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ON-SCREEN TEXTS AND THEIR DYNAMIC FUNCTIONS
FROM CONVENTIONALITY TO CREATIVITY:
LOVE & FRIENDSHIP AS A CASE STUDY

Abstract

This paper aims to uncover the function of on-screen texts in *Love & Friendship*, focusing in particular on the introductory intertitles. Considering that these introductory texts provide a description of the film's characters, we propose that the analysis of these short texts would benefit greatly from an evaluative approach, namely Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005), and particularly the semantic dimension of *attitude* which is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and the evaluation of things (pp. 42-69). While such descriptions may at first glance appear to be simple introductions to the film's characters, the analysis shows that these short texts are deployed as a means of judging and scrutinising the characters before the film has even started, thus depicting a society in which everyone knows each other and has opinions about each other, as Jane Austen did in her novels by way of social commentary and moral judgement (Lodge 1966).

Keywords: conventionality; creativity; intertitles; Appraisal Theory; attitudes.

1. Introduction

Technological advances and cultural change have established novel ways of communicating. Screens permeate every aspect of modern life, and new forms of interactive communication – such as instant messaging, text messaging, blogging, and tweeting – have spread to create new textual forms and frameworks (Dwyer 2015). These transformations challenge the presumption that films should primarily tell their stories with the soundtrack, and directors are trying to increasingly incorporate the text medium into their works. Therefore, the paper begins with a rapid overview of how extra-diegetic texts have evolved as dynamic systems in media products, from silent cinema to modern times. Then, the corpus and the actual analysis of *Love & Friendship*'s floating texts

and introductory intertitles are presented in paragraph 2 and paragraph 3, respectively. Finally, some conclusions are discussed in paragraph 4.

The use of text on screen harks back to silent cinema's intertitles, which can be defined as "[...] shots of texts printed on material that does not belong to the diegesis of a film and, therefore, are distinct from textual inserts such as calling cards, letters, posters, etc." (Abel 2005: 326). They were introduced at the beginning of the 20th century, when the length and complexity of silent films increased and the need to provide audiences with short narrations to facilitate the development of the story-telling on screen emerged. They either took the form of "expository intertitles" (Thompson 1985: 183) which helped the audience understand the organisation of the plot, summarising entire sequences or introducing the main characters, or "dialogue intertitles" (p. 185) which illustrated the actors' lines, thus giving voice to the characters on screen. With the coming of sound, on-screen texts have undergone a continuous evolution (Crafton 1999: 13): from traditional title cards giving geographical and background information (e.g. 'Paris, five years later...') to more dynamic solutions, such as depicting text messaging or interaction on Twitter (as in the British teen soap *Hollyoaks*, the American TV series *House of Cards* and *Glee*, or the BBC's *Sherlock*). In fact, directors have constantly cast around for new ways to incorporate the written word onto the screen, not only to complement and further the storyline naturally but also to make their films more visually interesting, thus increasing audience engagement¹.

The fact that the intertitle tradition is somehow experiencing a renaissance is mainly due to the changes which have occurred in our modern society, not only because people are constantly engaged in silent conversations on WhatsApp, Twitter, and chat forums, but also because heavy multitasking has led to a different way of consuming visual products, whether on public transport or in rooms with other people. Furthermore, a recent study has reported that 85% of Facebook videos are watched with the sound off and that "despite still being an option, sound (on Facebook) is not required"².

Against this background, Whit Stillman's clever use of on-screen texts in his film *Love & Friendship* (2016), the latest adaptation of a Jane Austen novella, has received high-profile write-ups in, among oth-

¹ One of the most recent solutions in this sense is the deployment of "bullet screens" (Dwyer 2017: 578) which allow cinemagoers to write comments about the film which are then projected onto the big screen, for a more interactive viewing experience.

² Sahil Patel, "85 Percent of Facebook Video is Watched Without Sound", *Digiday UK*, May 17, 2016, <http://digiday.com/media/silent-world-facebook-video/>.

ers, *Screen Daily* and the *Guardian*, where film critic Peter Bradshaw praised the director's ability to use on-screen texts "as a kind of visual archaism, almost like a literary silent movie"³. Stillman obviously needed to alter the original epistolary form of the narrative, thus transforming letters into well-flowing dialogue and action, but much of the dialogue in *Love & Friendship* comes straight from the novel. Although its title has been taken from another of Jane Austen's works, *Love & Friendship* is based on *Lady Susan*⁴, an epistolary novel divided into forty-one letters and followed by a final section which is narrated in the third person and entitled "Conclusion". It was written in 1794 but first published posthumously, in 1871, nearly fifty years after Jane Austen's death. Set in the 1790s in Victorian England, the film centres on widowed Lady Susan Vernon (Kate Beckinsale), a beautiful and calculating woman who uses her charm and intelligence to manipulate others. She invites herself to stay at Churchill, the country estate of her brother-in-law, where she craftily engineers suitable marriages for both herself and her debutante daughter Frederica (Morfydd Clark), who she matches with the wealthy Sir Martin James (Tom Bennett).

