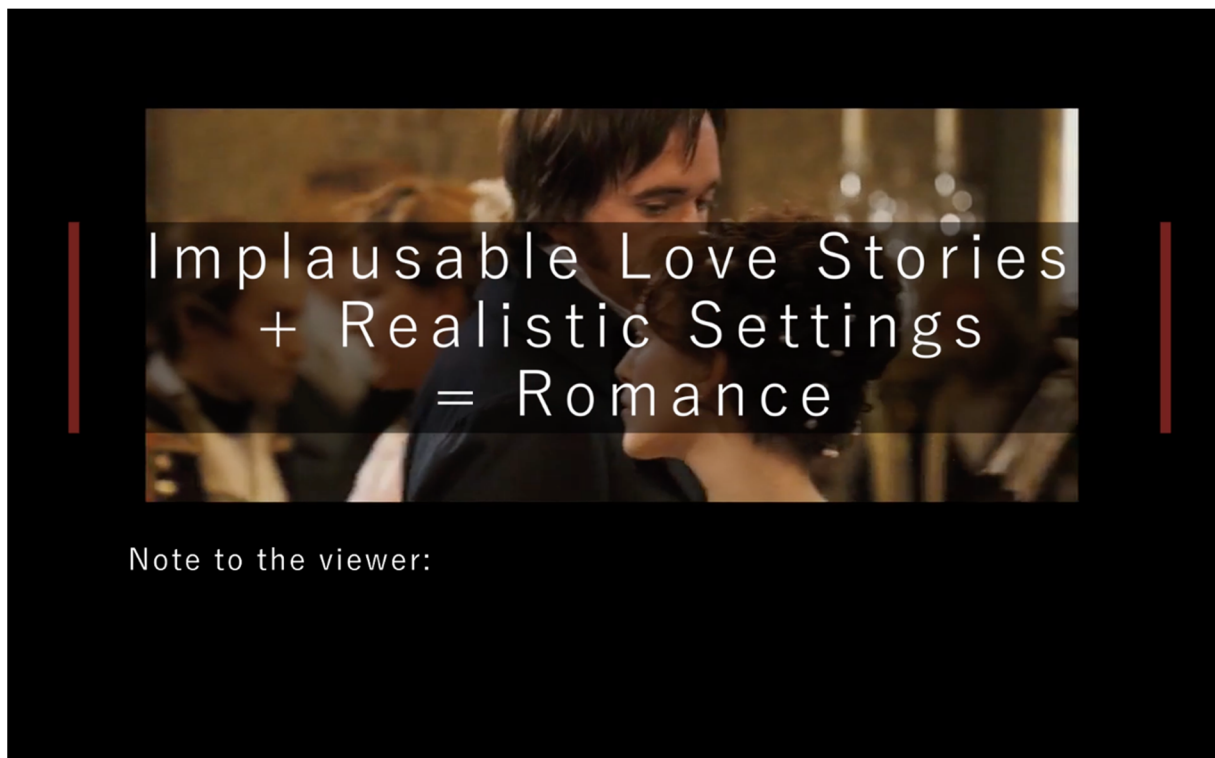


# Jane Austen in Film

Sophia Trayser



*Jane Austen is an indispensable part of both the literary canon and pop culture. Where does our fascination with Austen's plots come from? What elements explain Austen's enduring appeal? Watch the video essay here: <https://flowcasts.uni-hannover.de/nodes/yGkeZ>*

## Creator's Statement

Jane Austen's stories have captivated readers and audiences for centuries. Critics argue that in contemporary culture there are two Jane Austens. The first is an innovative literary genius with ground-breaking contributions to the art of the novel, especially in the use of consciousness through free indirect discourse (cf. Birk and Gymnich). However, the second Austen is a creator of romance, true love, and a fictional world that speaks to the readers of her novels until today. Therefore, Austen's texts, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, are an indispensable part of both the literary canon and pop culture.

Austen's novels are constantly being reinterpreted, in books as well as in film. Between 2009 and 2011 alone, at least 130 *Pride and Prejudice*-inspired novels were published. Additionally, since the 1990s, an increasing number of 'classic' novels have been adapted to film, for instance

*Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1986), and *Howard's End* (James Ivory, 1992). Jane Austen's novels, however, are by far the most widely and frequently revisited, as can be seen, for instance, with the famous 1995 BBC version of *Pride and Prejudice* and the most recent adaptation of *Persuasion* (Netflix, 2022). In addition to direct adaptations of the works, other films have been produced that are more or less directly based on Austen's story. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Burr Steers, 2016), *Lost in Austen* (ITV, 2008), *Austenland* (Jerusha Hess, 2013), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), and *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995) are just a few examples of how films rework the original material.

Initially, I wanted to create a video essay that highlights the dialogic process between original material and film adaptation and look at the different film adaptations of the works. However, I instead turned to the much more fundamental questions: where does our fascination with Austen's plots come from? What elements make Austen's plots so timeless that they are revisited again and again? While this video essay cannot fully answer these complex questions, I believe to have identified three major aspects that explain Austen's enduring appeal: romance, comedy, and social commentary. The subcategories are acoustically separated from each other. I work especially with the visual form of the film and have only used the original audio when it helps to emphasize the argument. This leads to abstraction from the film material and a stronger focus on the content of the essay. I use Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) as an example, but the attributes I have identified can also be applied to other film adaptations of Austen's works.

## Author Biography

**Sophia Trayser** (she/her) is a graduate student of the Advanced Anglophone Studies Master's program at Leibniz University Hannover (LUH) and holds a B.A. in English and American Studies and Sociology from the University of Kassel. Her research interests focus on Gender Studies and Feminist Studies, especially in British texts from the nineteenth and twentieth century. While her bachelor's thesis dealt with the concept of the development of female privacy in British literature in said time, her master's thesis analyzed the representation of agency and masculinity in Jane Austen's texts. During her studies, Sophia worked as a tutor for a course on British Literary Studies.

## Works Cited

Birk, Hanne, and Marion Gymnich, eds. *Pride and Prejudice 2.0: Interpretations, Adaptations and Transformations of Jane Austen's Classic*. Bonn UP, 2015.