During most of the eighteenth century many writers, artists, and landscape designers were engaged in a lively discussion about what constituted beauty in nature. Preferences were chiefly divided between the regular and smooth, which Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756) characterized "beauty," and the wild and irregular, which Burke called the "sublime" and others called the picturesque. Uvedale Price and William Gilpin preferred the picturesque in nature and in architecture. Gilpin, in *Observations on Several Parts of England particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* (1772), characterized the picturesque in pictorial terms:

...why does an elegant piece of garden ground make no figure on canvas? ...the smoothness of the whole, though right, and as it should be in nature, offends in a picture. Turn the lawn into a piece of broken ground; plant rugged oaks instead of flowering shrubs; break the edges of the walk; give it the rudeness of a road; mark it with wheel tracks; and scatter around a few stones and brushwood—in a word, instead of making the whole smooth, make it rough, and you make it also picturesque. (Sypher 797)

Price stated in his essay *On the Picturesque* (1795) that "the two opposite qualities of roughness, and of sudden variation, joined to that of irregularity, are the most efficient causes of the picturesque" (Snyder 148). Critics agree that Jane Austen was familiar with this discussion and with the writings of William Gilpin, who praised the wild beauty of the area around the Wye River and that of the Lake District (Bradbrook 50; Malins 129, Litz 13). Austen’s brother, Henry Austen, in an introduction to *Northanger Abbey*, stated that, “[a]t a very early age she was enamoured of Gilpin on the Picturesque ...” (7). W. C. Snyder asserts that novelists of that time often used the picturesque “as a kind of narrative touchstone” to reveal information about characters’ emotions and attitudes (148). D. S. Bland and Rosemarie Bodenheimer agree that Jane Austen also used landscape and the language associated with the picturesque to reveal character (Bland 131; Bodenheimer 605).

Since all of Austen’s novels make some metaphorical use of landscape, it is surprising that more of the filmmakers who have translated Austen’s novels into film have not exploited this obviously visual element for its suggestive value. In some films,
especially those made by the BBC for television, budgetary constraints may have restricted the use of outdoor, on-location scenes. In other films, such as the recent *Emma* (Miramax 1996), landscape appears to have little purpose other than to provide a pleasing background for the action or an appropriate location. However, two recent films—*Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1995)—not only demonstrate effective use of landscape for beauty and for authenticity, but associate landscape with theme and character.

The screenplay writer, Emma Thompson, and the director, Ang Lee, of *Sense and Sensibility* recognized the significance of landscape as Jane Austen used it in the novel—to support characterization and character relationships. Landscape is a much greater presence in the visual medium of film than in the novel; the contrasting types of English landscape are more obvious to the viewer. The film opens at Norland, the home of Mr. Henry Dashwood and his family. The grounds at Norland are “beautiful”—in the sense that Edmund Burke used the term. The spacious lawns are manicured, the shrubbery is colorful and varied, and near a pond or small lake sheep and cattle graze. In one scene, a long shot shows Elinor Dashwood (Emma Thompson) and Edward (Hugh Grant) walking on an open stretch of lawn with the mansion in the background. The scene is Arcadian, reminiscent of certain eighteenth-century paintings by Claude Lorrain and Poussin, and is typical of the landscape in the first part of the film. The formal, placid beauty of Norland supports and reflects the character of the developing relationship between Edward and Elinor. Both are rational, restrained people whose love is warm but not passionate and whose behavior is as ordered as the setting in which they appear.

The novel makes no use of landscape in relation to Elinor’s personality. Rather, the references to nature or to landscape relate to Marianne, whose relationship with nature is highly personal and emotional. The chief mention of nature in the early part of the novel is Marianne’s emotional address to Norland and its trees. She lapses into the poetic mode as she says “‘ye well known trees!’” (27). She laments that they will not change after she is gone, but that no one remains who will enjoy them (27). This attitude reflects eighteenth-century sensibility more than Wordsworthian spiritual oneness with nature. As Bodenheimer points out, Marianne’s apostrophe to nature is actually “egocentric projection” (609), which reveals how likely she is to misinterpret both nature and people. She contrasts her own sensibility with what she sees as the crass blindness and insensitivity of other people. Her willingness to assume lack of sensitivity in others appears also as Marianne chides Edward when he does not respond to the grandeur of the countryside around Barton Cottage (88) and when he later professes to have no knowledge of the picturesque (96).

