr. Darcy rejected Elizabeth Bennet with an excuse that she wasn't pretty and beautiful enough to tempt him dancing with her in the party at the ball." (Glory; Raju; Kumar, 2021, p. 326). Consequently, in Christian terms, pride is considered a fundamental flaw, which reflects a moral failure of this character.

The respective scene of the excerpt above also is portrayed during the Netherfield ball, when Mr. Bingley advises his friend to dance with the agreeable Elizabeth Bennet, and Mr. Darcy replies with a similar discourse as in the book, in which he says the line: "*Perfectly tolerable, I dare say. Not handsome enough to tempt me.*". Next, there is the record (Figure 6) of this aforementioned scene.

Figure 6 - *Mr. Darcy expressing his opinion about Elizabeth Bennet.*



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 00:10:19). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

In this scene (Figure 6) from the 2005 film, his comment reflects both pride, in his sense of social status, and prejudice, and his premature judgment of Elizabeth's character. Despite this cinematic media slightly altered Mr. Darcy's speech in comparison to the aforementioned excerpt, either the film or the novel presents Mr. Darcy's moral failure in the first chapters, as well as his strong pride, which isolates him socially, becoming arrogant. This is in accordance with Hutcheon (2013) that adaptation may change in terms of language, but it preserves its essence, as it retains fundamental elements of the story, characters, or ideas.

Likewise, it is possible to identify Mr. Darcy's pride beyond Elizabeth Bennet when he negatively interferes in the relationship between Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley, through "having removed Bingley from Netherfield to prevent his friend from [...] 'low connections'." (Giffin, 2002, p. 101). His decision may be motivated by his sense of superiority and prejudice regarding Jane family's social and economic status, which further exemplifies this moral flaw, as Giffin suggests. Consequently, the couple stayed apart for a while.

This is confirmed when Darcy himself admits his interference in Jane and Bingley's relationship to Elizabeth Bennet after she rejects his marriage proposal due to his actions, as demonstrated in the following excerpts of the chapter thirty-four:

She paused, and saw with no slight indignation that he was listening with an air which proved him wholly unmoved by any feeling of remorse. He even looked at her with a smile of affected incredulity.

"Can you deny that you have done it?" she repeated. With assumed tranquillity he then replied: "I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards him I have been kinder than towards myself."

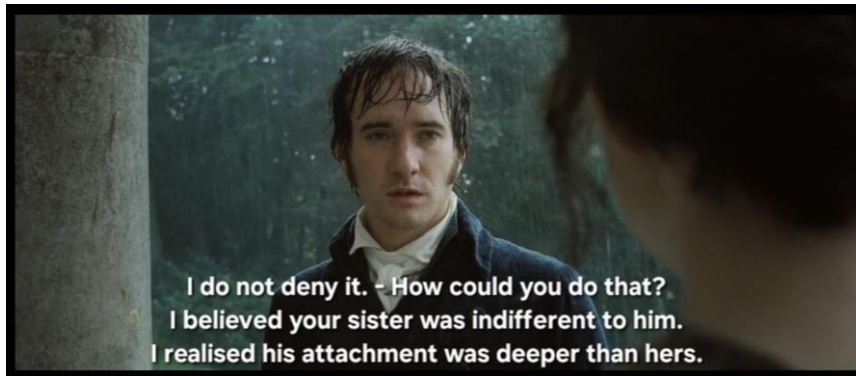
[...]

"Nor am I ashamed of the feelings I related. They were natural and just. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? – to congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?" (Austen, 2008, p. 203-205).

This moment reflects Mr. Darcy's arrogance as well as a deep social prejudice, due to a strong pride that dictates his judgments and behaviors throughout most of the narrative. Although he admitted his actions, Mr. Darcy still considers that he acted correctly for the well-being of his friend, Mr. Bingley. From a Christian moral perspective, this reflects a moral failure of arrogance towards the dignity of others, as Glory, Raju e Kumar (2021) and Giffin (2002) supported above.

