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# Six English Novels Adapted for the Cinema

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“A film critic asked me recently if you should read the book first and then see the movie, or see the movie and then read the book. I told him they don’t have anything to do with each other. There are all kinds of movies which I would go to see that I would never, ever read the book of. Like the Jane Austen movies, or the E.M.Forster movies.

There are so many books it’s way too late for me to read. I’m not going to read Jane Austen now, but I enjoy the movies. I try to keep up rather than go back.”

Elmore Leonard.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the film adaptations of six English novels; *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Tess*, *Jude*, *A Room with a View* and *A Passage to India*. Through textual analysis of both the films and the original novels it demonstrates that many of the changes which occur in the transition between media are explicable in terms of differences between film and literary genres. Most previous writing on adaptation has tended to explain such changes as a consequence of film and literature having different signifying or expressive capacities. Whilst this study does not argue that literary styles and devices have necessary or inevitable equivalents in film form, it does propose that filmmakers can find satisfying and comprehensible correlatives for written idioms, and that differences between novels and their adaptations are not therefore always best understood as arising from failures in the mechanics of translation.

In its consideration of what each film alters and omits this study finds compelling evidence that they are reshaped in particularly genre-related ways. This takes the form both of alterations that place an adaptation more comfortably in a particular film genre than the original story materials might allow, and changes which diminish or elide the operation of a literary genre to which the original novel belongs or relates. *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *A Room with a View* are discussed in terms of how they become romantic comedies, while the Hardy adaptations are the occasion of most of the original melodrama being omitted. Other genres and modes which pose problems and questions in adaptation - including tragedy, the didactic and the modern - are also examined. Additionally, this study will consider the political contexts and conditions of production of the novels and their adaptations as well as examining the extent to which the films may be said to be authored.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.

### Part One: A Review of Literature on Adaptation.

With few exceptions critical and theoretical writing on adaptation follows a relatively homogeneous itinerary. Important texts are visited, and revisited, and a route of key debates, issues and questions is used to meaningfully connect the case studies. Most of this chapter will essentially comprise such a 'Grand Tour' in miniature, with the emphasis on the recurring debates and arguments rather than on the specific films used as examples. A popular starting point is some discussion of the status of films and novels respectively to examine the motivation for using a preexisting model. Dudley Andrew, examining the use of texts and stories such as *Tristan and Isolde* - so well-known and durable that they may claim 'the status of myth' - places literature-to-film adaptation in a long-established continuum of artistic borrowing involving Bible stories, miracle plays, literature, music, painting and opera. He states that 'the adaptation hopes to win an audience by the prestige of its borrowed title or subject. But at the same time it seeks to gain a certain respectability, if not aesthetic value, as a dividend in the transaction.'(1). Andre Bazin makes an identical point when he argues that 'adaptations which the modern critic looks upon as a shameful way out are an established feature of the history of art.'(2) He is also interested in those characters and stories which have become larger and more significant than the works in which they originally featured.

Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo simply serve to supply the film-maker with characters and adventures largely independent of their literary framework. Javert or D'Artagnan have become part of a mythology existing outside of the novels. They enjoy in some measure an autonomous existence of which the original works are no longer anything more than an accidental and almost superfluous manifestation. (3)

Figures such as Dracula and Robinson Crusoe would belong to this category and lend some credence to the notion that form and content are not



inextricably bound -- an evergreen topic in adaptation studies. Crucial to any understanding of these examples, however, is the recognition that these are commonly 'loose' adaptations, notable more for the fecundity of the source text in terms of providing story outline than for the success of the derived text in rendering faithfully all aspects of the original.

George Bluestone, in his seminal study *Novels into Film*, makes the now familiar distinction between the 'reputable novel' which is 'supported by a small, literate audience' and 'produced by an individual writer' as opposed to the film 'supported by a mass audience (and) produced co-operatively under industrial conditions' (4). Such a dichotomy is relatively easy to criticise. One could point to the circumstances of Dickens - writing in serial form for hugely popular monthly publications, his text subject to external editing - as counter-evidence to the pervasive stereotype of the writer, toiling in solitude, outwith financial influences. The increased portability and accessibility of filming equipment, as exemplified by the extremely low-budget production of *El Mariachi*, (Rodriguez, 1992) suggests that the shooting of full-length features is not necessarily only achievable through industrial/studio channels. (Though this argument cannot be successfully extended to cover distribution and exhibition). Similarly, the novels of John Grisham and Michael Crichton and the films that arise from them cannot really be distinguished according to such a neat divide, with neither form being less an economic artifact than the other or more a work of art. Forty years on, it is probably more helpful to refigure Bluestone's distinction (which certainly held truer then than now) in less absolute terms, more as a sliding scale, with film being more marked by economic considerations and the novel being more likely to reflect individual preoccupations and choices.

In his essay 'Ice and Irony' on Delannoy's *La Symphonie Pastorale* (1946) Dudley Andrew refers to 'the treasure chest of literary classics' and states that 'great novels seem to call for reverential treatment, for vellum bindings and

quality adaptations'.(5) He succinctly pulls together many of the threads that comprise adaptation theory and practice. The 'treasure chest' necessarily suggests exclusivity, a discrete and recognisably superior body of work, a canon that can hopefully be borrowed from and convey these properties to the resulting film. 'Reverence' well expresses the relation between many adapters and original works, anticipating 'fidelity' as a major category of evaluation (and of course admitting the possibility of irreverence and infidelity, either as an accidental or desired outcome). 'Vellum bindings' also suggests and reinforces such terms as 'classic', 'quality' and 'canon' but particularly suggests a connection with the past. At best this can mean literature so transcendently good as to survive from one generation to the next and compel the interest of each, at worst, what Andrew calls 'the stodgy studio look' and 'conservative editing styles' of many of the French post-war 'quality films', overwhelmingly adaptations of literature. Most particularly it brings to mind the fore-grounding of the literary model in certain adaptations of historical and period novels; films which begin with the opening of the book, turning of pages, the 'author' starting to write, the first lines of the novel being read in voice-over, acknowledgement of the author in the film's title e.g Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Branagh, 1994) etc. The 'bookishness' of the film is thereby heralded; emblematic of a certain intellectual and aesthetic value.

However, it would be a mistake to afford the use of a literary prototype, and literary culture in general, a constant value in the debate on adaptation. In *Filmmaking by the Book*, Millicent Marcus indicates how literature and 'literariness' had both positive and negative connotations for filmmakers and screenwriters in post-war Italy;

(T)he nascent film industry, striving for aesthetic legitimacy, equated literature with high culture, prestige, respectability, tradition -- in short, with the very condition to which the cinema itself aspired. On the other hand, the neo-realist position, as articulated by Zavattini, associated literariness with a retrograde, prewar aesthetics characterised by political detachment, lyrical



introversion, decadence, crepuscularism, and worst of all, self-advertising formal virtuosity.(6)

Adaptation assumed a significance in Italian film culture of this period which included the global question of whether 'film has always remained subservient to literature and (whether) adaptation makes explicit its inferior status as a repository of recycled stories'. (7) The question of adaptation also had a particular relevance to Italy's national condition. Filmmakers wishing to use cinema as an expressive, investigative and particularly political tool for examining their country in the light of fascism, resistance, and on-going social change dating back to the Risorgimento argued over the meaning of 'literariness'. For the neo-realists Zavattini and Chiarini it signified 'contrivance, escapism, spectacle - a profoundly amoral abdication of neo-realist imperatives to unmediated social reportage'(8). For Aristarco, however, it was 'invested with the positive morality of Georg Lukac's critical realism, which celebrates the kind of inquiries into the dynamics of the historical process which only the novel can achieve, when endowed with 'typical' characters who embody the salient conflicts of their era and who are informed by the 'necessary anachronism' or a heightened awareness of the material forces that condition their lives.'(9) The use of a literary prototype can be seen therefore as more than a technique for co-opting the eclat and socio-cultural heft of the older medium, as signifying - in Marcus's words - 'a shifting value whose very vicissitudes reveal a wealth of self-serving strategies'(10).

Two related terms which recur in adaptation theory are 'fidelity' and 'equivalence' , though sometimes 'analogy' is preferred. The issue of fidelity provides two clear avenues of discussion. Firstly, whether it is possible to be faithful to the original - to make a film which is somehow 'the same' as the novel: though the nature of this sameness is not easily determined and leads to a

distinction between the 'letter' of the original - its concrete or material characteristics, and the 'spirit' - a necessarily elusive and subjective identification of its core values, not bound to the expressive qualities of the source medium. A second avenue questions whether the attempt at fidelity is even desirable, and whether its examination should be a principal preoccupation of adaptation studies. The former approach, fidelity criticism, leads inexorably to the category of equivalence - the assessment of the cinematic text's rendering of the properties of the original, properties that may appear particular to literary form and therefore either difficult or impossible to transpose. Such assessment forms by far the largest amount of writing on adaptation. The second approach concerns itself with significant alterations in the transition between media (not that these pass unnoticed by fidelity criticism). It is especially preoccupied by adaptations that change essential meanings or social/political assumptions key to the tone of the original. Adaptations that are subversive or which appear to enter into a critical dialogue with the source text, such as Jack Gold's *Man Friday* (1975), are central to such discussion. Such adaptations also provide further proof that the literary source is not always an object held in uncomplicated esteem, used to lend positive qualities to the film. To complicate the distinction further, some critics such as Dudley Andrew and Millicent Marcus attack fidelity criticism as tiresome and limiting, calling for an examination of adaptations in a historical or semiotic context, yet they continue to identify and explain equivalences in adaptations.

The question of separability, of spirit from letter, story from discourse -- in a sense, of whether it is possible to adapt at all, is an issue of greatly divided opinion. Marcus identifies the two camps thus... Paul Ricoeur, Roland Barthes, A.J.Greimas, Angelo Moscarriello, Gianfranco Bettetini and Seymour Chatman posit the existence of 'a universal, nonspecific code of narrativity which transcends its embodiment in any one particular signifying system.'(11) Whilst Jean Mitry, Gerard Genette, Luigi Chiarini, Emilio Garroni and Galvano della



Volpe 'insist that meaning is indivisibly bound to the concrete material terms of its realisation in art and that it is absurd to posit a significance separable from, and equally available to, a plurality of discursive systems.'(12) For the latter critics profound change is inevitable in the transition between media and the source text can be meaningfully viewed only as inspiration, a springboard to a different work in a different medium. Hence, a major distinguishing characteristic between adaptation theorists is the extent to which they regard literary form as intractable; the extent to which they anticipate and justify change as an inevitable consequence of the transition between media, and, of course, what that change will involve.

Keith Cohen offers a somewhat tentative claim for a universal level of narrativity, suggesting that adaptation can be a fuller rendering of the original than just an inspiration or influence;

A basic assumption I make is that both words and images are sets of signs that belong to systems and that, at a certain level of abstraction, these systems bear resemblances to one another. (13)

George Bluestone, however, is struck by the rootedness of the novel's narrative in its original form;

We discover, therefore, in film versions of the novel an inevitable abandonment of 'novelistic' elements. This abandonment is so severe that, in a strict sense, the new creation has little resemblance to the original. (14)

In *Screening The Novel*, Robert Giddings, Keith Selby and Chris Wensley quote Jonathan Miller stressing the inseparability of literary characters from the language which forms them;

The fact that someone is in a novel.... does not mean that they are in the novel in the same way that someone else might be in Birmingham or in a cubicle. They cannot be taken out of the novel and put in a film of it... (they) are made out of the same material as the novels in which they occur, and they cannot be liberated in order to make a personal appearance in another medium. (15).

Bluestone makes a useful point on this issue of separability and the

inevitability of change when he acknowledges the variability of the novel and hence the differing extent to which particular examples offer themselves up for, or declare themselves inaccessible to, adaptation. Metaphor, mental states, and omniscient narration are hard to convey, whilst prose which avoids 'meditation' and 'relies wholly on dialogue and physical action to reveal character' is easier in that it resembles 'the classic form of the scenario'. (16). Some works are, he asserts, inextricably lodged in one medium;

What is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each. That is why Proust and Joyce would seem as absurd on film as Chaplin would in print. (17)

Despite differences in the degree to which the theorists consider literary narrative to be bound or free, and hence the task of adaptation to be either Sisyphean or operable, there is a certain uniformity - given some subtle changes in emphasis - in their statements on the objective of achieving equivalence in the shift between media.

To judge whether or not a film is a successful adaptation of a novel is to evaluate the skill of its makers in striking analogous attitudes and in finding analogous rhetorical techniques. (18)

Martin Battestin.

The director... must either discover or create visual equivalents for the narrator's evaluations.. If the tone of a work is lost, the work is lost. (19)

George Linden.

The analysis of adaptation then must point to the achievement of equivalent narrative units in the absolutely different semiotic systems of film and language. (20)

Dudley Andrew.

Undoubtedly the novel has means of its own -- language not the image is its material, its intimate effect on the isolated reader is not the same as that of a film on the crowd in a darkened cinema -- but precisely for these reasons the differences in aesthetic structure make the search for equivalents an even more delicate matter, and thus they require all the more power of invention and imagination from the filmmaker who is truly attempting a resemblance. (21)

Andre Bazin.



Battestin and Linden both reveal an interest not just in the accurate rendition of the novel's parts, but in a more overarching element - perhaps the 'spirit' - which resides in the work's 'attitude', 'tone' and its 'narrator's evaluations'. For Andrew, the analysis of equivalence is redeemed from being a stock-in-trade of the fidelity critic by recasting it as a semiotic enterprise, revealing the limits, strengths and weaknesses of different sign systems. Bazin points to the need to avoid literal-mindedness, both for critics and adapters, in assessing and finding equivalents. 'Invention and imagination' will be key to recognising cinema's achievement of effective correlatives for literary modes and devices.

The equivalents that different theorists and critics identify form a major segment of adaptation writing, covering a plethora of literary and cinematic properties from fleeting details to entire modes of narration. Accordingly, a large part of this chapter will concentrate on their findings. However, it is probably helpful before delving into the many examples to briefly consider the paradox that underlies adaptation theory and practice and hence inflects the search for equivalents. The common criticism of many adaptations, that they are 'unfaithful to', 'betray', 'alter', or 'miss the point of' the original all clearly reveal a popular standard that deviation from the source text is not a good thing. However, what should be abundantly obvious is that an adaptation *is* going to be different, simply by virtue of being a film and not a book. This does not require any academic grounding to grasp. Only another volume of the same edition will be identical to the original. Any film, irrespective of intent, duration, casting, budget or setting cannot be a book. One is inclined to suspect that much criticism of individual works is really a difficulty with adaptation *per se*, a desire -perhaps unrecognised - and certainly impossible to satisfy, for the film to somehow *be* the book. Hence, adaptations are a singularly tricky enterprise, both in construction and criticism, involving a queer dynamic

between a desire for sameness, or re-production, and an acknowledgement of inevitable difference and alteration. The desire to find equivalents, and the rhymes, similarities and assonance they achieve between the two texts are the result of this dynamic: born of an impossible wish.

Among the best known and most commonly cited examples of a critic's identification of a cinematic equivalent for a literary device is Andre Bazin's explanation of the use of snow in *La Symphonie Pastorale*.

The ever-present snow carries with it a subtle and polyvalent symbolism that quietly modifies the action, and provides it as it were with a permanent moral coefficient the value of which is not so different after all from that which the writer was searching for by the appropriate use of tenses. (22)

Gide's use of the simple preterite and Delannoy's snowy decor are both, according to Dudley Andrew, 'clear and chilling' and both 'connote fatality and a certain spiritual dryness'. (23) The difficulty of rendering language, its tenses and sequential properties as opposed to the immediate and holistic qualities of the image is of perennial interest in adaptation studies. With Bazin's example the *effect* of a particular tense is relocated not just to a new medium, but to an unexpected element of that medium. Snow may exist in the novel as something described in a particular setting and as such could be expected to appear in the film as part of the decor and mise-en-scene - surely one of the easiest elements of the novel to render visually. However, Bazin detects in its use not just a simple fleshing-out or realising of the novel's description but a correlative for a specifically linguistic effect - a temporal property of the original is (allegedly) rendered in the spatial arrangement of the derived text.

Robert Richardson in his essay 'Verbal and visual languages' contends that film has a more literal linguistic facility;

The elements of film narrative, as they have existed since the mid-twenties, form not a figurative but an actual language. Language consists of vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Vocabulary consists of words, which represent things or abstractions, while grammar and syntax are the means by which the words are arranged. The vocabulary of film is the simple photographed image;



the grammar and syntax of film are the editing, cutting, or montage processes by which the shots are arranged... (hence)... a film such as *Last Year at Marienbad* could be said to use a limited vocabulary, and an abstract one at that, but a complex grammar of editing techniques so subtle as to evade comprehension more or less successfully. (24)

Richardson's point about *Marienbad* (Resnais, 1961) is well taken but it also anticipates the fundamental flaw in his argument. Films may well employ techniques of arrangement that approximate to grammar and syntax but not according to any universal standard that does not fluctuate from film to film. Hence, large-scale attempts to map film-language onto verbal language or construct a lexicon of cinematic techniques are doomed to failure. Film language is commonly film-specific, and even then not always clear, e.g. the ambiguous sequence in *Laura* (Preminger, 1944) that may or may not be interpreted as a dream. In fact, were such specificity possible, film viewing and criticism would be monumentally dull. Bruce Morrissette, in his essay 'Aesthetic Response to Novel and Film', is quick to point out that the absence of such objective reciprocity does not make the search for correlatives pointless; 'that no necessary parallel exists between a given set of words and images does not mean that artistically or aesthetically satisfying equivalences are impossible.' (25) Another example of the openness of film-devices comes, albeit unintentionally, from Martin Battestin's essay 'Osborne's *Tom Jones* : adapting a classic';

Just as Fielding indulges in amplifications, ironies, similes, mock-heroics, parodies, etc., so the film exploits for comic effect a circusful of wipes, freezes, flips, speed-ups, narrowed focuses - in short, the entire battery of camera tricks. The effect of this is again to call attention to the skill of the artist, to the intelligence manipulating the pen or the camera, as the case may be. (26)

Whilst Battestin is unquestionably correct to place the lists of literary and cinematic devices side-by-side, note that they cannot be specifically paired. Instead what can be achieved is some meaningful comparison of their effect at a less precise level. Millicent Marcus cites the non-specificity of film devices, and hence their inexact congruence with literary modes, as a solid reason why

adaptations need to be examined individually, in their particular historical context;

Because each film gives rise to its own syntactic laws and constitutes therefore a *sui generis* system of signification, then a semiotics of the cinema must abandon the universalising ambitions of Metz's *grande syntagmatique du cinema*, for example, and confine itself to case-by-case investigations. (27)

Chapter two of this thesis and the three prefatory sections on the novelists and the filmmakers who have adapted their work will undertake the contextualizing that Marcus identifies as crucial, locating the source novels and the adaptations in their particular historical and sociopolitical contexts.

In his chapter on *The Informer* (1935), Bluestone describes numerous examples of its director and screenwriter, Ford and Nichols, finding equivalents for devices and ideas employed in the novel. The adaptive strategy Bluestone describes is a mixture of simple transposition and sometimes invention.

Internal monologue and literary figures of speech are all but impossible to translate to celluloid. The film, which must render its meanings in moving images, resists both these devices. And yet the texture of the narrative prose, which is so largely supported by both monologue and metaphor, must be rendered in cinematic equivalents. Ford and Nichols have solved this problem by devising an elaborate set of symbols which function on both literal and analogical levels. (28)

These symbols include the informer, Gypo's, hat (which in both novel and film is worn jauntily when he is confident, but which he twists in his hands when nervous), and the twenty pounds he receives for informing (which functions 'analogically as a symbol of Gypo's undoing' (29) every time he spends some of it). However, a poster which offers a reward for information does not appear in the novel as it does in the film. Ford uses the poster as 'the symbol of the evil idea of betrayal' (30); it blows along the street, appearing to follow Gypo and represents what the novelist O'Flaherty called the 'monstrous idea' that crept into his head 'like an uncouth beast straying from a wilderness into a civilised place where little children are alone'.



The fundamental problem of a symbolic use of images to approximate to metaphor and interior states is suggested by Bluestone when he describes them as working on 'both literal and analogical levels'. Naturalism is so overwhelmingly the dominant mode of filmic narration that symbols are obliged to have a literal justification in the diegesis and hence to run the risk of going analogically un-recognized in a way that literary metaphors and similes do not. Just as literary characters are formed inseparably from language, so most cinematic symbols are inextricably linked to the world of the diegetic image. The more 'literary' symbolism of Russian montage cinema which directly compared the slaughter of a steer with the suppression of strikers or a nagging wife with a clucking hen, and in so doing broke with the diegetic continuum and naturalism, is unimaginable in most other conventional cinema.

Cinema's capacity to render objects and situations realistically and the fact that most cinematic narratives function in a manner which plays to this strength is very much implicated in adaptation's search for equivalents to literary metaphor and interior monologue. Bluestone points to the use of superimposition in various scenes in *The Informer* as an analogue to Gypo's interior monologue. Images of the man he will betray, the poster and flashes from his past represent variously memory, temptation and his 'tortured conscience'. However, such superimpositions, like sequences that try to convey the properties of dreaming, are generally unsatisfying moments in otherwise realistically weighted texts. We understand misty focuses and weird compositions more as *conventions* representing particular mental states than as *resemblances* of dreams, thoughts or hallucinations. Good evidence of the conventionality of their function is the manner in which viewers need cues to signal that such moments are imminent; changes in music, or the character looking distraught, drinking, sleeping fitfully etc are needed to ease us into recognising such modes. The difference between dreams versus flashbacks or

fantasy is established not by the particularity of the devices, but by the content of the realistically photographed build-up. Hence, Jonathan Miller is mostly correct in his statement on metaphor;

It is only in language that one can state an explicit comparison between one thing and another -- between lips and peonies, mouths and letter-boxes. Although a picture can be viewed with the knowledge that a metaphorical implication is intended, there are no communicative resources within the pictorial format for making such implications explicit. (31)

Whilst one could argue that superimposition or juxtaposition can make such a comparison explicit and that since sound cinema is a mixed medium metaphorical activity does not have to reside solely in the 'pictorial format', Miller is right to identify metaphor as a problem area for adaptation. Metaphor is difficult for the same reason that representing interior states is difficult - neither exist in a physically photographable state. Therefore, such devices can only be approximated to cinematically by offering images (or image/sound combinations) to be viewed for more than their manifest content, for a more abstract meaning. I would argue that the problem with this method is that the photographic image is so loaded with specificity and physical groundedness, and this quality is so invariably exploited, that to de-nature it becomes difficult. The cues that one is in 'another mode' can be so obvious that the representation feels heavy-handed, or so subtle that abstract or latent meaning is overlooked. Often, purely aural devices - such as voices in the head, or words recollected - are more successful than visual ones because they do not disrupt the appearance of the unmediated natural world. So, it may be helpful to reconsider generalisations such as Miller's: it is not that cinema can't 'do' metaphor or interiority, simply that it cannot switch into such modes as seamlessly and precisely as verbal language; its ability to capture surface reality - which it has come to bank on so heavily - is something of a hindrance when it wishes to venture beneath appearances.



The breadth with which the category of equivalence is applied to adaptation is striking. Dudley Andrew argues that the most disparate and seemingly unconnected things can be meaningfully compared in terms of a sweeping - and subjective - relativity. He asserts that it is possible to match different items from different domains in terms of common properties and their respective position in those domains; 'a tuba sound is more like a rock than a piece of string; it is more like a bear than like a bird; more like a romanesque church than a baroque one.' (32) The use of self-conscious cinematic devices which foreground a controlling creative hand in *Tom Jones* (Richardson, 1963) is an equivalence of this nature; a good approximation of elements from different domains. However, Andrew Horton identifies a more sweeping kind of equivalence in Malle's *Zazie dans le Metro* (1960) adapted from the novel by Raymond Queneau. Whilst Queneau's novel forms 'an internal critique of literature', Malle does not use cinema to achieve the same result but finds instead 'an equivalent internal critique of cinematic language'. (33) While the former used a variety of literary modes and devices to reveal the expressive limits of language the latter 'quotes' the cinematic techniques of earlier genres and periods, eg the Keystone Cops-style chase sequence.

"Queneau's *Zazie* thus became a framework to which he remained faithful in spirit, while simultaneously it was a point of departure for his own imaginative and satirical interests." (34)

What is achieved is not a re-production in another medium but a new work that complements or rhymes with the original; both *means* and *intent* are altered in the shift in media.

In her chapters on Visconti's *La Terra Trema* (1948) and *The Leopard* (1963) Millicent Marcus identifies a wealth of equivalences. In *La Terra Trema* she describes the 'lyricism' of the soundtrack as a 'medium-specific equivalent to the sweeping nostalgia of Verga's narrative perspective.' (35) The long takes and

attention to local detail are cited as correlatives for an entire literary style.

It is in his respect for the time-space continuum and the organic integrity of the profilmic world of Aci Trezza that Visconti provides the cinematic equivalents of literary verismo. The thickness of Verga's descriptive technique, its density, and its narrative layerings find their analogues in such justly famous episodes as the morning ablutions of the newly returned fishermen. (36)

In *The Leopard* she detects in the film's use of mirrors and paintings an equivalent to the novel's access - through internal monologue and omniscient narration - to Fabrizio's evolving understanding of his place, and that of his class, in a changing Sicily.

By finding ways to materialise the workings of the princely consciousness, Visconti has doubly fulfilled his aspiration to 'expressive originality.. not only from the visual side' in adapting *The Leopard*. (37)

Materialisation may be considered as a lynchpin of adaptive strategy - a 'bringing out' of novelistic elements into a cinematically accessible realm - and the coming chapters on particular adaptations will identify and analyse several such instances. The panning shot in *The Leopard* of the Salina family at Mass in Donnafugata is such a materialisation. Dust-covered, pale, and immobile the family seem ghostlike - other-worldly - and Marcus describes this as a cinematic confirmation of the novel's message that their time is drawing to an end. This process of materialisation is not always visual though; in a later scene where Fabrizio has a long interior monologue, the film accesses his thoughts by having two other characters join him earlier than they do in the novel.

Because the film version cannot make us privy to Fabrizio's interior monologue without externalising it in dialogue, Tancredi and Angelica must intervene earlier in the scene to provide the excuse for the prince to verbalise his funereal thoughts. The first part of the scene, in which Fabrizio contemplates the painting in mute solitude, is thus given retroactive justification by the dialogue of the second part. (38)

Occasionally the equivalents discovered involve more than the transition between literature and film; they are parts of a larger continuum of artistic and other influences in which the source idea or inspiration may be hard to locate.



Bluestone unearths a chain of influences behind the photography of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)

Gregg Toland's photography is acutely conscious of the pictorial values of land and sky, finding equivalents for those haunting images of erosion which were popularised for the New Deal's reclamation program and reflected in Steinbeck's prose. (39)

Here the adaptive task cannot be simply characterised as the substitution of fitting images for words. "Steinbeck's prose" is merely the penultimate stage in a sequence beginning with the events in the Dustbowl, followed by documentary photography and writing by Walker Evans, James Agee and others which in turn contributed to Steinbeck's impulse to write *The Grapes of Wrath*. Hence, its adaptation may be regarded in near cyclical terms - as a return to images.

Theorists and critics also chart the larger deviations and alterations that take place in the transition between media, looking not only for the achievement of analogues and correlatives but for deliberate changes where 'sameness' is *not* the desired result. In his chapter on *The Grapes of Wrath* Bluestone traces some major shifts from the Steinbeck novel to the Ford film. A preoccupation with animal and biological vignettes and metaphors that marks the original is excluded from the film. In part this is explicable in terms of the difficulty of translating metaphor but Bluestone also detects a desire to avoid the uncomfortable comparison made by the novel between animal and human existence.

If the biological interest exists, it is so chastened through suffering that it achieves a dignity which is anything but animal... The conflicts, values, and recognitions of the Joads cannot, therefore, be equated with the preoccupations of subhuman life. The biological life may be retained in the search for food and shelter, in the cycle of death and procreation, but always in terms which emphasise rather than obliterate the distinctions between humans and animals. (40)

Bluestone also describes a rather different type of sanitization of novelistic

elements; a subduing of political criticism. While the novel depicts both businesses and the authorities being variously unfair and cruel to the migrants, the film cuts or alters all these instances and leaves legal authority 'carefully exempt from blame.' (41) Similarly, the authorial comments and the more lyrical short chapters in which criticism of the state is most explicit are omitted - though Bluestone acknowledges that some phrases appear in the film as dialogue.

The angry interludes, the explicit indictments, the authorial commentary do not appear, indeed would seem obtrusive, in the film. Translated into observed reality, however, and integrated into the picture within the frame, certain fragments find their proper filmic equivalents. (42)

However, the most profound change is the adaptation's alteration of the original 'parabola structure' - where the migrant family are at their happiest at the story's mid-point and their circumstances then worsen - to a new structure of 'a straight line that continually ascends' (43) so that the film ends 'on an up'. Lester Asheim characterises this reversal thus; 'the book, which is an exhortation to action, becomes a film which offers reassurance that no action is required to ensure the desired resolution of the issue'. (44) Bluestone mitigates his judgment of these changes by pointing to the novel's own withdrawal from making radical conclusions. He argues that, however emasculated, the film was still a political work from which criticism could be inferred to an unprecedented extent.

Millicent Marcus believes the exact opposite to be taking place in *The Leopard*; not a de-fusing or playing down of political elements but a magnification of them. She describes Visconti's film as 'a highly politicised interpretation of the novel' (45) citing the addition of two key sequences; the battle of Palermo, and the shooting at dawn of rebel Garibaldi two years later. The former scene sets up Tancredi as an attractive figure - a revolutionary aristocrat - while the latter, and especially his assent to the execution of his



former comrades, reveals his motivation to have been cynical realpolitik. The film, more strongly than the novel - though I believe Marcus understates the book's latent politicism - shows Tancredi as representing 'the phenomenon of *trasformismo* - the neutralisation and appropriation of revolutionary movements to serve the interests of the ruling elite'. (46) Marcus identifies in this increased emphasis an 'implicit critique of the contemporary Italian political scene', 'the post-war betrayal of Resistance ideals', the coalition of Christian Democrats with the Movimento Sociale Italiano, and hence a rebuttal of critics on the left who believed that the novel lacked political merit and was unsuitable for making into a 'positive prescription for social change' (47).

Whilst the changes observed by Bluestone and Marcus are significant, they are nevertheless changes in degree - where more is retained than omitted and the new text does not clash or disagree with the original. In Keith Cohen's polemical formulation the achievement of such a schism should be the only real aim of adaptation; he wants the flaws and 'contradictions' of the original to be exposed through 'hidden criticism' or 'deconstruction'. Cohen argues that...

the adaptation must subvert its original, perform a double and paradoxical job of masking and unveiling its source, or else the pleasure it provides will be nothing more than that of seeing words changed into images. (48)

*Man Friday* is such an adaptation; the patriarchal and colonial ideology which underpins Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is comically subverted. Crusoe is portrayed not as the resourceful embodiment of the spirit of adventure and exploration but as dogmatic and uninventive, bound to English ideals and behaviour patterns utterly unsuited to desert island life. *Man Friday* by contrast is likable and intelligent, not only does he shake Crusoe's racist assumptions and mastermind their journey from the island but he usurps the title role! To examine such a film in terms of fidelity would be entirely redundant. What the filmmaker is trying to achieve is not what George Linden in 'The Storied World'

calls an 'accurate rendition of a novel' but to question the very 'subjective tones and attitudes' (49) the relaying of which fidelity criticism sees as key to successful adaptation. Although none of the six adaptations analyzed in the present study are the occasion of such a radical political re-writing as *Man Friday*, they will all be discussed in terms of the alterations they effect to their originals' socio-political valency. In *Sense and Sensibility* a new, feminist, sensibility overlays Austen's conservatism, while *Jude* may be read as a critique of Thatcherite social politics and morality, a re-presentation of Hardy's attack on Victorian values. Conversely, the adaptation of *A Passage to India* seems to move the narrative focus from Indians to the English and partially downplay the novel's criticism of the British Empire, resulting in a text which seems less politically progressive than its original. A survey of adaptations and their criticism suggests a continuum - between the attempt at fidelity and the attempt at subversion - along which filmmakers may move according to their politics and the constraints of production

Generalisations on adaptive practice have a tendency toward the imprecise and metaphysical; possibly owing to the paradoxical nature of the task, and possibly because, as Millicent Marcus suggests, only a more specific examination is effective. Morris Beja's conclusion, in which he attempts to delineate the properties of a good adaptation, is a fine example of this inherent drift;

It is a work of art that relates to the book from which it derives, yet is also independent, an artistic achievement that is in some mysterious way the 'same' as the book but also something other: perhaps something less but perhaps something more as well. (50)

This metaphysicality is also suggested in many critics' identification of a key scene or sequence in most works which needs to be carried - as intact as possible - to the derived text. Such a scene is often described as 'quintessential', encapsulating the themes of the whole novel microcosmically. Battestin regards the scene in *Tom Jones* where the philosopher Square is uncovered - literally -



in Molly's bedroom as such an encapsulation, the inclusion of which is vital to successful adaptation.