The most overt and literal dramatisation of Austen's original lines is manifest in the use of on-screen texts, first with what film reviewers have called "archaic intertitles"⁵ to introduce and describe the characters, and then with floating words when characters read letters aloud. Bearing all this in mind, the present paper investigates how on-screen texts are structured as part of a broader polysemiotic text in order to uncover their multiple and dynamic functions – which go well beyond the silent arts of translating sound into visual elements – in the frame of a cinematic adaptation of a literary text. In fact, despite harking back to silent cinema's intertitle tradition, *Love & Friendship*'s on-screen texts are far from anachronistic: they are an incisive reflection of the evolution experienced by our visual society, in which the presumption that screen media are made to be viewed, not read (Dwyer 2015) is challenged, as shown in the following paragraphs.

³ Peter Bradshaw "Love & Friendship Review – Whit Stillman's Austen Drama is a Racy Delight", *Guardian*, May 26, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/may/26/love-friendship-review-whit-stillmans-austen-drama-is-a-racy-delight/>.

⁴ As the director, Stillman, puts it: "*Lady Susan* was the title Austen's nephew had given her untitled manuscript when her family finally allowed it to be published a half century after her death. For our film, which would involve more characters and a larger canvas, the more Austenian *Love & Friendship* – derived from the title of one of her youthful short stories – seemed better" (Rutter, Reed, Monnier 2016: 10).

⁵ *Ibid.*

2. *Love & Friendship's* floating texts

The first floating text to appear on screen is partially taken from Letter 11 of the original novel. Catherine Vernon (Emma Greenwell) writes from Churchill to her mother, Lady De Courcy (Jemma Redgrave), conveying her anxious fears that her younger brother, Reginald De Courcy (Xavier Samuel), is being seduced by Lady Susan (Figure I):



Fig. I. First floating text: Catherine Vernon's letter

Upon receipt of the letter, Lady De Courcy (who has a heavy cold which has affected her eyes) asks her husband, Sir Reginald De Courcy (James Fleet), to read it to her *verbatim* instead of simply summarising it. After answering "I'll read every word, comma, and semicolon if that's what you wish" (Stillman 2016: 80), Sir De Courcy starts reading the first part of the letter aloud, including all punctuation. As he reads, the words appear on the screen in imitation eighteenth-century style, covering most of the bottom two-thirds of the screen (Figure I).

If we compare the on-screen text with the original novel, as shown in Table I below, we can detect some interesting differences in the use of punctuation marks.

<i>On-screen text</i>	<i>Original novel (Letter 11)</i>
I grow deeply uneasy, my dearest Mother, about Reginald, from witnessing the very rapid increase in her influence;	I really grow quite uneasy my dearest Mother about Reginald, from witnessing the very rapid increase of Lady Susan's influence.

Table 1. First part of Catherine Vernon's letter (*Love & Friendship*) vs. Letter 11 (*Lady Susan*).

While in the original letter we only find a comma after 'Reginald' and a full stop at the end of the sentence, the film seems to boost the use of punctuation marks by adding two commas and substituting the full stop with a semicolon. Stillman has therefore cleverly deployed on-screen text to achieve a comic effect by modifying Jane Austen's well-known pristine writing style and exaggerating her use of punctuation⁶ to signal the rhythms of the actor's speech rather than the grammatical structure (Sutherland 2011).

Frustrated, Lady De Courcy interrupts her husband, asking him to read "just the words" (Stillman 2016: 81), without punctuation. As shown in Table 2 below, the floating quotations and the original novel now coincide in the use of punctuation marks.

<i>On-screen text</i>	<i>Original novel (Letter 11)</i>
He and Lady Susan are now on terms of the most particular friendship, frequently engaged in long conversation together;	They are now on terms of the most particular friendship, frequently engaged in long conversations together;

Table 2. First part of Catherine Vernon's letter (*Love & Friendship*) vs. Letter 11 (*Lady Susan*).

