

# Adapting Jane Austen's Persuasion for a Contemporary Audience

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**Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad**

**2024**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:586024>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-01-22**



**Sveučilište u Zadru**  
Universitas Studiorum  
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Stručni prijediplomski studij  
Anglistika

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Završni rad

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Zadar, 2024.



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Zadar, 27. rujna 2024.

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## 1. Introduction

In this final paper, I will explore Jane Austen and her works which have been a popular read for over a century. There is certainly a reason for the love and admiration she is receiving as an author and this paper will shed light on why that is. It is a truth universally known that Austen was ahead of her time with her strong female characters and feminist motifs. That is a fundamental reason why nowadays her novels, as well as movie adaptations of her novels, are largely a hit. Many movie adaptations have found a source of inspiration in her works, therefore making her works very beloved for screen adaptations. That being said, this final paper will further elaborate the phenomenon of adapting Jane Austen. Furthermore, there have been quite a few screen adaptations of *Persuasion* (1817) and some of the most prominent ones shall be analyzed. A few introductory words about Austen's novel *Persuasion* will precede the mentioned analysis. Another key topic of this paper will be period dramas in general and their immensely high demand by the contemporary audience. Some of the finest period dramas will be mentioned and elaborated, such as *Bridgerton* (2020), *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) and *Emma* (2020). The heart of this paper is undoubtedly the thorough analysis of Carrie Cracknell's movie *Persuasion* (2022), which is a screen adaptation of Austen's novel that carries the same title. The director has had an extremely modern take on the classic, leaving the critics and audience both in awe and shock.

## 2. Period Dramas in the 21st century

For the last decade, period dramas have become more popular than ever. Teenagers and adolescents, who represent the younger audience, are certainly the key to making period dramas so popular, as they are the reason why some recent period dramas have been acclaimed as a considerable success. Shonda Rhimes' *Bridgerton*, based on the book with the same title by Julia Quinn, Julian Fellowes' *Downton Abbey*, Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* and Autumn de Wilde's *Emma*, both based on Jane Austen's two very renowned novels, which carry the same titles as their adaptations, are without doubt among the most watched period dramas. Learning about history through a romantic storyline, which more often than not captivates the viewer's heart, is most likely the main reason behind the admiration and love these sorts of movies and series receive. However, it is not easy to keep the younger audience amused and interested for a prolonged period.

Dr. Shelley Anne Galpin says that her "research, carried out with young people aged between 16 and 19, designed to provide evidence to interrogate simplistic assumptions often made about the tastes of young people, and to demonstrate the diversity that exists amongst teenagers" ("The Appeal Of Period Drama For A Younger Audience"). The study was intended to show how a younger audience correlates with the period drama genre and what this genre provides for British society. One of the most significant conclusions of the study was how much the responses vary among every young person, who participated in the study. One set of teenagers considered the dramas incredibly boring whilst the others were largely enthusiastic about them. The research showed that many participants from the young audience are drawn to period dramas only if they deem them historically, more or less, accurate. The reason for that is the ability to learn about the past through an intriguing show or movie. However, not only the

historical aspect of period dramas sparks interest among teenagers and adolescents. Women's rights, the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people as well as mental disorders and the neurodiverse are key factors when it comes to the amiability of period dramas among the younger audience.

However, despite clear ideological differences amongst the teenage participants in my research, these young people typically approved of dramas that they saw as promoting the freedoms of the disadvantaged, and representing demographics that they saw as underexposed in the media industry. (Galpin)

Casting ethnic minorities or non-white people for roles that would usually be played by white people has also been a huge success. *Bridgerton* is surely one of the best representatives for such casting. Although it is ahistorical when it comes to depicting ethnicity in the past, it breaks the stigma of an all-white cast incredibly well. Queen Charlotte is portrayed by two women of color, her older self by Golda Rosheuvel and her younger self by India Ria Amarteifio. There is also the unforgettable placement of Regé-Jean Page as Duke of Hastings in the first season of the show. Casting actors of various races and ethnicities defies British history, since it was white-dominated, yet it seems to be a very effective strategy for gaining a large fan base because that way the cast is diverse and non-white actors get an opportunity to have screen time. "Whilst historical dramas have been habitually subject to a felt need to adhere to often intangible notions of historical accuracy, the truth is that no drama that depicts the past is ever a true reflection of history" (Galpin).