In both the novel and the film this scene is shaped as a sort of parabolic dramatisation of Fielding's satiric theory and practice: satire, as he had pointed out in his preface to *Joseph Andrews*, deals with 'the true Ridiculous', which was his term for affectation and pretense - for those whose deeds did not match their professions. As a graphic enactment of this comic theory - the hilarious revelation of the naked truth behind the drapery - the exposure of Square is the quintessential scene in all of Fielding's fiction. (51)

Bluestone quotes Daniel Taradash, adapter of *From Here to Eternity* (Zinneman, 1953) making a similar point, revealing a congruence on this issue between theory and practice.

The matter of responsibility in adapting a fine novel is, I guess, mostly a matter of respect for the material... You have to be bold in breaking away from the book when it becomes necessary. But there are certain key scenes and definite aspects of character, which have to be retained. (52)

*The Leopard* contains such a 'microcosmic' scene, where the novel's themes are encapsulated. In his study, Don Fabrizio explains at length to Chevalley why attempts to modernise Sicily are doomed, citing the national character and the previous waves of conquerors who have been and gone, attempting to leave their mark. Hundreds of words of dialogue are taken intact from novel to film rather than made into pithy and succinct exchanges and maxims. Despite the ostensibly un-cinematic quality of much of the language - the abstruse "heterogeneous" is retained, perhaps uniquely in film soundtracks - it is recognised that the expressive properties of the scene reside in this language. To 'cinematize' the dialogue into something shorter and easier to understand would damage a scene in which the novel's key ideas are both fully and lyrically conveyed.

In their introduction to *Modern European Filmmakers and the Art of Adaptation* Andrew Horton and Joan Magretta, whilst acknowledging Bluestone's contribution, criticise the limited scope of his study - only six films,

all from Hollywood in the period '35 to '49 (53). In some respects this criticism is warranted, yet equally the scope of Bluestone's study lends it both tightness and specific historical usefulness; the influence of such bodies and doctrines as the Legion of Decency and the Production Code can be traced over several pictures. Whilst such influences may not affect modern adaptations this need not amount to reading Bluestone as 'dated', rather it helps us to understand a context for film production and adaptation quite different to today. A more problematic strand of Bluestone's work is his repeated under-valuing of the role of sound in cinema; this, more than anything else, gives his work a dated tone. He consistently describes sound and music as 'subsidiary' (54) lines in film composition and defends synchronisation only in terms of its 'contrapuntal' possibilities, in which respect he echoes Eisenstein and Arnheim - writing nearly forty years earlier. Adaptation criticism generally invites catchy maxims which stress the transition from word to image: eg. Richardson's 'literature often has the problem of making the significant somehow visible, while film often finds itself trying to make the visible significant'. (55) However, such maxims sidestep the fact that sound film is a *mixed* medium which has access to both pictorial and linguistic expression. Hence, Bluestone finds himself qualifying his own argument at times;

the film, being a presentational medium (except for its use of dialogue), cannot have direct access to the power of discursive forms. Where the novel discourses, the film must picture. (56)

Even the mammoth qualification of 'except.. dialogue' is insufficient to cover the innumerable ways in which verbal and written language appear in film. Titles, intertitles, subtitles, monologue, voice-over, signs, bill-boards, letters and computer screens have all been used. Since there are more words than camera-shots in the average film it seems ridiculous to maintain that film has an inconsequential share in linguistic discourse.

Richardson's 'Verbal and visual languages' from 1969 also contains a



sentiment which, one suspects, had a rather dated ring even when it first appeared.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the relative virtues of black and white versus color photography, and it seems generally agreed that the widespread adoption of color film for most subjects tends to weaken rather than strengthen the film, since color tends to emphasise the naturalistic, the 'real' quality of the image, while black and white makes a subtle but steady insistence that we are watching not reality, but an image of reality. (57)

Richardson could doubtless find general agreement for his idea among the Formalist critics of the 1930's but his argument is too broad. A naturalistic film style would indeed not suit a non-naturalistic novel if a 'faithful' adaptation were intended. But for the naturalistic novel, colour could be used - and commonly is - to accurately convey the properties described.

The criticism which this study levels at most previous writings on adaptations concerns their excessive attention to the question of significant changes between novels and their adaptations generally arising from the difficulties of film language, (its communicative recourses) in rendering literary language. The recent preeminence in the humanities of language as a 'fundamental paradigm, a virtual 'key' to the mind' (58) has produced a wealth of remarkable 'language-haunted' work and established a mode of figuring the world which future generations will probably regard as a core characteristic of our time. Without decrying this approach, I believe that its success has been detrimental to our willingness to pursue alternative or additional explanatory models. Whilst it is clearly true that the transition from one medium to another commonly poses considerable (and fascinating) difficulties of 'translation' I feel that this debate has obscured another area that offers to shed much light on why and how many adaptations differ from their originals. This study will argue that differences between film and literary genres suggest a viable explanation for many changes in adaptations - especially of older 'classic' novels -

with filmmakers shaping the adapted texts to fit their 'destination' film genres and muting elements of the originals' generic identity that might sit less easily.

In a sense this explanation is not so very different to the many analyses of film's attempts to accurately capture the qualities of language; though it holds that alterations do not only arise from difficulties in achieving precise matches at a specific or 'lexical' level but that they are explicable in terms of the two media not having genres which align neatly with each other. This thesis will demonstrate how a sensitivity to genre differences between novel and film informs and determines many major changes in adaptations. Some changes involve texts being shaped *towards* a particular genre - where the original story suggests a fundamental consonance with a film genre which can be increased by judicious omissions or alterations. Other changes amount to movements *away* from particular generic or modal facets of the novel which either clash with the film's particular destination genre or are deemed more generally unsuitable for inclusion. In this study, romantic comedy is a film genre which some adaptations strive to join, while the didactic is a moralizing and judgmental generic mode present in some of the original novels which the films work to diminish or omit - not least because its calculating perspective is broadly antithetical to the happy jouissance encouraged by romantic comedy.

In its consideration of six adaptations this thesis demonstrates how each film reshapes the materials of its original novel in particularly genre-related ways. The texts chosen span over a century as novels, from Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) to Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), and less than twenty years as films, from Polanski's *Tess* (1979) to Winterbottom's *Jude* (1996). The principal intentions of this selection are firstly to indicate that genre 'tweaking' in adaptation is not restricted to the novels of one particular period and secondly to produce a relatively tight study of some recent adaptations which had not yet been considered collectively. A further decision was to consider two adaptations



each of the work of three novelists (Austen, Hardy and Forster), and to thereby compare different directors' handling of the same author, with the intention of showing that genre-related changes are not explicable as a simple novelist/director clash of styles, but appear to transcend individual approaches.

Part two of this introduction will survey ideas of genre - especially as they relate to the chosen texts - and Chapter Two will further prepare the ground for the analyses of the six adaptations by considering the social/political contexts in which these texts appeared as well as the economic/industrial circumstances of their production. Chapter two will also address the concept of nostalgia - particularly relevant to the 'heritage' film (a critical grouping to which the films analyzed will be shown to belong and/or relate). In addition it will consider how the task of adaptation relates to, and complicates, theories of authorship. The tendency of these films and their surrounding discourses to foreground and emphasise their literary sources - their place in a national literary heritage - makes them (at least) doubly authored, by novelist and director, when the romantic conception of art which underpins most traditional theories of authorship depends on the singularity of the maker's constructive impulse.

The novels from which these films are adapted all belong to a body or canon of English literary works which may be termed 'classics', a status which is further confirmed by their being selected for adaptation. This study will argue that genre-related alterations are most likely with this type of adaptation and will further examine how and why literary adaptations commonly figure the past in a manner that plays down its unpleasant aspects in favour of stressing nostalgic pleasures. This 'softening' of the past generally involves the reduction of original elements which suggest social and economic division and prejudice as well as the elision of moments which show the period evoked to be in a state of socio-historical flux. In contrast, *Jude* will be shown to provide a stark exception to the usual adaptive practice of gilding history but can be seen nevertheless to

locate its gritty and pessimistic world view within a recent tradition of British screen texts.

Potentially problematic original material also includes moments where an author, narrator, or character expresses views or sentiments which have since become politically or morally objectionable. In constructing a film which will be both accessible and *acceptable* to a contemporary movie audience, adapters are frequently obliged to mute original elements which would jeopardise what this study terms the audience/film bond - an unspoken assumption of moral and political congruence between viewer and viewed (where the 'viewed' includes both characters, filmmakers and the films themselves). These 'acceptability' changes often dovetail with the genre-related alterations. Romantic comedy, for example, will be shown to require that Austen's more pointed allusions to social class, and in particular supposed class deficiencies, be elided. Every adaptation considered in this study has been the occasion of original material being omitted which, if included, could have damaged an audience's sympathy for the film.

A particular advantage of using celebrated 'classic' novels is the existence of relevant literary criticism. In combination with close textual analysis of both the films and the novels, the six chapters on particular adaptations employ a range of literary criticism to see what is retained, added and lost in the adaptation process and whether the films retain, diminish or increase the interpretive possibilities of the novel. In some instances the choices made in adaptation even appear to help answer questions raised by the originals - particularly in determining whether certain readings of the novel are valid or convincing. The emphasis and direction of the criticism alters from text to text, and particularly from author to author, but work informed by social/historical and feminist approaches to literature as well as by narrative theory and ideas relating to language, sexuality and race all feature in this study. An underlying premise of this work is that an adaptation joins and modifies an existing dialogue about the

original text, widening and complicating our sense of the story. For adaptation in a way frees a story from its original manifestation, creating an inchoate entity which clusters around two (sometimes more) texts. Adaptation can make talk of a particular story both fascinating and confusing; to which text does the speaker refer? Although one may regard the novel as the story's definitive version, it is more than likely that most who encounter a story will do so in its film form. The phenomenon of increased sales of a novel when it is adapted should remind us that the book's historical primacy is unlikely to be mirrored as experience. Most of us will see the film before we read the book.



## Part Two: Genre.

At first glance, few topics in film studies seem as clear-cut and universally understood as genre. Unlike language and concepts drawn from psychoanalysis or semiotics, genre terminology appears not only in specialist textbooks and journals but in popular film reviews for the general public. It also constitutes one of the principal ways in which that public understands and talks about movies. When we refer to Musicals, Westerns, Gangster films and Science Fiction movies, we do so with the conviction that these terms apply to recognizable groups of films and that our sense of these categories is shared by - in fact derived from - the film-making industry, the film-reviewing industry, and other viewers. The idea of genre is, according to Richard Jameson, 'second nature to the movies and our awareness of them.' (1)

The apparent simplicity of film genre is in no small degree due to the fact that the concept of genre is far older than cinema. Literature has been understood as existing in various kinds and forms for hundreds of years, and the identification of the characteristics which distinguish these groupings has been a staple critical activity for just as long. In his *Poetics* Aristotle announced his intention 'to treat of poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each', (2) an approach which - if 'film' were substituted for 'poetry' - might summarize the approach of much writing on film genres. In fact, Rick Altman observes how Aristotle's method had a profound effect on the history of literary genre studies and eventually on the study of film genres. He argues that by "accentuating poetry's internal characteristics rather than the kinds of experience fostered by poetry, Aristotle set genre theory on to a virtually

unbroken course of textual analysis.” (3) Also, by taking ‘an already defined object rather than defining his own’ (4) Aristotle initiated a tendency for critics to regard genres as transhistorical givens rather than historically located phenomena, and to overlook their own role as the potential creators of genres.

The apparent simplicity of the concept of film genre begins to dissolve with a consideration of the variety of functions a genre is assumed to fulfil. Firstly, genres are supposed to exist at the level of production, serving as prototypical patterns for the film-making industry into which the particular differences and variations of individual films are woven. Unlike material objects, such as cars or televisions, which are reproduced as numerous exact replicas, these variations are not figured as breaking from the genre. Stephen Neale maintains that the systematization of difference is a ‘fundamental’ element of the ‘economy of genre’ (5) allowing the repetition of pleasure. Secondly, genres are supposed to exist as labels or agreed descriptions circulating between film-makers, critics and viewers, allowing a huge variety of screen texts to be meaningfully categorized and allowing certain fundamental qualities of any text to be expressed in a word or two. These agreed descriptions - in conjunction with other information (often itself associated with particular genres) such as stars, ratings/certification and movie titles - help to guide viewers’ cinema-going, attracting them to movies they should expect to enjoy and alerting them to those they might not. Thirdly, genres are supposed to exist as mental constructs for viewers, described as ‘schema’ by the cognitivist theorists David Bordwell and Edward Branigan. Learned through prior viewing of genre films these constructs enable viewers to understand and take pleasure from particular films according to the protocols of their genres.

A survey of genre names or titles, and in particular the consideration of what exactly generates those titles, also works to suggest the complexity of the field. Numerous terms pre-date cinema: some originate from Classical antiquity



such as tragedy, comedy and epic, others appear later in the history of literature, e.g. romance and melodrama. These terms may be used as nouns, or as adjectives, combined with each other - e.g. romantic comedy - or appended to genre categories that have developed much more recently - e.g. epic war-film - or even applied pejoratively e.g. "I found that film melodramatic". The long history of certain genre terms fosters an inclination to conceive of those terms as fixed and stable, meaning the same thing throughout their history. However, this supposed continuity is frequently an illusion. A useful parallel can be drawn with reading old literature; where a principal interpretive difficulty is not the understanding of unfamiliar words, which can be looked up, but the fact that certain continuously used words and expressions have undergone shifts in meaning, sometimes quite radically, for example - 'making love' which formerly signified romantic speech but in modern usage is taken to mean the act of sex.. Even during the comparatively brief history of cinema the meaning and usage of many terms has altered, slipped or mushroomed. Consider the epic, which may refer variously to films on Biblical and gladiatorial themes, or to 'swords and sandals' stories of ancient civilizations, or which may be used to indicate that a film is somehow 'large-scale', either in terms of costly sets, many extras (particularly costumed), elaborate special effects, spectacular settings, running-time, or even in the treating of weighty moral or religious themes. The term may also imply positive or negative evaluations of these elements; either sublime magnificence or grandiose pretension. The term melodrama has also undergone a significant alteration in meaning which is charted later in this chapter.

Genre titles such as tragedy and comedy do not suggest particular settings, periods, styles of dress or available technology - rather they take the narrative trajectories of texts as their defining qualities. They may imply emotional affect, in that we understand and approach comedies as happily-ending dramas which

should entertain us rather than move us to tears (and we understand tragedy as pretty much the reverse), but the texts are nevertheless defined according to their intrinsic properties rather than assumptions about their reception; they are not termed 'laughers' and 'cryers'. Yet genres such as horror and the thriller take precisely this intended emotional impact on the audience as the texts' definitive qualities; although the textual material of horror movies may be encapsulated in formulae such as 'normality is threatened by the monster' the genre's title is not defined by such a narrative scheme. For other, more recent, genres such as the Gangster film or the Western, the designation derives from shared elements such as setting, both historical and geographical, familiar character types and dress. Whilst we may expect that these films will involve repeated narrative features such as the gangster's rise and fall, or an opposition between wilderness and community, neither these features nor the emotions the genres might evoke serve to give them their titles.

Genres may also be defined institutionally. The sections in a video store now constitute one of the most common ways in which we see movies grouped, and this comparatively recent re-mapping of cinematic geography has produced further categories into which films can be fitted, some of which undoubtedly complicate prior groupings. Films termed 'Foreign' will of course differ from country to country and in the anglophone world only refer to subtitled or foreign-language movies, not English-language films from other 'foreign' countries. Furthermore the 'foreign' category cuts across all the other genres, or ways of defining genres. Altman argues that the X rating has become a quasi-institutional definition for the genre of pornographic films. Although the rating has been superseded in the U.S and Britain by other systems of certification, it is frequently employed - and magnified into XXX - by filmmakers to designate and publicize their product. (6) Rather than focussing on story, setting or dress (which also tend to be unimportant in individual texts) and tactfully not



dwelling on the response they are structured to provoke from their viewers, this definition is acquired from the films' relation to the law and, like those films once or currently 'Banned', makes a virtue of and forms its generic identity from the restriction.

What the above should indicate is that there is no simple answer to the question "What makes a genre?" The criteria that afford a genre its generic status may be textual, or located outside the text. Even within the text different genres appear to treat different elements as definitive. Altman's 1984 essay 'A Semantic/Syntactic approach to film genre' (7) acknowledged that different textual features were invoked in genre terminology and distinguished between shared semantic elements (topics, plots, characters, objects) and shared syntactic approaches (how the former interrelate into a developed structure). Focussing on semantics has the 'benefit of broad applicability, easy recognition and general consensus' (8); a Western is easily recognizable by the presence of horses, six-shooters and cowboys for example. Equally, this approach may fail to exclude texts which, for other reasons, we may be reluctant to term Westerns such as *The Three Amigos* or *Blazing Saddles*. Conversely, syntactic analysis would reject these films as Westerns on the grounds that their comic story-structures and treatment of Western iconographic elements, in particular their merging with extra-generic elements, were radically different to those offered in true Westerns. Syntactic analysis might however accept *Star Wars* into the genre. Many viewers and critics noticed that the film offered 'in its structure the familiar epic configuration of the Western' (9) though semantic analysis would maintain that just about any single still from the movie - showing futuristic technology and costume - would serve to place it in the Science Fiction genre. Noting that the syntactic parallels between *Star Wars* and the Western genre did not suffice for the film to become popularly designated a Western, Altman argues that a body of films may be said to have fully achieved genre status when they become



recognizable in terms of shared topic and treatment, semantics and syntax. (10)

A major division between genre theorists is constituted by the debate over whether genres serve a ritual or an ideological function. Following the example of Claude Levi-Strauss and the structural anthropology he inaugurated, critics such as Altman, John Cawelti and Will Wright considered genres as narrative patterns which work to 'justify and organize a virtually timeless society'. (11) As folk narratives and tribal myths were seen to function without a particular source, other than the society/audience in which they circulate, these critics figured genres to be operating in a similar way;

According to this approach, the narrative patterns of generic texts grow out of existing societal practices, imaginatively overcoming contradictions within those very practices. From this point of view, audiences have a very special investment in genres, because genres constitute the audiences' own method of assuring its unity and envisioning its future. (12)

Whereas a ritual account of genre's function privileges audiences, effectively positing them as the makers of genres, an ideological account - favoured by Marxist critics and largely derived from the writings of Louis Althusser - tends to see audiences as a final and rather powerless link in the genre chain. In this version, genres are shaped and sustained by an industry which uses genres, genre conventions, and the familiar resolutions of genre texts to lure audiences into 'false assumptions of societal unity and future happiness'. (13) Both accounts recognize the tendency of genre films to produce a sense of viewer satisfaction through repeated narrative patterns of equilibrium upset and finally restored, though they interpret that process very differently. For Stephen Neale, mainstream narrative, and particularly genres, work to produce what he terms 'coherence' in the viewing subject. (14)

Genres institutionalize, guarantee coherence by institutionalizing conventions, i.e. sets of expectations with respect to narrative process and narrative closure which may be subject to variation, but which are never exceeded or broken. The existence of genres means that the spectator, precisely, will always know that everything will be 'made right in the end', that everything will cohere, that any threat or any danger in the narrative process itself will

always be contained. (15)

Seen from this perspective genres appear particularly insidious, the most 'soporific tunes in the overall ideological lullaby programme.' (16) Besides working in a fundamentally deceptive manner, by offering (phoney) solutions to fictional narrative situations and thereby diverting our attention from inequalities and power-relations in the real, extra-textual, world, this account also circumscribes the capacity for particular films to break with the limits of their genre. Although Neale stresses the role of difference in genre films, arguing that 'the notion that "all westerns (or all gangster films, or all war films, or whatever) are the same" is not just an unwarranted generalization, it is profoundly wrong', (17) he nevertheless sees the range of potential difference as ultimately limited.

In arguing for the contained nature of difference between films in a particular genre Neale invokes the economic imperatives of the movie business:

Genres, therefore, are crucial to the film industry. They provide, simultaneously, maximum regularity and economy in the utilization of plant and personnel, and the minimum degree of difference necessary for each individual product. (18)

He further argues that,

If they (Economic Factors) do not account for the existence of specific genres, they do account for the ways in which individual films tend constantly to be planned and constructed in generic terms, for the ways in which individual films tend constantly either to be produced as, or to become, genre films. (19)

However, Neale's thesis in *Genre* is significantly undermined by Altman's latest work *Film/Genre*. Altman maintains that filmmakers and studios accrue scant financial advantage from establishing and perpetuating relatively fixed genres. Why labour to produce genres and a public profile for those genres when one's competitors can easily and legally hijack them for their own filmmaking and marketing? In the supermarket we understand generic goods as cheap imitations, attempts to replicate the perceived qualities of the



branded products which in turn strive to distinguish themselves from the generic goods by emphasising elements which are not shared or which cannot be legally reproduced by other manufacturers. Following this example, Altman argues that filmmakers' interests lie in the creation and publicizing of proprietary material and titles to which competitors do not have access. In the golden years of the vertically-integrated Hollywood Studio System these included directors and stars on long term contracts. More recently, sequel series and names such as *Terminator* and *Batman* are products which studios clearly benefit from establishing and marketing.

The Bat-Franchise is particularly germane to an understanding of modern movie-products. Since stars and directors are now much freer to negotiate terms for individual movies, the films have not relied on the original Batman (Michael Keaton) as a box-office draw, nor on the original director (Tim Burton), rather the movies have employed three different actors in the title role and two directors, relying on new combinations of costume, gadgetry, special effects and major stars playing the villains, all unified under the biggest draw of all, the valuable Batman name. Through four movies the only constant in the Bat-equation, besides Bruce Wayne's butler, is the production company Warner Bros. Conversely, with sequel series which hinge on the presence of a particular star e.g Mel Gibson in the *Lethal Weapon* series and Bruce Willis in the *Die Hard* series the production companies can expect to pay significantly more with each sequel for that star to reprise the role. Their presence works to assure potential viewers that the new film should offer the same pleasures as the last, but also increases the cost of production. This increase in costs is exacerbated by the need for such sequels to promise 'difference' through enhanced excitement from special effects, set-piece scenes and stunts to 'top' that aspect of the previous film and make audiences want to see the new movie.

Many individual films are marketed with information such as "From the

director of..." , "From the makers of..." or "From the people who brought you..." with the names and faces of stars also serving to attract moviegoers. Association with other, successful, movies is clearly being sought in such a strategy, but not along strictly generic lines. On the contrary, these claims seek to engender an audience awareness of their product that is simultaneously narrower and broader than any particular genre. A film has nothing to gain from being mentally clumped with all the texts in one genre, since this will include box-office failures, movies that now seem dated, movies that seem too similar etc. Equally, it has much to gain from association with successful texts from other genres and even other media. Consider the recent British success *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* which had neither stars nor a famous director but which strove to emphasise its single most recognizable element - professional footballer Vinnie Jones in his first movie-role, a hard-man part which echoed - and drew heavily upon - his famously poor disciplinary record and notoriety for foul play. Despite his comparatively small role Jones dominated the poster campaign, trailers, clips for TV and media events connected with the film. Whilst *Lock, Stock* may be definable as a 'caper' film and was certainly labelled as such by critics who likened it to another popular British crime movie with a picaresque flavour - *The Italian Job* - its makers chose to stress what was *particular* to the film.

Operating with entirely different priorities to the filmmakers, reviewers and critics have a vested interest in figuring film output according to a widely-understood selection of stable genres. As intermediaries between the industry and the viewing public they benefit from the existence of a categorizing system which enables them to describe the films they watch on our behalf; it is a tool or vocabulary that makes their job possible. Filmmakers, on the other hand, must sell movie tickets and not reviews. The experience of the movie must never be reducible to the experience of the review, or potential viewers may feel that



through the latter they have obviated the need for - and dissipated the possibilities of taking pleasure from - the former. The real economic imperative of filmmakers is therefore to make products which only seeing will capture, which genre terminology will always fail to wholly describe, especially in terms of locating that product in a single genre. Rather than making films which reviewers and critics can unproblematically assign to a particular genre - thereby limiting its appeal to audiences predisposed to that genre - filmmakers stand to gain by constructing products which have affinities to more than one genre. Altman argues that 'at every turn, we find that Hollywood labours to identify its pictures with multiple genres, in order to benefit from the increased interest that this strategy inspires in diverse demographic groups.' (20) Robert Altman's film *The Player* satirizes this genre-mixing approach as screen-writers pitch their ideas to producers in terms of increasingly improbable hybrids of previous successes, appealing to the producers' desire to make movies which have something for everyone. In the present study it will be demonstrated how the producers of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* worked to ensure that their films were identified not just as 'period' films or literary adaptations - genres considered to have a distinct but fairly small following - but also as comedies, which have potential appeal for a far larger audience.

Evidence of the fact that many films mix elements of different genres can even be found in the different films of a sequel series, where sameness rather than difference would normally be expected. The movie *Alien*, for example, may be defined as a science-fiction film; its futuristic milieu and technology is certainly one of the factors that often marks that genre. Yet the film's narrative follows the very familiar trajectory of many horror films.... An isolated group of people, trapped in a structure from which they cannot escape, face a monster which they decide to tackle by splitting up. Employed in countless horror films, parodied in every episode of *Scooby Doo*, and always practised for reasons which

seem to make good sense to the characters, this tactic enables the monster to kill off the people one by one. A single female character remains (a fixture so common to the genre that she has acquired the moniker "Final Girl") who eventually defeats the monster...

With the first film in the series already a synthesis of genres, its sequel *Aliens* borrows from another genre - the war-film - to provide a new way of presenting the proprietary material (Sigourney Weaver's character, Set-Designer H.R.Giger's "look" for the monster, and the *Alien* name) which the original established. Rather than attempting to repeat the suspense and shock at the growth and eventual appearance of the creature, which had been carefully eked out in the original and could not offer the same surprise in a sequel, *Aliens* opted to present numerous monsters with which the characters would do battle. Much like an American Second World War film set in the Pacific (e.g. *Steel Helmet*), *Aliens* presents the group of soldiers as initially internally divided, adding gender and a human/android distinction to the war-film's familiar differences of race, rank, experience and class. The group is faced, just like G.I's against the stereotyped Japanese, with swarms of a monstrous and inhumane enemy who look identical and act as a terrifying de-personalized collective. Where the war-films' G.I's usually function as a synecdoche for the United States, the multifarious group in *Aliens* are metonymic for a wider sense of humanity, but the pattern of both groupings needing to overcome their internal hostilities in order to defeat the 'other' is identical.

Examining the commercial decision-making of Hollywood studios in the first decades of the century, Altman describes the activity of analysing previous films to determine which elements made them successful as 'assaying' and maintains that they practised this technique in order to re-combine what they identified as winning elements in new texts. Producers would 'seek to initiate film cycles that (would) provide successful, easily exploitable models associated



with a single studio' (21) However, although studios would intend that many of the elements which marked a cycle would be proprietary, and would certainly emphasize these in their publicity, other elements such as plots and settings could more easily be exploited by other studios wanting to reap financial rewards from ground already broken by their competitor. When the making of films which share these common elements becomes industry-wide, rather than studio-specific, and when audiences recognize those films as a distinct grouping, a cycle may be said to have developed into a genre. However, when certain films are subsequently identified as "starting" that genre it is important to recognize that they were probably not considered by their makers nor interpreted by their original audiences in those same generic terms. It is further important to recognize that those original makers had nothing to gain from establishing an industry-wide grouping.

In his essays 'The Western: Or the American Film Par Excellence' and 'The Evolution of the Western' Andre Bazin describes how the genre has been 'subjected to influences from the outside - for instance the crime novel, the detective story, or the social problems of the day'. (22) He clearly regards the introduction of material which he considers foreign to the genre as a pity, noting that 'its simplicity and strict form have suffered as a result'. (23) For Bazin the Western genre reached a 'definitive stage of perfection' just before the Second World War, crystallized in John Ford's *Stagecoach* which he describes as 'the ideal example of the maturity of a style brought to classic perfection'. (24) After this point he observes that the genre moves into a self-aware reflexive stage, interrogating as its subject the history 'which was formally only the material of the Western' (25). He cites the 'political rehabilitation of the Indian' (26) in such films as *Fort Apache* and *Broken Arrow* as evidence that the genre had begun to question its roots, and identifies a new species of films e.g *Shane* and *High Noon* which he terms 'superwesterns':

The superwestern is a film that would be ashamed to be just itself, and looks for some additional interest to justify its existence - an aesthetic, sociological, moral, psychological, political, or erotic interest, in short, some quality extrinsic to the genre and which is supposed to enrich it. (27)

In arguing that many post-war Westerns have become regrettably alloyed, Bazin is implicitly denying that the genre itself arose from generic mixing and cross-fertilization. In common with many other critics, e.g Will Wright and John Cawelti, Bazin regards the Western film genre as an extension of a pre-existing literary and folkloric 'mythology' (28) According to this argument Western films would have first appeared as a ready formed genre, and would have been interpreted as such by a public already significantly versed in their subject-matter and protocols through literature.

Altman notes how numerous studies of the genre take Porter's 1903 film *The Great Train Robbery* as cinema's first Western and how revisions of this position simply tend to fasten on alternative, earlier, movies e.g *Poker at Dawson City*, *Cripple-Creek Bar-Room*, and *Kit Carson* rather than questioning the validity of what one might term the "first screen-Western theory". (29) Interestingly, Charles Musser's article 'The Travel Genre in 1903 - 1904: Moving Towards Fictional Narrative.' (30) interprets *The Great Train Robbery* not as a Western but as an amalgam of the railway subgenre of the travel genre and the 'violent crime genre which had been imported from England a few months earlier' (31) Altman expands on Musser's "discovery" and argues that for the first decade of this century the Western film genre could not really be said to exist as a distinct and separate entity. He observes that the term Western was originally 'only a geographical adjective, designating a favoured location for films of various types (just as 'musical' had once been only a technological designator)'. (32)

Drawing on early advertizing material to substantiate his case, Altman notes how the films now considered to be the first Westerns (and many others



now lost) were originally marketed as Western chase films, Western comedies, Western melodramas, Western romances and Western epics, suggesting that it took several years before a coherent pattern of plots and character types solidified from this mixture which audiences could recognize as simply Westerns. (33) Although Bazin notes that Indian characters were, after 1939, frequently presented other than as villains, and sees this political re-arrangement as a new phenomenon and an undesirable break with tradition, Altman maintains that early (pre 1910) films featuring Indians invariably represented them as 'noble "red men" mistreated by dissolute "whites"'. (34) However, rather than forming early examples of the Western genre - which many have taken the presence of Indians to signify - these films may be regarded as a separate genre of 'Indian films' which disappeared as the Indian became a staple villain in the emerging Westerns, thereby contributing to that genre's stability and recognizability by adding a constant element. Despite having predecessors in literature, the Western genre did not emerge as a fully-formed entity but took several years to coalesce *out of* a variety of existing genres. Therefore, the shifts in the Western which Bazin discerns should perhaps not be interpreted as the despoliation of a previously 'pure' genre but as part of a on-going process of mixing and re-combination of elements which happens to produce the groupings we identify as genres.

The role of critics in creating and defining genres is discussed both by Neale and Altman in relation to the category of melodrama. Melodrama is particularly relevant to the present study since it will be argued that the adaptations *Tess* and *Jude* systematically cut original material that can be identified with that genre. These omissions will be explained in terms of the filmmakers' desire not to compromise the tragic narratives and realism of the new texts with improbable material that might damage the credibility of characters, events and causality. It appears that the filmmakers decided that the

most plangent melodramatic moments (as well as polemical asides which are also omitted) would severely alloy the intended tragic realism by posing an interpretive and emotional difficulty for audiences unaccustomed to reconciling such different - if not conflicting - elements in a single screen text. Most criticism of Hardy has, until comparatively recently, maintained that this original mixture was not entirely successful in literary form, and it seems apparent that his adapters have sided with the early critics, preferring a clearer generic identity. This suggests that although genre-mixing (and implying multiple generic affinities in promotion) may often work to attract a large diverse audience, it is not a simple "the more the merrier approach" but is approached by filmmakers as a kind of balancing act, which seeks to retain and not jeopardize the core genre(s) or audience(s) for a particular text.