However, the comic function of this second portion of text is only apparent when the word "long" flashes for a second time on screen, isolated, as shown in Figure 2 below:

⁶ Austen's punctuation has recently become a subject of debate. In fact, it seems that Austen's prose was heavily edited for publication by William Gifford, a poet and critic who worked for Austen's second publisher, John Murray (Sutherland 2013).



Fig. 2. Second floating text: the word 'long' flashes on screen

Sir Reginald De Courcy himself grows alarmed at the rapid advancement of Reginald and Lady Susan's friendship and asks his wife how Reginald could not only engage in conversations with Lady Susan Vernon at all, but especially in conversations which are *long* (Table 2). With the word 'long' appearing on screen, the comic effect is created by what can be called a visual oxymoron: the orthographic form of the word 'long', which is composed only of four characters, as well as its short sound express the opposite meaning, namely something continuing for a considerable amount of time (in this context).

The third and final floating text appears at the end of the film, when Reginald De Courcy marries his bride Frederica and reads a poem that he himself has composed for her. The text comes from an actual wedding announcement made in the *Massachusetts Gazette* on June 20, 1774 and in the film, director Stillman quotes the first four lines of the original poem⁷. In order to reinforce Reginald's spoken text, the words appear on screen as he declaims them, as shown in Figure 3 below:

⁷ Christopher Morrissey, "The Vindication of the Fair: 'Love & Friendship,' American Style", *The Imaginative Conservative*, June 8, 2016, <http://www.theimaginative-conservative.org/2016/06/vindication-fair-love-friendship-american-style-whit-stillman.html>.



Fig. 3. Third floating text: Reginald De Courcy's poem and the word 'mien'

As Reginald reads the word 'mien', the ancient and anachronistic word for "appearance or facial expression"⁸, Mr. Vernon (Justin Edwards) explains for the benefit of the other wedding guests that Reginald is not referring to *mean*, the homophone meaning unkind or unpleasant. Therefore, the on-screen text suggests the difference between graphic form and meaning with the aim of achieving a comic effect.

3. *Love & Friendship's* introductory intertitles

The director's decision to open the film with silent-film-like intertitles seems appropriate for a dramatisation of an epistolary novel, where the written word obviously plays a crucial role. Characters are introduced near the beginning of the film in short, but not still, poses: portrait shots with their names and a short description, as shown in Figure 4 below. Interestingly, these portraits are vaguely reminiscent of those created by Cassandra Austen for *The History of England*, Austen's only illustrated *Juvenilia*, as if in further homage to Austen's original novel.

⁸ Cambridge Dictionary Online, s.v. 'Mien', <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/en/dictionary/english/mien>, last accessed May 2, 2017.



Fig.4 . Fourth floating text: ‘expository’ introduction to Lord Manwaring

Even if here they are merged briefly with performance, these short descriptions are similar to the expository intertitles used during the silent cinema period to introduce the main characters. Of the fourteen descriptions to appear on screen, the present analysis will focus on twelve of them, notably those introducing the film’s main characters⁹.

<i>Characters</i>	<i>Intertitles</i>
Lord Manwaring	A divinely attractive man
Lady Lucy Manwaring	His wealthy wife
Miss Maria Manwaring	His eligible younger sister
Sir James Martin	Wealthy young suitor of Frederica Vernon & Maria Manwaring
Mrs. Catherine Vernon	Lady Susan’s sister-in-law
Mr. Charles Vernon	Her obliging husband, brother of the late Frederic Vernon
Mr. Reginald De Courcy	Catherine’s young & handsome brother
Mrs. Alicia Johnson	Lady Susan’s friend

⁹ The two excluded characters are: Wilson, the butler at Churchill (in the original novel, Wilson is Lady Susan’s maid), and the young curate of the Churchill parish (who is absent in the original novel).

<i>Characters</i>	<i>Intertitles</i>
Mr. Johnson	Alicia's older & respectable husband
Mrs. Cross	Lady Susan's impoverished friend.
Sir Reginald De Courcy	Catherine & Reginald's old father
Lady De Courcy	Their kind mother

