

# Jane Austen On Film: “Becoming Jane” [B1]

Il film, nel quale Anne Hathaway interpreta Jane Austen, ricrea una possibile storia d'amore vissuta dalla celebre autrice inglese.

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Very little is known about Jane Austen's life, including what she looked like. The only portrait of the writer that is considered authentic is a simple pencil and watercolour sketch made by her sister Cassandra around 1810 and now held in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Although there have been many adaptations of her novels, only a few films and TV shows try to explore Jane Austen's personal life. *Becoming Jane* (2007), directed by Julian Jarrold and starring American actor Anne Hathaway as Austen, moves between reality and fiction to present the author as the heroine of a romantic love story, almost as one of the characters of her novels.

## TOM LEFROY

In the film, Jane is an aspiring writer who refuses to marry Mr. Wisley, nephew and only heir of Lady Gresham (played by Maggie Smith), a wealthy local aristocrat, because she finds him dull. Instead, she gradually falls in love with the arrogant yet charismatic Tom Lefroy (played by James McAvoy), a young Irish lawyer with whom she feels a strong intellectual and emotional connection. In their early twenties, Jane and Tom dance, flirt and plan to run away together. However, Tom has the duty of supporting his large family, and if he elopes with Jane, he would lose his uncle's financial support and inheritance. Jane is therefore forced to give up the love of her life.

## A SUITABLE HUSBAND

In Regency Period England, finding a good husband was essential for a young woman's financial stability and social reputation. However, a good dowry was often more important than sincere affection. Through her novels, Jane Austen dared to challenge the social conventions of the time;

her protagonists reject marriages of convenience and choose relationships based on true love.

## DANCING TOGETHER

From some of Jane's letters sent to Cassandra, we know that she did meet a young Irishman named Tom Lefroy during the winter of 1795-96. He was on a break from his legal studies in London and visiting his uncle and aunt in Hampshire. It seems that Jane and Tom enjoyed each other's company and had fun at three holiday balls.

## JANE LEFROY

In her letters, Jane described these encounters to Cassandra with her usual irony, nevertheless showing a certain interest and affection. Most likely, the couple never saw each other again after Tom returned to London. He became an important judge and married Mary Paul, an heiress, with whom he had several children, including a daughter named Jane. Jane Austen died at the age of forty-one without ever marrying, becoming one of the most renowned novelists in English literature only after her death.

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# Glossary

- **renowned** = prestigiose, celebri
- **heir** = erede
- **yet** = ma
- **duty** = dovere
- **elopes** = fare una fuga d'amore
- **dowry** = dote
- **dared** = osare
- **balls** = balli, feste danzanti
- **watercolour sketch** = bozzetto ad acquarello
- **nephew** = nipote (maschio)
- **dull** = noioso