Derived from the combination of the Greek word for song - 'melos' - with 'drama', the term melodrama was once applied to all musical plays but came to specifically denote drama - especially in early nineteenth century London - where musical accompaniment heightened the emotional tone of particular scenes. The characters in these dramas are invariably one-sided with the narrative emphasis on intrigue and excitement. (35) The common usage of the adjective 'melodramatic' derives from the salient features of these works, meaning any text or episode that relies on improbable causation and sensational action. (36) Film and literary discourse - both critical and popular - employs this familiarly negative sense of the melodramatic, applying it to texts which fall short of certain standards of realism, whose attempts to wring emotion are clumsy, and whose characters are under-developed stock types. M.H.Abrams states that melodrama 'may be said to bear the same relation to tragedy that farce does to comedy' (37): although both melodrama and farce originally denoted a specific form they are now most often used in a pejorative sense, adjectivally, to suggest failure in other genres caused by blatant signalling of intended emotional responses and



the use of caricatural types. Equally, Altman argues that melodrama was 'cinema's most important parent genre' (38), an idea that makes considerable sense when one considers that the earliest film narratives conveyed their stories quickly and clearly, without sound-dialogue, and without close-ups that might permit more nuanced expression of emotion or intent than the expansive gestures and postures required in long-shot.

What is of particular interest to Neale and Altman in relation to the term melodrama is how it has gradually come to signify, over the last twenty or so years, a group of films which were neither constructed, marketed nor originally received as melodramas. In Film Studies the term has increasingly come to refer to certain 1940's and 50's films with central female characters and addressed to female audiences, for example Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* and *Written on the Wind*. Yet in the era of silent cinema the descriptor melodrama was actually associated not with 'the self-sacrificing psychology of downtrodden women usually stressed in recent definitions of the genre' but with films of adventure and action, pitched at male working-class audiences. (39) And in a study of the use of the terms melodrama, melodramatic and 'meller' in the trade journal *Variety* from 1938 to 1959 Neale discovers that this early usage persisted. (40) Even though the period Neale considers spans the emergence of those movies now commonly cited as the apotheosis and core of film melodrama they were scarcely ever labelled as such 'because these films usually lack the elements that conventionally define... (the term) ...from the trade's point of view' (41) For the movie industry melodrama meant 'not pathos, romance, and domesticity, but action, adventure, and thrills; not "feminine" genres and the woman's films but war films, adventure films, horror films, and thrillers, genres traditionally thought of as, if anything, "male"'. (42)

Altman identifies the new usage of melodrama as arising from the work of feminist film critics in the 1970's and 80's and through the development of the

concept that 'woman's film' exists as a genre. In 1974 Molly Haskell uses the term 'woman's film' (as here, in quotation marks which imply a degree of provisionality or reservation about its generic status) to designate a body of films defined in multiple, alternative, ways by their makers and original viewers but linked by a common address to a female audience. By 1987 and the publication of Mary Ann Doane's *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940's* the parentheses have disappeared 'thereby abandoning any remnant of doubt regarding the category's right to independent existence.' (43) Doane also works to link woman's film to melodrama, maintaining that 'the melodramatic mode is often analysed in terms which situate it as a "feminine" form, linking it intimately with the woman's film in its address to a female audience', and also arguing that 'Because it foregrounds sacrifice and suffering, incarnating the "weepie" aspect of the genre, the maternal melodrama is usually seen as the paradigmatic type of the woman's film.' (44) Altman also acknowledges how frequent quotation from Thomas Elsaesser's article 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama' (45) has 'abetted' (46) the development of woman's film as an established genre and its conflation with melodrama. Although Elsaesser deals with a discrete group of films his conclusions are (in Altman's words) 'broadly stated and have regularly been taken to apply to melodrama as a whole'.

Neale's analysis of the usage of melodrama implies that more recent invocations of the term in Film Studies are wrong, that the terminology employed by the trade at the time of production should provide the standard for genre terms. He is certainly correct to the extent that we are profoundly mistaken if we assume that early uses of the term meant what we currently take it to mean, and particularly if we imagine the original climate of production and consumption to have been inflected with an awareness of current meaning. However, Altman maintains that those critics who managed to re-shape the



meaning of melodrama are simply revealing that genres are not fixed by or at production but can be critical or political constructs as well. Whilst some confusion may have been created by the co-opting of existing terminology (a strategy that helped create an "instant history" and sense of validity for their approach) the work of feminist critics in examining the representation of female experience is no less genre-making than the decisions of early filmmakers about how to market and describe their films. Since those critics have managed to connect certain films in a particular way and under a generic title, and since that approach and use of genre terminology have been largely accepted and repeated by others (in introductory Film Studies textbooks for example (47) ) then they have, Altman maintains, made a genre.

Interestingly, critics writing about those films currently considered melodramas often take the negative sense of the 'melodramatic' as a polemical springboard to argue that the movies *do not* display those qualities but are definable in terms of other - more highly valued - modes and genres. In 'Social Implications in the Hollywood Genres' Jean-Loup Bourget argues that *All That Heaven Allows* 'is not a "weepie" but a sharp satire of small-town America.' (48) He specifically refutes the presence of the simplistic emotional cueing of the melodramatic mode suggested by "weepie", proposing instead that the film operates in the critical (and intellectually respectable) mode of satire. Later, he argues that melodrama is definable in terms of an opposition with tragedy - but not according to a high/low divide. He defines melodrama as 'bourgeois tragedy, dependent upon an awareness of the existence of society' whereas tragedy (plain & simple) hinges upon a metaphysical fate rather than social or political forces. (49)

Elsaesser also recognizes that melodrama is commonly understood and defined in terms of tragedy;

Melodrama is often used to describe tragedy that doesn't quite come off: either because the characters think of themselves too self-consciously as tragic or

because the predicament is too evidently fabricated on the level of plot and dramaturgy to carry the kind of conviction normally termed "inner necessity". (50)

Like Bourget, he seeks to annex the positive values associated with tragedy (and by implication acknowledges the prejudices that cluster around the terms melodrama and melodramatic) when he asserts that 'the best American melodramas of the fifties (are) not only critical social documents but genuine tragedies.' (51) For Elsaesser, these films have an etymological link with earlier theatrical melodrama not because of common negatively-definable properties such as a surfeit of emotionality or slender plausibility but because both groupings employ a code which works in conjunction with the narrative, 'a system of punctuation, giving expressive color and chromatic contrast to the storyline, by orchestrating the emotional ups and downs of the intrigue.' (52) In the films this code includes music but also mise-en-scene and framing, which often suggests the psychological difficulties of the characters. Its development was assisted by 'major technical innovations, such as color, wide-angle and deep-focus lenses, crane(s) and doll(ies)' and the contributions of directors with experience of German expressionism and its attention to meaningful spatial compositions. (53)

Elsaesser observes that the films he examines 'concentrate on the point of view of the victim' (54), which is equally true of the Hardy adaptations considered in this study. Although it will be argued that original melodramatic material is consistently cut in the transition from novel to film, this refers to the melodramatic as understood in a broadly pejorative sense, i.e material which compromises realism. In both *Tess* and *Jude*, as mentioned above, it appears that the filmmakers strive for a unity of tone which is at odds with Hardy's original mixture of styles and seek to achieve this evenness by omitting or altering incidents which audiences might regard as melodramatic as well as excising certain of the author's polemical interventions. Despite downplaying



the melodramatic - where the term is used in this sense - it is noticeable that much of what remains - for example the focus on 'victims' - corresponds with those films currently understood in Film Studies as melodramas. Like characters in such melodramas the films' title characters are ultimately unable to act decisively to solve their problems. Instead, they expend their energies in endless, often circular, peregrinations, finally returning to places and people which they should know will make them unhappy.

Both Elsaesser and Torben Grodal - who approaches genres in terms of cognition and emotion - maintain that many melodramas work by figuring wide social or historical problems in individual terms. Grodal describes the 'coupling of history and individual fate' (55) that occurs in *Gone With the Wind* as central to the audience passivity that he sees as defining the genre. Viewers know the outcome of the American Civil War, so Scarlett O'Hara's efforts are inevitably contextualized by that knowledge, leading to a feeling of 'being carried away by sublime exterior forces.' (56) Whilst Elsaesser doesn't consider whether these films engender passivity in audiences, he does identify in the best literary and theatrical melodramas, e.g. *Les Misérables*, an 'interiorization and personalization of what are primarily ideological conflicts, together with the metaphorical interpretation of class conflict as sexual exploitation and rape'. (57) He sees the continuation of this tendency in film melodrama as evidence of the fact that popular culture has 'resolutely refused to understand social change in other than private contexts and emotional terms.' (58) In Hardy's originals both Tess and Jude can be interpreted as representative; Tess of a fading rural class located between landowners and labourers, and Jude of the position of intelligent young men outside the class then admitted to University. This interpretation is still possible in the adaptations (the rake Alec's taking advantage of Tess is recognizably a process facilitated by their respective class positions, for example) but perhaps not as clearly as in the novels. Because detailed (but un-cinematic)

accounts of land and labour practices are not reproduced, nor many of Hardy's critical asides and digressions, this interpretive route is not so obviously signposted. Nevertheless this connection with melodrama remains, and whilst it is affected by those other omissions it is not - ironically, given the etymological link - diminished by the adaptations' elision of original material that may be termed melodramatic, such as narrative-propelling chance encounters, ghostly gothic settings and stories, and unlikely moral 'conversions' of characters.

Romantic Comedy is another genre particularly relevant to the present study. It will be argued that *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, and *A Room With a View* are all adapted so as to fit more comfortably into this genre than their original story materials might allow. This practice will be shown to involve omissions, alterations and additions which collectively re-mould the new texts, muting features which would be aberrant or uncomfortable in the 'destination' genre and creating a new emphasis on the more appropriate elements. It is of course possible to argue that the original novels, especially Austen's, are already romantic comedies and hence that arguing for their being *made into* romantic comedies when adapted is misleading. However, whilst acknowledging that these novels are close - both in theme and tone - to the types of movies we recognize as romantic comedies, this study will maintain that significant changes are nevertheless required for the adaptations to function and be enjoyed according to the protocols of that film genre.

A brief summary of the Austen novels' generic make-up suggests some of the elements that become problematic for the filmmaker seeking to make a romantic comedy, as well as high-lighting the strong correspondences between that film genre and her work: they are understood primarily as love stories and comedies, succeeding particularly in sharp satirical treatment of certain characters, and with a tendency to conservative moralism and didacticism (most pronounced in *Sense and Sensibility* ). 'Love story' and 'comedy' suggest an



obvious affinity with romantic comedy, but 'satire' and the 'didactic' begin to present difficulties. An element of satire is not necessarily anathema to the workings of romantic comedy, but could become uncomfortable for a modern movie audience when social class provides the satiric grist. Most of Austen's sharpest satire is reserved for certain members of the wealthy land-owning class, particularly those like John and Fanny Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* whose avarice and insensitivity to tradition are at odds with the values of stewardship and continuity which the author valorizes. The humorous/critical presentation of such characters presents no difficulty for romantic comedy and is carried largely intact from novel to film.

However, Austen's satire occasionally targets characters from a lower class and in a manner which could make audiences feel alienated from the moral and political tone of a film if it were transposed unaltered to the screen. For example, in the novel of *Sense and Sensibility*, Lucy and Anne Steele are lower-middle class women hoping to marry into the gentry (and money). Merciless fun is made of Anne's grammatical lapses and social inadequacies and these same failings are eventually identified in Lucy's shoddy letter writing. Throughout, Anne's coarseness functions as a warning about the lowly origins of her sister, who has learned better to disguise them, and who threatens the novel's desired happy outcome by being engaged to marry the principal male character, whom we hope to see married to the 'heroine'. A useful contrast can be made with the movie *Pretty Woman*, one of the most successful romantic comedies of the last decade. Although *Pretty Woman* did use the social shortcomings of Julia Roberts' character, who is catapulted into a 'classy' environment, to create comedy, it also constructed the cross-class pairing as an outcome viewers should desire, and presented her difficulties with etiquette as a situation with which they might empathise. Where *Pretty Woman* made the social gulf into narrative and comic grist for a 'love conquers all' resolution, Austen presents it as

damning evidence against cross-class miscegenation. In adapting *Sense and Sensibility*, the filmmakers are obliged for various reasons - discussed later in this chapter - to produce a text more in sympathy with *Pretty Woman* than with Austen. The adaptation therefore excises the character of Anne completely, and whilst it presents Lucy as an unsuitable marriage partner, her class position is not emphasised; we recognize her as the 'wrong' choice because she is revealed to be sly and scheming and because she stands in opposition to the characters with whom we most sympathize.

The didactic 'lesson' contained in the original Austen novels is another generic element which would not successfully merge with the destination genre of romantic comedy. In both *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* Austen seeks to demonstrate that relationships founded on a gradually developing friendship are more durable and successful than whirlwind romances with unrestrained and extravagant expressions of love. Staid, diffident, even quite boring men are shown to be better partners than the younger, handsome, dashing types who ultimately reveal themselves to be cads and/or abandon those women who were foolish enough to become romantically involved with them. Forget the superficial pleasures of good looks, charm, romance, even sexual satisfaction - Austen seems to advise - and recognize the merits of men who are quietly considerate, who are generous to spinsters, and who keep their estates and tenants in good order - men whom one can 'learn to love'. Romantic comedies, however, necessarily have a greater investment in romance. Whilst Austen counsels prudence and moderation, letting the head lead the heart, Romantic Comedies invariably reward those characters who "take a chance", who choose a partner who often does not offer security, stability or social parity. These qualities are often embodied in an alternative but 'wrong' partner, whom a character may be encouraged and/or pressured to marry by other characters and forces within the narrative. The 'wrong' partner is however identified by the fact



that he/she would not constitute the right romantic pairing, but a hollow - if sanctioned - relationship. The adaptations therefore work to downplay the didactic aspect of Austen's novels by casting as the 'right' partners actors who are not interpretable as second-best in terms of charm and physical appeal but who offer instead the attractiveness of male romantic leads. Although their characters still represent the dependable virtues Austen cherishes they are simultaneously acceptable as satisfying love-matches.

With original texts, it appears that modern readers are prepared to make various allowances - for generic elements such as the above and other 'unacceptable' features - because the novels are the product of an earlier time with different standards. This includes their unrepentant references to and inclusion of, for example; slavery, wage-slavery, limited suffrage, and innumerable permutations of social, ethnic, and gender prejudice - all of which are considered unacceptable in modern society. This critical amnesty is not, of course, absolute; readers will not usually side with texts where these materials form a dominant current but we are generally prepared to accept ficto-historical storyworlds and their characters which depend on assumptions, conditions and socio-economic prerequisites we reject in our own society. (for example, forgiving P.G.Wodehouse and his character Bertie Wooster for occasionally using the word "nigger") Provided a general congruence of sympathy is created between reader and characters & narrators - normally achieved through the inevitable undertow of identification caused by focussing on a particular character (59) - readers will overlook other utterances, thoughts or facets of the diegetic world which are by modern standards morally or politically unacceptable.

However, we are not prepared to extend this suspension of criticism quite as generously to the adaptations made in our own time. Or, more accurately, we don't get - as viewers - the opportunity. (Nobody adapting P.G.Wodehouse

would dream of having Bertie Wooster say "nigger" - in fact the use of racist language has become an easy method for film and TV makers to establish that a particular character is bad.) It would appear that filmmakers worry that inclusion of problematic elements may be seen as reflecting the film's assent to those elements or views. This indicates that adaptations of older or 'classic' literature are obliged to perform a difficult - if not irreconcilable - double task. They will be seen as expressing the filmmakers' assumption of a certain moral and political congruence between the films and their audiences (an implicit shared world view which invites and facilitates spectator/text engagement); and where necessary they must involve changes in order that the terms of that assumption do not offend audiences. Simultaneously, the adaptations must offer nostalgic pleasures - or at the very least a sense of pastness - which rests on the novels' reference to, and material origin in, history - the very location of all the problematic sentiments and politics. Therefore, unless they wish to take issue with the original texts these changes must be subtly spliced into the existing material. Only in a handful of examples do adaptations take as their task the instigation of a critical reappraisal of the original. And even a radical adaptation like *Man Friday* does not attempt to expose the 'problems' of the original by making a wholly faithful new text which invites an audience to dislike it and reject its standards. Instead, it relies on an audience's familiarity with the original and seeks to win our sympathies through deliberate alterations which serve to highlight the novel's incorrect racial politics.

Overwhelmingly, however, adaptations of 'classics' strive to perform a suturing operation which will maintain a comfortable audience/text bond and provide an sense of the text's authentic connection to the past. Several of the adaptations considered in this study attempt an evocation of the past which combines the appearance of a high degree of authenticity with dialogue and action which will neither offend an audience nor jeopardize that sense of



historical connection. *Emma* will be shown to demonstrate the same concern as *Sense and Sensibility*, smoothing away material that might impair the adaptation's functioning as a romantic comedy or which might otherwise discompose a modern audience. The film's alterations to the character Harriet Smith and the remarks other characters make about her is a good example of changes designed to accommodate the more egalitarian sympathies of a late twentieth century audience: Whilst the original connected her intellectual shortcomings and social gaucherie to the mystery of her parentage and the eventual revelation of her 'low' birth the adaptation constructs her faults as free-standing, not as deterministic consequences of her origins. *A Room With A View* will be shown to perform the same work as the Austen adaptations in this respect - avoiding original material which either threatened the smooth-running of romantic comedy, especially in terms of achieving an unmitigatedly happy ending, or which brought the forces and affects of the historical period into disturbing focus.

This approach of 'neutering' the past - or at the very least the planing away of its more improper protuberances - is not however offered as an explanation for all novel-to-film alterations. Whilst every adaptation presupposes a prior model, the time gap between the original work and the subsequent film does not necessarily span a significant period of history with corresponding sea-changes in opinions and social mores. Therefore, this practice is most likely to be evident in adaptations of older works, in novels which are likely to be those termed 'classics' and films which are likely to be termed 'period' by the industry and viewing public and/or 'heritage' by many film critics and theorists. This study will however argue that sensitive adjustments to original elements perceived as unpalatable (which tend to either stem from the originals' generic make-up or which might impair the functioning of the destination genre) are a probable explanation for some changes in adaptations which are separated from their

originals by many years. It is fruitless to specify a particular 'minimum' period for the likelihood of such changes since it is not so much the interval itself as the nature and extent of the novelist's imbrication in problematic material which creates a potential gulf of sympathy. This is in turn affected by the filmmakers' expectations of what the target audience are prepared to accept. In the case of *Jude* for example it will be shown that there is no attempt to gild the living conditions and cruel social texture of the past - in fact their representation seems a major element of the adaptation's project - but certain of Hardy's generalizations about women - which if included might well jeopardize the audience/text bond - do not find their way onto the screen.

The concept of 'nostalgia' as a significant element in adaptations of classic literature will be discussed in the next chapter, but insofar as nostalgia may be regarded as an important quality of many romantic comedies it will also be examined below. The original novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *A Room With A View* all share a fortuitous congruence with the protocols of their destination film genre. In his article 'Romantic Comedy Today: Semi-Tough or Impossible?' Brian Henderson maintains that the genre hinges on the fact of the key couple not having sex;

Romantic comedy lives on the problem of nonfucking and is over when, and only when, it is resolved, when fucking starts or resumes. (60)

He argues that romantic comedies of the 'thirties such as *It Happened One Night* are more successful than recent examples of the genre (his essay was written in 1978) because censorship standards prevented both references to sex and any presentation of the act itself - thereby ensuring the necessary 'problem' or precondition of the genre. The three novels in this study which are adapted as romantic comedies are ideally suited in this respect to match the criteria of the genre's 'Golden Age'. The originals do not contain sexual references or sex scenes (except through covert symbolism in *A Room With A View* ) and this



absence is translated from the page to the screen. The fact of the adaptations being ultimately derived from periods when similar prohibitions or standards prevailed seems to make avoidance of sex appropriate when a contemporary film from an original screenplay would probably be regarded as naive or disappointing if it did likewise. Not only is the avoidance of sex a matter of adaptive fidelity - which is generally interpreted positively - but that fidelity also delivers a high degree of consonance with the paradigmatic examples of the destination genre.

One need not agree with Henderson that sex sounds the death knell of the romantic comedy to recognize that the genre requires its pairings to be delayed or frustrated. Although the principals in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* have sex at an early stage, the connection is immediately lost and the remainder of the movie concerns the tortuous route to its reestablishment. Clearly then, three novels which focus on the tribulations of couples developing their relationships and which conclude with their (elided) consummation, or at its brink, are prime candidates for adaptation as romantic comedies. The absence of sex in these adaptations also offers a nostalgic pleasure which relates both to other classic adaptations - which generally evoke historical settings as gentle and genteel, less brash and explicit than modern times - and to the earlier romantic comedies - from an era of filmmaking and movie-going when violence, sex and bad language were prohibited. Even modern romantic comedies which may involve both sex and bad language can be considered to involve a significant degree of nostalgic pleasure since they generally don't contain violence - that part of the trinity of movie censorship and certification most usually blamed for recent social ills - nor special effects and set-piece action scenes - the qualities often considered to define modern blockbusters.

Two recent television adaptations of classic novels illustrate how this 'innocent' element of nostalgia forms an important part of viewer expectations.

The BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) featured an invented scene in which Darcy (Colin Firth) swam - in his shirt and breeches - through an ornamental lake before entering Pemberley, his country house. This vignette was repeatedly screened on morning television and other 'plugs' and formed a locus of popular discussion about the series which was widely acclaimed as the best classic adaptation for many years. The importance of this new scene was its carefully limited introduction of an increased physicality to the male lead, which suggested in turn the pleasant possibilities of the eventual sexual encounter between Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett - whose own erotic potential was alluded to in scenes of Jennifer Ehle traversing the countryside with greater physical freedom than that suggested by her literary prototype. The success of this innovation hinged on the public's familiarity with Darcy as a 'buttoned up' literary figure, and/or with Laurence Olivier's portrayal of such a role decades earlier; a construction which allowed the comparatively un-shocking spectacle of Colin Firth in wet clothes to generate such a frisson.

However, a subsequent adaptation by the same screen-writer, Andrew Davies, revealed the extent to which his previous work had succeeded largely because of its use of subtle suggestion rather than explicit representation. His next venture, *Moll Flanders*, charted the life and criminal career of the eponymous heroine, played by Alex Kingston, through a staggering variety of sexual encounters and positions - including a new lesbian relationship - that seemed effectively limited only by the codes of the Broadcasting Act. In addition, a 'just for video' version was released that promised extra minutes considered too hot for television. *Moll Flanders* failed to capture the public imagination in the same manner as *Pride and Prejudice*, mainly because it did not offer any innocent nostalgic pleasure but opted instead to fully exploit the possibilities of explicit representation. Although the comparison is perhaps unfair, since Defoe's milieu is infinitely rougher than Austen's and *Moll Flanders* could



never conceivably have been made as a romantic comedy, it is important to note that the most successful of these two adaptations worked because it retained to a very high degree the formality and decorum of the original. This most nostalgia-related element of viewers' expectations of classic adaptations was enlivened by the small but significant suggestions of physicality and sexual tension which sent viewers back to the sharp dialogues with renewed interest and appreciation, their ears tuned for its suggestive possibilities.

All six films considered in this study may also be regarded as belonging to a recent phase of a genre of adaptations of English literature. The consistent reappearances of certain actors in these films certainly foster an awareness of classic literary adaptations as a recognizable grouping; the presence of Helena Bonham-Carter, Emma Thompson, and Rupert Graves in several Merchant-Ivory films has contributed heavily to their family resemblances over the last fifteen years. Similarly, this type of connecting bond is not limited to actors; the Merchant-Ivory production team (discussed later) cements many different adaptations and has come to constitute a classificatory title - "Merchant-Ivory type", "Merchant-Ivory style" etc. that is widely understood to designate a certain type of film. Adaptations of classic literature are also likely to share a common audience, drawn to these movies because of their supposed high socio-cultural value.

Interestingly, the three later movies considered - *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *Jude* - strive to differentiate themselves from this genre and its supposed audience. The prefatory section to the Austen adaptations describes how their producers were anxious that their movies be publicized and understood as comedies - rather than appealing simply to audiences drawn to literary adaptations or 'period' movies. And *Jude* appears to intend to reverse many of the protocols and assumptions associated with those movies, rejecting any nostalgic account of the past and not featuring actors particularly associated

with those films that do. These efforts by filmmakers provide an insight into the multiform nature of the concept of genre; the case of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* reveals genre's meaning for producers as an economic category, and the case of *Jude* suggests the social and political values certain genres may be seen to represent.



## CHAPTER 2. CONTEXTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS.

In his book *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* Robin Wood explains his decision to undertake a study which addressed the movies of a particular historical stratum, considering whether they had anything to say (directly or otherwise) about the time when they were made;

On the one hand, I have never felt a great interest in an approach to cinema that was merely sociological, that reduced films to so many examples of this or that tendency; on the other, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of seeing works in the context of their culture, as living ideological entities, rather than as sanctified exhibits floating in the void of an invisible museum. (1)

There is, however, a difficulty of reconciling this method of 'reading' films with other critical and theoretical approaches. For if films can somehow speak to us about the era when they were made, they must be achieving this expression through (and perhaps despite) a variety of structures which ostensibly transcend that period. For example, just as a genre film is never simply a genre film but relates also to its director and cast etc, so a film from the mid-eighties is not just a film from the mid-eighties but also exists and holds significance in relation to its genre and director. Rather than focussing on one element of a movie's multiform character as truly key and dismissing other presences as distractions - as so much 'noise' (2) which the critic needs to filter out - a successful analysis of any film's significance must accommodate all these constituent elements. If a film should give an especially acute sense of relating to its time this is likely to be explicable not as the operation of a magical zeitgeist reflection but as something achieved through combination with other elements, e.g a florescence or turning-point in a particular genre and a noteworthy period in a director's career. Examining British movies in their national cultural context, Sarah Street argues for just such an interrelationship of elements and

acknowledges the complexity of their imbrication;

Films are not produced in a vacuum and the patterns of repetition and difference which are inherent in genre production are, to some extent, socially and ideologically determined. The relationship is, however, a complex one, and I would not argue for a rigid equation between film and society. (3)

Movie criticism can, however, lead to exactly such rigid equations between film and society. In his article 'The Politics of the Maladjusted Text' Richard Maltby considers the persistent critical tendency to interpret film noir as evidence of a 'postwar malaise' afflicting America. (4) He quotes John Houseman's response to *The Postman Always Rings Twice*;

One wonders what impression people will get of contemporary life if *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is run in a projection room twenty years hence. They will deduce, I believe, that the United States of America in the year following the end of the Second World War was a land of enervated, frightened people with spasms of high vitality but a low moral sense - a hung-over people with confused objectives groping their way through a twilight of insecurity and corruption. (5).

Another contemporary critic, Lester Asheim, took issue with Houseman's view, pointing out that the most popular movies of 1946 did not offer this type of pessimistic milieu or resolution. He suggested that choosing different movies to screen for the hypothetical audience of twenty years later would result in very different perceptions of their era;

(Those who) see *The Razor's Edge* .. will deduce that our generation was an intensely earnest group of mystical philosophers who gladly renounced the usual pleasures of this world in order to find spiritual peace. From *State Fair* they can conjure up a nation of simple agrarians whose major problems centred around prize hog and spiked mincemeat. And what would they make of a generation reflected in *Road to Utopia*? (6)

Asheim's point is well taken, but Houseman did successfully anticipate both the subject and direction of future criticism. Subsequent writing did concentrate on those films which came to be termed film noir, identifying in what the movie industry called 'crime' or 'mystery' thrillers such symptoms as a fear of communist expansion or nuclear threat, and a sense of male insecurity -



explained as the anxiety of the returning war-veteran that his position (industrial, domestic and political) has been filled by a woman. Maltby stresses how this criticism was facilitated by 'selective presentation of its evidence' (7) and has 'maintained.. prominence because film criticism has historically paid more attention to revising the opinions of earlier critics about a relatively small number of texts than it has to the commercial considerations of Hollywood.' (8) Having the freedom to decide which films are significant necessarily allows the critic to privilege those interpretations in which he/she has an interest. The question Maltby raises in relation to these interpretations 'is not whether these films did by some unexplained osmosis embody a *Zeitgeist* , but why they were taken to do so by liberal critics of the period?' (9) His answer is that the movies corresponded to thinking espoused in social psychology and psychiatry which postulated that returning soldiers would experience immense difficulties of integration in a changed society. Although in real life 'the problems of readjustment did not appear as they had been expecting' (10) the movies appeared to be 'symptomatic of a social condition (the critics) were desperately in need of discovering.' (11)

Mindful of the potential pitfalls Maltby identifies, the bulk of this chapter will attempt to locate the adaptations considered in this study within their particular cultural contexts, to determine whether - and how - they reflect or somehow reverberate to issues of social and political importance at the time of their production. It will combine this analysis with an investigation of the commercial considerations relevant to their production and attempt to locate and explain critical responses to literary adaptation and the 'heritage' film within prevailing political currents in film studies. The final section of this chapter will introduce ideas of authorship and investigate how adaptation makes them problematic.

Although there had been British-produced literary adaptations - as well as other adaptations of British literature - since the very beginnings of cinema, the 1980's saw an intensification of this activity and the flourishing of what has come to be termed the heritage film. John Caughie points to the importance of British television in priming 'the world audience for the prestige of Britain's literary and theatrical heritage, finding a market through such sumptuous literary adaptations as *Brideshead Revisited* (1981) and *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984).

(12) The importance of the overseas market, especially the U.S, in the popularity and success of this kind of television production - and subsequent movies - is great. Combining high production standards with subject matter drawn from Britain's past proved popular with audiences attracted to traditional conceptions of Britishness. In a bold co-production with the American cable giant Home Box Office (HBO) the British production company Goldcrest was sufficiently confident to sink ten million pounds into a six-part TV serialization of M.M.Kaye's novel, *The Far Pavilions*. (13) Goldcrest company-director David Puttnam had also produced *Chariots of Fire* (1981), about British successes on the running track at the 1924 Olympics. The film was, according to Puttnam, about 'yearnings for a Britain I was brought up to believe in, and began to feel didn't exist.' (14) anticipating the nostalgia for a bygone Britain epitomized in the Merchant/Ivory adaptations of E.M.Forster's novels. It also helped initiate the flurry of 'quality' adaptations later in the decade simply by proving that British filmmakers and British subject matter could make handsome returns abroad.

In his article 'Re-presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film' Andrew Higson defines heritage film as a 'cycle of quality costume dramas' (15) and in his opening 'list' specifically names two of the adaptations examined in this study, *A Passage to India* and *A Room with a View*. Before considering Higson's analyses in any depth I intend to provisionally situate all of the films in the present study in relation to the



category of the heritage film. The predominance of Merchant/Ivory Forster films in the heritage cycle can lead to a sense that the category is effectively limited to films set in the Edwardian era, or is fundamentally definable as a series of Forster adaptations. The concept of a 'cycle' further enhances this sense of a relatively small, even closed, corpus of films - the seam virtually exhausted with five-sixths of Forster's novels having been filmed, leaving only *The Longest Journey* still to be adapted. Yet Higson also includes in this grouping *Another Country*- adapted from Julian Mitchell's play -, *Little Dorrit* - an adaptation of Dickens' novel -, and *Chariots of Fire*- an original screenplay, casting his net far wider than simply Forster and/or the Edwardian period. The principal connecting element among these films is, according to Higson, their representation of an English past 'as visually spectacular pastiche, inviting a nostalgic gaze' (16) that elides the ironies and social criticisms often present both in the original novels (so many of these films being adaptations) and in their own narratives - a triumph of 'pictorialist' (17) camera style and mise-en-scene where the beauty of settings and framings reduces the potential emotional effect of the stories.

Three of the films in the present study, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *Jude* have been released since the publication of Higson's (1993) article. Of these, the Austen adaptations have the strongest claim for a relatively uncomplicated membership of the heritage cycle. Their nostalgic emphasis on country houses, costumes and other period details, in conjunction with the presence in *Sense and Sensibility* of two Merchant/Ivory alumni - Emma Thompson and Hugh Grant - constitutes a firm bond with the earlier pictures. Conversely, *Jude's* unremitting portrait of the harshness of life appears a deliberate rejection of the heritage aesthetic, suggesting an absolutely opposite approach both to adapting literature and representing the national past. Higson does not mention *Tess* in his article, mainly because the volume for which it was written is concerned

with Margaret Thatcher's impact on film and *Tess* pre-dates her becoming Prime Minister. Also, despite being adapted from an English novel, the film has a strongly European flavour. With a Polish Director (Roman Polanski), *Tess* was shot on location in France and released there (1979) two years before it arrived on British or American screens. However, other critics draw attention to the 'increasingly pan-European' (18) and international phenomenon of the heritage film; Caughie describes *Jean de Florette* (France, 1986) and *Babette's Feast* (Denmark, 1987) as examples of 'Heritage Cinema in Europe' (19) and Street observes that Martin Scorsese used 'heritage themes and stylistics' (20) in *The Age of Innocence* (USA, 1993).