Table.3 . *Love & Friendship's* introductory intertitles

As shown in Table 3 above, all twelve intertitles are composed of nominal groups with a largely fixed sequence, although it is possible to detect some minor variations. We always find the Thing that is being talked about, deictics indicating whether or not some specific subset of the Thing is intended and, except for two nominal groups (number 5 and number 8), epithets indicating some quality of the subset (Halliday 2014: 364-376). As far as epithets are concerned, of the fifteen detected instances, five (33.3%) have been coded as experiential epithets ('younger', 'young', 'older', and 'elderly'), indicating an objective property of the Thing, while nine (60%) can be classified as attitudinal epithets ('attractive', 'wealthy', 'eligible', 'obliging', 'handsome', 'respectable', 'impoverished', and 'kind'), expressing the addresser's subjective attitude towards the Thing (Halliday 2014: 376-377). Therefore, from this quantitative analysis, it seems that characters are not simply introduced and described but also scrutinised before the film has even started. Since nominal groups appear to provide the richest lexical resources for expressing feeling, mainly through attitudinal epithets (Martin 2017: 30), we can thus rely on APPRAISAL¹⁰ (Martin and White 2005) to qualitatively investigate the linguistic mechanisms employed in the evaluation of these characters.

3.1 Analysis of introductory intertitles

Developed within the area of the interpersonal social metafunction of language in systemic functional linguistics (see Martin 1992; Matthiessen 1995; Halliday 2014, among others), which fashions social roles and relationships, APPRAISAL is a framework that concerns itself with the "subjective presence of writers/speakers in texts as they

¹⁰ In Appraisal Theory, small capitals are usually used to indicate the lexical-semantic systems available to the speaker.

adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate” (Martin and White 2005: 1). Considering that attitude resources are the most obvious hints of one’s thoughts and emotions, the area of APPRAISAL explored in this analysis is “attitudinal positioning” (Martin and White 2005: 42), which is used to construe the addresser’s positive or negative attitude towards experiential phenomena or propositions about those phenomena. More specifically, attitudinal meanings are divided into three broad subtypes: JUDGEMENT (attitudinal response), which deals with resources for evaluating and assessing behaviour according to various normative principles; AFFECT (emotional response), which is concerned with resources for construing emotional reactions; and finally APPRECIATION (aesthetic response), which looks at resources for construing the value of natural and semiotic phenomena (Martin and White 2005; White 2011, 2015). Within each category, which may be further divided into more delicate subcategories¹¹, the APPRAISAL may be expressed with a positive or negative polarity, relative to the cultural values of addresser and addressee, with more or less intensity, and may either be inscribed (i.e. direct), when it is effectively written into the text, or evoked (i.e. implied), when it is called upon from the reader (Martin 2000: 155).

In exploring the means by which evaluation is expressed in the intertitles, the detected attitudinal epithets have been coded for the kind of attitude expressed: JUDGEMENT (of character and behaviour), AFFECT (of feelings or emotions), or APPRECIATION (of natural and semiotic phenomena). Of the nine attitudinal epithets detected, six (66.6%) have been coded as JUDGEMENT and three (33.3%) as APPRECIATION; none as AFFECT. Therefore, as the categories of JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION happen to be the only significant ones, only the subcategories within these two systems have been identified and then elaborated with reference to Martin (2000) and Martin and White (2005: 71). A positive (+) or negative (–) value has also been assigned in each instance, as shown in Table 4 below¹²:

¹¹ However, analyses in this study do not apply this level of delicacy. For a full account of attitudinal subcategories, see Martin and White (2005).

¹² All analyses of APPRAISAL involve a certain degree of subjectivity and must be understood as situated within particular cultural contexts (Martin and White 2005).

<i>Appraising items</i>	<i>Judgement</i>	<i>Appreciation</i>	<i>Appraised</i>
attractive		+reac	Lord Manwaring
wealthy	+norm		Lady Lucy Manwaring
eligible		+val	Miss Maria Manwaring
wealthy	+norm		Sir James Martin
obliging	+prop		Mr. Charles Vernon
handsome		+reac	Mr. Reginald De Courcy
respectable	+prop		Mr. Johnson
impoverished	-norm		Mrs. Cross
kind	+prop		Lady De Courcy

Table.4 . *Love & Friendship's* introductory intertitles

It can be observed from Table 4 above that positive appreciation has been assigned to Lord Manwaring, Mr. Reginald De Courcy, and Miss Maria Manwaring. More specifically, those epithets expressing positive physical qualities ('attractive' and 'handsome') have only been attributed to male characters. Moreover, through the addition of the pre-modifier 'divinely', Lord Manwaring's attractiveness is intensified. Both epithets are attributed to the two men Lady Susan engages in affairs with and have been interpreted as instances of Reaction, dealing with the degree to which the Thing in question captures one's attention and the emotional impact it has (Martin 2000: 160). Both Lord Manwaring and Mr. Reginald De Courcy have a definite emotional impact on some of the female characters of the film, first of all on Lady Susan: she has become the scandal of British high society because of her relationship with the married Lord Manwaring and is thus forced to leave the Manwarings; later, she turns her attention to Mr. Reginald De Courcy and flirts with him intensely, to the disapproval of Reginald's family.