No matter if the drama is set in the past, present or even in an imaginary world, the plot will mostly be constructed as a combination of the needs of a contemporary audience and a widely accepted depiction of historical events. BBC, known for their exquisite period dramas, and similar organizations have taken this into great consideration and created splendid shows,



such as *Bridgerton* which meet these diverse requirements. In the words of Monique I. Vobecky “Whether it be ‘Bridgerton’ or classic BBC period television dramas such as ‘Pride and Prejudice,’ it is clear that the obsession for period dramas stems from the paradoxical nostalgia of romanticizing history” (“The Rationale Behind the Modern Obsession with Period Dramas”). The younger generations have discovered period dramas through *Bridgerton*, which is an undeniable hit. It has acclaimed such fame and success because it did something that other shows and films of the same genre have not - it modernized and heavily romanticized the British Regency era. This era marks the epoch from February 1811 to January 1820 and is best known for colonialism, poverty, wars, riots and racism. In *Bridgerton*, during that same period British society is very welcoming to people of color, there is no mention of wars and riots and it appears that there is no poverty. However, not all families in this period drama are wealthy, yet not one family is shown to be truly struggling to make ends meet or buy new clothes from the modiste every so often. That is why *Bridgerton* has often received the commentary from the critics that it is a fairy-tale. Since Netflix had a large budget for this particular period drama, the audience was eager to see how they will invest it in this modern screening - will it be the costumes, the scenery, the music or the production itself.

*Bridgerton* offers instrumental covers of popular pop songs such as Billy Eilish’s ‘Bad Guy’. While this modernity allows people to relate to this specific genre, it might not be a good idea to take it too far. Critics point out that the modern pop songs are used at quite inappropriate times in the show, creating a largely modern soundtrack instead of incorporating a classical one too to fit the Regency era more. The costumes did receive high praise yet they are considered to lack originality and creativity. For instance, a certain color palette is used by a family in the show without changing as the episodes go by, creating a sense of monotony. In the latest season

of the show this does finally change. Nevertheless, Jane Austen's classics make some of the finest and most renowned period pieces.

Whether you watch Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) or BBC's adaptation of the same title, the idyllic English country-side cinematography and a sensational soundtrack is impossible not to enjoy. Austen's stories are timeless — pining young lovers and troves of slow-burn miscommunication, making them perfect for subtle artistic exploration. Their well-loved narratives are themselves beautiful works of art, and directors simply have to aesthetically match Austen's subtle wit and charm. (Vobecky)

These period pieces have simplified and romanticized the Regency era for a modern audience. Even though there are some flaws such as the not entirely adequate modern soundtracks and bland design of the costumes, the occurrence of period dramas is the key to the infatuation of the younger masses with this genre.

### **3. Adapting Jane Austen**

[Jane Austen] has entered pop culture more thoroughly than other writers because she is almost spookily contemporary. . . . Beneath the period details, the typical Austen heroine offers something for almost any woman to identify with: She is not afraid to be the smartest person in the room, yet after a series of misunderstandings gets the man of her dreams anyway. (James qtd. in Steenkamp 3)

As explained in the paragraph above, Austen's works truly lure in a large audience of all ages. The reason is quite simple - Austen's main topic is an idyllic love. More often than not, people, women, in particular, wish for such love and partnership. Usually, in real life, unfortunately idyllic love is hard to achieve and reach. That is precisely why Austen has captured

readers for decades and why movie adaptations of her works are largely a success. “In this sense, Austen adaptations are the ultimate ‘chickflicks’, selling happily-ever-after fantasies which offer a respite from today’s fraught, slippery world of quick hook-ups, divorce and family counseling” (James qtd. in Steenkamp 3).