Higson too draws attention to the relationship between television and cinema in the development of heritage film. In addition to tentatively including *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Jewel in the Crown* in the cycle he argues for an aesthetic and thematic link between heritage movies and the 'BBC classic serial and the quality literary adaptation on television' (21) He also points to the flow of creative personnel between the two media - Hugh Hudson and Charles Sturridge, the respective directors of *Chariots of Fire* and *Maurice* coming from the television industry - and, most importantly, he stresses the role of TV companies in co-funding several heritage pictures. Of the six films considered in this thesis *A Room With a View* was part funded by Channel Four, *Jude* by the BBC, and *A Passage to India* by America's HBO.

International co-financing became an increasingly important strategy for British film and television makers from the 1970's onwards as returns from the domestic market contracted severely. Cinema admissions in 1982 achieved only 3.5% of the figure for 1946, giving Britain the lowest per-capita attendance rate in Europe. And in television, the cost of the licence fee - the BBC's principal source of income - did not keep pace with the increasing costs of labour and technology. (22) In order for their products to be profitable, and in order to secure the funds



to keep producing, film and television makers found the American market critically important. Analyzing U.S television, D. L. Le Mathieu observed that 'the British found Americans willing to share the costs of production for expensive but prestigious programs, appealing particularly to the American middle- and upper-middle- classes.' (23) Le Mathieu also charted how this species of British television production benefited from upheavals in U.S funding of public broadcasting. In 1972 President Nixon had vetoed a bill funding such broadcasting, reacting against its perceived left-wing, anti Vietnam-war bias. However, major petroleum companies such as Exxon and Mobil were eager to be perceived as stepping into the breach and underwrote the costs of securing 'quality' British programmes for U.S public broadcasting. This move enabled the oil giants to 'impress an upscale, politically influential segment of the American public' (24) and therefore seemed a better targeting of public relations resources than costly advertizing on the commercial channels. This funding was also characterized in fiscal terms as a 'grant', deductible against corporate taxes. (25) As one commentator remarked at the time; 'support of public television is an act of advertizing which happens to enjoy the legal and moral benefits of philanthropy.' (26)

The success in the U.S in the early 1970's of such co-financed TV productions as *The Forsyte Saga*, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* and *Elizabeth R* led to an escalation of such production agreements and prepared the ground for American funding of British films with similar period elements and highbrow appeal. Therefore, by the 1980's, America constituted a hugely important factor in the production equation for British films and filmmakers involved in classic literary adaptations and other period dramas. Both as a source of production funds and as an important market, the U.S was too potentially lucrative to be ignored and many movie-projects found themselves structured to achieve transatlantic appeal.

Television series enjoy the opportunity of building a following week-on-week as reviews and word-of-mouth encourage a larger audience. They may well be watched - at least the first time - because they appear to be the best choice out of a variety of programmes which are perceived as free or already paid for. Conversely, films which perform badly over a first week or fortnight are likely to lose their screen space to other films, and movie-going represents a far more deliberate decision to view a particular text. (The viewing habits of audiences during the 1930's and 40's - the era of truly mass movie-going - approximated more closely to TV viewing; i.e. deciding to attend and then choosing what to see. Since then, television has clearly usurped its function as the medium to which the public will automatically and inevitably turn.) Therefore, whilst it is obviously crucial to both TV programmes and movies that they achieve a public profile and draw audiences, this imperative is more immediate for movies. An important practice which movies employ to achieve public awareness and generate the desire to attend is the casting of recognizable stars who serve as a major focus and constitute a principal public method of categorizing films, e.g. "A Mel Gibson movie."

Sometimes, a movie role may be altered or enlarged from an original literary character to either achieve a better 'fit' with the perceived qualities or strengths of a star performer, or to afford that star more screen time. This approach to adaptations is not a recent phenomenon. In her study of British costume films of the 1930's and 40's Sue Harper describes how the 1937 adaptation of H. Rider Haggard's popular novel *King Solomon's Mines* cast Paul Robeson in a part which, although minor in the original, was greatly enhanced in importance in the screenplay. (27) Whilst Harper does not identify whether the role was magnified with a view to casting the American star or if the alterations simply made it more attractive to a performer of his stature, it is clear that casting, and the calculation in the production process regarding the



importance of stars, are major influences shaping adaptations.

A similar enlargement of a role occurs in *Sense and Sensibility*, where Emma Thompson claims to have written the part of Edward specifically for Hugh Grant. (28) Whereas in the original Edward is only introduced through summary and other characters' recollection, the first fifteen minutes of the film make him very much present as an appealing character whose personal qualities of gentleness and diffident hesitation have much in common with those of his part in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. That successful film of the previous year (1994) had established Grant as a household name in Britain and raised his profile in the U.S. (Immediately after completing his part in *Sense and Sensibility* Grant achieved a further, unexpected, enhancement of his recognizability by being arrested with a prostitute in Los Angeles and making a subsequent 'atonement' on an American talk show) Grant's marketability, and the supposed qualities of the Grant screen persona, may therefore be said to have been a major influence on the eventual shape of *Sense and Sensibility*.

The casting of Gwyneth Paltrow in the title role of *Emma* is another example of how production concerns impact on adaptations. The inclusion of an American actress in an otherwise British cast (with one Australian) helped ensure that the film would have an appeal to U.S audiences and was probably a major factor in U.S production company Miramax agreeing to finance the picture. At the time of *Emma's* production Paltrow was known primarily as the girlfriend of Brad Pitt, an attachment which secured her (and *Emma*) incalculably valuable publicity and which she had also enacted on screen in *Seven*. Since *Emma* (and more recently since Brad Pitt, whose fame she appears to have eclipsed) Paltrow has forged a career which includes two further roles in British-flavoured pictures, *Sliding Doors* and *Shakespeare in Love*. In both instances her presence - which has never compromised the believability of her British roles - has been an important bridge between British and U.S markets.

A useful comparison can - and frequently has - been drawn between Paltrow's credible British sound and Dick VanDyke's famously poor cockney accent in *Mary Poppins*. The makers of the latter were clearly convinced that the benefits of including a U.S star greatly outweighed any drawbacks in the lack of realism - not, admittedly, a major consideration in a musical fantasy such as *Mary Poppins*. More specifically, Paltrow's presence in *Emma* seems an obvious echo of American actress Andie McDowell's being cast two years previously in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. The importance of this production strategy has recently been proved in *Notting Hill*, the new romantic comedy by the makers of *Four Weddings*, which features Julia Roberts opposite Hugh Grant. Like genre-mixing strategies intended to appeal to a diverse audience, the casting of an American performer in movies which might otherwise be regarded by U.S audiences as (too) British, is a practice calculated to secure greater returns.

Tellingly, *Jude* (which, whatever its merits, was a box-office disappointment) offered no such point of connection or recognizability for U.S audiences. In combination with its rejection of the nostalgic emphasis which had proved a saleable commodity for most British period adaptations, it deployed no star-bridge to the U.S market. Without an American star and lacking either performers with significant transatlantic stature - like Grant or Thompson - or a director with an equivalent profile - like Lean, Polanski or Ivory - it was principally financed by Polygram - a European company. It seems likely that none of the five U.S distribution companies which dominate the business - Buena Vista, Columbia, Fox, UIP, and Warners (29) - would have contemplated committing to a project so distanced from the U.S domestic market.

Narrative alterations are another significant area in which production concerns influence adaptations. The importance of ensuring that stories unfold at a rate appropriate for cinema appears to be a longstanding concern of filmmakers adapting literature and a major determinant of novel-to-film



changes. Harper observes how alterations in narrative pacing tended to mark those films which were adaptations, with 'narrative structure(s) altered by the scriptwriters so as to scatter textual gratifications'. (30) Discussing the pirate movie *Dr Syn* she observes how the original novel by Russell Thorndike was itself ideally structured for transition to the screen since it offered 'exciting events at regular intervals.' (31)

In her article 'License & Liability: Collaborating with Jane Austen.' Nancy Hendrickson notes how Austen's novels are, from a conventional Hollywood perspective, 'light on action (unless one thinks of pouring tea as action).' (32) Thompson's screenplay for *Sense and Sensibility* may be seen to remedy this situation by adding what Beverly Gray terms 'heightened drama' to the original through 'taking pains to step up the intensity of her characters' meetings and partings'. (33) The first parting of Edward and Elinor, in a stable-block, is a good example;

Instead of the cool, casual parting described through Marianne's memory of it, in the novel, Thompson devises a scene in which Edward seems on the brink of proposing marriage to Elinor. What we will later recognize as his stumbling attempt to confess to her his prior engagement is, however, interrupted by his sister's demand that he instantly depart for London to attend his mother. (34)

This alteration allows the film to offer a narrative course far closer to the supposed industry ideal of a three act structure where an initial climax or crisis is reached after roughly fifteen minutes. Whereas in the novel there is no suggestion that Edward attempted to tell of his engagement, let alone that this could have been reasonably misconstrued as a near-proposal, the film makes a significant dramatic moment of this event and thereby helps establish what audiences will desire as the film's resolution. The sense that the film industry prefers its scripts to have recognizably dramatic moments and events is confirmed by David Lean's recollection of trying to raise finance for *A Passage to India* when one (unnamed) Studio 'said they'd do it if we put in an explicit rape'.



(35) Whilst Forster's original novel is famously unclear about what may have caused a visiting English woman, Adela, to claim that she was raped by an Indian, Dr. Aziz, one set of potential backers wanted a definite event that would also have what they perceived as the desirable or marketable property of explicit sexual violence. There is a breathtaking irony, given that adaptations are often figured as the 'violation' or 'rape' of the original, that just such an assault was actually desired in and upon the narrative.

Although Lean's adaptation does not offer a decisive account of what happens in the cave where Adela claims she was raped, it does attempt a partial explanation through adding a new scene beforehand. Adela is shown on a solitary bicycle trip into the Indian countryside where she finds an overgrown temple of erotic carvings. She gazes at them with fascination but is scared away by an aggressive troop of monkeys. Her later rape accusation may therefore be interpretable to viewers as a confused and delayed response to this unusual sexual awakening. This new scene - discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8 - and the possible interpretation it helps facilitate is not, of course, as extreme or vulgar as that requested by the previous would-be backers but nevertheless relates to the same industrial predilections for enhanced narrative clarity and sexual emphasis.

Lean's *A Passage to India* also shows the influence of production practices in its spectacular visual effects. Where Forster's novel studiously refused to imbue Imperial India with any glamour, stressing the ordinariness of many places and the un-excitement of many events, the adaptation heightens these elements. The prefatory section to the Forster adaptations will describe how producer Lord Brabourne was attracted to Lean as a director by the massive visual scale of his later movies; it therefore seems likely that the director was expected, both by his producers and ultimately by audiences, to adapt *A Passage to India* to look and feel a similar way. With the above and many other changes



there is no clear dividing line between alterations attributable to Lean's authorial style and tastes and those determined by the production process more generally. Rather, it is possible to argue for a degree of synergy between the two. Given the great financial success of his epics *Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*, the films which led Brabourne to approach Lean, an alternative approach, albeit one in tune with Forster, was never likely.

In her article 'Passage to the Odeon: Too Lean' June Perry Levine quotes Lean's comments on the adaptive process;

I like a fairly strong narrative in a film and Forster - I don't think that he's as concerned with narrative as a lot of people would claim. The trouble with making a film is that he keeps going off on the most wonderful sidetracks, and one is tempted to go down them with him. One writes pages of script and then thinks. "Well, wait a minute: I've gone off the story." (36)

Levine maintains, quite reasonably, that these comments prove 'that Lean believes the heart of the matter in narrative forms such as the novel and film is the main through-line of the plot: rising action, complication, crisis, climax, denouement. Many would agree with him.' (37) Although Forster's novels are more subject to deviation from a clear principal plot than most, it is probable that Levine is observing a phenomenon common to many adaptations. Given that most movies are viewed at a single sitting that takes far less time than the (usually interrupted) reading of a novel, it seems inevitable that the production of most adaptations will involve a degree of whittling away and a tightening of narrative focus. It is, however, the nature of what is omitted and altered and the balance of the resulting text that provides viewers and critics with ammunition to critique the adaptation and its adapter(s). As screenwriter, director and editor Lean was easily identified as 'responsible' and his film was criticized for emphasising the English at the expense of the Indians and for seeming less critical of Imperial life and administration than the original.

The fact that the production process tends to structure adaptations



according to compressed and clearer narrative structures than their originals may also be evidenced by an exception to the rule, Polanski's *Tess*. Many critics and reviewers were surprised that his version proved so faithful to the original, presumably expecting a more sensational or explicit film. One result of Polanski's close following of the original was that it proved lengthy and, according to Andrew Rissik, 'ennervatingly tedious'. Rissik maintains that *Tess*'s 'sequences are ill-defined and lead randomly into one another in a manner that seems merely episodic. This gives the movie the kind of "and then.." continuity principle that distinguishes the shaggy dog story'. (38) Rissik does not choose to explain, however, that what he identifies as the film's tediousness and narrative disjointedness are largely an inheritance from the original, though those properties may be termed 'recessive' - only emerging as textual problems (and then only for some viewers) when reproduced as cinema. Hardy's original is marked - as is *Jude the Obscure* - by narrative progression and physical relocations of the title character that frequently seem to meander and repeat themselves to the extent that a reader might well wonder "Where (and why) are we now?". Rissik's criticism, and similar responses from others, suggest that Polanski may not have effected the degree of narrative pruning and straightening the industry would usually practice.

Financial considerations underpin most important decisions in filmmaking, and a significant portion of most movies' budgets is likely to be spent on achieving suitable settings and locations for scenes. This is particularly true for period adaptations and historical texts where great care - and expense - is generally taken to ensure the correct 'look'. Even without the difficulty of historical verisimilitude, adaptations may also pose a problem for filmmakers since settings and locations which cost a writer nothing - except time and ink - may involve a movie production having to either build costly sets or scout for locations, then move, accommodate and feed the cast and crew. Whilst a writer



may devote an equal amount of time and energy to describing the activity of a single character in a small room as on thousands of characters in a multitude of fantastic environments, adapting those works would entail huge differences in time, money and effort. Producers therefore may often seek to avoid particularly costly settings and scenes, encouraging (or requiring) directors to omit or relocate sequences. This is, however, more difficult when particular locations are critical to a project (which directors will frequently argue for most scenes), and especially when they form a well-known element of a literary original. The prefatory section to the Hardy adaptations will explain how Polanski's being unable to enter the U.K meant that a mock-up of Stonehenge - a major dramatic site in the story - had to be created in Brittany at great expense.

Adaptations will not always work to contract their originals' range of settings however. Hendrickson observes how 'Hollywood's chronic fear of "talking heads"' (39) was a causative factor in the opening of the 1940 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* becoming a scene in a draper's shop which allowed visual and physical action - in combination with dialogue - to initiate the story. Both the Austen adaptations considered in this study also strive to avoid a repetition of drawing-room dialogues which might become boring or claustrophobic for audiences. This is achieved by relocating several such scenes to exteriors and introducing a wider variety of interior spaces.

In the original novels the fact that so many important scenes occur in similar locations is neither problematic nor unpleasurable for the reader since the dialogue between characters and its merging with Austen's own narrative voice in indirect free style offers the principal pleasure. Although settings may be briefly described or mentioned they do not, in written form, remain as present to the reader as do locations and mise-en-scene to a viewer. Rather they are passed over, like a description of a character's dress or physical features, once the verbal exchanges become the focus of attention. (In novelistic form the only



properties that may maintain an equivalent hold on our attention are peculiarities of speech e.g Twain's use of accent and patois.) Literalized on screen, however, settings do not 'disappear' as easily and constitute a more constant element of a scene's narrative or emotional impact - albeit to a hugely varying degree according to emphasis. Repetition of a similar setting or the use of a fixed location can generate in audiences a sense of building claustrophobic pressure and desire to 'break out' through narrative resolution, entirely appropriate for films such as *Twelve Angry Men* where the jurors cannot leave the jury room until they have reached a verdict. By introducing a wider variety of locations the Austen adaptations work to avoid such a sense - though the framing of certain female characters in *Sense and Sensibility* does sometimes suggest that their emotions and appetites are constrained by their formal milieu. Generally, however, a claustrophobic mood would be antithetical to the narrative project of romantic comedy and the nostalgia these adaptations evoke for their time and place.

In *Emma* a conversation between the two principal characters, Emma and Knightley, is moved from a drawing-room to his large garden, where they participate in archery while continuing a slightly altered version of the novel's dialogue. This relocation allows for the development of some successful visual comedy - Emma's aim getting worse as the difference between her views and Knightley's becomes clearer. A similar effect is achieved when the adaptation reinvents the first meeting between Emma and Frank Churchill as an encounter at a ford where Emma's carriage is stranded mid-stream with a broken wheel. It first appears that Frank takes her predicament lightly, teasing her rather than being immediately helpful. In both instances a variety of physical action and settings is substituted for the un-leavened succession of dialogues in interiors a more faithful rendering might have produced. The new visuals also assume a degree of narrative responsibility, anticipating and reinforcing the themes of the



stories. Emma's wayward and potentially dangerous aim with a bow and arrow suggests the perils of her interfering in the romantic affairs of others, of playing Cupid. (A metaphoric materialization of the principal theme that seems obvious once recognized but which is also smoothly integrated into the story, rather than a clumsy allusion) And Frank's teasing manner and initial failure to 'rescue' Emma from a minor physical peril begins to structure the narrative distinction between Knightley's considerate reliability and Frank's potentially hurtful game-playing.

The early scenes in *Sense and Sensibility* - which Emma Thompson's screenplay magnifies and invents from the original's summarized backstory - make particular use of a wider variety of locations than those favoured by Austen. A horseback ride between the characters Edward and Elinor - in the grounds of the estate which Elinor's family is about to lose - provides an apt setting for their discussion of the limited opportunities available to women, unable to either inherit or work. It further allows the countryside to become the object of a nostalgic gaze, like the new exterior scenes in *Emma*. A scene at the kitchen table, where Elinor arranges parting gifts for the servants, helps convey her ability to cope under emotional pressure and establishes a sense of her being a considerate employer, almost 'mucking-in' with the staff - a construction likely to appeal to modern audiences. And the scene in the stable-block (discussed earlier) provides the film's first major dramatic climax. Varying these locations ensures that when those drawing rooms with which Austen is so familiarly associated are used for particular scenes they are understood as elegant and desirable, places audiences would like to be.

It is, of course, arguable that the range of new locations and activities offered by these adaptations actually strains historical plausibility and that keeping all the 'action' in particular rooms would accurately convey the relative confinement of life, particularly for women, in the early nineteenth century.



However, conveying this state of affairs to audiences accustomed to personal independence and mobility would massively undermine both comedy and nostalgia. Whilst *Sense and Sensibility* does work to convey gender inequalities, it is not prepared - as the all-encompassing happy ending demonstrates - to interrogate that fully the supposed pleasures of gentry life in Austen's time.

The principal focus of Andrew Higson's article is heritage film's relationship to the politics and culture of Britain in the 1980's and early 1990's. The volume in which it rests - *British Cinema and Thatcherism*, edited by Lester Friedman - is largely concerned with films and filmmakers that evince 'revulsion, to one degree or another, for the ideology of Thatcherism, though their methods of expressing that distaste cover the spectrum of aesthetic options.' (40) On the front cover glares a wonderfully chosen still from *The Krays* (1990) of sharp-suited, machine-gun toting gangsters who represent the brutal and unrestrained forces of free market economics and ambition so cherished by Thatcher. (This philosophy was to impact directly on the conditions of film production when her government passed a new Films Bill in 1985. The bill abolished the protectionist Eady Levy which had existed since 1947, cycling a share of box-office receipts into British film production.) Focussing almost entirely on films of an oppositional nature by such directors as Mike Leigh, Stephen Frears, Terence Davies, Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman, Friedman observes how their works 'bear little resemblance to the tastefully tedious adaptations that so many of us associate with the British Cinema.' (41) The heritage films sit uneasily in such company, distinguished not only by their emphasis on (retreat into?) an apparently ordered past as opposed to a shifting pluralistic present, but also by their comparative financial success alongside Jarman etc. Although Higson is correct to define their production base as 'hand-



to-mouth' (42) and perhaps to argue that 'their significance is accounted for culturally rather than financially' (43) certain heritage films, especially *A Room With a View* and *A Passage to India*, have - as he acknowledges - performed very successfully at the box-office.

The heritage films' response to the social and political climate in which they were produced is, according to Higson, one of;

...turning their backs on the industrialized chaotic present, they nostalgically reconstruct an imperialist and upper-class Britain.. The films thus offer apparently more settled and visually splendid manifestations of an essentially pastoral national identity and authentic culture: "Englishness" as an ancient and natural inheritance, *Great Britain, the United Kingdom*. (44)

Nostalgia had formed a key part of Thatcher's ideological project too. She had called for a return to 'Victorian values' and tapped successfully into national memories of an imperial past during the Falklands conflict of 1982, winning her second General Election largely as a consequence of the tidal wave of jingoism she had unleashed. But Higson cautions against assuming that these films 'resonate unequivocally with Thatcherite politics' (45). He draws attention to the liberal-humanism (essentially Forster's) that exists in their dialogue and themes, and in a particularly penetrating insight he observes the comparative paucity of Victorian stories or settings in the heritage cycle (despite that era spanning such a long period compared to the Edwardian.)

It is notable.. that very few of the heritage films of the 1980's have actually been located in the Victorian period... Significantly, none of these films tell stories of nineteenth-century entrepreneurs on the make, accumulating vast private fortunes at the expense of public welfare - even though it is surely Victorian capitalism and the dramatic industrial transformations of that period that provide the ideal role model for Thatcherism. (46)

Heritage films' construction of nostalgia is key to understanding many of the changes that take place in the adaptation process. Although Forster's novels were themselves nostalgic, they were nostalgic not for his Edwardian present but for a 'mid-Victorian golden age'. (47) Like Hardy, Forster felt a concern for a



disappearing way of rural life; though Hardy's concern was rooted in an understanding of patterns of labour and associated lifestyles whereas Forster's may be better characterized as a distaste for spreading suburbs and suburban mores. The Forster adaptations, by way of contrast, evoke nostalgia for the Edwardian era in which they are set;

The greenwood of Merchant-Ivory's *Maurice* and the ruralism of their *Room with a View*, the pastoral community of *Summer Street*, and the sincerity, companionship, and moral support of the bourgeois family are offered as part and parcel of the period they depict; they have not yet become the lost objects of nostalgic desire. The pastoral of the films therefore invents a new golden age, one that the novels depict as already tainted. (48)

The 'spectacular visual pleasure' (49) of landscapes, houses and costumes - in combination with the downplaying of most original material which describes the period evoked as being in a state of social change - creates a pleasant and reassuring sense of a past in which stories, often of romantic love, can unfold. The films' evocation of nostalgia facilitates the genre-shifts towards romantic comedy which are described in the coming chapters on *A Room With a View* and the Austen adaptations *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*. This visual pleasure also works to soften those heritage films which are not romantic comedies, not by evoking nice settings for nice stories but by offering visual delights which effectively contradict or counteract their narratives. Higson argues that *A Passage to India*, despite its criticism of the British Empire, nevertheless portrays the Raj, and India as managed by the Raj, in a manner which is 'utterly seductive, destroying all sense of critical distance and restoring the pomp of Englishness felt to be lacking in the present.' (50)

In the previous chapter this adaptive process of altering the originals' rendering of their own time - now become the past - was described as 'neutering'. One facet of the heritage film in which this is particularly apparent is in their presentation of country houses. In the original novels of several heritage films the properties described are either imperfect, inelegant or in a state



of dereliction - conditions which assume a metaphorical relevance to their inhabitants and the financial and social stability of their class. Clive's house in Forster's *Maurice* is crumbling, but Higson notes how in the adaptation this 'is never foregrounded as much as the remaining magnificence of the house' (51). In Waugh's novel *A Handful of Dust*, the Victorian Gothic mansion Hetton Abbey is the family home of Tony Last. Waugh works some sharp satire from the discrepancy between Tony's affection for the unfashionable property and the opinions of others.

They were not in fashion, he fully realized. Twenty years ago people had liked half timber and old pewter; now it was urns and colonnades; but the time would come... when opinion would reinstate Hetton in its proper place. Already it was referred to as 'amusing', and a very civil young man had asked permission to photograph it for an architectural review. (52)

Conversely, in the adaptation the property which represents Hetton Abbey is photographed as wholly desirable - prompting a reviewer to remark 'The Duke of Norfolk's country seat, Carlton Towers... is the star of stars' (53). An identical process will be discussed in the chapter on *A Room with a View* where the Honeychurch family home, Windy Corner, becomes a far more attractive property than that described by Forster. According to Higson this type of change allows the 'pleasures of pictorialism' to 'block the radical intentions of the narrative' (54) In seeking to construct a pleasant and nostalgia-evoking version of the English past these films studiously avoid material (verbal or visual) which might jeopardize the viewer's sense of that past as more settled and permanent than the present. Ugly or dilapidated properties become, therefore, particular to contemporary life, not to be found in an earlier, better, England where beautiful and solid properties help suggest those same qualities of elegance and reassuring guardianship in the movie characters who move through - and blend into - their drawing rooms and lawns.

Interestingly, in his article on British 'new wave' films of the 1960's John



Hill characterizes significant changes in their adaptation process not as 'neutering' but its reverse, 'masculinization', a perspective developed from Laura Mulvey's idea that most narratives are sadistic in that the main characters who propel the plot are male;

(M)akers of the British 'new wave' films have adopted tightly developmental narrative forms, carried by sharply accentuated male heroes - witness, for example, how the translation of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* from novel to film effected a tightening-up of the cause-effect narrative chain and a removal of 'redundant' auxiliary characters - so they have embedded a type of 'masculinization' in the very structures of the film (underwritten, of course, by the powerful, charismatic performances of the rising young working-class actors, like Albert Finney.) (55)

It is remarkable how those changes effected in the films of the 'angry young men' - about contemporary working-class life - are entirely opposite to those wrought on the heritage film - about historical upper-class life. Heritage films invariably lack a single male hero and offer considerable pleasure as ensemble pieces, from the performances of secondary characters. There is in fact a tendency for the smaller or cameo roles, often played by older actors belonging to Britain's theatrical and/or TV 'heritage', to outshine those of the principals who take the romantic leads; Judi Dench and Maggie Smith in *A Room with a View*, Robert Hardy in *Sense and Sensibility*, and Juliet Stevenson in *Emma* are all given screen time and space to make the most of their roles. Even where the casting is not so productive e.g Alec Guinness in *A Passage to India*, the intention to emphasise peripheral performances through notable or 'star' presences is evident. There is also a sense in which the films' concentration on costume, as part of the scrupulous attention to visual period details, amounts to a feminization; a process which reaches its apotheosis in Daniel Day Lewis' fabulously camp portrayal of Cecil Vyse in *A Room With a View*. His fastidious attention to detail and concern about his appearance become, in Higson's criticism, a synecdoche for the self-consciousness of the whole heritage genre.

Tellingly, *Jude's* strenuous efforts to reverse the heritage aesthetic involve



an increased emphasis on the working-class principal (present in almost every scene) and less attention to the subsidiary characters. This process is further facilitated by the working-class credentials - and TV associations - of Christopher Eccleston, who plays Jude. His roles in the gritty 'northern' dramas *Cracker*, *Hearts and Minds*, and *Our Friends in the North* strongly differentiate his inherent screen value from that of most key figures in heritage film; e.g Hugh Grant, who suggests diffident charm and social privilege, or Daniel Day Lewis and the Bonham-Carters - the former having a 'natural' lineal connection to Britain's literary past through a poet laureate father and the latter seeming to enjoy acting in Merchant/Ivory movies as a family prerogative.

In her review of *Sense and Sensibility* Claire Monk identifies a 'feminist sensibility' (56) - attributable to Emma Thompson's dual influence as screenwriter and principal actor - which reshapes the original story materials. There is an increased emphasis on the iniquity of women being unable to inherit or achieve independence and/or distinction through work. This is largely achieved through new scenes and dialogue which Thompson writes in to the early part of the film. The fleshing-out of the character Margaret, Elinor and Marianne's younger sister, becomes emblematic in Monk's reading of the extent to which the film magnifies female voices and concerns. Street too observes how Austen's 'concern with patrimony and the strains it placed on women are well communicated in the film' (57); though the coming chapter on *Sense and Sensibility* will argue that the theme of female entrapment is ultimately dissolved and forgotten in the romantic comedy finale which also loses the original sense of the women's economic security being achieved at the expense of marrying somewhat dull husbands.

The Austen adaptations offer nostalgic pleasure in a similar, though not identical, manner to the series of Forster adaptations begun a decade earlier. The novels invariably idealize a particular scale and segment of Britain's



national past; the country estate owned and governed by the male head of a genteel family. The potential disruption and eventual reinstatement of this system forms a recurrent narrative trajectory in Austen's novels and they lend themselves to examination in terms of how the wealthy landowners fulfil what Austen unequivocally constructs as their obligations of good management, generosity and the preservation of a particular social order. In *Sense and Sensibility* the death of Mr Dashwood provides the structuring problematic by leaving the female Dashwoods homeless. His son John and his wife Fanny threaten moral and physical changes to the estate, being more interested in money than continuity and - in a perceptive addition of the Thompson script - discussing the replacement of the (productive) orchard with a (vulgar, decorative) Grecian Temple. Sir John Middleton's provision of a cottage for the dispossessed Dashwood women initiates Austen's portrayal of the gentry acting properly and paves the way for a match between Marianne and the self-effacing and aging Col. Brandon, thereby offering hope of a male heir to a family estate which had threatened to wither. In *Emma* the machinery of matching individuals and estates achieves, after some potential mis-matches, a perfect symmetry with the marriage of Emma and Knightley; a union of property and personal characteristics which anticipates both beneficent governance and eventual succession.

Like Forster, Austen was already nostalgic for a bygone age while the adaptations create her own period as the object of nostalgic stirrings. Both money-driven members of the established upper class like John and Fanny Dashwood, and social climbers like Lucy Steele and Mrs Elton represent a threat to the Austenian ideal of the steadily managed estate, epitomized in Knightley's management of Donwell Abbey and his gifts of legs of pork to vulnerable spinsters. The social mobility produced by the Industrial Revolution is indirectly figured in her narratives as a dangerous self-centredness, a desire to carve one's



own place in the fixed feudal hierarchy of invitations and parties. e.g Mrs Elton's attempts to usurp Emma's role as principal organizer of entertainments. Yet the adaptations tend to downplay the actual success of the characters who reach above their station; the adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* does not for example dwell on the wealth and security that Lucy Steele's machinations achieve for her, though the novel is clear that she has gained much simply by compromising honesty and integrity (a loss which film viewers might well regard as insufficiently punitive.) This makes the movies' 'Austen-Time' seem basically fixed and perfect, not - as Austen figured it - a juncture where the gentry would have to hold together and act in a certain way to maintain their position.

A major difference in the kinds of national nostalgia offered by the Forster and Austen adaptations lies in the connection of the former to the wider world, and particularly the British Empire, compared to more hermetically-sealed narrative orbit of the latter. Patrick Wright notes that the 'national past is capable of finding splendour in old styles of political domination and of making an alluring romance out of atrocious colonial exploitation.' (58); an observation that seems strongly applicable to the visual delights of Lean's *A Passage to India*, even as the storyline criticizes Imperial administration. And whilst *A Room With a View* does not specifically address Imperial relations it is clear that the British abroad enjoy a seemingly natural authority over the locals, evidenced for example in Rev. Eager's dismissal of the carriage-driver's girlfriend. Although these films retain a strong element of their originals' critical and satirical impulse toward the sensibilities of the British abroad - we do regard Eager as a pompous prude - they simultaneously offer the pleasure of participation in a world where to be British (or more specifically English) really meant something.

Following the Suez debacle of 1956, when (in a fortuitously neat reversal of the Rev. Eager episode) the 'natives' told the British where to get off by declaring the Canal Egyptian property, any satisfactory sense of British superiority



has increasingly relied on the national past rather than its present for substantiation; though events like the ceaselessly referenced World Cup Final of 1966 - an English victory - have permitted a generally illusory sense of continuity with that past. The convergence of soccer and aggressive nationalism has been an interesting, and worrying, phenomenon of the last twenty years; crystallized in the enduringly popular chant "Two World Wars and one World Cup", a motif that effortlessly yokes war and sport and which finds its most regular expression among the British abroad or at soccer internationals (for some Britons the only occasion of foreign travel). Hence also the great ideological significance of victory in the Falklands which was seen as laying to rest the theory (that had niggled national pride since the Second World War and was effectively proved by Suez) that Britain could not act decisively abroad without American assistance.