Moving to Miss Maria Manwaring, Lord Manwaring's sister is described as 'eligible', which can be interpreted as an instance of Valuation¹³ (Martin and White 2005). Valuation deals with experiential worth and is used to appraise how worthwhile the Thing is. In the case of Miss

¹³ Since the supposed value of a Thing is variable from register to register, Martin and White (2005) stress that instances of Valuation are often dependent on the field of discourse.

Maria Manwaring, she is valued as a suitable future marriage partner thanks to her attractiveness and wealth. This not only suggests that her physical attractiveness and social status are the main (and maybe only) features which make her an eligible woman, but also that she plays a passive role within the network of social relations in the film, since the adjective 'eligible' implies that she is supposed to *receive* the action of being chosen as a wife. In a historic period in which women had little agency, this is not surprising, but it does contrast strikingly with Lady Susan's manipulative behaviour and extremely active scheming. Indeed, Miss Maria Manwaring herself is one of the pawns in Lady Susan's plan: first, Lady Susan diverts Sir James Martin's attention from her to Lady Susan's daughter, Frederica; then, when Frederica refuses to marry him, Lady Susan yet again removes Sir James from Miss Manwaring and marries him for his money herself.

JUDGEMENT proves to be the most significant category (Table 4). More specifically, the detected epithets have been interpreted as instances of either Normality (how unusual someone is) or Propriety (how ethical someone is) (Martin 2000: 156). The first subcategory comprises epithets referring to the economic situation of Lady Lucy Manwaring, Sir James Martin (both 'wealthy'), and Mrs. Cross ('impoverished'). Regarding the only instance of negative judgement, 'impoverished', this lexical choice amplifies a core value of poor and can thus be unpacked as poor + very. Lack of money seems to be one of the worst misfortunes one may experience and the whole film revolves around Lady Susan's search for financial security and status for herself and her daughter, following her wealthy husband's death. As for Propriety, 'obliging', 'respectable', and 'kind' have been attributed to Mr. Charles Vernon (Lady Susan's brother-in-law), Mr. Johnson (husband of Alicia, Lady Susan's American friend), and Lady De Courcy respectively, thus encoded positively to represent good moral values, in sharp contrast to those of Lady Susan.

Therefore, while the film's intertitles may at first glance appear to be simple descriptions of the principal characters, the analysis shows that these short texts are deployed as a means to judge and evaluate the characters before the film has even begun, as if their reputations precede them. The evaluation of characters and their behaviour is also a marked characteristic of Jane Austen's narrative style (Lodge 1966), which is presented to the reader in different ways. In *Lady Susan*, evaluation is realised through the letters exchanged between Lady Susan, her family, friends, and enemies. In these letters, pictures of the characters' personalities are often painted for the reader, especially in the correspondence between Lady Susan and Mrs. Johnson, where we meet and get to know

several characters long before they actually become addressers or addressees themselves (Austen 2013). Therefore, it seems that Stillman has transferred an inner characteristic of Jane Austen's epistolary novella to the film through the deployment of the introductory intertitles, which somehow anticipate, as the original letters do, the peculiarities and also the interrelations of the film's main characters.

4. *Final remarks*

Whit Stillman's film *Love & Friendship* (2016) has received considerable acclaim for being a successful adaptation of Austen's epistolary novella, *Lady Susan*, thanks in part to its creative deployment of on-screen text. Epistolary novels always present serious challenges for directors, since the reading of letters lacks the action that films demand, but Stillman has made the written word the location for high drama with short descriptions introducing his characters and with floating texts that render the contents of letters visible to the audience. Furthermore, by exploiting on-screen texts *Love & Friendship* builds a bridge between Victorian and modern society: while Austen's characters were big letter writers and book readers, Stillman's contemporaries (and primary audience) constantly write and read vast amounts of text messages or blog posts, hunched over mobile phones or tablets. By linking these two worlds through the use of on-screen text, the film also legitimises its status as an adaptation. In fact, despite heavily relying on Austen's lines, Stillman uses on-screen text to direct the focus of attention on his own characters and their network of relations. As we have seen, when Sir Reginald De Courcy starts reading Mrs. Vernon's letter complete with punctuation (making the written nature of the communication explicit), he is interrupted by his wife, who is interested in just the words, as if their daughter (i.e. the film character) was present and uttering them herself (in the manner of direct spoken communication). Meanwhile, in the case of the word 'long', which quickly flashes on screen, its graphic form contrasts not only with its actual meaning but also with the extent of Mrs. Vernon's preoccupation with Reginald's attraction to Lady Susan, thus emphasising it. Moreover, on-screen text connects the written word, that is the world of Jane Austen, to the spoken word, the world of Whit Stillman and his actors. This is symbolised by the word 'mien' (i.e. appearance) which appears on screen to signal that it is a homophone for 'mean' (i.e. unkind or unpleasant).