In the corresponding scene from the 2005 film adaptation, Mr. Darcy also admits his interference in Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet's relationship, even though his discourse suffered alterations in comparison to the novel, as in the film he says the lines: "*I do not deny it. I believed your sister was indifferent to him. I realised his attachment was deeper than hers.*". Below, there is a record (Figure 7) of this respective scene:

Figure 7 - *Mr. Darcy admitting his interference in Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet's relationship.*



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:10:14). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

In this scene (Figure 7), Mr. Darcy's speech is altered by omitting the economic prejudice expressed in the novel, since in the adaptation, his actions are justified only for his prideful arrogance toward Jane Bennet's affectionate intensity for Mr. Bingley. As a result, this character's discourse becomes more emotional, almost remorseful, differently from the novel. This is in accordance with Lourenço (2018, p. 255), who highlights that "[...] in order to be lucrative and to please the broadest possible audience, some film adaptations have softened or erased the novel's critical perspective, transforming the narrative into an idealized love story."

7.2.2 Mr. Darcy's self-reflection

After Mr. Darcy's marriage proposal suffered rejection by Elizabeth Bennet, who accused him of arrogance and selfishness, his self-reflection and moral awakening journey began. Consequently, instead of reacting with indignation or resentment to Elizabeth Bennet's refusal and allegations, he initiates a process of personal reflection on his attitudes and opinions which is closely aligned with Christian morality of the Anglicanism period, according to Giffin (2002). For this reason, he quickly sent a letter to Elizabeth, in which he attempts to justify his actions, while also recognizing his flaws.

In the excerpt below, in chapter thirty-five Mr. Darcy clarifies the reasons for his previous actions, as well as he justifies them to Elizabeth Bennet inside the letter he gave to her one day after she refused his marriage proposal. This is acknowledged in the following excerpts from the novel:

"That I was desirous of believing her indifferent is certain — but I will venture to say that my investigation and decisions are not usually influenced by my hopes or fears. I did not believe her to be indifferent because I wished it; I believed it on impartial conviction, as truly as I wished it in reason."

[...]

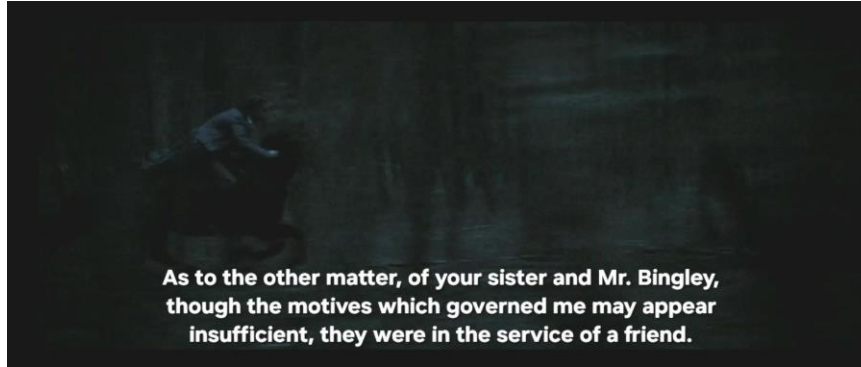
"Perhaps this concealment, this disguise was beneath me; it is done, however, and it was done for the best. On this subject I have nothing more to say, no other apology to offer. If I have wounded your sister's feelings, it was unknowingly done and though the motives which governed me may to you very naturally appear insufficient, I have not yet learnt to condemn them" (Austen, 2008, p. 210-212).

In the excerpts above from his explanatory letter, Mr. Darcy expresses self-reflection that results in a sincere attempt at transparency and restitution, which represents a journey transformation from proud self-arrogance to a more humble and honest self-awareness. Therefore, his decision to write to Elizabeth may indicate the beginning of his moral development that reflects Jane Austen's personal beliefs, as Giffin (2002), Toal (2017) and Reef (2014) agree.