Roger Gard observes that there is nothing 'repulsively nationalistic' about Austen's novels, no 'explicit xenophobia', anti-Semitism, nor parody of foreign speech and manners; features which he identifies across a wide range of other nineteenth-century English novelists. (59) With two brothers in the Navy and Napoleon's army 'thundering on the other shore' (60) it is all the more remarkable that these events and connections figure so slightly in her writing; the presence of a garrison of soldiers in *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, is significant only in terms of the officers' availability for local entertainments - their military function is never raised. John Caughie observes that heritage cinema does not, generally, 'deal with the great events of history' (61) and in this respect the Austen novels offer themselves up easily for adaptation and inclusion in the heritage genre. Caughie notes that heritage films tend even to eschew using such events as motivation for more personal stories, as opposed to Visconti's *Senso* (1954) which uses the Italian Risorgimento and particularly the battle of Custoza as a backdrop to the relationship between a Countess and an



Austrian officer. This repeated absence may indicate another facet of the heritage adaptations' status as 'neutered' texts - though in the case of the Austen films this is not a loss in the adaptive process but a conveniently consonant original state.

A strong connecting element between the Austen and Forster adaptations' elicitation of nostalgia is their concentration on a particular class. Higson notes the fascination of heritage film with the private property, possessions and culture of the upper class;

By reproducing these trappings outside of a materialist historical context, they transform the heritage of the upper classes into the national heritage: private interest becomes naturalized as public interest. Except, of course, these are still films for a relatively privileged audience, and the heritage is still refined and exclusive, rather than properly public in the sense of massively popular. (62)

He is absolutely correct to observe that the films can only offer audiences the pleasure of the spectacle of historical wealth by not dwelling on the mechanisms by which that wealth was garnered and retained. Images of Knightley's factor collecting overdue rents from his tenants would unquestionably complicate and dissolve the pleasure of watching Knightley's generosity to distressed gentlefolk, because we would be forced to recognize it as the autocratic class reinforcement it really is - to recognize that he is not concerned with poverty per se, simply with keeping it the exclusive domain of the *socially-designated* poor. So such potentially critical concepts remain as textually-absent from the adaptations as they are from Austen's novels. Instead, the spectacle of wealth and associated class power works to suggest a gentle and well-ordered past where people knew their place and were looked after.

Higson's other point, that the upper-class focus of heritage films constitutes a major part of their appeal to a 'relatively privileged audience' helps explain certain critical and intellectual responses they have provoked. By glossing and valorizing the past, by taking the literary canon rather than contemporary social and political material for their narrative grist, these movies



have drawn a degree of academic snide disfavour. Higson maintains that heritage cinema is ultimately ambivalent to Thatcherite politics, but at a time when many other filmmakers were (and are) involved in socially-committed work like Leigh's *High Hopes* (1988) this fascination with the past can be represented as a want of concern for contemporary society which appears to chime with Thatcher's infamous mantra of individualism; "There's no such thing as Society."

The six films considered in the present study precisely span (accidentally as it happens) the eighteen years of Conservative Government in Britain (1979 - 1997). The first eleven years saw the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, with the subsequent years under the more diluted rule of John Major. Thatcher was ousted when the party recognized that her hardline image and approach were rapidly losing favour with the British public, largely as a consequence of the hugely unpopular 'poll tax' (a 'no-exemptions' head tax with which she was strongly and personally associated). Her fall from power in 1990 did not spell an absolute cessation of the policies of free-market economics and individual acquisition she had espoused; the remaining years of Tory Government continued to provide a target for filmmakers and others in which the spirit of Thatcher could generally be discerned.

It has doubtless been a source of bitterness to writers on the left, and certain writers on film, that Britain's most successful and sustained film product (particularly in export terms) during this period has not been the work of the array of filmmakers galvanized by a loathing for Thatcher but a succession of tastefully-executed costume dramas which offer a reassuring and bourgeois view of our national past. The international popularity of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* has compounded the feeling that heritage cinema perpetuates an unrepresentative notion of Britain (a notion that may now be changing with the success of films like *Trainspotting* and *The Full Monty*). Street observes that



the film shares with heritage pictures 'a fascination with the upper classes, featuring numerous ceremonies at which they, their clothes and possessions are on full display.' (63) and she quotes Nick Roddick's response to the movie;

*Four Weddings* certainly exports a view of British life which is much more like the rest of the world wants it to be than it actually is. (64)

Whether one bemoans the racist implications of imperial nostalgia, execrates the infatuation with the upper class, resents the distraction from contemporary issues, or merely regrets the retrograde usage of film as an illustrator of literature, there is something for everybody who writes about film and society to dislike or poke a jibe at in the heritage film. Caughie's comments are not untypical;

(O)ne of Britain's more dubious contributions to world culture. (Heritage film) seems to have reshaped what is meant by 'quality' in British cinema into period detail, melancholic languor and the evocation of loss. At a time when Britain has difficulty selling much else, it has been remarkably successful at selling its past. (65)

It is highly revealing to contrast Caughie's sneer at the heritage film with his affectionate views on another nostalgic cycle of movies commonly understood (particularly overseas) as representing Britishness and British filmmaking - the Ealing Comedies. He concludes his entry in *The Companion to British and Irish Cinema* by remarking 'The genre may have died with Ealing, but the spirit lives on.' (66) Mainly understood as those films made at the Ealing Studio between 1947 and 1957 with Michael Balcon as head of production, these comedies e.g *Passport to Pimlico* (1949) and *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951) generally involve an opposition between communities and impersonal capitalistic forces of progress, with the communities succeeding in holding their own. Although the films have themselves become objects of nostalgia (both for their spirit of community and the era of studio-based domestic film production) most were already intrinsically nostalgic - for the 'Blitz spirit' of World War Two, of the nation pulling together against a common foe. As Street observes, this



version of the British past is not wholly accurate (is no more accurate, in fact, than the golden gloss of heritage cinema);

Despite the films' differences, their most recurrent feature seems to be nostalgia for the wartime community, a nostalgia which does not reflect the conflicts and compromises on which that community and consensus were based. (67)

Unlike the heritage film, however, the Ealing Comedies do not emphasise or celebrate the upper classes but are, in Caughie's words 'identified in spirit' (68) with the early years of Clement Attlee's Labour Government - a reforming administration which nationalized many of Britain's principal industries and services, some of which, e.g British Telecom, were to be publicly floated in the Thatcher years. The gently left-wing politics of most figures behind Ealing films was acknowledged by Balcon to John Ellis in 1975 (also quoted by Caughie);

By and large we were a group of liberal-minded, like-minded people... We voted Labour for the first time after the war; that was our mild revolution. (69)

The Labour party's recent decision to drop its long-standing commitment to public ownership of all key services and industries may well have strengthened perceptions of the Attlee years and Ealing Comedies as embodying a halcyon period of their own, of an idealistic socialism as opposed to the more P.R oriented administration of Tony Blair. Many traditional Labour supporters accuse the present government of being too right-wing, excessively focussed on re-election (historically something of an Achilles heel for the party), and failing to embark on significant programmes of spending on public services. However inaccurate in historical terms the nostalgic associations that cluster around Ealing Comedies may be, they cannot be represented as either politically conservative or socially elitist. In the broadly left-of-centre atmosphere of (any) University - where most serious writing about film takes place - it is unsurprising to encounter such open affection for the Ealing Comedy whereas an unabashed enthusiasm for the heritage film is essentially out of tune unless



qualified by an additional interest e.g the gay value and relevance of the Forster adaptations or for the significant representation of women in the Austen movies.

## AUTHORSHIP.

A French film journal, *Cahiers du Cinema: Revue mensuelle du cinema et du telecinema*, is widely recognized as the originating force behind theories of authorship in cinema. A 1954 article by Francois Truffaut, 'Une certaine tendance du cinema francais' formed a critical moment - both in the sense of an important occasion and a turning force - in the study of cinema and in the critical direction of *Cahiers*. Truffaut attacked the then dominant *Tradition de la Qualite* in French Cinema, rejecting its valorization of scriptwriters over directors and emphasising a crucial distinction between those directors who were true *auteurs* (authors) and those who were merely *metteurs en scene*. (70) In Truffaut's polemical formulation an auteur was defined by his ability to make a film his own, to mark it with the stamp of his personality, whereas a *metteur en scene* - however technically competent - was unable to disguise the fact that the origin of his film lay elsewhere. From its very inception then, the concept of *auteurism* can be seen as literally and figuratively antithetical to adaptation, particularly to films which invoke or celebrate their literary source. Two key figures in the 'Quality Tradition' Truffaut attacked were Aurenche and Bost, writers who adapted celebrated novels for the screen. And, more generally, the evaluative distinction between directors who simply implement somebody else's vision and the real men of cinema seems fundamentally unfavourable to adaptation.

Truffaut and other *Cahiers* critics were not the first writers or magazine to recognize the importance of the director. John Caughie observes that Lindsay



Anderson, writing in *Sequence* several years before Truffaut's article, had expressed the belief - which informed much writing in that journal - that the director was 'the man most in a position to guide and regulate the expressive resources of the cinema.' (71) Anderson also appears to preempt the auteur/*metteur en scene* distinction in his review of Ford's *Wagonmaster* and Wise's *Two Flags West* where he identifies 'the difference between the expressive, poet's eye, and the elegant superficial skill of the *decorateur*.' (72) What marked the writing of the *Cahiers* critics and their *politique des auteurs* however was the development of this distinction into the central critical policy for the journal. In his overview of authorship theory Edward Buscombe draws attention to its recurring usage as an evaluative tool for judging directors and their films;

Bazin distinguishes between Hitchcock, a true *auteur*, and Huston, who is only a *metteur en scene*, who has 'no truly personal style'. Huston merely adapts, though often very skilfully, the material given him, instead of transforming it into something genuinely his own. A similar point is made by Jacques Rivette... (who) declares that Minelli is not a true *auteur*, merely a talented director at the mercy of his script. With a bad script he makes a bad and uninteresting film. Fritz Lang, on the other hand, can somehow transform even indifferent material into something personal to him. (73)

In seeking to identify the personal style or signature of an individual artist as the hallmark of great work the *Cahiers* critics were practising a style of art appreciation which had first arisen with romanticism in the nineteenth century. Whereas artistic creation from classical times onwards had located the artist in a relatively circumscribed position, bound by pre-existing ideal models and audience expectations, romanticism moved the stress 'more and more to the poet's natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity' (74) The discernment of these personal qualities, as opposed to identifying the artist's use of established codes and techniques, became the task of criticism. Edmund Wilson exemplifies this tendency;

The real elements, of course, of any work of fiction, are the elements of the



author's personality: his imagination embodies in the images of characters, situations, and scenes the fundamental conflicts of his nature or the cycle of phases through which it habitually passes. His personages are personifications of the author's various impulses and emotions: and the relations between them in his stories are really the relations between these. (75)

Filmmaking however - especially on Hollywood's industrial scale - posed a considerable difficulty for practising this style of criticism. How could it be possible to locate the individual expression of a single artist in an object whose shape had been determined by so many different contributors and processes? More specifically, how could characters, situations and scenes offer an insight into the personality of a director when they originated from a novelist, playwright, newspaper reporter, or screenwriter? The *Cahiers* critics' stance was to maintain that true auteurs were able to overcome precisely these obstacles, to resist the dissolution of their expressivity, and that auteurist criticism was constituted in the ability to read through such obscuring elements as the contributions of others, the original scenario, and industrial influences. Downplaying the significance of the story (that is, the significance of what most films are ostensibly about) and focussing their attention on directorial style as the real indicator of meaning in auteur films was a key *Cahiers* strategy. Jacques Rivette argued that the 'prime virtue' of directors such as Nicholas Ray and Anthony Mann was a certain violence, 'a virile anger which comes from the heart and lies less in the scenario or the choice of events, than in the tone of the narrative and the very technique of the *mise en scene*.' (76) And in his response to Nicholas Ray's *Party Girl* Fereydoun Hoveyda sought to hammer home the message that style and not themes or subject-matter was the true object of criticism;

The subject of *Party Girl* is idiotic. So what? If the substratum of the cinematic opus was made up simply of the convolutions of the plots which are unravelled on the screen, then we should just annex the Seventh Art to literature, be content with illustrating novels and short stories (that, moreover, is exactly what happens in a great many films which we do not admire), and



hand over *Cahiers* to literary critics... *Party Girl* comes just at the right moment to remind us that what constitutes the essence of cinema is nothing other than *mise en scene*... It is not by examining immediate significance that we can come into contact with the best films, but by looking at the personal style of each author. (77)

Andre Bazin, whose writing and influence frequently worked to qualify and moderate the views of other *Cahiers* critics, recognized that the fascination with personal style and *mise en scene* had successfully facilitated the examination of much previously underrated American cinema, but also felt that subject-matter required greater attention. In his article 'La politique des auteurs' he observed that, since the individual signature of the artist was celebrated as the mark of quality, it could appear that some critics preferred 'small 'B' films where the banality of the scenario leaves more room for the personal contribution of the author.' (78) He recognized that by making the discovery of the author in his works the sole object of criticism an unflexible auteurist approach ran the risk of considering films themselves as mere manifestations or symptoms. The 'negation of the film to the benefit of praise of its auteur' (79) would certainly have been an ironic by-product of a critical approach which had sought to elevate the status and serious consideration of film. Bazin argued that American cinema should also be admired (and studied) not just for the talents of certain individual directors, but also for its collective and synergistic abilities, those mechanisms of studio production in which Hollywood excelled and that he termed 'the genius of the system.' (80)

Bazin's phrase was taken up several years later by Thomas Schatz who argued that auteurism had stalled film history and criticism in a 'prolonged stage of adolescent romanticism.' (81) Schatz argued that many directors who were celebrated for their individual expression, e.g John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Frank Capra, actually enjoyed an unusual degree of authority over their pictures because of their additional function as *producers*. Rather than characterizing



those directors with a marked personal style as individuals who managed to subvert or buck the system Schatz describes these successful director/producers as filmmakers who earned an increased autonomy within the system by proving they could deliver commercially successful pictures. (82) Schatz emphasises the overarching role of the studios in filmmaking and rejects auteurism's characterization of great films as the product of individual expression. (The *Cahiers* critics had, in fairness, acknowledged that their *politique des auteurs* did not explain *every* good movie.) He draws attention instead to the work of studio executives and independent producers such as Louis B. Mayer, Irving Thalberg and David Selznick who controlled many stages of the production process, from managing massive yearly budgets to viewing dailies. Schatz describes these immensely powerful men as 'the most misunderstood and undervalued figures in American film history.' (83)

The critic with whom Schatz most strongly takes issue is Andrew Sarris who had popularized auteurism in anglophone film studies and (in)famously (mis)translated la "politique des auteurs" as "auteur theory", thereby affording what was ultimately a polemical device the status of a cogent theory. Like the *Cahiers* critics Sarris identified personal style rather than subject-matter as the mark of an auteur and figured the written prototype as the imposed material against and through which he works to express himself. In this scheme an adaptation which foregrounded or was clearly faithful to its literary original was not, ipso facto, the work of an auteur.

Over a group of films, a director must exhibit certain recurring characteristics of style, which serve as his signature. The way a film looks and moves should have some relationship to the way a director thinks and feels... Because so much of the American cinema is commissioned, a director is forced to express his personality through the visual treatment of material rather than through the literary content of the material. (84)

Sarris insistently represented the relationship of directors to producers and studio bosses as one in which the financial orientation of the latter formed an

impediment to the self-expression of the former. For Sarris the 'auteur theory values the personality of a director precisely because of the barriers to its expression. It is as if a few brave spirits had managed to overcome the gravitational pull of the mass of movies.' (85) In the introduction to his *The American Cinema; Directors and Directions 1929-1968* he states that the director 'would not be worth bothering with if he were not capable now and then of a sublimity of expression almost miraculously extracted from his money-oriented environment.' (86) The *Cahiers* critics had frequently portrayed the influence of the production process in negative terms too - Rivette describes the work of the auteur as a struggle against the 'limp and anonymous dough imposed by the executives since the beginnings of the talkies' (87) - but Sarris also appeared, in Caughie's words, 'to recognize the industrial structure of the cinema as something more than an 'interference' on the auteur's freedom of creativity.' (88) Sarris argued that the 'ultimate premise' of the auteur theory was concerned with an 'interior meaning' which emerged from the 'tension between a director's personality and his material.' (89) Although Sarris is less than clear about what exactly he signifies in the phrase 'interior meaning' he seems to posit the director's given materials and the industrial conditions under which he worked almost as a structuring element - albeit an antagonistic one - rather than just an obstacle to auteurist expression.

Sarris's ranking of directors according to an auteurist 'Pantheon' with 'the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value' (90) is probably his most distinctive and memorable contribution to film criticism. Its potency is evidenced, for example, in Richard Corliss's creation of an equivalent, alternative, Pantheon of screenwriters for his counter-argument that writers and not directors have the best claim to being the creative originators of movies. (91) Though, as with Schatz's call for the recognition of producers, Corliss stresses the collaborative nature of filmmaking and prefers to ascribe success to the



'fortuitous communion of forces' (92) Equally, Sarris also began to problematize the notion of auteurism as a willed effort by directors to impose their personalities on their movies. In an article on Otto Preminger he describes mise-en-scene as 'not merely the gap between what we see and feel on the screen and what we can express in words' but also as 'the gap between the intention of the director and his effect upon the spectator.' (93) By introducing the idea of films containing more than was 'put in by a director' Sarris was - as Caughie remarks - opening the way, whether he liked it or not, for the next important phase in the understanding of film authorship - auteur-structuralism. (94)

The term auteur-structuralism (or cine-structuralism) refers to work by the British critics Peter Wollen, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Alan Lovell, Jim Kitses and Ben Brewster which describes authorship in terms of 'structures' and particularly in terms of Claude Levi-Strauss's structural study of myth. (Whilst the work of the auteur-structuralists has no direct bearing on adaptation, it forms a necessary strand of the present examination of authorship.) Although auteur-structuralism would later be criticized for being insufficiently grounded in Levi-Strauss's theory and its basic equation of cinema with myth would also be questioned, it achieved two key gains for the study of cinematic authorship. Firstly, its practitioners laid particular emphasis on the thematic elements of directors' work, though at the cost of 'rigorous consideration of mise-en-scene' (95), an approach that was the exact inverse of early *Cahiers* critics' priorities. Secondly, auteur-structuralism developed the idea - which Sarris had introduced - that whilst meanings in films might be associated with a particular author, i.e recurring themes across a director's work, their inclusion could well be unconscious rather than the deliberate practice of the filmmaker with whose name they might be associated. This altered conception of authorship worked to dissolve the more romantic notion of the auteur director as involved in a deliberate - even heroic - struggle with unsympathetic producers and studios.

Nowell-Smith, in his study of Luchino Visconti, summarized his critical approach as the discovering 'behind the superficial contrasts of subject and treatment a structural hard core of basic and often recondite motifs.' (96) And Peter Wollen also stresses that (his version of) 'the auteur theory involves a kind of decipherment, decryptment' in which 'a great many features of films analysed have to be dismissed as indecipherable because of 'noise' from the producer, the cameraman or even the actors.' (97) In common with earlier formulations of auteurism, auteur-structuralism emphasised the often hidden nature of its object of study, though where the Cahiers critics had generally regarded subject-matter as principally an obscuring veil the auteur-structuralists searched for recurrences and variations on particular themes. The significance and handling of themes was not, however, considered in terms of the directors' treatment of particular literary originals - where they existed - but in relation to far wider patterns. In uncovering elusive meanings, a major connection between auteur-structuralism and the structural study of myth was a shared attention to a whole corpus of 'works' rather than the privileging of particular examples. Levi-Strauss had argued that an analysis of myth as 'the quest for the *true* version, or the *earlier* one' was mistaken, that a myth should be defined 'as consisting of all its versions.' Hence, 'not only Sophocles, but Freud himself, should be included among the recorded versions of the Oedipus myth on a par with earlier or seemingly more 'authentic' versions.' (98) When applied to film, this approach, Wollen claims, enables the critic to discern the presence of an auteur not only 'in the orthodox canon of a director's work, where resemblances are clustered, but in films which at first sight may seem eccentricities.' (99) An understanding and familiarity with all John Ford's work for example enables him to discern 'a whole complex of meaning in films such as *Donovan's Reef*, which a recent filmography sums up as just "a couple of Navy men who have retired to a South Sea island now spend most of their time raising hell."' (100)



Wollen's recuperation of *Donovan's Reef* indicates how auteur-structuralism, despite its vaunted scientificity, nevertheless contained and fostered an evaluative approach to movie criticism in which films which appeared to bear an authorial imprint were preferable to those which did not lend themselves to such a reading. Of course, instances abound of auteurist and auteur-structuralist critics explaining that their particular understanding and application of an authorial approach to film analysis is less reductive and judgmental than this; Nowell-Smith insists that he is not promulgating 'a standard of value according to which every film that is a *film d'auteur* is good, and every film that is not is bad.' (101) Sarris argues that the auteur theory 'claims neither the gift of prophecy nor the option of extracinematic perception... Directors, even *auteurs*, do not always run true to form.' He invents a hypothetical example of a second-rate filmmaker directing an improbably stellar cast and concedes that 'the resulting spectacle might not be entirely devoid of merit with so many subsidiary *auteurs*.' (102) (an argument which further opens the category of authorship to actors, which perspective will be considered later in this chapter) And Wollen maintains that 'the great *metteurs en scene* should not be discounted simply because they are not *auteurs*.' (103)

However, the entire direction of Wollen's thesis points in the opposite direction, to the evaluation of directors according to the amenability of their oeuvre - their interpretive productivity - when subjected to his method of analysis. When comparing John Ford and Howard Hawks, both of whom he considers auteurs, superiority is gauged by his results.

My own view is that Ford's work is much richer than that of Hawks and that this is revealed by a structural analysis; it is in the richness of the shifting relations between antinomies in Ford's work that makes him a great artist beyond being an undoubted *auteur*. (104)

In Wollen's method, filmic material which does not facilitate an auteurist reading, 'everything non-pertinent, is considered logically secondary, contingent,

to be discarded.' Admitting that these other elements, e.g lighting and performance, may 'sway us or please us or intrigue us' he nevertheless discounts their value as critical or interpretive avenues; they are 'inaccessible to criticism... (we) can merely record our momentary and subjective impressions'. In a particularly revealing phrase he describes the difficulty of practising auteurist analysis on a text constructed in industrial conditions with a multiplicity of influences (including, of course, the script or literary original) which impoverish and dilute that of the director. Nevertheless, he urges, 'the film can usually be discerned.' (105) The film has become, in his analysis, synonymous with - reduced to - the authorial structure it may contain.

In a 1972 amendment to his original work Wollen made a significant change to his argument. Whilst continuing to describe auteur criticism as the identification and disengagement of 'a structure which underlies the film and shapes it', he altered - without signposting the alteration - his representation of the director's function;

The structure is associated with a single director, an individual, not because he has played the role of artist, expressing himself or his own vision in the film, but because it is through the force of his preoccupations that an unconscious, unintended meaning can be decoded in the film, usually to the surprise of the individual involved. The film is not a communication, but an artefact which is unconsciously structured in a certain way. (106)

Hence, he argues, it is necessary to distinguish Fuller, Hawks and Hitchcock from ' 'Fuller' or 'Hawks' or 'Hitchcock', the structures named after them' and with whom they 'should not be methodologically confused.' Although there is a connection between 'the presence of a director on the set' and 'the presence of a structure in the text', it is more accurate to 'speak of a film *auteur* as an unconscious catalyst.' (107) Although this conception of the director formed a strong link with structuralism, since 'it had been foundational for structural linguistics and structural anthropology that users of language and myth were not conscious of the structures which they were using' (108), it also



jeopardized the primacy of the author or authorial-structure relative to the other elements in the film. For Wollen also uses the figure of the catalyst to describe the relative unimportance of pre-existing texts or story materials in the work of an auteur, to indicate that they are not unalterable determining factors. Seizing on director Don Seigel's use of the word to describe what he borrowed from a Hemingway short story - 'the only thing taken from it was the catalyst that a man has been killed by somebody and he did not try to run away' - Wollen argues that the term 'could not be bettered' to describe elements of a script or novel which enter the director's mind;

The director does not subordinate himself to another author; his source is only a pretext, which provides catalysts, scenes which fuse with his own preoccupations to produce a radically new work. (109)

Caughie problematizes Wollen's use of the term 'catalyst' as an metaphor for the director's function, noting that it 'begs the question of the extent to which the catalyst is to be privileged within the compound.' (110) He does not, however, interrogate the significance - particularly germane to the present study - of Wollen's using the same term to describe the function of the original screenplay or novel as he does to characterize that of the director. Although the general thrust of Wollen's argument privileges the auteur or auteur-structure, this figure appears to suggest a contributory parity between source materials and their transformation/adaptation.

Charles Eckert criticized the auteur-structuralists more generally, for what he saw as their collective failure to thoroughly and consistently apply the work of Levi-Strauss to film. He maintained that their allusions to Levi-Strauss and the structural study of myth achieved a certain scientific cachet for their writing but lacked serious theoretical grounding and still resulted in evaluative judgments about the quality, maturity or complexity of directors' work. Eckert noted that different critics applied different, but all nominally structuralist, methods of analysis. In surveying Nowell-Smith's work, Eckert problematizes

his decision to consider each of Visconti's films singly, an approach which Nowell-Smith had taken when faced with the apparent evolution or development of Visconti's filmmaking. Unlike Wollen, whose method was closest to Levi-Strauss in that he posited the whole corpus of a director's work as comparable to the multiple variants of a single myth, Nowell-Smith raised 'the profound issue of whether or not the body of films produced by an individual director over a period of time can qualify as a 'set' of myths.' (111) In arguing that Visconti's work had evolved, Nowell-Smith was proposing a perspective that fundamentally jeopardized the film/myth equation, since the structural study of myth stressed the synchronicity of variants. Noting this difficulty, Eckert suggested the solution that 'an apparent evolution in style and theme may only mask what is recurrent in a body of work.' (112)

Brian Henderson, however, argues that Eckert's examination of auteur-structuralism and his call for a better grounding in Levi-Strauss simply revealed the incompatibility of authorship study and a structuralist approach;

In activating these texts, Eckert has activated the scandal of their lack of foundation. Attempting to integrate them, they have come apart in his hands. (113)

For Henderson there are simply too many fundamental differences between films and myths for the two to be meaningfully equated;

(For) Levi-Strauss myths have no origins, no centers, no subjects, and no authors. Bodies of film organized by auteur signature are obviously defined by their origin, which is a subject and an author as well as a definitive center. (114)

He also argues that structuralism is riddled with defects, stemming from its origins in traditional dualist Western modes of thought. An empiricism, which regards its objects - texts - as fixed and finite givens and which fails to recognize them as processes, rather than as products, structuralism needs - he maintains - to be critiqued and displaced. Henderson advocates an approach, which he identifies in the 1970 article by the *Cahiers* editorial collective on



Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*, that centres on the ideological function of texts and ideology's creation of subjects, both of authors and audiences.

In their 1969 article 'Cinema/ideology/criticism' *Cahiers* editors Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni had observed that in France (and the Western world generally) 'the majority of films, like the majority of books and magazines, are produced and distributed by the capitalist economic system and within the dominant ideology.' Therefore, the object of criticism was to discern 'which films, books, and magazines allow the ideology a free, unhampered passage, transmit it with crystal clarity, serve as its chosen language? And which attempt to make it turn back and reflect itself, intercept it, make it visible by revealing its mechanisms, by blocking them?' (115) They rejected the traditional figure of the camera as an 'impartial instrument' for representing the world as 'eminently reactionary', arguing instead that 'what the camera in fact registers is the vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought-out world of the dominant ideology.' (116) The real work of the filmmaker was therefore to expose this tendency and eventually break the link between cinema and its ideological function. They identified various different categories of film, defined by their varying relations to the dominant ideology. Most texts were characterized as blind to the ideology they unwittingly reproduced and consolidated, whilst others engaged with it either at the level of the signified - e.g political themes - or at the level of the signifier, by disrupting cinema's supposedly natural style of representing reality. (117) They also identified an interesting category of films 'which seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner.' These films 'throw up obstacles in the way of the ideology, causing it to swerve and get off course.' 'Riddled with cracks', such films were seen to be 'splitting under an internal tension which is simply not there in an ideologically innocuous film'; by actually 'presenting' ideology rather than being simply shaped by it, filmmakers had the

opportunity to reveal and corrode its operation in their text. (118)

Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* was subsequently identified as a film of this type. In the analysis of the *Cahiers* editorial collective, 'the film attempts to suppress the realities of politics by presenting Lincoln's career as one based on an idealist morality superior to mere politics. Yet Ford, who is consciously sympathetic to that ideology, nevertheless shows us a Lincoln characterized by a violence which displays his truly repressive character.' (119) In Jean-Pierre Oudart's conclusion to the article this disjunction is interpreted as marking a divide between Ford and the ideology his film ostensibly conveys. A different conception of authorship may be extrapolated from this analysis, in which the filmmaker's relationship to and rehearsal of the dominant ideology - as inscribed in his films - becomes the principal object of analysis.

In the present study the filmmakers' handling of the ideologies manifested and espoused in the original novels is the subject of much attention. Many omissions and alterations relate to original material which has, with the passage of time, become morally or politically objectionable. Equally, some of the adaptations considered take themes from the originals with which the filmmakers are in greater ideological consonance and either magnify them or stress their contemporary relevance. Emma Thompson's script for *Sense and Sensibility* makes more of Austen's representation of patrimony and its negative effects on women by adding new scenes and dialogue, and the modern look of Michael Winterbottom's *Jude* up-dates Hardy's social and moral criticisms of Victorian England. David Lean's *A Passage to India* amounts to a reversal of such a process; finding Forster's representation of Imperial India and the Raj too critical, it works to effect a partial recuperation.

Stephen Heath characterizes the traditional figure of the author as working to conceal the operation of ideology in the text. Although the author 'is constituted only in language and a language is by definition social, beyond any



particular individuality', classical formulations of authorship stress the particularity of authorial expression and inevitably culminate in evaluative judgments. (120) He argues for a 'theory of the subject' to examine the ideological operations that notions of authorship avoid; rather than considering the film text in relation to an 'englobing consciousness' it should be examined as part of a 'specific historico-social process, (with) the recognition of a heterogeneity of structures, codes, languages at work in the film and of the particular positions of the subject they impose.' (121) According to such an approach the author may 'return as a *fiction*', part of the pleasure of viewing a film or films, but de-centred from his traditional role, now 'part of an activity of writing-reading' in which viewers are no longer posited as passive receivers but play an active, constitutive, role. (122)

In his article 'The death of the author' Roland Barthes charts the history of the figure of the author, 'emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation'. A celebration of the individual, the notion of the author is - he argues - an irretrievably capitalist ideological construction which seeks to explain, and thereby limit, art. (123) Such a construction 'suits criticism very well' since it structures a clear critical role - 'discovering the Author'- and it is therefore 'no surprise' to see that 'the reign of the author has also been that of the critic'. Like Heath, Barthes stresses the multiplicity of influences and sources on texts; 'a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation,' and indicates the importance of the reader/viewer; 'The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.' (124)

Surveying ideas of authorship since auteur-structuralism, John Caughie notes that film theory since the early 1970's, particularly through its federation

with semiotics and psychoanalysis, 'has tended to shatter the unity of the author'. Where the concept of the auteur had postulated an author existing prior to and determining the shape of the text, writers such as Barthes, Heath and the *Cahiers* editorial collective shifted attention to the text itself and its interaction with the spectator in which the author 'rather than standing behind the text as a source, becomes a term in the process of reading or spectating.' (125) The concept of authorial self-expression became infinitely harder to sustain, though Pam Cook argues that avant-garde film remains an area in which ideas of personal vision or expression have considerable validity. Since the 'artisanal' mode of production of avant-garde film places it outside the dominant economic and ideological system, the notion of individual expression is not (as a Marxist formulation would figure such a notion in commercial/mainstream film) 'illusory'. Caughie notes the importance of this perspective, admitting as it does the possibility of shades or degrees of authorship determined by the production practices and circumstances of specific films. (126)

Writings on movie authorship have tended to figure adaptation and authorship as activities occupying opposite ends of the spectrum of cinematic practice. The important issue the early *Cahiers* critics identified in ascertaining whether a director was an auteur was not whether there existed a prior written model for the film, be it an original screenplay or a novel, but the extent to which that prior model was either a point of departure or an unshakeable entity which irresistibly determined the film's outcome. Auteurs were those who could ensure the individuality of the subsequent film, while metteurs en scene could never build on the written word. The difficulty with reconciling a high estimation of literary adaptations and this most traditional formulation of *auteurism* is the intrinsic value of the written original which most adaptations of celebrated literature both assume and invoke. Lester Friedman argues that



Britain's national cinema was (until the Thatcher era) basically unexciting, defined by plodding adaptations that were constrained by their sense of their literary originals' value;

Relatively few of these traditionally "tasteful" adaptations display any sense of intellectual boldness or cinematic creativity... Instead, they genuflect reverently to the original source material, rarely daring to venture very far beyond the most stolid of approaches. (127)

He contrasts the British reverence for literary sources with the mutational energy of American film;

Though American cinema, too, often cannibalizes literary works, most American filmmakers view their source material simply as a blueprint, usually feeling quite free to invent or eliminate characters, drastically alter locales, and totally transform endings - all done in the name of making elements "cinematic". Such mutations, when successful, delight mainstream audiences who care little about fidelity to literary materials. So while the British literary legacy provided its film industry with a seemingly limitless source of subjects and stories, the obsession with faithfully recreating the written work on screen fostered a tentative cinema, one concerned more with accuracy than with audaciousness. (128)

Friedman's sense of American cinema's willingness to treat sources as nothing more than 'blueprints' echoes Peter Wollen's argument that auteurs are defined by their ability to use original novels or scenarios as catalysts. And, consciously or not, Friedman's equation of 'audaciousness' with the 'cinematic' also echoes Truffaut who repeatedly invoked 'audacity' as a manner of specifically cinematic originality - e.g Jacques Tati's gait - and as the signature of *hommes de cinema* (129). An interesting complex of ideas reverberates through the writing of the auteurists and, to a lesser extent, the auteur-structuralists, where the critics' sense of the cinematic and their conception of authorship are mutually reinforced by valorizing breaks with, and differences from, the other arts, especially literature.