As one of the film's reviews reports "Stillman and Austen share a delight in the 'comedy of ill-manners' here, having fun with the characters constantly seeking to one-up each other's undercutting comments

or silly personality tics”¹⁴. This feature is made clear from the outset of the film, thanks to the so-called archaic intertitles. As the analysis has shown, these are not objective descriptions of the film’s characters but serve as a way of evaluating and anticipating different aspects of the characters’ personalities before the film has even started, thus perfectly representing a society in which gossip and people’s reputations (as in the case of Lady Susan) spread quickly. Men are represented as attractive *objects* that Lady Susan, who has an “uncanny understanding of men’s natures” (Stillman 2016: 180), exploits to achieve her manipulative motives. Lady Susan’s agency and fight against the patriarchal society in which she lives is not shared by other female characters, like Miss Maria Manwaring, who is depicted, as we have already observed, as an additional pawn in Lady Susan’s scheme. In the film, money and prestige seem to be paramount and this seems to be confirmed by the analysis of the intertitles. Lady Susan will stop at nothing to get a rich husband and achieve high social status, and the introductory descriptions contribute to representing Lady Susan as an anti-heroine, by highlighting other characters’ moral values.

Interestingly, the only missing character in the intertitles is precisely Lady Susan (Table 3) but, as is so often the case, we hear of her before she appears on screen through Reginald De Courcy, Charles Vernon, and Catherine De Courcy Vernon’s words: she is accused of being “the most accomplished flirt in all England” but also described as a woman of “beauty, distinction, and fortitude” who is often “victim of the spirit of jealousy” because of her actions or remarks which can be “open to misconstruction” (Stillman 2016: 20). Even if this analysis has not attempted to uncover the identity of the addresser, we may infer from these preliminary results that the subjective presence adopting stances towards the film’s characters is Lady Susan. In addition, only three characters are not described with attitudinal epithets and these include two key female figures for whom Lady Susan may have respect, as opposed to other characters: Mrs. Alicia Johnson and Mrs. Catherine Vernon. Alicia is Lady Susan’s good friend and the only figure depicted both in the film and in the original novel as being as immoral as Lady Susan, so much so that it is Mrs. Johnson herself who encourages Lady Susan to have affairs with Mr. Manwaring and Sir Reginald De Courcy. Mrs. Catherine Vernon is Lady Susan’s sister-in-law and the only female character in the whole film who is not a victim of Lady Susan’s manipulation.

¹⁴ Daniel Schindel, “Love & Friendship”, *The Film Stage*, January 24, 2016, <http://thefilmstage.com/reviews/sundance-review-love-friendship/>.

Before concluding, it is worth mentioning that the film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, which is considered the largest independent film festival in the United States. As a review in the *Huffington Post* states “When you think of a Sundance movie, *Love & Friendship* isn’t what comes to mind”, especially because of the film’s subtle “sight gags” and “ironic banter”, which cannot be wholly appreciated by an audience “that’s not as attuned to this sort of film”¹⁵. Considering that the film is a period drama set in Victorian England and based on a lesser-known work by Jane Austen, the deployment of on-screen text may also have the function of making the film’s comic nature more accessible to a wider audience. This seems to be confirmed by Stillman himself, when talking about his introductory intertitles: “[they are] there to set the tone of the film and give the impression of what kind of film we’re making”¹⁶.

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¹⁵ Matthew Jacobs, “With ‘Love & Friendship’, Whit Stillman Trades Jane Austen Debates for a ‘Lady Susan’ Adaptation”, *Huffington Post*, January 29, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/whit-stillman-love-and-friendship_us_56ab6543e4b0010e80e9a42b.

¹⁶ Clayton Dillard, “Interview: Whit Stillman on Jane Austen and *Love & Friendship*”, *Slant*, May 10, 2016, <http://www.slantmagazine.com/features/article/interview-whit-stillman-on-jane-austen-and-love-and-friendship>.

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