In the era in which Austen lived, she was very advanced and unlike the majority of society with her thoughts regarding women and their rights. One might say she was a feminist, which can be recognized when reading her novels and analyzing their heroines. This is undoubtedly a major factor in why her works are classics and why movie adaptations of her novels have a large audience. Even before Austen’s time, as well as after, women have been fighting for their rights and equality with the opposite, male sex. This battle is an ongoing one, therefore making Austen’s novels evergreen. Most women love to see feminism through famous books and their movie adaptations, and Austen is certainly one of those authors. Lapina-Kratasyuk and Gromovetskaia suggest that “the interest in Austen’s works in the popular culture of the second half of the 20th century has often been identified as a reaction to the spread of feminism” (122). The utopia that a woman, even such a long time ago, fights for her rights, stands up to societal stereotypes and norms and gets to live the life that she desires is more often than not riveting for female readers, nowadays as well as back then.

In an era of instant gratification, information overloads and mass-produced have-it-all fantasies, audiences prefer their Elizabeth Bennets to be lively, fearless women who can do just as well without Mr Darcy than with him. Fortunately Jane Austen’s nascent feminism and strong female characters ensure that meeting the very particular demands of these new millennial Janeites is not such an impossible task. (James qtd. in Steenkamp 9)

Jane Austen's novels have sparked inspiration for film adaptations throughout the twentieth and at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The directors and screenwriters have the choice of being totally faithful to her books or, the seemingly more popular choice as of late, to modernize and heavily adapt the text and characters to the likes of modern audiences. It is clear that the directors John Glenister, who directed *Emma* (1972), and Simon Langton, who directed *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), made the first choice and followed the novels very closely. However, there are the opposite examples of movie adaptations that followed Austen's novels very loosely or minimally, with much modernization. "The directors of the 1995 *Clueless* and the 2001 *Bridget Jones's Diary* deviated from the historical telling of the novels and created films for the modern era" (Graham 33).

People who have been Jane Austen's fans for a long time and have deep admiration and love for her works often find the topic of adaptation problematic. The reason for it is quite simple - a book will always be the original and the movie, since it is made based on a book, will certainly have changes to the original piece, whether they be small or significant. More often than not such drastic changes are not preferred or understood by the aforementioned fans. It is factual that some adaptations of Austen's novels are poorly executed, but there are also adaptations that have truly brought the book to life. Still, die-hard Austen fans might argue that no movie adaptation could ever do her novels justice.

There is not a movie in the world that can do justice to the book it was based on, but it does not mean that it cannot be a good film. An avid Austen reader can complain that the adaptation completely missed the point of the novel . . . or that the screenwriter kept very few original lines, or that the casting ruined characters, or hundreds of other complaints. (Bartolović 25)

It is important to note that although such an opinion on adapting Austen's works does have some validity, the directors and screenwriters have a totally different medium which they work with. It is an incredibly complex form of art and the filmmakers are just as much an artist as Austen herself was, therefore they are creating their form of art while trying to stay true to the book their art is based on. A movie adaptation can be seen as a director's vision or interpretation of the book the movie is based on. Certainly, not every interpretation or vision will sit right with the audience, which is perhaps why the whole adaptation process and final product can be considered fascinating and worthy.

#### **4. *Persuasion* (1817)**

*Persuasion* differs from Austen's other novels and there are multiple reasons as to why. The novel appears more realistic and serious in comparison to her published works, allowing the reader to get a pretty accurate glimpse into Austen's time. The main female character in this novel is older than her other heroines and perhaps, one might add, more mature. The male characters mostly have jobs that do not make them a fortune, they make just enough. That is quite a difference from the gentry with large incomes or inheritances that Austen's other works describe. *Persuasion* in itself is a critique and comment on the societal norms and the gap between the sexes.