Truffaut, and other early *Cahiers* critics, had sought to raise the perceived status of cinema (and particularly the American movies they enjoyed) through the polemical device of arguing that the best directors were authors. Since those

other arts which enjoyed more serious consideration invariably had an identifiable individual as their creative originator e.g the painter, the novelist, the composer, then the study of film required a similar focus. Identifying the screenwriter as the creative originator or author necessarily diminished the legitimacy of cinema's claim for autonomous 'art' status because it focussed on the pre-filmic stage (not so very different from other varieties of writing) rather than on the stage of cinema's material difference from other story-telling or visual arts. Conversely, celebrating the director - who assumes control at the stage when story-materials are literally made into film - was to emphasise film's area of intrinsic difference and hence autonomy. Denigrating directors and works which show a slavish adherence to written prototypes, and delighting in those that deviate - making that deviation the very stuff of cinematic authorship - fulfils the same polemical function. It is ironic however that by celebrating its dismissals, alterations and irreverences, film has defined and continues to define itself in terms of a relationship with literature.

Many adaptations, and particularly heritage films, arise because of the supposed value of their written prototypes, a value that is meant to be both 'captured' and 'expressed' by the filmmaker. They are not therefore the occasion of cinema's proving its credentials through radical alterations, but are often seen as directorial tests, especially when a filmmaker not associated with the adaptation of 'classics' makes a foray into the genre, as was the case when Polanski directed *Tess*. The directorial authorship in such instances is constituted to a certain extent in small nuances and emphases but also, and perhaps primarily, as a kind of struggle with the original text; not a struggle to erase it, but to master it, like a difficult piece of music. The director may well have an intense admiration, even infatuation, with the novel to be adapted but its preexisting value structures an implicit challenge, often made explicit in reviews and criticisms. Will the original prove too much for the director? How



will the filmmaker 'match up' to the author? Will he - like a poorly matched boxer - allow awe for his 'opponent' to stifle his creativity?

It is, of course, a contest in which filmmakers will sometimes succeed but which literature will never lose; just as when a musician or conductor fails to properly play a piece of music nobody blames the composer, but if they succeed in producing pleasant sounds the composer has a significant share in that success too. The adaptation of celebrated literature may be approached in terms of an ongoing comparison or competitive dialogue between the older established arts and the newer. Directors who film a celebrated novel are often involved in an exercise not so very different from popular musicians who prove they can either play or compose something more classical, or abstract artists demonstrating that they can produce accurate still-lives. Although it is a perspective completely opposite to those purists who argue for film as film, one might argue that adaptation provides film and filmmakers with opportunities to prove their worth alongside other arts and artists by facilitating comparisons between the two media; whilst a symphony and a sculpture could not be evaluatively compared, for example, two versions of the same story can.

A difficulty with representing the director's screen rendering of a literary original as a species of authorship is the absence of significant thematic originality this model supposes. A good adaptation may well represent a successful piece of work on the director's part, but if the story is ultimately somebody else's can that directorial success really be characterized as authorship? Fetishizing mise-en-scene rather than themes as the arena where cinematic authorship could be enacted circumvented this difficulty, but - besides diminishing the writer's claim to authorship of films - a side effect of downplaying story-invention as the mark of authorship is to potentially open the category of author far wider than just the director. Sarah Street observes how 1940's melodramas from the Gainsborough studios, e.g. *The Man in Grey* and

*The Wicked Lady*, invariably had a radical 'look' which was not attributable to the direction and which actually ran counter to their narrative strategies.

The films' radicalism can be located in the work of Gainsborough's art directors, particularly John Bryan, who presented audiences with a transgressive visual discourse which privileged pleasurable looking, excess and exoticism. In this way, instead of reflecting the scriptwriters' middle-class concerns and fixating on their conservative narrative closures, the films instead provided an escapist fantasy which focused on the *pleasures* involved in the process of transgression. (130)

Although Street ascribes this effect to the work of art-directors, rather than the directors themselves who allowed and included such visual elements, it is worth noting that the disjunction between narrative and 'look' as alternative sources of meaning echoes the valorization by the early *Cahiers* critics of mise-en-scene over story. Relatedly, the chapter on *A Passage to India* will discuss how Lean's visual representation of the Raj and Imperial India as impressive and exotic works to dissolve the more critical narrative elements which are retained from Forster's original.

Performance may also be regarded as another potential area of authorship. Caughie notes how gay criticism has charted the career of Dirk Bogarde as an exploration of male sexuality, beginning with traditional 'male pin-up' roles in movies such as *Doctor in the House* (1954) but developing into more complex representations of homosexuality - *Victim* (1960) - and sadism - *The Damned* (1969). He argues that 'if there is a case for considering actors as *auteurs*, Bogarde is probably one of the more interesting and complex of British *auteurs*.' (131) Such auteurism would consist in the actor's selection of roles and the nuancing of performance in a particular direction but is also achieved through collaboration with sympathetic directors, e.g Joseph Losey and Luchino Visconti, attuned and amenable to the actor's particular tenor. The role of critics and their desire to create such meanings is also significant; just as director-centred formulations of auteurism offer an exclusive and intellectual pleasure of



discovery, of looking beyond the obvious to see more than the average moviegoer, so gay retrospective readings of an actor's oeuvre - e.g Richard Dyer's study of Judy Garland's significance (132) - offer the reader a pleasure of knowingness coupled with a wilful delight in subverting many ostensibly heterosexual texts.

Although *Sense and Sensibility* may be a potential example of the actor as auteur, with Emma Thompson's dual role as principal actor and screenwriter affording her a considerable influence on the movie, Caughie's sense of the producer's importance in British filmmaking may be more germane to the present study than his tentative claim for certain actors as *auteurs*. He notes how those critics who celebrate the director as the creative author have been the 'quickest to bury' (133) British Cinema and explains this in terms of the relationship between producers and directors in Britain. Without the relative continuity offered by the Hollywood studio system and American film's more stable financial history, British Cinema has tended to crystallize - and always for discrete periods - around producers and producer-directors who are able to create 'the structures in which expression can happen'. (134) He cites individuals such as Balcon, Attenborough and Puttnam, as well as production teams like Powell and Pressburger, the Boulting Brothers and Merchant-Ivory as examples of Britain's tendency both to make movies and to figure its movie output not in a director-centred manner but around producers.

The Merchant-Ivory triumvirate will also be discussed later, in a preface to the Forster adaptations, but it is well worth considering their claim to constituting a kind of authorship. With Ismail Merchant as producer, James Ivory as director and Ruth Praver Jhabvala as screenwriter, their movies have a strong group style and their adaptations of Forster in particular tend to rewrite the originals in similar ways (some of them already discussed). That their repertoire has been exclusively adaptations may diminish their claim to 'author'

status, as may the fact that they are three people when auteurism tends to celebrate individuals. Yet equally, most directors recognized as auteurs also work from the written prototypes of others, and another producer/director duo - Joel and Ethan Coen - have one of the strongest claims to auteur status in contemporary cinema through their corpus of quirky black-comic movies.

A major difference between Merchant-Ivory and the Coen brothers is that the latter write their own original scripts whereas the former invoke and foreground the literary predecessors of their films. But traditional director-centred auteurism cannot accommodate this reverence and attention to the original novel. Higson notes how heritage adaptations always foreground their literary models;

In each case, the "original" text is as much on display as the past it seeks to reproduce. The literary source material, of course, functions as an important selling point, playing on the familiarity and prestige of the particular novel or play, but also invoking the pleasures of other such quality literary adaptations and the status of a national intellectual tradition. (135)

All of which is anathema to auteur theory. The pleasures of continuity, of film with literature and of one classic adaptation with others, are entirely different to the audacities Truffaut encouraged. He wanted cinema to emphasise its particular strengths, to see how its form permitted expression that was unavailable to literature; whereas adaptation - and heritage film especially - depends upon and stresses the expression through film of original literary material. The pleasures of bourgeois stability and family continuity which heritage film offers are mirrored and enhanced through the genre's impression of a stable and negotiable bridge between literature and film, past and present. Certain adaptations may resist the heritage approach, breaking with their visual style or their figuration of the past - in this study *Jude* does both - but this move will not necessarily connote authorship. *Jude* foregrounds Hardy's original no less than any heritage movie, and the way it 'looks and moves' owes much to



British television. Barthes argued in his critique of authorship that any 'text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.' (136) and that authorship consists - if it exists at all - only in the reduced sense of an original re-combination of preexisting elements. The following chapters address films which essentially perform this work of re-combination and much of their authorship actually consists of omissions - omissions which align the new texts with film genres. Although this may seem irreconcilable with the connotations of invention and originality that surround the term authorship, an example of Eisenstein's springs to mind. In a discussion on framing (137) he describes how, in their art classes, Japanese children were given a paper picture and a pair of scissors and were instructed to cut a pleasing element from the whole. Eisenstein observes with considerable glee that the child, through cutting away, effectively frames a shot; the process of omission, of deciding what and how to exclude from the original, constitutes the creative work and personal signature of the artist.

## THE AUSTEN ADAPTATIONS: PRODUCTION CONTEXTS.

*Sense and Sensibility*. First published in 1811.

*Sense and Sensibility*. Released 1995. US.

Director Ang Lee. Producer Lindsay Doran. Screenplay Emma Thompson. Director of Photography Michael Coulter. Editor Tim Squyres. Music Patrick Doyle. Art Director Luciana Arrighi.

Leading Players Emma Thompson *Elinor Dashwood*. Alan Rickman *Colonel Brandon*. Kate Winslet *Marianne Dashwood*. Hugh Grant *Edward Ferrars*. James Fleet *John Dashwood*. Harriet Walter *Fanny Dashwood*. Greg Wise *Willoughby*. Imogen Stubbs *Lucy Steele*.

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*Emma*. First published in 1816.

*Emma*. Released 1996. UK.

Director Douglas McGrath. Producers Patrick Cassavetti & Stephen Haft. Screenplay Douglas McGrath. Director of Photography Ian Wilson. Editor Lesley Walker. Music Rachael Portman. Art Director Michael Howells.

Leading Players Gwyneth Paltrow *Emma Woodhouse*. Jeremy Northam *Knightley*. Toni Collette *Harriet Smith*. Greta Scacchi *Mrs Weston*. Alan Cumming *Rev. Elton*. Juliet Stevenson *Mrs Elton*. Ewan McGregor. *Frank Churchill*.

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Robert Clark argues that an understanding of Jane Austen and the responses and criticism she has provoked requires an understanding of her 'rise to prominence', an achievement which took place not so much in her own lifetime but in the late nineteenth century. (1) Austen's novels became particularly celebrated in this period for their sharp ironical insights, aesthetic and moral discrimination, qualities which - it was supposed - were appreciable only by a cultivated readership. Clark notes 'the aesthetic elitism associated with



the ability to take pleasure in reading Jane Austen' (2), a tendency which continues to the present day. Central to this figuration of Austen's novels is the notion that they are somehow timeless, that their properties of discrimination are not mired in the history and social relations of her era. Until the early 1970's, when historical-materialist and feminist approaches began to be applied to her work, most Austen criticism shared this view.

Beginning with Alastair Duckworth's *The Improvement of the Estate* (3) in 1971, Austen criticism began to consider the ways in which her novels might reflect her contemporary situation. In her essay 'Jane Austen and Gentry Society' Terry Lovell observes that Austen belonged to a sector of the gentry that was particularly vulnerable to financial stresses in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as a result of changes in agriculture and industry. (4) Money for dowries was frequently short as landowners were obliged to invest in their estates, especially in enclosures, if they were not to be squeezed by other more successful estates or by the up-and-coming class of thrifty tenant farmers. The unpromising marriage prospects of Elinor and Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*, owing to their small financial settlement, was a condition of which Austen had first-hand experience.

Austen's work invariably celebrates order and sound management - already discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the concept of nostalgia. These qualities are frequently manifested in the good taste and judgment of the characters she valorizes. Whilst earlier aestheticist criticism celebrated this discrimination in its own right, more recent criticism has sought to plumb the meaning of the social order Austen constructs. Marilyn Butler, in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, saw 'Elizabeth Bennet and Marianne Dashwood as symbols of a dangerously iconoclastic individualism that would have been read by contemporaries as the moral equivalent of political Jacobinism. The work of Austen's narratives, guided by her ironic commentary, was to recuperate such

creatures for a conservative social order.' (5) Critics vary in the extent to which they regard Austen as espousing a traditional Tory ideology. Lovell, for example, argues that she was not simply reactionary but acknowledged the need for the gentry to reform their morals and methods of management if they were to survive. (6) But David Aers (7) takes a more critical view, noting that Austen's 'good' characters are moderate traditionalists while those figures most heavily satirized are either 'new money' like Mrs Elton or members of the gentry who are over-eager to embrace (and profit from) change. A key contextual strand between Austen's work and her period is then the exposure of the gentry to social and economic changes, especially as they impacted on the women of its lower echelons.

The first of the two Austen adaptations considered is *Sense and Sensibility*, by Taiwanese director Ang Lee in which Emma Thompson also had a critical creative role - adapting Austen's novel and playing the central part of Elinor. Thompson's acting career had begun in comedy, with the Cambridge University Footlights and a series of revue shows and appearances on TV comedy programmes. However, by the mid-nineties she was acknowledged as the 'leading British actress of her generation' (8) with an Academy Award for her role as Margaret Schlegel in the 1992 Merchant-Ivory adaptation of *Howards End* and another nomination for her performance in their adaptation of Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1993). Her earlier work in the television dramas *Tutti Frutti* and *Fortunes of War* (both 1987) had paved the way for this 'serious' career, bringing her significant critical acclaim, including two BAFTA's. The latter production, which was heralded as important 'event' television like *The Jewel in the Crown* and *Brideshead Revisited*, prompted good reviews for Thompson, particularly in the United States where - despite a restrained welcome for the production generally - she was singled out for praise.

Thompson's popularity and recognizability in the U.S eventually proved a



decisive factor in enabling the adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* to go ahead. Producer Lindsay Doran had first met Thompson whilst making *Dead Again* with her then husband Kenneth Branagh in 1990 and the two women quickly discovered a shared interest in Jane Austen. Doran had long wanted to make a film version of the novel but had been unable to find a suitable writer. After seeing a skit from Thompson's comedy show *Thompson*, then airing on American TV, Doran felt that the British actress had the ability to merge period writing with comedy and offered her the job of adapting. Thompson worked on the screenplay between film and TV projects for years (by the time shooting began in 1995 the project was on its fourteenth draft) and her increasing status within the industry, particularly after her Oscar, meant that the project became more interesting to studio executives, many of whom 'had probably never heard of Austen' (9) but who recognized the marketing potential of a screenplay by 'an actress who was quickly assembling an astonishing track record' (10).

There was, however, a downside to Thompson's Oscar-centred celebrity. In accepting the award she had dedicated it to 'the heroism and courage of women' adding that 'I hope it inspires the creation of more true screen heroines' (11). By criticizing the industry - however accurately - at its biggest and most visible gala event Thompson had, it was widely felt in Hollywood, bitten the hand that fed her. In the months after the awards she was not inundated, as is usual for Oscar winners, with a deluge of projects and offers, but was - relative to her success - rather left out in the cold. Thompson had earlier turned down the lead role in Paul Verhoeven's *Basic Instinct* (which eventually made Sharon Stone a celebrity) explaining to *People* magazine that 'I don't think there are many women out there thinking, "Hey, I really want to be made to look stupid and take off all my clothes in a film."' (12) The roles she sought were what she termed 'female heroic' and 'three-dimensional. That they're real people, and they're not appendages, and they're not morally irrelevant. That drives me mad

more than anything. It's the sort of patriarchy of our culture.' (13) Adapting *Sense and Sensibility* provided Thompson with an ideal opportunity to create and deliver a different kind of female role, drawing particular attention to the position of women in a patriarchal culture by adding new scenes and dialogue to Austen's original. One reviewer felt that the Thompson script's 'correcting' of the traditional gender imbalance in movie roles was so marked that she wondered whether it was 'her deliberate ploy to make the women in the film so exceptionally engaging and the men really rather dull' (14). In *Film Comment*, Donald Lyons described Thompson's work as 'a real liberation' and observed that as viewers we are 'shown a variety of capable women and feckless men and left to draw our own, properly feminist, conclusions.' (15)

In writing the screenplay Thompson wanted to emphasize what she identified as Austen's comic and ironic perspective on society and relationships, avoiding 'prettiness', remarking 'That's what's wrong with the television versions of Austen. They're just - well, I find them offensive. They're so *cozy* - there's no sense at all that they're satire.' (16) Her focus became the 'real issues - money and marriage. If you haven't any money, you can't get married, and if you don't get married you'll never have any money.' (17) In giving her screenplay a keener political edge Thompson moved the adaptation - and perhaps the heritage film cycle - into better alignment with prevailing political currents in Britain and the U.S.A. Although Andrew Higson argues that heritage films cannot be uncomplicatedly equated with political conservatism there is an obvious sense in which their nostalgic invocation of national identity and stability can be ideologically linked to the turn to the right of the Thatcher/Reagan years - the era in which the cycle developed and flourished. But by 1995 public opinion had turned, and would continue to turn, markedly to the left. In the U.S.A, prior to Bill Clinton's election in 1992, George Bush had eked one presidential term from the Republican support that Reagan had



enjoyed for a decade, and in Britain Prime Minister John Major was leading the Tories through an equivalent sputtering half-life that would end in a record Labour landslide in 1997.

*Sense and Sensibility's* satirical treatment of the characters John and Fanny Dashwood, who come into money but behave cruelly and ungenerously, may certainly be read as a critique of Thatcherite avarice. Similarly, its concern with gender inequality draws attention to deficiencies in social justice - an area of government in which the Conservative administration was seen as particularly lacking. This focus on the negative effects of capital ownership and the inequalities of historical life is significantly different to the reassuring period evocation of *A Room With a View* which, ten years earlier, had been released into an environment of wider public satisfaction with government by the right and a complacent sense of private capital as a guarantor of familial stability. Nevertheless, despite Thompson's criticism of previous - less satirical and political - adaptations, *Sense and Sensibility* unquestionably benefited from an upsurge of interest in Austen at the time of the movie's release. In the U.K. *Sense and Sensibility* followed a hugely successful T.V adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* which both indicated and whetted a public appetite for more Austen on screen.

Director Ang Lee had made three films before *Sense and Sensibility*; *Pushing Hands* (1992), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994); all concerned with family relationships and social rituals. Whilst the choice of a director experienced in representing Chinese society may have seemed unlikely for a film set in Regency England, several critics observed that there were interesting cultural consonances - of etiquette, formality, and the existence of passions beneath these appearances - between the Lee milieu and Austen's. Lyons described Lee as 'an artist of family and society, of the unending tension between ceremony and self, conformity and freedom.' (18) Thompson

also felt that Lee's preoccupations converged with her own sense that the Hollywood obsession with romantic love precluded the representation of other relationships; 'He's so good on the relationship between people in a family which we don't examine much because we are so hung up on boy meets girl. We don't represent moms or sisters or all the other human relationships that involve love and betrayal and despair. These stories are of prime importance and should be told more often.' (19)

*Emma* is both scripted and directed by American Douglas McGrath. McGrath had previously worked as a screenwriter on *Bullets over Broadway* (1994) for Woody Allen - a director who, like Austen, tends to represent a small social set. McGrath approached producer Steven Haft with the idea of an adaptation of *Emma*. Haft took the idea to Harvey Weinstein at Miramax Films and was anxious to convey the comedy potential of a McGrath *Emma*. He explains in a *Screen International* article that 'by the time it reached Harvey, he had begun to realize that Doug was someone who had a comic take in his personality.' Haft continues; 'Harvey will only finance pictures that have international appeal. *Emma* might play well in the U.S. as an effervescent comedy, but at the same time Doug's script is consistent enough to meet European critical expectations.' (20) In stressing the film's comedy and accessibility Haft echoed the intentions of *Sense and Sensibility's* producer Lindsay Doran who emphasised in the trade press that her product was 'a movie with great jokes and strong emotions' not just what Sydney Pollack (her partner in Mirage Productions) calls 'a literary eat-your-spinach-it's-good-for-you movie'!

(21)

*Emma's* publicity e.g. "This season Cupid is armed and dangerous"; therefore drew attention to the film's lightness and humour more like a contemporary romantic comedy than a 'quality' adaptation. Again, in this the



*Emma* team appeared to learn from the success of *Sense and Sensibility's* strategies. John Anderson, Columbia Tri-Star (UK's) marketing chief, had been keen to quote critics who likened *Sense and Sensibility* to *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and sought to avoid traditional costume drama conceptions of the picture. (22) Doran remarked that it was 'extremely difficult in the marketing to avoid looking like just another English Period Piece' (23) and in this respect *Emma* was better placed than *Sense and Sensibility* since, unlike its predecessor, it was not connected by cast-members or production team to other adaptations of British literature or other heritage films.

Whatever the film's qualities, it has not been accorded the serious attention - in terms of authorship etc. - that *Sense and Sensibility* has received. *Emma* has been regarded as a comparatively 'light', even 'lightweight' heritage film, its apartness from the Merchant/Ivory family signalled by a cast that combines non-British actors (the American Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma and Australian Toni Colette as Harriet) with Britons not associated with heritage movies (Jeremy Northam, Ewan McGregor, James Cosmo). Equally, this discrepancy in critical attention is also due to *Emma's* being a more uncomplicatedly happy novel than *Sense and Sensibility*, with Thompson's feminist rewriting of the latter bound to excite intellectual interest. Where *Sense and Sensibility* won plaudits for its ability to achieve the elusive 'crossover' between the comparatively tiny audience for heritage/period pictures and the lucrative (young, regular cinema-going) popular audience, *Emma* was perhaps seen to be reaching too far in its pursuit of the latter.

## CHAPTER 3. SENSE AND SENSIBILITY.

As a rule, the openings of Jane Austen's novels are familiar and celebrated. The first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* is perhaps the most well known;

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. (1)

Whilst treating the general rather than the specific, not immediately introducing a key named character or characters, it is nevertheless effective exposition: introducing the major themes of the novel - fortune and matrimony - and their indissoluble relationship. In contrast, *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* begin in a mode that is more obviously expository, with the introduction of characters and a summary of their background and make-up;

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. (2)

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park... (3)

Notable for their concision, both beginnings are made particularly interesting by their choice of central verb. Roger Gard (4) draws attention to the qualifying 'seemed' which subtly casts doubt upon Emma's happy condition without undermining the light tone. Similarly, 'captivate' can seem innocuous but combines a predatory note with the dominant romantic sense. However, the purpose of referring to three other Austen novels before delving into *Sense and Sensibility* has not been to compose a paean to her talent for the foundational stage of story-telling but to suggest that her first published novel is rather a disappointment and an exception in this respect.

The four pages that form Chapter One do establish the novel's *situation*,



those circumstances in a family history leading to a significant juncture at which the reader dips in and attends to what follows... Mr Dashwood has died. He is survived not only by his wife and three daughters but by a son from a previous marriage. The bulk of his legacy, including the family seat, goes to his son's family. Little remains for his second wife and daughters. They have suddenly gone from wealth to comparative poverty and will soon be obliged to leave their home to make way for the son's family. Where will they go and how will they manage?.... Though Austen's explication of the Dashwood's circumstances is certainly more lively than my synopsis, it nevertheless lacks the sparkle of her other openings. Whilst highly summarized, it is not audaciously succinct, and does not achieve the entertaining and involving detail of a fuller prelude, though Austen's caustic wit does surface in her description of John Dashwood who 'was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill-disposed.'(5)

What is memorable about the early part of *Sense and Sensibility* is the dialogue between John and Fanny Dashwood in which they discuss his father's final request that John help his widow and daughters. John decides to give them three thousand pounds, Fanny objects and the couple exchange ideas for a variety of sums and annuities, their value decreasing throughout. Ultimately John's will to perform his father's request proves far weaker than his wife's avaricious but slyly phrased argument that they need the money more themselves. They decide to give nothing except "acts of assistance and kindness" which the preceding dialogue inclines us to think will never materialize.

It is this exchange which the 1995 adaptation chooses as its principal starting point. There is a very brief scene beforehand in which the dying Mr Dashwood reveals to John Dashwood that the overwhelming bulk of the estate will go to him - causing a wonderful facial expression of excitement stifled beneath sombre attention. Mr Dashwood enjoins his son "You must help them!"

and his words are quickly echoed by Fanny (Harriet Walter) in the next sequence. "Help them!" she exclaims with displeasure as she and her husband adjust their mourning clothes before two mirrors in their town-house. This framing in which we see both them and their reflections simultaneously expresses many of the couple's faults. Beyond the conventional associations of duality, vanity and hypocrisy the mirrors anticipate their concern for the apparent, for the public face, for being seen to do the right thing, for propriety rather than generosity. Highly self-conscious and deliberate, it is a framing which suits their activity - assiduous preparation for the newly found roles of Lord and Lady of the Manor. It is in marked contrast to the later appearance of Sir John Middleton (Robert Hardy) and his mother-in-law Mrs Jennings (Elizabeth Spriggs), the other 'couple' who hold the welfare of the Dashwoods in their hands but for whom generosity rather than propriety is a guiding principle. When the Dashwoods arrive at Barton and meet their benefactors the camera-movement, action and dialogue is hectic and exuberant. A low camera pans fast to the left - motivated by an off-screen shout from Sir John - and a selection of noisy dogs bound across the screen as he and Mrs Jennings step from their carriage; "Here ye are!" he exclaims repeatedly as they bustle up the path to meet them. He instantly interrupts Mrs Dashwood's gratitude with a cheery "none of that"; not wanting any reflection on how generous he may appear.

The dialogue in which three thousand pounds is whittled down to nothing takes place in John and Fanny's town-house and carriage as they depart to take possession of Norland, the family seat. The opening titles run throughout. Gard compares the John/Fanny conversation to the exchange in *King Lear* where Lear's daughters, Goneril and Regan, collaborate to produce a pseudo-discussion that reduces the number of his followers they are prepared to accommodate from one hundred down to none at all, thereby demolishing any vestige of his autonomy. He describes it as...



..a piece of bravura comedy - hardly surpassed anywhere in literature for its ruthlessness - and that is remembered by readers of good taste a long time after they have forgotten all the limpid and delicate pros and cons about prudence and feeling, reason and romanticism. (6)

The choice to foreground this sequence in the adaptation serves not only to retain and emphasise a favourite element of the original as the title-sequence but also achieves the economical use of time so necessary to transform an average-size novel into an average-length film. John and Fanny's dialogue serves not only to describe their own shortcomings and suggest the moral dangers of taking prudence too far - that there is a wrong way as well as a right way to let the head lead the heart - but to make clear the dire financial position in which the (other) Dashwoods now find themselves and to anticipate the changes of lifestyle they face. As Fanny says at the concluding phase of their debate, in dialogue that is only slightly modified from the novel;

Their housekeeping will be nothing at all. They will have no carriage, no horses, hardly any servants and will keep no company. Then you can see how comfortable they will be!

Once John and Fanny arrive at Norland the film begins its most significant deviation from the original. In Austen's novel the arrival of the new owners and the relationship between Elinor, the eldest Dashwood daughter, and Edward, Fanny's brother, are not developed in any detail but form part of the summarized background prior to the unfolding of the story proper. The novel's reader is simply informed that Mrs Dashwood has delayed quitting Norland partly because she is aware of..

...a growing attachment between her eldest girl and the brother of Mrs John Dashwood, a gentlemanlike and pleasing young man, who was introduced to their acquaintance soon after his sister's establishment at Norland, and who had since spent the greatest part of his time there. (7)

The novel has no scenes between Edward and Elinor at Norland, which might come as a surprise to any reader who tackles *Sense and Sensibility* after having seen the film. The many acts of sensitivity and tact that so

distinguish Edward Ferrars (Hugh Grant) from his sister and brother-in-law, endearing him both to the Dashwoods and the viewer, are an invention of the adaptation. It is worth considering quite how profound an impact these new scenes have on the balance of the story. The novel's Edward is discussed, both by narrator and characters, but is never really *present* in the Norland scenes; he never speaks or appears. Marianne is unimpressed with his listless reading of Cowper: an occasion which is enacted for the screen, but discussed retrospectively in the novel. Mrs Dashwood is scarcely aware of him at first, though we are told she appreciates his quiet manner, and Margaret - the youngest Dashwood daughter, who provides the catalyst for the Edward/Elinor romance in the film - is never mentioned.

In contrast, Hugh Grant quickly secures a favourable impression as Edward Ferrars. Whilst Austen tells us that Edward is 'not handsome'(8), Grant obviously is, a status given him by his previous roles as the desirable male lead in other romantic comedies. It is largely in this capacity that we recognize him when he first appears and such a manifest appeal does not accord with Austen's description of an Edward who requires time and intimacy to be appreciated (9). It is of course arguable that all well-known actors carry 'baggage' in a way that literary characters do not, a residue of past performances - sometimes reprised, others contrasting - that exists alongside any current incarnation. And one must also acknowledge that part of Grant's residual meaning - his appearances in *The Remains of the Day* and *Maurice* - place him comfortably in a context of literary adaptation. This intertextual value could be further stretched to argue for the naturalness of a Thompson/Grant pairing since both are graduates of Merchant/Ivory productions which enjoy quality connotations, period settings and literary precursors. However, the crucial factors are that Grant brings a clear desirability to the role which Austen's Edward lacks and the screenplay also features numerous changes and additions - tailored, according to Thompson, to



suit Grant's screen persona - which make Edward more attractive.

From the moment of his arrival Grant has dialogue and scenes calculated to recommend him to the relevant characters and the audience, markers of his gentleness and sincerity which swiftly, but not crassly, ingratiate him. He simultaneously excuses Margaret's absence, counters his sister's implied criticism in pointing it out, and acknowledges the family's loss in a single self-deprecating sentence; "I am shy of strangers myself and have nothing like her excuse." He also reveals that he hasn't accepted the family bedroom which would have obliged Margaret to move - a tactless relocation which Fanny had intended. When he speaks to his sister alone on the stairs he meets her criticism of the family with a reply that points up her lack of empathy and, by extension, suggests his warmth; "My dear Fanny, they've just lost their father. Their lives will never be the same again." Consistently, the film's Edward *sides with* the Dashwood women, never through direct confrontation - though this is hardly to be expected in a genre where brawling and shouting matches are unthinkable - but by small acts of kindness and consideration, some concealed from his sister and brother-in-law, some not, but all conspicuous for the viewer.

It is his discovery of the elusive Margaret hiding beneath a table in the library that really settles his place in the audience's affections as well as facilitating his intimacy with Elinor. Entering the room with Fanny, their conversation serves to further outline their respective characteristics. Edward's response to the walls lined with books is "Magnificent!", whilst Fanny's remarks that "These are mostly foreign" and "I've never liked the smell of books" suggest a range of undesirable traits, from xenophobia, through lack of accomplishment to outright tastelessness. (This last hint is confirmed when Fanny reveals her plan to knock down the walnut grove and replace it with a "Grecian Temple".) Edward's helping Margaret escape discovery and inevitable embarrassing censure from Fanny by sliding her Atlas completely under the tablecloth and

masking her shriek at the Grecian Temple plan with a cough endorse our favourable view of him. The subsequent scene in which he and Elinor make intentionally erroneous claims about the source of the Nile to coax Margaret out of hiding makes an effective contrast to the awful possibilities of her being discovered by Fanny. Unable to bear their geographical inaccuracies, the tousle-haired Margaret (Emile Francois) slides out from under the table to correct them. Neither Edward nor Elinor manifest surprise at her appearance and introductions proceed as decorously as if she had just walked through the door.