Having confessed this lack of knowledge, he proceeds to use language that signifies his knowledge of picturesque terminology:

“I shall call hills steep, which ought to be bold; surfaces strange and uncouth, which ought to be irregular and rugged; and distant objects out of sight, which ought only to be indistinct through the soft medium of a hazy atmosphere.... I can easily believe it to be full of rocks and promontories, grey moss and brush wood, but these are all lost on me. I know nothing of the picturesque.” (97)

Marianne takes this confession to be true, but Elinor suspects that Edward wishes to avoid the pretentiousness of those who claim to feel more than they actually do, and thus “he affects greater indifference and less discrimination in viewing them himself than he possesses” (97). Marianne has already stated that “‘my feelings are not often shared, not often understood. But sometimes they are’” (88). She is apparently thinking of Willoughby, who shares her tastes and understands her feelings. However, Marianne comes to understand that Willoughby’s morality is not equal to his sensibility, and his love for her not equal to his love of money.

In the film, prior to the family’s removal to Barton Cottage, the only hint of a preference for the picturesque is given by Margaret (Emilie François) when she overhears a conversation between Fanny (Harriet Walter) and Edward. Fanny tells of her plan to pull down the walnut grove to make way for a Grecian temple. Margaret lets out a muffled “‘No....’” Edward hears her but obscures her cry with a request that Fanny show him the site. In the novel, in a scene that occurs when the two sisters-in-law meet in London, Fanny tells Elinor of the plan to build a greenhouse and plant a flower garden where the walnut trees have already been felled and a patch of thorns cleared away (226). Elinor is thankful Marianne did not hear of this project. Elinor apparently shares Marianne’s preference for the natural beauty over artifice, but she can conceal her disapproval whereas Marianne would have been openly scornful of this violation of natural beauty in favor of “improvement.” Fanny’s plans are in keeping with the late eighteenth-century vogue for “improving” estates by structuring nature. In *Mansfield Park*, Mr. Rushworth, the wealthy but stupid suitor of Maria Bertram, expresses his desire to employ Humphrey Repton, a real-life landscape designer, to restyle Sotherton. Fanny Price begs that he not cut down an avenue of trees. Here, Austen is obviously satirizing this kind of misguided tampering with natural beauty. Several of her novels manifest her familiarity with the two schools of landscaping—the formal restructuring favored by Repton and that style called “picturesque” favored by Richard Payne Knight (Malins 147).
In the film, the wild, natural, “picturesque” scenery near Barton contrasts strikingly with Norland’s placid beauty. Emma Thompson’s conception of the scenery is not exactly what appears in the film. In her screenplay, Thompson gives the following stage direction: “In comparison to Norland, Barton Cottage has the air of a damp shoebox. It sits low and bleak in the grey lonely countryside” (62). It is clear that Thompson wanted a contrast between Norland and Barton Cottage, and scenery that would suggest the melancholy feelings of the Dashwoods, who have lost father, husband, lover, and home. Their trip to Devonshire begins on a cloudy day, with the family in their carriage looking melancholy. If not the damp shoebox which Thompson desired, Barton Cottage, in its setting of scraggly bushes, bare tree limbs, and high grass, is a far cry from Norland.

The cinematic treatment of the Dashwoods’ arrival at Barton Cottage differs from Austen’s treatment. The novel states that they were pleased with the look of the countryside, and that its appearance “overcame their dejection” (28). Austen describes the area near the cottage: “High hills rose immediately behind, and at no great distance on each side; some of which were open downs, the others cultivated and woody” (28-29). Later we are told that nearly every window in the cottage looked out on the high downs (40). Thus, the setting of Barton Cottage is picturesque, but not forbidding or conducive to melancholy.

The most striking use of picturesque landscape in both the novel and the film occurs when Marianne and Margaret set out for a walk on a day when rain is threatening. In the novel it starts out as just a walk, whereas in the film Marianne is trying to get Margaret out of the house so that she will not torment Elinor about Edward’s continued absence. In the novel, Margaret is willing to go and is as keen to enjoy the climb as Marianne. The following passage reveals their pleasure in the scene and weather:

They gaily ascended the downs, rejoicing in their own penetration at every glimpse of blue sky; and when they caught in their faces the animating gales of an high southwesterly wind, they pitied the fears which had prevented their mother and Elinor from sharing such delightful sensations.

“Is there a felicity in the world,” said Marianne, “superior to this?—Marianne, we will walk here at least two hours.” (41)

When the rain begins to fall in torrents, they run down the steep hill toward their garden gate, Marianne falls, and Willoughby, who has been walking nearby, comes to assist her.