This letter's scene in the film was slightly altered in terms of time and Mr. Darcy's words, since he gave her his letter on the evening of the same day that the marriage proposal was rejected, and regarding the subject above, he just speaks the lines:

“As to the other matter, of your sister and Mr. Bingley, though the motives which governed me may appear insufficient, they were in the service of a friend.”. The record (Figure 8) of this scene is presented below:

Figure 8 - Mr. Darcy explaining his interference in Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet's relationship.



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:15:48). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

In the 2005 film adaptation, this scene (Figure 8) shows that Mr. Darcy delivered the letter he wrote to Elizabeth Bennet in the night, showing his eagerness to tell her his side of the story in order to change her opinion of him. In addition, Mr. Darcy's speech in the film is shorter, more direct, and softened, as Mr. Darcy attributes his actions solely to his caring for his friend. This aligns with Brown (2016), Diniz (2005), De Noronha (2010), and Lourenço (2018), who, in agreement with Hutcheon (2013), emphasize the transformative nature of film adaptation in transposing literary narrative into audiovisual form.

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7.2.3 Mr. Darcy's repentance of his actions and forgiveness of Elizabeth Bennet

Mr. Darcy's regret is manifested in his actions after becoming aware of what he had done through his letter. Therefore, the clearest evidence of his regret and forgiveness is his intervention in the scandal involving Lydia Bennet, one of Elizabeth's young sisters, who ran away with Mr. Wickham, while she was a teenager. Despite Elizabeth's rejection, as soon as Mr. Darcy learns of the occurrence, he does not only provide financial support to secure their marriage, in order to avoid a negative effect on the Bennet family's social status. Besides, he also hides his involvement from Elizabeth. Later, he admits it to her.

In light of the above, Mr. Darcy's altruistic act contrasts strongly with his previous pride, illustrating the profound effect of his moral development. This is confirmed in the novel, when he responds to Elizabeth Bennet's gratitude for the assistance provided to her sister, as shown in the following excerpt below:

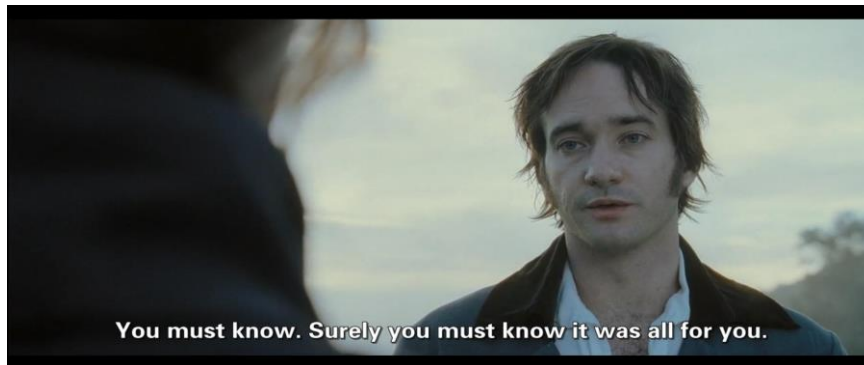
“If you will thank me,” he replied, “let it be for yourself alone. That the wish of giving happiness to you might add force to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny. But your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe I thought only of you.” (Austen, 2008, p. 377)

Although Elizabeth Bennet wounded his pride and rejected him, Mr. Darcy continued to love her and treated her family with greater respect. This reflects his regret for his past behavior, as well as his capacity for forgiveness, which are key steps in Christian moral development. This may be influenced by the author's beliefs, as approached by Toal (2017, p.20), who asserts

that “Austen’s religion manifests in characters’ engagement with others and struggle within themselves.”. Therefore, Jane Austen reveals the relevance of her religion in the moral practice of everyday life, as her characters grow morality and learn from their flaws.