'Charming' is an apt term to describe the film's new scenes at Norland; though the constant mixture of humour with sadness side-steps the danger of insipidity which charming scenes risk. Edward's manner charms Elinor, Margaret and the viewer whilst continual reminders of the Dashwood women's difficulties arise. The comic conversation in which Margaret's 'expedition to China' and Edward's roles of sword-fighting, administering rum and swabbing are discussed is eventually revealed - by a tilt up to a first floor balcony - to have been watched over with concern by Fanny, who will attempt to sever the relationship. Conversely, the more serious discussion between Elinor and Edward as they ride in the park and she laments that women have no opportunities for real occupation ends on a humorous note; Edward replies "Piracy is our only option" and asks "What is swabbing exactly?"

Mary Poovey argues that although Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* ostensibly recommends reason over romanticism 'this neat design is less stable than an absolute and authoritative moral system would seem to require'(10) ; Sensibility is so attractively portrayed and Sense seems so dull that many readers find Marianne's passionate choices more appealing than the prudent actions of her older sister. However, the film structures the moral choices of Elinor and Marianne quite differently. Firstly and most importantly the beginning of the Edward/Elinor relationship is seen and appreciated by the audience; it is not



simply a bland 'given' which will compare unfavourably with the subsequent blossoming romance of Marianne and Willoughby. Secondly, the two 'suitors' acquire different comparative values in the transition between media. Poovey maintains that the novel's Edward is an 'inert fixture... incapable of energetic gallantry and attractive only to the most generous observer.'(11). Although Greg Wise as Willoughby is certainly more dashing and vigorous than Grant and this contrast between them is evident, the film's Edward is simply attractive in a different way.

Austen constructs Edward's diffident and hesitating manner as an imperfect covering for his essential worth, penetrable by Elinor but nearly repugnant as qualities in a suitor for Marianne who will reveal her poor judgment in an attachment to the superficially wonderful but structurally unsound Willoughby. The film retains this distinction between the bearing and diction of the two men but values it differently. Grant's awkwardness, his broken speech patterns, the expressions and gestures which accompany his communicative difficulties may approximate to Austen's conception of Edward's lack of courtliness and savoir faire but they are now meant to be viewed as attractive in their own right. Grant's vulnerability and frequent social mortification formed key elements of his appeal in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and it is difficult to interpret a similar performance of bashful gauche any differently. The speech of Ross (David Schwimmer) in the hugely popular sitcom *Friends* - also marked by hesitation and the delaying of key words and conclusions - is a further marker that such a manner is not meant to be interpreted negatively.

Overall, these early scenes change the didactic values of Austen's novel. The divide between Romanticism and Rationalism is not rendered quite in her terms. Elinor's 'choice' of Edward (though of course neither is free to choose) may be rational since he combines being un-dynamic with fundamental

goodness but it satisfies the more romantic criteria as well. There is no real sense that in marrying Edward she will be settling for second-best. Her prudence is not demonstrated *at the expense* of more manifest pleasures. Despite the agonizing delays and disappointments, Thompson's Elinor does not so much enact the Austenian ideal of coming to love and value unglamorous dependability as win on both counts.

This reflection applies equally to the marriage of Marianne to Colonel Brandon. Despite Alan Rickman's downplaying it is still impossible to view their marriage as negatively as Alastair Duckworth reads the novel's resolution, as 'a gross over-compensation for her misguided sensibility'(12). His Col. Brandon is unquestionably less dashing and youthful than Greg Wise's Willoughby but the marriage certainly does not amount to what Gard calls the 'acceptance of flannel waistcoats'(13) - a virtual punishment for her romantic excesses. Rather, Rickman's Col. Brandon is interpretable more through the value of previous performances; as the handsome cellist in *Truly Madly Deeply* and as charismatic villains in *Die Hard* and *Robin Hood - Prince of Thieves*. This phenomenon is explicable in Derridean terms as a 'trace' of previous meanings with which the present role must contend and to which it will eventually be added. Also, although Rickman is significantly older than thirty-five - the age of Austen's Brandon - the years between Austen and the present day have rendered the implications of being a particular age very different. Besides, cinema appears to be the preeminent medium for partnering women with men old enough to be their fathers: which combination of factors effectively defuses those aspects of the Brandon/Marianne relationship - especially the stifling of her sexual desire - which a modern audience might well find unsavoury.

Despite the didactic structure, with the two sisters representing different moral codes, Austen's novel does not make the location of an authorial point-of-



view quite as easy as the 'moral lesson' format would initially suggest. Both Marilyn Butler (13) and Mary Poovey note that the character of Marianne is so spirited and interestingly developed as to threaten the conventional values of the didactic form. Though Butler argues that this treatment nevertheless accords with Austen's championing the cause of Sense;

It is quite false to assume that merely because Marianne is treated with relative gentleness, Jane Austen has no more than a qualified belief in the evils of sensibility. She spares Marianne, the individual, in order to have her recant from sensibility, the system. (14)

Since her value as a representative of Sensibility wanes in the second half of the novel, Butler points to other characters who represent its most negative aspects of individualism and selfishness, Lucy Steele and Fanny Dashwood. Their presence maintains the didactic message which might otherwise become compromised by the exploration of Marianne's character - as her romantic impulses threaten to become more appealing than Elinor's measured actions. A more radical interpretation is proposed by Angela Leighton (15) who suggests that since Marianne becomes increasingly silent toward the end of the novel as she is manoeuvred into marrying Brandon, those very silences bear interpretation. They encourage us to reflect on the fact that her rebellion against (male) propriety and order has been stifled and that what we are aware of are her absent screams of protest;

Jane Austen's greatness lies in the fact that, beneath her artistic championing of Sense, she can make us *hear* those Silences that always lie on the other side of it. (16)

Leighton's reading probably indicates more what she *wants* to find in the novel than it is a realistic perspective on Austen's authorial intentions. Such an interpretation is anyway debarred by the film, since Marianne's marriage is neither represented nor interpretable as a species of punishment for her previous romantic exuberance. Any hint of such a meaning would massively subvert the operation of romantic comedy - towards which the textual changes

and casting are so clearly structured. An adaptation which did not involve such restructuring (i.e. a genuinely unprepossessing Edward, the interpretive possibility of Marianne's marriage as a joyless trap) would offer little pleasure to movie audiences and would unquestionably have precluded the publicizing of the film as a comedy.

Acceptability clearly formed an important measure and point of reference in this and the other adaptations examined. Changes are designed to ensure both the functioning and good fit of the film within its destination genre and - more generally - work to produce a text which will be morally and politically palatable to audiences. Alterations to one character, Lucy Steele, are particularly calculated to downplay a theme of social gradation which is more pronounced in the novel and which, if reproduced on film, would jeopardize viewers sympathy with the leading characters and the text generally. Lucy, played by Imogen Stubbs, is Elinor's rival: her long-standing but secret engagement to Edward is revealed as the reason for his being unable to propose. Following Edward's disinheritance she abandons him for his brother, revealing her mercenary character but ironically facilitating the marriage to Elinor that his sense of duty had prevented. Austen constructs Lucy not simply as an obstacle to the Edward/Elinor romance but as his inferior, socially, morally and intellectually. If Edward marries Lucy - which for a while we think he has - then we are invited to reflect that he has blundered not just in love but in class terms as well. After Lucy reveals her secret engagement, Elinor laments to herself not just her own disappointment but the defects of the match;

Could he ever be tolerably happy with Lucy Steele; could he, were his affection for herself out of the question, with his integrity, his delicacy, and well-formed mind, be satisfied with a wife like her - illiterate, artful, and selfish? (17)

To a certain extent this criticism can be contextualized and mitigated: her assessor here is hardly impartial. Equally one must recognize that the tendency to act and judge indiscreetly is constructed as Marianne's, not Elinor's. Elinor's



behaviour is marked by reserve and sound judgment under stress; the early qualification in this sentence may be intended as evidence of this capacity although it is the contrasting lists of qualities and defects which predominate. Furthermore, Elinor's representation of the doctrine of Sense, which the novel so overwhelmingly commends, makes it easy to view her as a surrogate or mouthpiece for Austen herself: when Elinor speaks and reflects one commonly senses that this is more than just a character speaking. Overwhelmingly, however, it is the novel's insistence on Lucy's inferiority that is so striking;

The youthful infatuation of nineteen would naturally blind him to every thing but her beauty and good nature; but the four succeeding years- years, which if rationally spent, give such improvement to the understanding, must have opened his eyes to her defects of education, while the same period of time, spent on her side in inferior society and more frivolous pursuits, had perhaps robbed her of that simplicity, which might once have given an interesting character to her beauty. (18)

What exactly Lucy lacks is a rather confusing amalgam of accomplishment and breeding. 'Confusing' because throughout her novels Austen never quite makes explicit how these qualities are related. Though we may infer, rather mathematically, that whilst (a) is not an inevitable consequence of (b), (b) is at least a necessary condition for (a): (Austen features no individuals who are both learned and blue-collar as does Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*.) The intelligence of her heroines Elizabeth Bennet and Elinor Dashwood is fiercely cherished and designed to place them higher in our estimation than the many wealthier but comparatively dim women they encounter. These talents constitute a significant part of their appeal for men who might be better served financially in marriage to the dull but dowried. However, the message is not quite as egalitarian as this summary might suggest. The Austen heroine may be relatively impoverished (Emma Woodhouse being a notable exception) but she is nevertheless genteel and her conquest will take place within a demarcated social circle. When Elizabeth marries Darcy one is

invited to rejoice that she has overcome the obstacle of being - in modern terms - 'cash-poor', but not to feel that she has risen, Cinderella-like, way above her station. In distinguishing her heroines from the mediocre but well-heeled aristocracy Austen employs a meritocratic logic but then defends them against invasion from below by simultaneously clinging to their own claims of birth. Austen's interstitial social situation - talented daughter of a vicar on the periphery of gentility but without wealth - may go some way to explaining the relevance she inconsistently affords to both birthright and accomplishment, a practice which leads to potentially contrasting conceptions of her political stance.

In encouraging the viewer to side with Elinor the film does not, indeed *cannot*, stress Lucy's social inadequacies as a major factor in making the engagement unapt. To do so would run the risk of fostering some sympathy for her since Lucy's class-position (in the novel) will for most of us be closer to our own than Elinor's. The film does not emphasise any significant social differences between the two women. What is made clear is that Fanny regards them as being *equally* unsuitable for Edward because they both lack wealth. By making all the key characters effectively the same class, therefore stressing money as the dividing and distinguishing factor, Lee and Thompson's film just about avoids the sticky issue of class altogether. Our partisanship is secured instead by the conventions of the romantic comedy. We root for Elinor simply because she is 'our girl': those new scenes at Norland constitute an investment in happiness (hers and ours) which we are not prepared to see lost. Our dislike for Lucy is stimulated principally by her construction as an obstacle to this hoped-for outcome and is nurtured thereafter by her sly habit of observing Elinor to see whether she will betray her feelings for Edward - an often-noted feature of her behaviour in the novel - and her forming a friendship with the odious John and Fanny, whom we already dislike.

Lucy's vulgar older sister, Anne, is omitted from the film, which may



make good sense in time/economy terms since she is a peripheral character but the omission also has the advantage of hushing Austen's class-based criticism. Anne's grammatical lapses, slang, and incessant chatter about 'beaux' reflect not only on herself but her sister too. They are intended to remind us of whence they have come and increase our trepidation at the Edward/Lucy attachment. Such a portrayal might well prove counter-productive with a contemporary cinema audience; not that we would be moved to like the Steele sisters more but we might well feel distanced from the ideological position of the film and feel distaste for characters who criticized others in class terms. At the novel's conclusion Edward comes to Elinor at Barton and they examine Lucy's final letter to him. He roundly criticizes her writing style which he, and of course Austen, construct as evidence of her defects. Were this rendered on film our affection for him would unquestionably be diminished, with viewers trying (uncomfortably in all likelihood) to work out just what makes the letter so awful. Her errors and inelegance could, naturally, be exaggerated to achieve this effect; though this would in turn jar with her performance. As it stands, criticism of Lucy's letter could well leave most of an audience sympathizing with the writer, not the critic.

By carefully refiguring Elinor's rival-in-love the film masks the one major area of the novel where social differences are thrown into explicit relief. Certain shadings remain, such as the city/country distinction which marks Elinor and Marianne as different to Willoughby's party at the London ball; a disdainful reference to 'country fashions' is audible as they turn to examine the crushed Marianne. This contrast is heightened by Miss Grey's (Lone Vidahl's) virtual slow-motion turn which suggests her self-conscious elegance as opposed to Marianne's exuberant freshness and unreserve; so appealing to Willoughby in a country setting but an embarrassment in city society. However, this town/country opposition is an entirely 'safe' distinction for the film to reproduce

with all the good characters favouring rural life and those we are encouraged to dislike being city-based. The foppish Robert Ferrars is a metropolitan man par excellence whilst Edward 'hate(s) London' and 'has no particular acquaintance in town'. Lacking any of the contemporary relevance of a class-based social divide, this distinction, whilst faithful to the original, is now a supplementary shorthand which facilitates and helps structure our attachments and dislikes. Early characterizations and dialogues establish a scale or lexicon of associations, positive and negative, which subsequent scenes both confirm and employ. Though the town/country divide may mobilize ancient associations they are differently held and less problematic than class prejudices; I am unaware of urban audiences walking out of *Sense and Sensibility* in disgust! In another story the (good/bad) values pertaining to the distinction could be reversed without this proving an impossible paradigm shift for the audience.

Relatedly, Austen is never particularly concerned with interaction between family and servants. For the most part the household staffs are invisible and there is insufficient action of an upstairs/downstairs nature to leave a reader troubled by issues of inequality, wage-slavery etc. It is, of course, possible to produce a modification of Leighton's argument for Marianne's silences; that their very absence leads to contemplation of their circumstances. However, one could never argue that Austen herself intended to invite such thoughts. Her servants are out of sight because they are meant to be out of mind, because - bluntly - they don't matter. Still, one would have to try very hard indeed to use Austen's work as a stimulus for notions of shivering chambermaids cleaning cold kitchen floors at five in the morning. In terms of her novels' suitability for adaptation without offending modern audiences this feature of her work is particularly useful in a way that Joseph Conrad's racism, for example, is not.

Filmmakers cannot really be accused of ducking a question that the



originals themselves don't raise, except perhaps by implication. On this issue Austen simply does not face adapters with the dilemma of uncomfortable faithfulness versus conspicuous revision. The invisibility of servants, ironically itself a feature of 'ideal' nineteenth century households, contracts the social range of accessible characters for an audience to identify with, like or dislike. An audience who don't have servants therefore project their sympathies onto upper and upper-middle class protagonists who do because there is no real alternative. The servants themselves are insufficiently present to provide a 'them and us' option. The world of country houses, fine interiors and costumes is thereby made not only accessible but happily cloistered from its economic preconditions. We may logically comprehend the unfairness of a time that made possible such a lifestyle but Austen does not oblige us to contemplate it. In socioeconomic terms, historical reality is suspended in favour of a pleasing melange of period detail and denial. Whilst the representation of country house life and its upper-class characters works to evoke nostalgia for that phase of Britain's past - green, pleasant and stable - this is only achievable and sustainable because other less pleasant but far more widely-experienced lifestyles are not shown. Truly *representative* historical life is not represented. In texts where the economic and power relationships between rich and poor are described, e.g. *Howards End*, in which the fortunes of the clerk Leonard Bast are thoughtlessly upset by businessman Henry Wilcox, the potentially nostalgic connotations of class privilege and capital are diminished.

A brief scene at Norland, particular to the adaptation, in which Elinor wraps presents for the servants prior to their departure establishes her credentials as a fair employer, as do her farewell words to the staff in the kitchen, also an addition to the novel. Presumably this is a corrective nod in the right direction, a preemptive strike to counteract any negative connotations which might be ascribed to the absence of servants - though overwhelmingly this

absence seems a blessing rather than a difficulty. Such scenes may even serve to recuperate our experience of the original, encouraging us to believe that this is how Austen's characters *would* treat their servants in all those unwritten pages, irrespective of Jane's ignoring them. Otherwise the film maintains the original's uninterest in matters below stairs. When Marianne summons a ruffled footman to post a letter in the middle of the night the effect is clearly comic as his wig threatens to unfurl; a reflection on his working hours, terms and conditions would be to read against the grain of the film.

Whilst the film is able to benefit from Austen's absent servants in terms of being acceptable to a contemporary audience - and therefore commercially viable - it is obliged to effect actual changes to the themes evoked by the title in order to maintain that viability. The values of Sense and Sensibility are gently but significantly altered from Austen's conception to fit the conventions and expectations of the genre of Romantic Comedy. The changes already discussed in the portrayal of Edward and the unfolding of his relationship with Elinor provide the early stages of this transformation and are continued throughout the film.

Austen is more explicitly critical of Marianne's romantic tendencies than the film, often suggesting, in a voice that verges on contempt, that her sufferings are unnecessarily self-indulgent. This criticism is invariably followed instantly by a comparison with the superior bearing of Elinor. The following example comes from Chapter One and concerns their grief at bereavement;

Elinor saw, with concern, the excess of her sister's sensibility, but by Mrs. Dashwood it was valued and cherished. They encouraged each other now in the violence of their affliction. The agony of grief which overpowered them at first, was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again. They gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in future. Elinor, too, was deeply afflicted; but still she could struggle, she could exert herself. (19)

Marianne's sadness is characterized as having a self-absorbed quality in the



film too but its presentation lacks the rather hyperbolic tone of the above. She responds to Elinor's request to play something different on the piano by switching to an even more funereal tune, but the exchange thereby achieves a comic value as well. This approach is repeated after Willoughby's unusual departure from Barton Cottage. Marianne, Mrs Dashwood and finally Margaret shut themselves inside their bedrooms to weep, and a high-angle shot frames Elinor alone on the landing with the sound of crying suffusing the house. By avoiding what might be painful close-ups of the weeping women and by placing Elinor at the junction of their three doors, the ridiculous element of this behaviour is expressed in conjunction with its genuine origins. Although they wish to express their unhappiness in solitude, the framing ironically emphasises the collective quality of their misery. Whilst Elinor - whom they regard as insufficiently romantic, expressive, individualistic etc - is the only one left truly on her own, unwillingly experiencing the lonely dejection they are striving to attain. Though Willoughby's departure *is* worrying, the Dashwood women *are* sad, and with the exception of Elinor this sadness *is* rather egocentric, the manner of its representation undercuts both the sadness and its possible criticism with humorous staging and framing rather than underlining it through judgmental narration.

By conveying Marianne's excess of sensibility in a less negative fashion than the original, the film closes Austen's moral chasm - already narrowed by the new values added to the Edward/Elinor relationship - between sense and sensibility. Instead of the outright vindication of sense which Austen offers, the film appears to commend a happy balance with sensibility, to imply that a prudent match may be romantically satisfying too. 'Lose your heart and come to your senses' invites the film's subtitle - at least on my cassette-case. A more Austenian maxim might be 'Forget your heart and come to your senses', for the concept of losing one's heart suggests an abandonment to romantic hopes of

which Jane surely would not approve. Whilst Austen's Marianne is 'born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions', to 'voluntarily give her hand to another' 'with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship' (20), Kate Winslet's Marianne discovers that her Mr. Right was right beneath her nose all the time. The original didactic resolution in which modest hopes are rewarded and extravagant desires are attenuated almost to disappearing point is translated into the staple conclusion of numerous romantic comedies, for example *When Harry Met Sally*.

One major area of difference is the time and attention afforded at the novel's conclusion to Lucy and Robert Ferrars. Whilst the film leaves Lucy being virtually attacked by Fanny, furious at the discovery of her engagement to Edward, and later reveals that she is married to Robert, the novel discusses in some detail the advantages her mercenary nature has secured her. Lucy's 'unceasing attention to self-interest... with no other sacrifice than that of time and conscience' (21) not only frees her from an attachment to a disinherited Edward but re-ingratiates both Robert and herself with Mrs Ferrars senior and thereby assures their financial future. Austen invites us to note that Edward and Elinor - the model couple - will be less well provided for than Robert and Lucy - that least exemplary pairing - but to feel satisfied with this outcome because good conduct is its own reward.

Lee & Thompson's film must satisfy a different set of expectations, however. Its resolution is more absolute, not qualifying the happy success of the two 'good' couples by dwelling on the prospects of the matchings which shadow theirs; Robert & Lucy, Willoughby & Miss Grey. A brief interlude in the final wedding scene shows Willoughby watching from afar, but this only reminds us of what he has lost, what his conduct has *cost* him, and achieves a satisfying and enhancing contrast with the joy down at the church. Any concluding reflections on his newly-acquired financial security or on the remunerative potential of



Lucy's influence with Mrs Ferrars would threaten the romantic finale. Austen may conclude *Sense and Sensibility* in a manner that is 'perfunctory and swift', a 'detached and public tidying of events' (22) but the adaptation ends romantically, not rationally. Edward's proposal to Elinor - witnessed by Margaret from her treehouse - cuts directly to flag-waving children outside the church as Marianne and Brandon emerge from their own wedding. Swelling music, a judicious edit, and a wholesale riot of colours and jubilation manage to link two marriages into a single scene of happiness which is both preposterously immoderate and irresistibly infectious. Willoughby may be seen reminding himself of his loss and Fanny is also glimpsed in the crowd - wiping confetti from her face! - but the demands of the romantic comedy are ultimately met by effectively banishing, as to opposed to incorporating, unpleasant aspects of the story.

The desire to render the film's final distinctions, and an audience's affections, in absolute rather than qualified terms is also evinced in the omission of the novel's scene where Willoughby arrives unexpectedly at Cleveland having heard of Marianne's illness. His dialogue with Elinor somewhat softens both her opinion of him and the reader's, especially since he reveals that his particularly hurtful final letter to Marianne was dictated by Miss Gray, not composed by him. Whilst continuing to acknowledge his many defects Elinor feels an unmistakable sympathy for him too;

Willoughby, he, whom only half an hour ago she had abhorred as the most worthless of men, Willoughby, in spite of his faults, excited a degree of commiseration for the sufferings produced by them, which made her think of him now separated for ever from her family with a tenderness, a regret, rather in proportion, as she soon acknowledged within herself - to his wishes than to his merits. (23)

Rather than risk an audience's anticipation for a Marianne/Willoughby reconciliation - which a 'death-bed' appearance might well prompt - or even have his conduct faintly mitigated, the adaptation excises this scene completely. His fundamental - if attractively concealed - weakness is never really explored

and following his appalling treatment of Marianne in London he never returns to complicate the development of her relationship with Brandon.

Another area where the film lightens the original's didactic tone is its alteration of the character of Mr Palmer. A minor character in the novel, he is made far more entertaining and likable in the adaptation. This is achieved not only by the casting of a recognized comic actor, Hugh Laurie, but through new dialogue and the avoidance of Austen's rather censorious descriptions of him as self-important and more interested in billiards than his Parliamentary business. The exchanges between him and Mrs Palmer/Imelda Staunton are more wholeheartedly comic than Austen makes them and serve to reintroduce humour at moments which otherwise threaten to become depressing. The following exchanges in Sir John's drawing room after Willoughby's worrying departure are a good example;

Mrs Palmer: 'If only this rain would stop!'

Mr Palmer: 'If only *you* would stop!'

&

Mrs Palmer: 'Do you not long to have the Misses Dashwoods come to London?'

Mr Palmer: 'I came into Devonshire with no other view.'

(Mrs Palmer, standing, now crumples the newspaper of the seated Mr Palmer in her excitement. He looks displeased and attempts to flatten it.)

Laurie as Mr Palmer is unquestionably rude, brusque, even sarcastic to his wife and others. However, these moments are appreciated purely for their comic value; we are not seriously intended to judge him and recognize his imperfections. While Austen appears to intend that all her characters, except Elinor, be recognizably flawed and therefore qualitatively locatable on a scale of virtues and defects, the film is less interested in stressing the faults of minor characters. Their defects, e.g Mrs Jennings' embarrassing curiosity, are only shown where they are germane to the Elinor/Marianne//Reason/Romanticism



divide; Marianne will come to discover that Mrs Jennings is essentially good, but that Willoughby - who criticizes and impersonates her manner - is not. This is, of course, particularly true for the reserved demeanour of Brandon, whom Willoughby will encourage her to dislike but she will eventually learn to love. While Austen's moral examination is unremitting, the film is prepared to play at least one character purely for his comic potential and in so doing lightens the story's tone considerably.

In her introduction to the 1995 Penguin edition Ros Ballaster notes that *Sense and Sensibility* evolved from an earlier unpublished work written in the form of letters (24). Following Poovey she suggests that this epistolary form was abandoned because it encouraged a sympathetic response to those character traits Austen wished to censure. She indicates how key moments are often filtered through another character's consciousness; e.g. Elinor's witnessing the meeting between Willoughby and Marianne at the ball. This 'establishment of narrative distance' means that 'events acquire the sort of perspective which can promote judgement rather than identification on the part of a reader.' (25) This measured style of 'telling' rather than 'showing' clearly suits Austen's didactic purpose but is far less suited to the demands of a romantic comedy which will require identification between audience and characters. The 'losing one's heart' Austen wished to avoid becomes a necessity in the adaptation.

An early scene between Fanny and Mrs Dashwood indicates how the film breathes immediacy into Austen's often distant relation of events. When she becomes aware of the intimacy between Edward and Elinor, Austen describes Fanny's response to Mrs. Dashwood thus;

She took the first opportunity of affronting her mother-in-law on the occasion, talking to her so expressively of her brother's great expectations, of Mrs. Ferrars's resolution that both her sons should marry well, and of the danger attending any young woman who attempted to *draw him in*; that Mrs. Dashwood could neither pretend to be unconscious, nor endeavour to be calm. She gave her an answer which marked her contempt, and instantly left the room... (26)

Although the italicised '*draw him in*' suggests the recollection of actual phrasing, Fanny's hurtful remarks are contained, or rather suggested, within a single sentence. That they are hurtful and destructive of Elinor's hopes is summarily conveyed rather than expressively demonstrated. We know of Edward and Elinor's relationship because we have been told, in a similar tone, of its existence and now we are told of a likely obstacle to its development. The emotional engagement with their relationship which dialogues and vignettes of human detail might have fostered is intentionally absent and our disappointment is consequently relative. A naive essentialist argument might be that the adaptation will necessarily do away with Austen's emotional distance and judgmental perspective since its narrative technology is one of showing not telling. However, this would ignore two crucial factors. Firstly, that Austen's style is not an inescapable consequence of literary form; that she deliberately avoids techniques and devices which approximate to the immediacy of mimetic or quasi-visual experience. Secondly, that the film similarly eschews diegetic modes and devices such as voice-over which could replicate Austen's style and effect.

Lee and Thompson's film consciously structures this and other moments differently... From a window Fanny watches Edward and Elinor walking away from the house. Edward attentively gathers Elinor's shawl which has slipped from one shoulder. She is joined at the window by Mrs Dashwood and, prompted by the sight of the couple, a conversation begins about Edward. Ostensibly discussing his prospects in an abstract manner, but clearly making a pointed allusion to Elinor, Fanny describes at length how Mrs Ferrars 'is determined that both he and Robert will marry well'. Her opinion of Elinor as unsuitable becomes obvious as she describes Edward as a type upon whom 'penniless women can prey' and refers to 'his ruin' (disinheritance) should he settle himself in 'less exalted ground than he deserves'. Mrs Dashwood, clearly



upset, replies 'I understand you perfectly', turns away and leaves Fanny looking contented. A cut to Edward later saying 'To Devonshire!' at the news of their move immediately links Fanny's intervention to the couple's separation. By making Edward and Elinor actually present in this scene, through revealing them not only as the subjects of the conversation but of observation too, the film heightens the sense of loss at this future separation. Small acts of kindness, of which the shawl-arranging is a timely reminder, have value and appeal in their own right and as signs of a growing intimacy - auspicious in the eyes of Mrs Dashwood and the audience, worrying for Fanny. This value, and the dramatic weight of Fanny's intervention, are accentuated by juxtaposition.

Great emotional emphasis is added to the scene in which Elinor finally reveals her awful predicament to Marianne. As she speaks, Thompson raps her knuckles hard on her chest - an act not specified in the novel. The sound of these impacts, punctuating her long bottled-up outburst, is painful and riveting. Chapter One of this study introduced the concept of 'materialization' as an important adaptive strategy; the rendering of novelistic elements in a cinematic manner. Although these and other instances are more than a transformation of original material, since they also alter the novel's tone and intent, I would not hesitate to class them as successful materializations because of their imaginative use of filmic means (camera-movement, framing, performance, sound etc.) to bring out original material.

Marianne's 'rescue' by Willoughby also undergoes a transformation in the passage from page to screen. After her fall, Austen relates the incident thus;

A gentleman carrying a gun, with two pointers playing round him, was passing up the hill and within a few yards of Marianne, when her accident happened. He put down his gun and ran to her assistance. She had raised herself from the ground, but her foot had been twisted in the fall, and she was scarcely able to stand. (27)

The changes to this scene are twofold. Not only is dialogue added to an incident where the original only summarises the substance of what

is said, but important adjustments are made to what actually happens which add to the increased vividness already facilitated in the shift from a telling to a showing mode. Willoughby arrives, not on foot, but on horseback. We first see him silhouetted against the horizon through the mist and rain, though Margaret who has gone for help cannot. The noise of approaching hooves increases and Margaret's disorientation is conveyed by cutting which avoids any establishing shot to help place him in relation to her. It seems as if they may collide when Margaret suddenly senses the horse close by, shrieks, and causes it to rear. Willoughby dismounts, rushes to Marianne - who remains lying on the grass - and scoops her into his arms. He carries her to the cottage where, having thrilled everyone with his good looks and actions, he departs as suddenly as he arrived.

Having already increased the romantic appeal of the Edward/Elinor relationship the film is obliged to effect significant changes to Willoughby's arrival in order to maintain a meaningful distinction between the two men. A Gothic flavour of dangerous excitement is lent to his appearance through the vision-obscuring weather, disconcerting camera-movement and editing. His arrival on horseback simultaneously references a host of movie-heroes, from Robin Hood to Zorro, who dash melodramatically to rescue heroines and initiates a counter-reading of him as being 'too good to be true' which Elinor will later pick up with her question "Is he human?". His direct speech, swift departure, and confidently witty reason for not staying - that he has "no desire to leave a watermark" - distinguish him from Edward's hesitant and self-conscious manner. (Though not in terms of one being appealing and the other not.) Elements of this contrast - though not Willoughby's early dialogue - are already present in the original but his dynamic masculinity is far more boldly stressed in the film. This is achieved almost to the point of being tongue-in-cheek. Elinor's rather deflating comments provide a limited acknowledgment of this



quality which avoids an audience's sensing for themselves that the characterisation has gone unintentionally over-the-top and become parodic.

The adaptation also magnifies a fragment of Austen's original to create a vivid, almost erotic, moment of the scene in which Willoughby cuts a lock of Marianne's hair to keep. In the novel Elinor only learns of this event retrospectively from Margaret, who witnessed it, but the film actually enacts the scene with Elinor as a physical observer. By filming this scene the adaptation not only achieves an emotionally heightened representation of the developing Marianne/Willoughby relationship but also provokes a reminder of Elinor's separation from Edward and the suffering her dignified bearing conceals.

Edward's proposal to Elinor is the scene most significantly altered in terms of a shift from a summarized to a manifest mode of representation. The film compresses two separate visits by Edward to Barton Cottage - the first when he reveals Lucy and Robert's marriage, the second when he proposes - into a single incident. The effect of his surprising news produces in Elinor 'a state of such agitation as made her hardly know where she was' in the original, causing her to 'almost' run out of the room and 'burst into tears of joy'. (28) However, Thompson as Elinor enacts the whooping release of pent-up emotion which Austen's qualified description seeks to contain. She covers her mouth with a hand but cannot stifle her wholly convincing cries. This performance far outstrips any faithful realization of Austen's prototype, is more than a rendering of prose into performance, and forms a first rung on the film's concluding emotional ladder of a) Good News b) Proposal and c) Wedding Scene. While Austen provides for a cooling-off between the first two incidents the film builds relentlessly to a stirring 'high'.