In this novel, she prefers the Navy men over her usual male characters who are often jobless gentry and praises the lives of these hard-working men, who also serve the nation. Throughout the novel, the gap between female and male sexes is emphasized and criticized very clearly and directly multiple times. Anne, the main female character, shows great understanding of women's inferiority and the struggle they face to escape the shackles of society. During a

conversation with Captain Harville, Anne openly speaks of inequality and, by doing so, defends women in general and “. . . proposes that if, as Harville asserts, men and women have different natures it must be because the sexes are granted unequal opportunities because social codes put men and women in different relations to occupation and change” (Lynch qtd. in Bartolović 19). Anne also suggests, not as openly though, that the portrayal of women as incompetent and weak is an ideology and image created by men.

Having all this in mind, one can say that this novel is darker than others because it shows the true nature of the time Austen lived in, in other words shows the mindset of the early nineteenth-century society. The novel could be seen as an observation of her time and its society. In addition, Austen situated this novel in an exact time frame to emphasize the importance of that specific time, since it was the time of war. At the beginning of the novel Captain Wentworth was without a fortune or name but during the war, which lasted eight years, his situation has drastically changed. He became wealthy and had many opportunities after the war. He is not the only character that undergoes such a change strongly related with the war. With this, Austen wanted to show that since the times have changed, maybe the people should too. When looking at the depth and complexity of this particular novel, it goes without saying that *Persuasion* is an intricate piece of literature that demands understanding to create a proper movie adaptation.

#### **4.1. *Persuasion* - movie adaptations until 2022**

Until the year 2022, *Persuasion* had a total of four adaptations. The first adaptation was created by the BBC in the year 1960. It was written by Michael Voysey and Barbara Burnham and the director was Campbell Logan. Anne Elliot is played by Daphne Slater and Captain Frederick Wentworth is played by Paul Daneman.

The second adaptation was filmed in 1971 by ITV/Granada. The screenwriter was Julian Mitchell and the director was Howard Baker. This adaptation has five episodes and is the longest of all, with a duration of 225 minutes. Since it is the longest version, the novel's storyline is pretty accurately followed. The main female character is played by Ann Fairbank and the main male character is played by Bryan Marshall. Roger Michell's adaptation came out in 1995 under the BBC wing once again. The screenwriter was Nick Dear. It is considered one of the best adaptations of Jane Austen's novels. Parrill claims that

The 1995 film captures far better the spirit of the times and is more sophisticated in its visual style. Unlike most other cinematic versions of Austen's novels, this film presents a world in which the heroine is not beautiful, the hero is roughhewn, men often go about in worn and dirty clothes, and some of the characters live in grubby-looking houses (qtd. in Bartolović 39)

The role of Anne Elliot is portrayed by Amanda Root and Captain Wentworth is played by Ciaran Hinds. The portrayal of Anne in this adaptation is accurate, as she looks plain and older at the beginning of the movie and later on more elegant. Behavior-wise she shows changes throughout the film like she does throughout the novel - she is quiet and lonely in the beginning and more confident and assertive as time goes. The script is so well-written that no narrator or narration was needed, both actors portray the intensity of the main male and female character's emotions incredibly well. The screenwriter and director put in their best efforts to portray everything as realistic as they could and did not wish to glamorize the characters' lifestyles. For instance, Anne can be seen riding in a farmer's cart, the clothes and costumes are dirty and muddy when the characters are outside, the Musgrove children cause a lot of fuss and noise and their parents are portrayed as simple and kind. What also makes this adaptation realistic are the

on-location shootings in lovely homes located in the English countryside. Such a setting creates a certain mood, which in this instance was the end goal. The storyline is historically very firmly set, which influences the progression of the characters' relationships.

The last, fourth adaptation is a 2007 BBC television film with a duration of 94 minutes. Simon Burke was the screenwriter and the director was Adrian Shergold. Sally Hawkins plays Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth is played by Rupert Penry Jones. The general review of this adaptation is not very positive. The main issues are the script, the way it was filmed, which was using a camera held with hands, characters communicating with the camera and probably the worst of all - the incorrect portrayal of the main heroine.