In the film, however, Margaret goes unwillingly, protesting that it is going to rain and that she is not supposed to run. Margaret does not share her sister’s enthusiasm for nature. They are seen climbing a hill, Marianne (Kate Winslet) pulling Margaret along. Marianne says: “Is there a felicity in the world superior to this?” Then they are enveloped in rain and mist. They begin to run down the hill, Marianne falls, and Willoughby appears on a white horse. The filmmakers have created a thoroughly romantic scene for this first meeting between Willoughby (Greg Wise) and Marianne. Thompson conceived of Willoughby’s appearance in this way: “Crash! Through the mist breaks a huge white horse. Astride sits an Adonis in hunting gear” (85). For Marianne, both the appearance of the man and the circumstances in which he assists her dispose her to fall in love with him.

The final significant use of nature in the novel and the film occurs when Marianne and Elinor go to Cleveland, the home of the Palmers. In both novel and film, the wildness of the countryside and the inclement weather are emphasized. In the novel, however, the house itself is described as “a spacious, modern-built house, situated on a sloping lawn” (302). Further description indicates that the house is surrounded by fir trees, the mountain ash, acacia, and Lombardy poplars. Penny Gay has pointed out that these details and a reference to a Grecian temple indicate the kind of “improved” landscaping favored by Repton (53). Over several days, Marianne wanders about the estate, but especially “where there was something more of wildness than in the rest, where the trees were the oldest, and the grass was the longest and wettest...” (305-06). Marianne prefers the wilder, less improved parts of the estate. Looking at a distant ridge of hills, she thinks that perhaps Willoughby’s Combe Magna may be seen from there. In the film, Mrs. Palmer announces while in the carriage that Combe Magna may be seen from the top of a nearby hill. As soon as Marianne alights from the carriage, she goes for a walk through the shrubbery and on the lawn, and then she sets out for that particular hilltop. The viewer sees her in a long shot, a small white figure climbing up a green hill in the rain. Then we see her in a middle-range shot, sodden with rain, looking out on Combe Magna, pitifully calling Willoughby’s name. The Cleveland location—Montacute House in Somerset—is itself picturesque, with its gables, obelisks, and turrets. The avenue leading to the house has formal landscaping, but when Marianne goes into the gardens, we see her framed against a huge misshappen hedge. Lindsay Doran, producer of the film, calls this hedge “the perfect background for Marianne’s physical and emotional deterioration” (Thompson 286-7). Thus, in scenes at Cleveland, the picturesque elements are supposed to suggest not only Marianne’s sensibility
In the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, again we find references to the picturesque, and we find characterization supported by responses to landscape. During Elizabeth's stay at Netherfield during Jane's illness, she and Mrs. Hurst encounter Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley walking on a path. Mrs. Hurst takes Mr. Darcy's arm, leaving Elizabeth no one to walk with. Mr. Darcy suggests that they all enter the avenue which is broad enough to accommodate four, but Elizabeth rejects his gallantry saying that the three of them are "charmingly grouped" and a fourth would spoil the "picturesque" (53). This observation indicates Elizabeth's (as well as Austen's) awareness of the idea that irregular groupings create a picturesque beauty—an idea promulgated by Gilpin. As A. Walton Litz points out, Elizabeth's comment is a kind of in-joke for those who have read Gilpin, because in Gilpin's appendix to his prints, when he refers to grouping, he is referring to the grouping of cattle (22). Up until Elizabeth's visit to Rosings, references to nature or landscape are few.

Landscape is a constant presence from the beginning of the film. Gerry Scott, who was in charge of the design of the film, said "we wanted to use the English landscape as a player in the film" (Birtwistle 27). Scott even preferred to show real exteriors outside of windows (37). The film opens with Elizabeth (Jennifer Ehle) watching two young men, Darcy (Colin Firth) and Bingley (Crispin Bonham-Carter), race their horses across a field toward a great house. Then she too breaks into a run. According to the producer, Sue Birtwistle, the filmmakers wanted "to express some of this vitality" (2), what she calls Elizabeth's "sexual energy" (4). Elizabeth is later shown trudging through fields and over a stile, jumping down into some mud, and then walking jauntily on toward Netherfield. While this three-mile trek to see her sister is spoken of in the novel and indicates something of her independence and energy, in the film it fits into a larger portrayal of Elizabeth's energy, her rebelliousness, and her love of nature. Indeed, she shares some of the same qualities that Marianne Dashwood manifested, but Elizabeth is much more sensible. She is even self-mocking about her appreciation of nature. When the Gardiners invite her to go with them to the Lake District, she rejoices, but her rejoicing shades into mockery as she says:

"What delight! what felicity! You give me fresh life and vigour. Adieu to disappointment and spleen. What are men to rocks and mountains? Oh! what hours of transport we shall spend! And when we do return, it shall not be like other travellers, without being able to give one accurate idea of any thing. We will know where we have gone—we will recollect what we have seen. Lakes, mountains, and rivers, shall not be jumbled together in our imaginations; nor, when we attempt to describe any particular scene, will we begin quarrelling about its relative situation. Let our first effusions be less insupportable than those of the generality of travellers." (154)

In these lines, Elizabeth moves from being completely delighted at the prospect of traveling into this picturesque country that she had only heard of or read about in Gilpin's essays, to being ironic in her doubt that she and the Gardiners could be any more reliable than other travelers when reporting what they have seen. The key to the irony is the use of the word "insupportable," since most travelers insist on boring their listeners by futilely trying to describe what one must see in order to appreciate.

In the novel, when Elizabeth visits Charlotte Lucas Collins and Mr. Collins in Hunsford, she comments frequently about the beauty of the woods and fields around Rosings. Elizabeth takes every opportunity to enjoy nature and to escape exposure to Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine. She particularly likes to walk "along the open grove which edged that side of the park, where there was a nice sheltered path, which no one seemed to value but herself, and where she felt beyond the reach of Lady Catherine's curiosity" (169). Roberta Hannay associates the preciseness of the physical landscape of Rosings with Lady Catherine's emphasis on rigid social distinctions (80). Elizabeth's choice of a path is one untrodden by others and away from the manicured lawns and sculptured shrubberies of Rosings. Again, Elizabeth's preference to walk by herself reflects her independence and self-reliance.

The film shows very much what the novel tells. It shows fields and woods, distant landscapes with clumps of trees. Elizabeth meets Mr. Darcy on a shady path in some woods, and later she walks with Colonel Fitzwilliam (Anthony Calf) through some high grass near a wood. In contrast to these natural and even wild scenes, we see the formal avenue down which the Collinses (David Bamber, Lucy Scott), Elizabeth, Maria Lucas (Lucy Davis), and Sir William Lucas (Christopher Benjamin) approach Rosings—filmed at Belton House in Lincolnshire (Birtwistle 25). The shrubberies on each side of the avenue are trimmed in uniform shapes suggesting perhaps the tight control which Lady Catherine (Barbara Leigh-Hunt) possesses on her property and those under her patronage. Elizabeth makes it clear that she is not one whom Lady Catherine can control—in contrast to the obsequious Mr. Collins, who counts Lady Catherine's trees and enumerates her windows to impress his visitors.
The most significant use of nature or landscape in the novel, however, appears in the beginning of Volume III. Accompanying her aunt and uncle, the Gardiners, to Pemberley, Elizabeth first sees the house from the top of a hill and tells her impressions of it:

It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills;—and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something. (245)

As Elizabeth and the Gardiners tour the house, Elizabeth admires the view from the windows. From one window she can see the hill from which they had descended. She admires the whole scene—the wooded hill, the trees scattered along the river bank, the winding of the valley. As she recognizes the taste with which the house is decorated, again she thinks that being mistress of Pemberley would be pleasant. Elizabeth clearly appreciates the beauty of Pemberley Park. The reference to its natural beauty having been unmolested by “an awkward taste” reveals her preference for a mingling of the wild and the domesticated—man living in harmony with nature, changing it as little as possible while living in its midst.

In the film, even more emphasis is placed on Elizabeth’s appreciation of the beauties of Derbyshire, where Pemberley is situated. The filmmakers chose to show the Peaks, a significant aspect of the Derbyshire landscape, and Elizabeth and the Gardiners riding in an open carriage past these conical hills. Mrs. Gardiner (Joanna David) speaks of the beauty of Chatsworth and of the contrasting “wild and untamed beauty of the Peaks,” and Mr. Gardiner (Tim Wilton) describes it as the “perfect county”—“nature and culture in harmony,” “wildness and artifice.” They climb up a steep hill, with Elizabeth pressing ahead of the others to the rocks on top. She looks out at the countryside—a mixture of cultivated fields, trees, low vegetation—and soliloquizes, “Beautiful!” Mrs. Gardiner calls to her to be careful. Again, she exhibits her energy and daring, as well as her appreciation of wild nature.