The scene from the film that corresponds to the excerpt above, also demonstrates Mr. Darcy replying to Elizabeth Bennet's gratefulness for the support he offered to her sister. In this scene, even though there are some adaptations regarding words choice compared with the original narrative, it still reflects Mr. Darcy’s repentance and forgiveness in a romantic tone and feeling as well, since he says the lines: “*You must know. Surely you must know it was all for you.*”. The respective scene (Figure 9) is portrayed below:

Figure 9 - *Mr. Darcy explaining to Elizabeth about his assistance with her sister, Lydia.*



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:54:26). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXFF5A>

The record above (Figure 9) evidences Mr. Darcy’s actions shifted from selfish pride to a man capable of repentance, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and moral growth in Christian terms. In the film, Mr. Darcy is portrayed with a greater affective sensitivity and romantic sentiment communicated through his voice tone and expressive manner, despite his discourse preserves the essence of the novel, as both reveals his development in regretting and forgiving. It aligns with Cerqueira (2023), who argues that literary adaptations are interpretative new versions that offer a different perspective on the work.

7.2.4 Mr. Darcy’s moral transformation

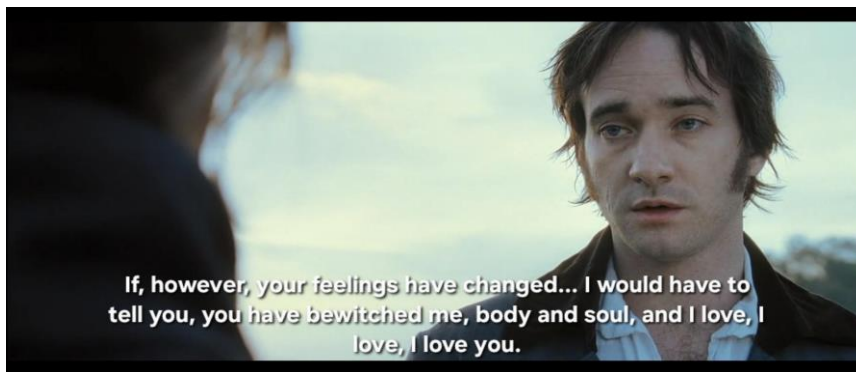
At the end of the novel, Mr. Darcy is revealed as a transformed man, whose development, constructed throughout the narrative, is evident both to Elizabeth and to the character himself. For this reason, when he renews his proposal to Elizabeth Bennet, and finally, she accepts it, since his second proposal is no longer marked by a strong sense of superiority or pride, but it expressed humility, sincere feelings and respect for her. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the novel in the chapter fifty-eight, still in the same conversation from the previous excerpt:

“You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever.” Elizabeth, feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances. The happiness which this reply produced, was such as he had probably never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do. Had Elizabeth been able to encounter his eye, she might have seen how well the expression of heartfelt delight diffused over his face, became him; but, though she could not look, she could listen, and he told her of feelings, which, in proving of what importance she was to him, made his affection every moment more valuable (Austen, 2008, p. 377-378).

The excerpt above reflects Mr. Darcy's moral development in the Christian understanding that true virtue requires confronting personal flaws and seeking moral truth rather than proud self-arrogance. Moreover, this second proposal clearly contrasts with his first one, revealing the depth of his transformation in comparison with the beginning of the narrative. Mr. Darcy's development highlights Jane Austen's Anglican moral vision: that true virtue is cultivated through humility, repentance, and moral change, which insights are inserted into the daily lives of her characters, as asserted by Giffin (2002).

Similarly with the novel, in the film adaptation, the corresponding scene of this excerpt above is presented in continuation and in the same context of the previous record. However, the cinematographic work added new speech lines for the character of Mr. Darcy that do not exist in the novel, these being a new confession of love, in which he expresses his feelings in an entirely romantic tone, as he says these speech lines: "*If, however, your feelings have changed... I would have to tell you, you have bewitched me, body and soul, and I love, I love, I love you.*". Below, it is the record (Figure 10) of this aforementioned scene:

Figure 10 - *Mr. Darcy confessing his feelings to Elizabeth Bennet in his second proposal.*



Source: Screenshot from *Pride & Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005, 01:55:12). <https://youtu.be/RYKGTXXXFF5A>

According to Lourenço (2018, p. 264), the direction and production of the 2005 film adaptation portrayed the character of Mr. Darcy "[...] as a hero or a charming prince, becoming more sentimental.". This is confirmed in this scene (Figure 10) above, in which Mr. Darcy's discourse emphasizes his emotional sensitivity and his romantic feelings, no longer also expressing the behavior changes or the moral development of the character, as in the novel. This is explained by Diniz (2005), who underlines that adaptation is a complex creative and cultural process that involves dialogue between languages and is always permeated by ideological choices.