#### **4.1. Carrie Cracknell's *Persuasion* (2022)**

The movie was directed by Carrie Cracknell and the screenwriters are Ron Bass and Alice Victoria Winslow. The main character Anne Elliot is played by Dakota Johnson and the second main character Frederick Wentworth is portrayed by Cosmo Jarvis. Other appearing stars in the movie are Nikki Amuka-Bird, Mia McKenna-Bruce, Richard E. Grant, and Henry Golding. Seeing that *Persuasion* is a popular and beloved Austen novel, and the other screen adaptations of her works so far have been quite well done, the expectations for this movie were pretty high. Unfortunately, the movie was perceived by a large number of critics and viewers as disappointing for numerous factors which were commented on and elaborated on by both parties. The most frequently mentioned factor, which played a key role for such a rating, is the modernization of Austen's novel to a very high, unrecognizable degree. Adapting Jane Austen, and any other classical writer for that matter, for a younger audience requires modernization but



this movie poses the question of whether it has gone too far, which will be further thoroughly analyzed in this paper.

The movie opens with the main female character, Anne Elliot, talking about her current life status. Already in the opening scene it is noticeable that the adaptation will be quite modern, considering Anne's monologue: "Now I'm single and thriving" (00:01:38-00:01:40). Such a sentence would certainly not be actually used back in Austen's time. The opening scene is portrayed by Anne speaking and being the narrator, however, that setting continues throughout the entirety of the film. Not only does she speak as the narrator, but she also breaks the fourth wall, in other words, she speaks directly to the camera and the audience. The first instance of her breaking the fourth wall can be seen at 00:02:54 and from that point on it is a constant occurrence.

Debt collectors barge into the house and one of them says to Anne's sister Elizabeth: "Daddy's broke, princess" (00:04:10-00:04:12). The sentence structure and vocabulary are highly modernized, considering the word 'broke' would certainly not be used in Austen's time nor would the auxiliary verb be used in such a manner. At 00:04:27 Lady Russell, Anne's family friend whom she is incredibly close with like with a mother, also breaks the fourth wall by looking into the camera and sighing as Anne narrates about her and her life. Anne's father, Walter Elliot, says to Anne: "Try to keep up" (00:05:37-00:05:39). The meaning of the sentence, or the semantics, is very modern as that phrase is nowadays used to indicate someone is slow or perhaps stupid. At 00:05:49 Mr. Shepherd, who is a friend of the family and also runs their books, uses the word 'spa' to describe why Bath is a lovely place for their new place of living, seeing that they have to move out. In Austen's time, there were only thermal waters and facilities with the sources of such waters, and they were also very few. The concept of the spa did not

exist at the time. It is a thing of the modern world, therefore the usage of that word in the movie is redundant.

Sir Walter Elliot says the following: “What good is a title if you have to earn it? What good is anything if you have to earn it?” (00:06:17-00:06:19) which is a great example of what Austen in the novel tries to portray - the difference between hard-working men such as the ones in the Navy and the gentry or nobility who are conceited and wish to have everything handed out to them. In the novel, she praises the working class, which has a purpose and admirable courage, and shows disdain for the gentry, which is rather useless for the society. At 00:08:15 Anne speaks about her love interest, Captain Wentworth, claiming that if it were up to her, she would have never left his side. She was forced to leave his side by Lady Russell because she deemed him unsuitable for Anne as he lacked a fortune. To Anne, that did not matter but she had to listen to her family which caused her and Wentworth to part ways. In this scene of the film, she emphasizes that she does not care for his wealth and that she only cares for him. That is also a good portrayal of her character in the novel because she was a feminist and fighter against stereotypical norms of society, believing that love is the only valid reason for partnership, not economic status.

The color palette used for this movie is rather too modern and it gives off an Instagram-like look and it does not set the vibe of Austen’s time. The makeup of the female characters is not heavy but it still makes the characters look as women do now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is not realistic. The outfits have been given little to no thought because they are so simple and cheap-looking. The dresses Anne and Elizabeth wear for the most part of the movie look like dresses one can buy today in stores like Bershka or Stradivarius. It makes the movie appear unrealistically modern and perhaps even cheap and low-budget. Up until this point in the movie

it is already clear that the adaptation will be heavily modernized for a contemporary audience, however it could be argued that the way it was filmed, regarding the outfits, speech and vocabulary and constant breaking of the fourth wall, is taken a bit far.