As the group approaches Pemberley House, Mr. Gardiner comments on the many woods that they have seen, and then asks the coachman to stop so that they can take in the view of the grand house fronting a small body of water. The filmmakers chose the impressive Lyme Park on the Cheshire/Derbyshire border for the exteriors of Pemberley House (Birtwistle 24). Elizabeth expresses appreciation of the vastness of the estate and of the beauty of the house in its setting. The film also shows Mr. Darcy as he approaches Pemberley House on horseback along a tree-shaded path, and we see the house framed between trees as he pauses. He rides up to a stream, strips down to his underwear, and dives in. The stream and its vegetation have a natural, untouched appearance, and the grass on the banks is long and unkempt. However, after Mr. Darcy finishes his swim, he strides toward Pemberley House, where Elizabeth is seen walking on a closely-cropped lawn in front of the mansion and where, in spite of some obvious landscaping, the foliage is still primarily natural. The trees are large, the bushes in their natural shapes. When Elizabeth and the Gardiners enter their carriage to leave, we see behind them a formal garden, with flowerbeds and small bushes. The overall effect reflects Mr. Gardiner’s comment about “nature and culture in harmony.” It is the ideal as defined by Gilpin, Price, and Knight. Hannay points out that the greater indistinctness and freedom of landscape around Pemberley, as described in the novel, contrast favorably with that of Rosings and suggest Darcy’s greater flexibility regarding social distinctions (87). It is also significant that Elizabeth, her aunt, and her uncle appreciate landscape that fits the definition of the picturesque. Darcy’s ownership of the house and landscape has elevated him in the opinion of both Elizabeth and her relatives. Thus, Elizabeth’s taste in landscape—and in men—is vindicated by their approval.

One final scene reflects the film’s use of nature. This occurs when Lady Catherine requests that Elizabeth accompany her to a “prettyish kind of little wilderness” at Longbourn. This setting figures in the novel as well. It is referred to as a “copse,” and Mrs. Bennet says that she thinks Lady Catherine will like the “hermitage” (352). No other description occurs. In the film, Elizabeth leads Lady Catherine through a stone archway to an area enclosed by a stone wall. Since the season is autumn, most of the trees are bare and leaves cover the ground; the grass is uncut and long. Perhaps Lady Catherine should have chosen a more formal location for her demands, since Elizabeth’s defiance finds an appropriate setting in this natural environment.

Film has one advantage over the novel; its impact on the viewer does not depend merely upon words and the mind’s eye. Film touches the eye and the ear, as well. The best filmmakers, in adapting novels to film, make an effort to capture the themes and characters of the novels as well as to enrich the viewer’s experience with sensory appeals. For example, the soundtracks for both of these films make a significant contribution to a viewer’s enjoyment. However, it is with the visual aspect of the films that this
paper has been primarily concerned. The two films treated in this essay are sterling examples of the success that may come when landscape is made an important player in a film, and when landscape functions to express and to reinforce both theme and characterization.

WORKS CITED


However, two recent films—Sense and Sensibility (1995) and Pride and Prejudice (1995)—not only demonstrate effective use of landscape for beauty and for authenticity, but associate landscape with theme and character. The screenplay writer, Emma Thompson, and the director, Ang Lee, of Sense and Sensibility recognized the significance of landscape as Jane Austen used it in the novel—to support characterization and character relationships. Landscape is a much greater presence in the visual medium of film than in the novel; the contrasting types of English landscape are more obvious to the viewer. Pride and Prejudice develops the design and themes of its predecessor in a social comedy which is witty, but more critical and less light-hearted than at first apparent. Container. Course information. Jane Austen’s novels have long been praised for their perfection of form, and she has also been acclaimed as a moralist, not only by literary critics, but by professional philosophers. At the centre of the course, however, will be the two novels which are each concerned with a contrasting pair of sisters, Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. Classes will examine how in these books Jane Austen finds her distinctive technique and concerns, and how the second of these novels brings a new treatment and situation to themes introduced in its predecessor. Enquiries. Pride and Prejudice. MPAA Rating: for some mild thematic elements. Reviewed by: Michael Karounos CONTRIBUTOR. Although Jane and Elizabeth have a fetching mixture of sense and sensibility, Mary, alas, is all sense, while Lydia and Kitty regularly dissolve into paroxysms of laughing, crying, and whiney importuning. Elizabeth, or Lizzy as she’s called, is played by Keira Knightley. The whole story revolves around her personality and much depends on casting. As a moral tale of the faults of pride and judgment, the film communicates well that none of us are perfect and that we must never judge hastily, or compromise our principles for selfish pleasures or for the expedience of a moral complacency. See: HUMILITY. Violence: None.