Overall, Mr. Darcy's journey in the work *Pride and Prejudice* resonates with a Christian moral development, which may concern the influence of the author's Christian beliefs. As Mr. Darcy grows from a man influenced by pride, arrogance, and prejudice into an individual who reflects on his actions, is humble, and is also capable of repentance of his flaws, forgiveness, sacrificial love and personal growth, incorporating Christian moral principles into his daily life.

Regarding the 2005 cinematic adaptation, the character of Mr. Darcy suffered a notable adaptation, as in the film he was presented mainly as a more sentimental and romantic individual, whose some lines were preserved, but the most ones were altered, others omitted and softened to the impact of his moral development. Therefore, the moral development of the character, which mirrors the stages of pride, self-reflection, repentance with forgiveness and moral transformation based on Christian morality in the book was implicit and almost imperceptible in the film, to the detriment of his romantic evolution, which was more prominent, as it was "[...] transformed into a love story with a happy ending, a fairy tale." (Lourenço, 2018, p. 264).

8. Final Considerations

The purpose of this research was to analyze the development of Christian morality in Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* novel, through a comparative analysis of the literary work with the 2005 film adaptation of the same title, directed by Joe Wright. To achieve this objective, this study aimed to identify the stages of Christian moral development portrayed in the novel, as well as to analyze whether those stages were preserved, altered, or omitted in the film adaptation.

The content analysis of the novel revealed that both characters demonstrate a moral development reflecting Jane Austen's Christian beliefs, which were identified through the following four main stages: the first stage, pride in Mr. Darcy and prejudice in Elizabeth Bennet, displayed their Christian moral flaws. Following this, the second stage, self-reflection, arises after Darcy's letter, leading them to recognize their flaws. From this, the third stage, repentance and mutual forgiveness, reflected their sincere regret through humility and service in Mr. Darcy, and through changed perception and gratitude in Elizabeth Bennet. Finally, the fourth stage portrayed the moral transformation, as both characters overcame their flaws, demonstrating an authentic spiritual and personal maturity.

The comparative analysis of the 2005 film adaptation presented that the cinematic version preserved the moral growth of both protagonists, especially all the four mentioned stages identified in the novel, but presented it through a more secularized, less religious, and mostly emotional approach, emphasizing the evolution of their romance. Furthermore, the film alters some lines and scenarios, omits some speeches, or softens the second, third and the fourth stages for both protagonists, particularly concerning the character of Mr. Darcy, in order to possibly please modern audiences, as well as to adapt to the ideologies and cultural expectations of contemporary society, since adaptations are new versions of the original work.

In light of this, the content analysis contributed to the realization that the novel, beyond a romantic perspective, also has Christian characteristics of Jane Austen's beliefs. In addition, the comparative analysis concluded that both the novel and the film present Elizabeth and Darcy not only as romantic protagonists, but as individuals involved in a process of growth and moral transformation. Also to understand how religious themes rooted in Christian morality in a classic literary work are adapted and transformed in modern media, as well as the enduring dialogue among literature, morality, and cultural representation.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that while the essence of the characters' moral development remains in the adaptation, the film presented it through a more romantic and sensitive lens, rather than a Christian one. In this sense, future research could also expand this analysis by comparing *Pride and Prejudice* with other film or television adaptations, investigating how Christian moral principles are represented in different cultural and temporal contexts. Additionally, new studies could examine the moral development of other Austen characters, which would offer greater insight into the author's religious perspective, expanding the academic discussion within this field of study.

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