Mrs. Croft, Admiral Croft's wife, states that: "A woman without a husband is not a problem to be solved" (00:15:14-00:15:16) which is a splendid portrayal of Austen's feminism and progressive thinking. The female characters in her novels, *Persuasion* as well, are strong-willed, fierce, independent and ahead of their time, and this scene represents that very well. The narration and dialogues have so far been simplified to a maximum and made contemporary. However, all of a sudden Anne starts using complex sentences for instance: "If he'd wished to see me before now, he need not have waited" (00:15:57-00:15:59). The leap from incredibly simple grammatical forms to a highly formal type of sentence is sudden and unexpected, might one add confusing. At 00:17:17 Anne uses the term 'narcissist' to describe her sister Mary, whom she came to visit as she has fallen ill. That term was first used at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, indicating that just like 'spa' this term is redundant and did not even exist at the time.

At 00:20:05 Anne uses the phrase 'It's electrifying' to describe her feelings for Captain Wentworth. Even though static electricity was discovered long before Austen's time by the Greeks, such a phrase is still very inadequate for a movie set in 1817. At 00:23:25 Anne drinks wine from an odd and not elegant-looking glass while sitting on the windowsill - very modern and most unusual for that period. At 00:23:58 she can be seen drinking straight from a bottle of red wine. Even today, such a move is considered a little dramatic and over-the-top. For Austen's time, such a sight is unprecedented. At 00:26:23 Anne was sitting at the table with her sister Mary, her husband Charles Musgrove and their children and she evidently mouthed the swear

word 'fuck'. Once again, even for a modernized adaptation of a classic novel, some things are distasteful.

Captain Wentworth says: "Quite the upgrade" (00:28:31-00:28:32) indicating that Louisa, Charles Musgrove's sister, is better than Anne. Such a sentence is not fitting for that period. Henrietta Musgrove, Louisa's sister, says "risky profession" to describe Captain Wentworth's job which is being in the Navy. The sentence is not necessarily poorly worded but quite modern. Later on, when Anne and Mary are having a conversation, Mary calls Anne out by describing her piano playing as: "plonk-plonking your sad-sack tunes" (00:33:36-00:33:38). The way she worded the sentence is hilarious and certainly fitting for a contemporary audience. At 00:33:43 when Mary asks Anne how she likes to spend her time Anne answers: "alone in my room with a bottle of red" which is once more unprecedented for Austen's time.

As Mary states that "marriage is the greatest blessing that life can offer" (00:33:54-00:33:56) Anne looks mockingly at the camera, which is another element of breaking the fourth wall as well as showing disdain for the primitive and socially acceptable way of thinking. On top of that, the element of irony is present, which Anne is aware of because Mary does not like her marriage nor does she like her children, as she is very narcissistic. At 00:41:52 the movie shows a scene of Anne picking up her dress and pulling down her underwear to go pee by a tree. She stops in her tracks as she hears Wentworth and Louisa talking. Just as is the case with the bottle of red wine and the mouthing of the word 'fuck' this type of behavior is absolutely unacceptable and crazy for Austen's time.

As the movie progresses, when Anne sits at the table with Wentworth, his comrade Harville and others, she responds to Wentworth by saying: "Don't patronize her by deciding for her what worries she can and cannot endure" (00:50:21-00:50:23). Anne emphasizes her

feminism here by stating that a woman can decide for herself what she can and cannot do, which is an accurate representation of the novel's Anne and also of the feminist approach that Austen has. At 00:55:09 Wentworth tries to express his thoughts and emotions to Anne and he has a hard time doing it, just like his character does in the novel. However, his expressions are very stiff and the warm words he has for Anne are hard to believe. One might say that that is precisely a good depiction of Wentworth's character from the book. On the other hand, it could be argued that the portrayal could have been a bit more natural and less stiff and awkward. In the beach scene at 00:58:08, after Wentworth talks to Anne and expresses his wish to remain friends with her, Anne pans over to the camera and refers to her and Wentworth as 'exes'. The term exes is a heavy modernization and would have never been used in that period, especially since having exes was not approved back then and even if a person had one, it had to be kept in ultimate secrecy.

Not long after saying that, she goes for a swim at 00:59:04 fully dressed while Wentworth is watching in the distance. Such behavior is, again, modernized and unusual for Austen's time because most people could not swim. It was also socially unacceptable for a woman to be soaked and show the outline of her body. When sitting on a picnic with Lady Russell at 01:08:45 Anne is wildly underdressed for Austen's time, wearing a dress and a cloak of some kind over it which give an incredibly simple and modern look, the one women nowadays achieve by buying clothes from stores such as Zara and Stradivarius. At 01:08:59 Lady Russell suggests that she goes on European tours to sleep with men. She explains that she is content with being on her own, since she is widowed. This only stresses the fact that she does not want to remarry, but that she still has needs. That is a truly feminist detail in the movie and it is aimed at the modern woman and the contemporary audience. Even though it is progressive and contemporary, mentioning something like that in Austen's time was unheard of. Even if a

woman did seek pleasure, she could have never spoken about it and she had to keep it in ultimate secrecy.

As mentioned before, some elements of the dialogues and monologues are excessively contemporary. When Anne and Lady Russell are riding in the carriage, Anne explains why she would not pursue someone like Mr. Elliot by stating: “Because he is a ten. I never trust a ten” (01:09:58-01:10:00). This phrase went viral on Tiktok about two years ago, the same year this movie was released. The phrase is used to describe a person who is outstandingly handsome, well-mannered and has nothing but virtues. With that being said, this phrase is as modern as it gets. This adaptation, as mentioned earlier in this paper, is heavily contemporary but the usage of this terminology has been the topic of almost every critic and a galore of viewers who saw the movie. The aforementioned phrase is simply out of touch with the historical period and the novel and it was deemed tremendously inappropriate.

Nearing the end of the movie, in the scene where Harville sits and speaks to Anne, he does not assert himself like he does in the novel when the topic of inequality of sexes is mentioned. He says: “I don’t mean to venture any claims about the differences between man and woman” (01:35:11-01:35:13). It differs from the novel yet it was a nice, feminist touch to Harville’s character which the audience largely approved of. Anne answers him with: “Oh well I will. The only privilege I claim for my sex is that of loving longest” (01:35:14-01:35:17). Her character appears progressive as it does in the book and she is assertive with her opinion. It is yet another feminist element in the movie adaptation and we can say that it stays true to Austen’s strong female characters from her other novels.

At 01:39:13 Birdy’s song ‘Quietly Yours’ from 2022 starts playing. The song plays in the background as Anne and Wentworth finally end up together and embrace each other. The song

choice is aimed at the contemporary audience, just like it has been done in *Bridgerton* (2020). Opinions on a contemporary soundtrack vary because some suggest that a classical soundtrack would be more suitable, like the one that was used in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005). At the same time, the aspect of the heavy modernization of this movie adaptation has to be taken into consideration. If the producers had used a classical soundtrack, it would be a big jump from the aforementioned modernization and it could have been unfitting. As the song is ending, Anne narrates: “Don’t let anyone tell you how to live. Or who to love” (01:41:45-01:41:47). With this sentence her character has stayed, once more, true to her character in the novel. She is a persistent, strong-willed, independent woman who got her happy ending with the man of her dreams and yet stayed true to herself, without tailoring her character to the norms of the society. The adaptation ends with a happy ending for Anne and Wentworth, where they plan to sail the seas and oceans together and travel the world.

#### **4. Conclusion**

It can be argued whether Cracknell’s *Persuasion* (2022) could be considered a worthy movie adaptation of Jane Austen’s novel which carries the same title. The critics, as well as the audience, have shown disapproval of the extreme contemporary elements Cracknell implemented in this movie adaptation. Some crucial points and topics of Austen’s novels were adhered to and represented, such as feminism and the lead characters’ personalities. Anne Elliot is, like in the novel, an independent lady who stands out from the rest of society and its norms. We can even say that she is a feminist as she voices her opinions and is quite assertive, unlike most women of that time.

Captain Wentworth is well portrayed in the adaptation and the best example is the beach scene when he tries to voice his feelings towards Anne. He is bad at it and has difficulties opening up, just like in the novel. However, it is not certain whether that is enough to proclaim this a good adaptation. The downsides are the highly modern dialogues and monologues, a few scenes that show strange and unusual behavior of characters for a period drama, the constant breaking of the fourth wall and numerous other points. The best example is the vocabulary Anne uses when speaking to the camera, which confuses the viewer about the period in which the movie takes place. Anne's repeated looking at the camera and speaking to it is one of the most modern elements any adaptation of Austen has had so far. We as viewers can ask ourselves the following question: when is something too much and taken too far? This movie surely sparks that questions in the audience and the opinions vary from person to person and their own preferences. Some critics and audience members argue that the modernity of the adaptation is what makes it unique and interesting. Regrettably, not many share that opinion.

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## **6. Adapting Jane Austen's *Persuasion* for a Contemporary Audience: Summary and key words**

The main focus of this final paper is Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion* and its 2022 film adaptation by Carrie Cracknell. One could say that this adaptation caused all kinds of reactions from viewers as well as critics and was therefore an interesting piece of art for analysis and writing. Some of the most significant period dramas of the twenty-first century are mentioned at the start of this paper. Secondly, the love and praise Austen's works acclaim in the world of literature are elaborated and so is the interest that the movie industry shows towards her works. The novel is presented briefly to give the key points that the adaptation should have adhered to. Afterwards, several previous screen adaptations are mentioned which is shortly after followed by a detailed film analysis of the adaptation from 2022. The paper examines whether the modernization of classical works in film adaptations is more of a negative phenomenon than a positive one. The paper concludes that Cracknell's adaptation is incredibly modern and that the opinions of the contemporary audience are divided. Majority of the audience thinks that the adaptation is a miss because the level of the novel's modernization is almost absurd. On the other hand, some viewers claim that this experimental take on a classical piece is intriguing.

**Key words:** novel, *Persuasion*, movie adaptation, Jane Austen, contemporary audience

## **7. Adaptacija romana *Persuasion* Jane Austen za suvremenu publiku: Sažetak i ključne riječi**

Glavni fokus ovog završnog rada je roman *Persuasion* od Jane Austen i njegova filmska adaptacija iz 2022. od Carrie Cracknell. Može se reći da je ova adaptacija izazvala svakakve reakcije gledatelja i kritičara te je samim time bila zanimljiv komad umjetnosti za analizu i pisanje. Uvodno se spominju neke od najznačajnijih povijesnih drama dvadeset i prvog stoljeća. Zatim se obrazlažu ljubav i pohvale u svijetu literature prema Austeninim djelima kao i zaintrigiranost filmske industrije s njenim djelima. Potom je roman predstavljen ukratko kako bi se predstavile ključne točke kojih se adaptacija trebala pridržavati. Sljedeće je navođenje nekoliko dosadašnjih adaptacija na ekranu nakon čega slijedi detaljna filmska analiza adaptacije iz 2022. Cilj ovog rada je potaknuti pitanje da li je modernizacija klasičnih djela u filmskim adaptacijama više negativna pojava nego što je pozitivna. Može se zaključiti da je Cracknellina adaptacija izuzetno moderna te da su mišljenja moderne publike podvojena. Većina publike je mišljenja da je adaptacija promašaj jer je nivo modernizacije romana skoro pa apsurdan. S druge strane neki gledatelji tvrde da je ovaj eksperimentalni pristup klasičnom djelu intrigantan.

**Ključne riječi:** roman, *Persuasion*, filmska adaptacija, Jane Austen, moderna publika