An acknowledgment of Austen's tendency to pull away from the brink at emotional moments is perhaps achieved in having the action move outside the cottage when Edward proposes inside, with Margaret relating what she can see of

the incident from her treehouse. However, an audience does witness his declaration that 'my heart is, and always will be, yours' and this device works more in terms of creating an unbearable anticipation than of reproducing Austen's moderating and contextualizing style. Margaret's cry 'He's kneeling down!' is followed by a cut to the scene of Marianne and Brandon's wedding which finally compounds the irresistible drive toward a happy resolution. If not an actual double wedding, the film contentedly encompasses the two central pairings in its last scene. The 'strong emotions' which producer Lindsay Doran was eager to emphasize in publicity are achieved through such magnifications, materializations, and re-structuring of scenes as the above. The highly-charged moments - e.g Elinor's revelation of her secret suffering and the crisis of Marianne's illness - generate a force of emotional backswing which allows for a fuller and happier release than Austen's restrained approach permitted. The original didactic structure has provided the foundation for a second stor(e)y with quite different values, and a compliment to Austen may be inferred from the fact that her characters contained sufficient nuances, despite the novel's didactic intent, to emerge altered but still recognizable at the end of the process. The original is not so much revised as exploited - in the best sense; mined for elements which will work in a different medium and genre.

The closeness of the original story materials to those expected in a romantic comedy is, of course, the fundamental reason why the film is structured according to the requirements of that genre. Virtually any story that culminates satisfactorily in happy marriage after a series of love-related confusions, set-backs and disappointments is already broadly in tune with the narrative trajectory of romantic comedy. This chapter has charted the various alterations and omissions from the original novel which enable the adaptation to counteract those remaining elements which would not sit comfortably. Certain changes, such as the increased romantic appeal of the male leads and the



reduction of didactic moralizing, are alterations calculated to better align the film with specifically generic expectations. Meanwhile the omission of Austen's class-based criticisms of the Steele sisters brings the film more generally in line with contemporary standards of social thinking. This latter type of change will be seen and discussed in all the following chapters and suggests that adapters are invariably anxious that the derived texts will offer a political and moral world view acceptable to modern audiences. Changes related to the requirements of romantic comedy will be further discussed in Chapter 6 and in the next Chapter, concerning Douglas McGrath's adaptation of *Emma*. Despite the original novel being both a comedy and a love story, numerous alterations are nevertheless required for the adaptation to satisfy the demands of that genre.

## CHAPTER 4. EMMA.

Austen's characters invariably inhabit a small world. A handful of country houses, a compact market town and occasional visits to London encompass the circle of their activities. The difficulties and moral dilemmas of her heroines are not set beneath a huge backdrop of the French and Industrial Revolutions, of Napoleonic wars and political upheaval, but are placed in a much smaller and more secure rural canvas. Roger Gard maintains that this phenomenon explains the comparative disdain for Austen in Continental Europe where, he argues, she is regarded as an 'English provincial miniaturist' who fails to deal with the really weighty issues (1). Equally, her uninterest in the turmoils of her time may explain her popularity with the British and with anglophone readers worldwide since she appears to offer a pleasant and rather timeless England which is 'green, happy, bustling (and) elegant' where social and political ambiguities do not cloud the wit and 'energy' of her writing (2).

It is this latter conception of Austen's England which the 1996 adaptation of *Emma*, scripted and directed by Douglas McGrath, exploits for its opening... A hand-painted spherical bauble spins in dark space. Not unlike the Universal logo of the revolving earth, this predominantly blue and green 'world' does not bear the continents and oceans but a series of tiny portraits of the story's characters, their family houses, and a map of Britain with only London and Highbury marked. This device becomes cleverer upon reflection - at least to this viewer - as a witty confluence of film iconography (though the movie isn't a Universal release) and literary culture. It makes explicit the narrative parameters of what will follow, claiming that for the purposes of the story this is the whole world. A voice-over, not drawn from the original, stresses the extent to which an audience is entering a sequestered milieu;

In a time when one's town was one's world and the actions of a dance excited greater interest than the movement of armies there lived a young



woman who knew how this world should be run.

It is arguable that the visual device alone sufficiently establishes the story's boundaries and that the voice-over is an unnecessary addition. However, such a criticism points up a recurring problem in the assessment of adaptations; whether to judge the new form simply on its own merits or to regard it alongside and in dialogue with the original. For Austen readers the meaning of Emma's spinning bauble will chime with what they already know of Austen's preoccupations. For non-readers its implications may only become clear *in conjunction* with the soundtrack. If one believes that any artwork should be free-standing in terms of its intelligibility - which is not to deny the pleasures of intertextual readings as well - this dual expression is probably necessary. For a commercial undertaking that will not want to alienate non-readers it is probably inescapable.

Possible confusion arises however in having the voice-over delivered by Greta Scacchi who plays Mrs Weston. Voice-overs normally suggest omniscience, an authorial point-of-view, or at least the chastened wisdom of hindsight. Though Scacchi may have a lovely voice Mrs Weston is not associated with any of these varieties of superior knowledge or judgment, either in the novel or the film. Whilst pleasant, she is not all-knowing, mistakenly detecting a romance between Mr Knightley and Jane Fairfax for example. It is more usual to regard Knightley himself as the character whose judgments most approximate to his author's. David Monaghan states that;

It is generally agreed.. that the truth of the novel can be located somewhere in Knightley's viewpoint, in the story of Emma's education (*by Knightley*) and/or in Austen's use of binary oppositions (*where Knightley is commended over Frank Churchill*). (3)  
(Italicised sections mine)

This combination of factors could argue for using Knightley's voice (Jeremy Northam) or perhaps a female non-character who could be interpreted

as Austen, or at least as having authorial omniscience.

One feature which Austen readers are particularly likely to notice is that the new opening omits the original's celebrated first sentence;

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. (4)

A well-wrought and attention-grabbing sentence, it begs the question, why the substitution? Especially when the excision of Austen's original is more likely to disturb than to delight those viewers who notice such things. The answer is that the transition between media makes most of Austen's description redundant. As the camera pulls back from the bauble to reveal Emma (Gwyneth Paltrow) presenting it as a gift to the newly married Mr and Mrs Weston (James Cosmo and Scacchi) we can see that she's attractive, guess her age as accurately as is necessary, recognize her social situation from her dress and bearing, and infer confident intelligence from her speech. The voice-over instead describes what *cannot* be seen; the fact that Emma's environment is not influenced by the wider world. This factor may need stressing for a contemporary cinema audience whose world constantly and instantly reverberates with distant events. All that remains to convey is the easily-missed but crucial qualification of Austen's 'seemed', a task that is more difficult on film than in prose. Whilst language cannot capture the surface detail of Emma's appearance and home - the brevity of Austen's own descriptions of faces and places suggests her recognition of this limitation - it can suggest far more easily than a primarily mimetic medium a difference between surface and reality.

McGrath nevertheless finds an equivalent for Austen's 'seemed', and without recourse to a diegetic device. We learn that Emma only appears to be happy by a deliberate shift in the film's style of 'showing'. When Emma mistakenly addresses Mrs Weston by her maiden name and goes on to claim that



the marriage has made her very happy the camera closes in relentlessly on the two women in profile. As they embrace Paltrow leans forward and toward the camera into the space between them, her face occupying most of the screen. Her expression suddenly lapses into sadness, visible only to the viewer, revealing that she is not as uncomplicatedly happy as she seems. Whilst the more static medium-long-shots of Emma interacting with other characters designate her public face, this close-up, preceded (and heralded) by a mannered camera-movement, suggests her interior state. The framing of an embrace to reveal a surprising or inappropriate expression on one of the participants is not entirely original of course: Visconti's *The Leopard* involves a similar moment between Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale. What makes this instance interesting is its use as a materialization of a literary device and the stylistic and interpretive precedent it sets for the whole film, of zooming and swooping camera movements to characters' faces as revelatory of significant thoughts or moods.

By actually enacting the closing moments of the wedding party, an event alluded to rather than developed by Austen, the film introduces several key characters quickly and establishes their relevant traits. Emma's combination of talent and lack of sustained application is broached in her dialogue with Mrs Weston, her former governess. Although Mrs Weston praises her painting skills Emma admits that she should have practised harder, as she was urged. The young vicar, Mr Elton (Alan Cumming) is revealed to be somewhat obsequious, and his romantic interest in Emma is anticipated by his lingering on the periphery of this conversation at the right of the frame, interrupting to claim that Emma's painting is without fault. Emma's father, Mr Woodhouse (Denys Hawthorne) is shown to be an amiable but fussy valetudinarian in his complaints about the draughty church and worries about the effects of eating rich cake. Though all of these character-revealing moments are present in the original the film pulls them into a single scene, helping to fit nearly 500 pages of

novel into 120 minutes of running time.

Information is also compressed when the back-story concerning Mr Weston's son Frank Churchill is conveyed. Austen begins Chapter two with three pages which summarize Mr Weston's history leading up to his new wife's receipt of a pleasing letter from Frank. Instead the film introduces Harriet Smith (Toni Collette) earlier than the novel, adding a dinner-party scene in which Mr Weston briefly relates his past to her - and, of course, the audience. The benefits of this alteration in terms of the effective use of screen-time are twofold. Firstly, Emma's attempts to match Harriet and Mr Elton are quickly initiated. Secondly, the introduction of a character new to the social circle provides a natural justification for another to relate his circumstances first-hand.

Cuts on dialogue where speech begun in one scene is completed in another are a recurring feature of McGrath's film and serve to keep the story progressing at a fast pace. When Emma visits Miss Bates (Sophie Thompson) and they discuss the imminent arrival of her niece Jane Fairfax (Polly Walker), Miss Bates proposes that when she comes Emma should visit again and asks; 'you must sit right where you are and you must say...'. A reverse shot to Emma shows her in the same seat but now wearing a different dress. Emma completes the sentence; 'We are so glad to have you with us' and the shot reverses back to Miss Bates and Jane together. The visit alluded to in the beginning of the sentence is actually underway at its conclusion.

This method of linking two separate occasions is both effective in terms of an economical use of time and amusing. Conflicting visual and aural messages blur our sense of the temporal transition. Aurally, whilst the *sense* of the sentence which links both visits is clear and unbroken, the change in *speaker* cues our awareness that something unusual is going on. Visually, although Emma's clothes are different, this could easily go unnoticed - especially since her posture and position remain unchanged. It may only be with the reverse to the



newly arrived Jane Fairfax that the leap in time is fully comprehended. The familiar and comprehension-facilitating shot/reverse-shot technique, which ostensibly approximates to the natural shifts in attention of a physically present listener, is subverted. Even the shot featuring Jane Fairfax, which dramatically clinches our sense of what has happened, is not *inherently* non-naturalistic. It is its *context*, a conversation in which she was not originally present, which prompts our recognition that time has not unfolded naturally. The film eschews any formal or non-naturalistic cue that time has moved on, such as a fade, dissolve, or lingering shot before a cut. It structures the time-lapse as *unacknowledged* both stylistically - the unbroken shot/reverse-shot - and at the level of performance; viewers may be surprised at Jane's appearance but characters are not. Though attempts to map literary language precisely onto film terminology often fail, it is in this instance possible to argue that through colliding a naturalistic film grammar - the editing - with a naturalistic film vocabulary - the shot and its contents - a *non-naturalistic* rendering of the passage of time is effected.

As with the early camera-movement leading to Emma's expression in the embrace this device is not notable for its originality but for its sustained use throughout the film to develop its own system of signification. This scene with Jane Fairfax is also linked to the next scene between Knightley and Emma by a bridging sentence. As Emma's queries about Frank Churchill are answered noncommittally by Jane, Emma's inner voice begins 'I take it back. She is...' A cut to Emma and Knightley arranging flowers in a conservatory completes the sentence with Emma saying aloud '...absolutely impossible!' In a variation on the previous segue the speaker remains the same, albeit in a shift from inner thoughts to speech proper, and it is the location which alters. As with the embrace, conspicuous camera-movements draw our attention to significant moments for the characters.

In the conservatory Emma and Knightley are framed to the right and left respectively of a tall plant stand which divides the screen vertically. As Knightley asks 'Why should you care so much about Frank Churchill?' the camera pulls back swiftly, leaving him a smaller and immobile figure at the right of the screen. This camera-movement is ostensibly motivated as a reframing of Emma who is simultaneously moving forward and toward the left of the frame to place a label in a plant pot. However, a viewer cannot but notice Knightley's frozen concern at the mention of Frank followed by his physical separation/distancing from her in this altered framing. By instantly making him smaller and solitary the negative effects of a Frank/Emma pairing are graphically suggested and his romantic interest in Emma is anticipated. Having placed the label in the plant pot Emma returns to her original position beside Knightley and the camera restores the original framing by zooming/tracking back in. The significance of the previous change is thereby underlined; they are still separated by the tall stand but not as far apart as they were when the subject of Frank predominated.

Next it is Emma who has her private worries exposed to the audience by a pointed camera movement. As Knightley announces his news that 'Mr Elton is going to marry', news which absolutely reveals how ill-judged was Emma's attempt to match him with Harriet, the camera sweeps around and to the right to catch her expression. Whereas the previous framing held Emma in profile and most strongly lit from behind the new camera position places her more frontally with her face better lit and her disappointment therefore more decipherable. A literal thunderclap from outside accompanies the camera movement, and stresses the dramatic impact of his news. The new framing doesn't constitute a confession to Knightley of her one-time hopes for Harriet. He can see her no better than he could before. However, whilst the audience were already aware of her manipulations, this sudden interrogatory camera movement anticipates her



eventual admission to him at the ball and begins her series of realizations concerning Knightley's virtually infallible judgment.

Another split-sentence links the conclusion of this scene to the next. Emma's response; 'I don't know what to say, except that I am..' is completed by a wet and bedraggled Harriet in a room at Hartfield '...in a state of complete shock'. Different speakers, in different locations, discussing a different event, form the materials of this temporal segue. Emma is momentarily worried that Harriet has already heard of Mr Elton's engagement, but her 'shock' arises from a chance meeting with Robert Martin (Edward Woodall), the suitor Emma had encouraged her to reject. Four different scenes are thereby rapidly linked with inter-connected dialogue and without recourse to more traditional editing devices. When Harriet explains her bedraggled state to Emma and her monologue becomes the voice-over for a more familiar flashback sequence the impression is not so much of a sudden leap in time and space but of a distinct slowing-down in the temporal oscillation, a steadying respite from our vorticosic journey.

As with *Sense and Sensibility* Austen's *Emma* commonly renders significant moments in a narrative mode that is summarized and distant, a 'telling' style which avoids the increased engagement and vividness which a less mediated or 'showing' style might provoke. McGrath's adaptation, like Lee & Thompson's, does not attempt to replicate her reined-in style at these key junctures but exploits them for their immediate and visual potential. The question inevitably arises of how much this alteration may be *facilitated* by formal differences or whether the shift in media is a *predetermining* or absolute factor. It seems likely that writing - however good - cannot provoke mental images, though it may concern itself with visual matters. In *Narrative Discourse* Gerard Genette maintains that 'the very idea of showing, like that of imitation or narrative representation... is completely illusory'; that all written

narrative can do is tell 'in a manner which is detailed, precise, "alive", and in that way give more or less the *illusion of mimesis* ' (5) Descartes in *Meditation Six* (6) gave an early example of how comprehension is not always contingent upon visualization; the difference between a pentagon and a hexagon can, he points out, be both mentally pictured and understood, whereas the difference between a chiliagon (a 1000 sided figure) and a 999 sided figure cannot be imaged but can be understood without difficulty. Some Cognitive Scientists maintain that mental images - as they are popularly understood - do not even exist; they believe that these phenomena function in a linguistic rather than pictorial manner, that they are actually ideas though they seem experientially similar to images (7). This suggests that even with the assistance of memory - a faculty of limited usefulness when negotiating fiction - language can only dance at the periphery of our sense of sight. Vision may be alluded to, suggested and remembered but always and only in the play of words, never in the ignition of internal images. To conceive of language as such a stimulus ultimately debases literature, regards well-structured words as fuel - not as an end in themselves.

Writers may nevertheless choose to engage the idea of vision, to orbit and arouse our memories and experiences of seeing. Equally, they may not. Writers may employ a style which emphasises the differences between reading and seeing. Their works may minimize visual descriptions and continually remind us of their authored status - their constructedness - through the presence of an authorial voice and through summarizing devices which undercut the spatio-temporal naturalness of the story-world. Austen's style falls overwhelmingly into this latter category. It is arguable that her heavy use of dialogue indicates a contrary tendency, toward a more mimetic rendering of experience, but this argument would overlook the most salient aspect of her characters' speech. Whilst her lengthy dialogues can assume an experiential similarity to the duration of real 'talk-time' they are ultimately too clever, the



phrasing and argument too tight and finely wrought, to be like real conversation, even given historical changes in speech patterns. The absence of lapses, mumblings and phatic function all draw attention to the ideal nature of her characters' speech. This is, admittedly, a feature of virtually all fictional renderings of speech, but Austen's novels more than any others feature rejoinders and repartee so improbably perfect as to suggest the considered deliberateness of written language rather than the makeshift spontaneity of the spoken word.

Austen's presence as a narrator - not of the 'Gentle reader..' variety but as an equally palpable presence, both ironic and judgmental - and her consistent tendency to handle dramatic moments in a moderating and summarized style should lead to a recognition that she is not trying to make us see, but that she is trying to tell us something. Whilst readers are intended to become interested and involved with the characters this technique of securing our engagement necessarily employs a careful balance between partisanship and moral judgment. The former is only developed as the latter is satisfied. We are never 'swept away' by Austen's novels, but led to their matrimonial conclusions with an invitation to qualify our delight at the outcome with considered inferences from what has preceded. In observing that McGrath's adaptation does not attempt the distancing, discrimination-provoking style of Austen one is obliged to face several resultant questions. What inferences would Austen like us to draw from *Emma*? Do these lessons remain vestigially in the adaptation, notwithstanding the formal and stylistic changes? If absent or muted, what is it about Austen's social and moral lessons that a modern audience might find distasteful? To what extent are the changes that McGrath's adaptation effects explicable as a consequence of the change in media? Or are these changes more a matter of *genre* than of *form*?

The Christmas Eve party at the Westons which leads to Mr Elton's

unwelcome marriage proposal to Emma is a good example of the adaptation's use of a 'showing' narrative mode instead of the 'telling' style of the original. Austen describes Mr Elton's oily attention to Emma thus;

(He) was continually obtruding his happy countenance on her notice, and solicitously addressing her upon every occasion. Instead of forgetting him, his behaviour was such that she could not avoid the internal suggestion of 'Can it really be as my brother imagined? Can it be possible for this man to be beginning to transfer his affections from Harriet to me? - Absurd and insufferable!' - Yet he would be so anxious for her being perfectly warm, would be so interested about her father, and so delighted with Mrs Weston; and at last would begin admiring her drawings with so much zeal and so little knowledge as seemed terribly like a would-be lover, and made it some effort with her to preserve her good manners. (8)

The film develops this scene for a highly visual comic effect. Emma is trying to listen to Mr Weston's news about a letter recently received from Frank Churchill but Mr Elton's interruptions continually distract her. Austen only mentions the letter *after* she has described Mr Elton's fawning attempts to ingratiate himself, so a reader comprehends Emma's frustrated attempts to listen rather than actually sharing in her frustration. But McGrath elicits precisely such an empathetic response to Emma's irritation. As she, and the audience, attempt to listen to Mr Weston the camera continually pans to the left. Each pan is shown retrospectively to have been motivated by a touch on Emma's elbow by Mr Elton who asks her variously whether she is warm enough, whether she is too warm, and if there is anything he might do for her father. As the camera leaves Mr Weston - who is on the brink of a particularly interesting revelation before each pan - the sound of his voice fades to be replaced by the exchanges between Emma and Mr Elton. Conversely, each time the camera returns to Mr Weston's monologue he appears to have just delivered the most topical sections, unheard by the audience, who are only privy to his preambles and segues before being interrupted afresh.

The adaptation's sub-scene of Mr Weston's (non)story builds Emma's



frustration to a comic climax as her exchanges with Mr Elton become increasingly ridiculous and her patience wears thin. The camera appears to be struggling to pan right but is repeatedly detained by Mr Elton's attempts to prolong the conversation and appear to be of service. He even subverts her attempt to be rid of him by sending him to fetch some punch when he worries that he won't perform the errand fast enough. The peak of her frustration is then revealed in a 'Please!' that breaks into a deeper and stronger timbre before recovering her more feminine tone to enjoin him not to hurry. Her success in momentarily banishing him is dissolved as the camera pans right just in time to see Mr Weston concluding his narrative; 'And that was the end of the letter!'. The chirpy harpsichord rendering of 'Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly' which had been playing throughout immediately concludes with a flourish, underlining with a cheeky finality Emma's failure to hear.

The changes effected in the realization of this scene amount to far more than an inevitable modification caused by the transition in media. Austen could have stressed the comic frustration far more boldly by interweaving Mr Weston's monologue with Mr Elton's interruptions, having the reader experience - like Emma - the suspense of only catching fragments of his story. Similarly, McGrath could have presented the scene in a manner which more closely approximated to Austen's structure and effect. By framing Emma, Mr Elton and Mr Weston all together in a single long shot the adaptation would have avoided the audience-involving pans and provided a justification for not using clearly audible dialogue. Occasional words and phrases from both men could be made distinct or naturalistic sound could be eschewed altogether. A voice-over of Emma's thoughts could certainly restore the original's order where the narratee learns of Frank's letter after rather than during Mr Elton's interruptions.

However, both these hypothetical versions would probably fail to match the comic effects of the real texts. Alternating dialogue in the un-Austen novel

might approximate to the panning shots but would not replicate the exquisite helplessness of the viewer who can only look where the camera looks, when it looks. Though a reader can only read what is on the page he/she is at least free to subvert the intended order of its delivery, to skip ahead, to read faster. The tantalizing nearness of the unheard and unseen monologue is also enhanced in the medium of film because it actually appears to be taking place rather than being simply unwritten. Logically we know that Mr Weston's story does not continue when he is off-screen but the direction makes it easy to believe that it does. The panning camera suggests that action and dialogue continue beyond the borders of the frame, that our frustrating 'problem' is one of access to an apparently boundless story-world. With literature one is more palpably aware that characters, settings and events only exist through their author - a world beyond the letter of the text is harder to suggest.

Similarly, a film version of this scene which attempted to reproduce Austen's more 'literary' comic style would be difficult to achieve. The humour in the original rests principally in the voice which describes what takes place. Her indirect free style which blends her own voice with that of Emma is a uniquely literary effect since any adaptation that quoted tracts of the novel, or a radio reading, would necessitate using a *particular* voice. The story's narrator would either have to be Emma or not. The description of Mr Elton's art appreciation as involving 'so much zeal and so little knowledge' offers entertainment predominantly as a pleasing use of language. Whilst a film version could feature such apposite phrases, judiciously selected from the original, they would inevitably have to be *sourced*. Austen's method of filtering the story through a consciousness that indistinctly combines narrator and heroine, author and central character, would be lost.

The concept of two hypothetical scenes in addition to the original and McGrath's adaptation reveals that the change from novel to film cannot be



characterized simply as a necessary shift from 'telling' to 'showing'. Austen chooses to employ a telling style, but other writers might be more concerned with ideas of vision and immediacy - using dialogue and more denotative description. McGrath chooses to use a specifically visual device, but another director might have found recourse in the more linguistic tools of film form such as voice-over.

The scene in which Emma breaks the news to Harriet of Mr Elton's proposal is changed in a related manner. Dialogue is added to an event which the original relates in summary. Whereas the adaptation makes a whole-hearted attempt to evoke our sympathy for Harriet the original appears less concerned. Harriet's tearful but accepting response to the bad news and Emma's witnessing of it are repeatedly described in terms of Emma's consciousness - forcing our attention away from the real 'victim', Harriet. Her artless grief is felt and appreciated by Emma because she 'was in the humour to value simplicity and modesty to the utmost' (9). Harriet's artlessness is significant only in the temporary recognition it prompts from her friend that her own artful schemes are responsible. The comparison of herself with Harriet momentarily elicits from Emma the conclusion that 'to resemble her would be more for her own welfare and happiness than all that genius or intelligence could do.' (10) McGrath's film has Emma apologetically express a similar sentiment to Harriet before placing her head in her lap. However, the adaptation does not weave a critical and ironically comic thread through its representation of Harriet's sadness. Doing so would jeopardize audiences' sympathy and identification with the text and Emma.

Austen immediately follows Emma's 'resolution' to be more like Harriet with the rather cruel observation that 'It was rather too late in the day to set about being simple-minded and ignorant' (11); an observation that would certainly make an audience uncomfortable if included. The unlikeliness of

Emma's wanting to be like Harriet and the inability of her busy mind to be long without a match-making project are suggested throughout and by means of Harriet's sadness. In contrast, the film does not undercut what Emma says, as she says it. A sadder strain of the title-music plays as the two women talk and the camera closes slowly on them, from long to medium shot. Stylistically, there are no cues that the scene can be interpreted as an ironic comment on Emma. It is followed, not by the original's reference to Harriet's ignorance, but by a scene in which Emma shows her some puppies in an attempt to cheer her up. Harriet's pathetic observation that one of the puppies has brown eyes, just like Mr Elton, begins the diminution of our sense of her grief in preparation for her next infatuation. However, it is achieved more gently than the original, though at the expense of losing Austen's acerbic portrayal of Emma's self-analysis.

Ros Ballaster's argument for *Sense and Sensibility*, that Austen develops 'the sort of perspective which can promote judgement rather than identification on the part of a reader' (12) applies to *Emma* too. This scene reveals that McGrath tips the scales away from a judgmental perspective and invites us to identify more strongly with characters. The original's representation of Harriet's sadness as relevant only in terms of its influence on Emma would be uncomfortable for the adaptation to reproduce. Given that Harriet's class-position is identified as (at best) uncertain, suggesting that her emotions are of little intrinsic importance would imply a textual perspective from which modern audiences would certainly feel alienated. Whereas Austen, and her Nineteenth Century readership would have no ethical difficulty in relating Harriet's importance with (what is eventually revealed to be) her social position, understanding the confusion and unhappiness as a natural result of her being socially mis-cast by Emma, the adaptation is obliged to appear more egalitarian. Throughout *Emma*, aspects of Austen's original which would not sit easily with a contemporary audience are carefully 'tweaked' to become more acceptable -



through both a muting of uncomfortable social and moral sentiments and a satisfaction of the demands of the romantic comedy.

When she is first introduced into the novel, we are told that 'Harriet Smith was the natural daughter of somebody' (13). This rather sharp and abrupt designation of her status softens into a description of her appearance, but suggestions then persist that her looks flatter the more elegant Emma when they are compared. Her position as a 'natural child' ultimately determines her marriage at the novel's conclusion to Robert Martin, the successful tenant farmer, rather than to any of the novel's gentlemen. Emma's notion that she is a gentleman's daughter is discovered to be incorrect. The final chapter reveals her to be simply the illegitimate child of a tradesman, prompting a recognition from Emma that her eventual match is suitable and that any of the other possible couplings would have been socially disastrous.

Such was the blood of gentility which Emma had formerly been so ready to vouch for! - It was likely to be as untainted, perhaps, as the blood of many a gentleman: but what a connexion had she been preparing for Mr Knightley - or for the Churchills - or even for Mr Elton! - The stain of illegitimacy, unbleached by nobility or wealth, would have been a stain indeed. (14)

Emma's adoption of Harriet as a friend is not interpretable as an egalitarian act, an ignoring of social differences which others might find unbridgeable. Rather, one recognizes Emma's assumption that her own status confers a right of patronage and that Harriet's rank will be improved not only by developing her accomplishments but predominantly by simple association with someone of such high standing as herself. When Knightley and Emma disagree about Harriet's initial refusal of Robert Martin their reasons are highly significant. Emma's are essentially egotistical. She cannot accept that Robert Martin is an adequate match for her 'intimate friend'; the value she ascribes to herself makes him unsuitable, not any intrinsic superiority of Harriet's. She fails to recognize that it is her own inappropriate relationship with Harriet which

transgresses social boundaries and which in turn makes his proposal seem problematic. Knightley's reasons are rational (at least according to Austen's social logic). He lists Harriet's defects - primarily her illegitimacy, but also her lack of accomplishment and fundamental silliness - as reasons why the match favours her. He regards Robert Martin more highly than Emma, citing his respectability and industry. Furthermore, Knightley's fundamental 'rightness' is revealed in his grasp of information. He guesses Emma's plans for Harriet and Mr Elton and attempts to dissuade her by revealing his knowledge of the latter's acquaintance with 'a large family of young ladies'; knowledge which correctly anticipates the vicar's marriage.

Knightley's judgment of the situation is a typically Austenian amalgam of moral conservatism and pragmatism. The extent to which his high opinion of his tenant Robert Martin represents an authorial fondness for such rural thrift is revealed in a description of Robert's farm toward the end of the novel as a place of 'prosperity and beauty, (with) its rich pastures, spreading flocks, orchard in blossom, and light column of smoke ascending'(15). However, this tendency does not amount to a meritocratic overturning of the social scale. Whilst we are meant to recognize that Emma's original negative assessment of a Robert/Harriet match was wrong, we are also clearly intended to concur with Knightley's view of the Emma/Harriet friendship as ill-judged and sure to cause difficulties. The relationship does finally dissolve 'into a calmer sort of goodwill' (16) - presumably similar to the socially-grounded and appropriate interaction between Knightley and Robert Martin. The novel's eventual restoration of the proper order is also evinced in the final pairings which can be seen to suit not only the characteristics of the participants, but also their social standing.

Mr and Mrs Elton deserve each other in terms of their shortcomings - his social ambition and small-mindedness, her *arriviste* vulgarity and vanity - and as a precise class match as well. Neither have the lineage of Emma or Knightley



though they are higher placed than Harriet and Robert Martin. Knightley and Emma are well suited because they both combine intelligence with fundamental goodness and both occupy the highest possible positions within the small world of Highbury - Master and Mistress respectively of its principal houses. The Jane Fairfax/Frank Churchill marriage is admittedly harder to assess - one cannot help feeling that she deserves someone morally better, though this may be compensated for in the financial and indeed social security she eventually finds. Nevertheless, this pairing is not socially transgressive and its more problematic properties may be accounted for in terms of its status as a *secret* connection, formed *outside* the security of Highbury by two visitors. Finally, the Harriet/Robert marriage happily links the only two characters who don't belong in Highbury's best society, rewarding him for his industry and taking her out of social circulation to a place where the revelation of her birth can do no harm.

Crucially, characters' good and bad qualities fit their status so neatly that the resolutions are not expressed purely in class terms. Characteristics are mapped so tidily, so *naturally*, onto the social scale that alternative resolutions or stories are safely debarred. A Harriet who happened to be cleverer and prettier than Emma, and who might really captivate Knightley, is unimaginable because her social level simply *could not* produce such a person. Notwithstanding Emma's 'improvements' it is only the possibility of her being high-born that allows us to think she can become truly genteel and be socially relocated. Once the truth is discovered her opportunities for refining and aspirational contact cease. Similarly, despite Knightley's respect for Robert Martin, we appreciate that the values this tenant farmer represents are a limited construction. He is a good example of what he is, but nothing more. We understand from the outset that this is not a story in which - for example - he could ever make himself Knightley's equal in delicacy or intellectually. He could never buy his farm from his landlord, rise in everybody's estimation and finally drive to Hartfield in a

new carriage and propose to an Emma who has secretly admired him throughout.

Many of these assumptions which underpin Austen's original would be unpalatable to a contemporary audience if made sufficiently discernible. Although readers are prepared to accept certain values, both implicit and explicit, in the original because that text is the product of a time with different standards, the film must work differently. It cannot simply repeat the problematic values of the original because it is a new text and liable to be judged by modern criteria, though it must also deliver a satisfactory sense of pastness. Nevertheless, McGrath's adaptation does not effect sweeping changes to the story, retains considerable portions of original dialogue, and yet manages to defuse some of Austen's more difficult sentiments. This is partly achieved by some careful omissions. Emma's reflections upon the discovery of Harriet's true parentage are left out, as is the recognition that her friendship will inevitably fade. This last omission is so striking that it is even referred to in a one-page review of *Emma* by Peter Matthews in *Sight and Sound*.

The movie is plainly embarrassed by Austen's categorical opinion that the friendship between Emma and Harriet is an inappropriate one; and it excises that bleak - but arguably truthful - moment when the now chastened Emma realizes their intimacy is cooling. (17)

Knightley's relationship with Robert Martin is also significantly rephrased in the archery scene where he and Emma argue about Harriet's rejection of the proposal. Whilst in the original Knightley twice refers to Robert thinking of *him* as a 'friend' as well as a 'counsellor' he stops short of saying that he regards Robert the same way, though he praises him highly. In the adaptation Knightley begins unabashedly by saying 'he's a tenant, you know and a good friend'; a relationship that is faintly less deferential is thereby suggested. Similarly, the novel has Knightley tell Emma of Harriet's eventual acceptance, blending his arguments in favour of Robert with a recognition of his social inadequacies;



His situation is an evil - but you must consider it as what satisfies your friend; and I will answer for your thinking better and better of him as you know him more.... His rank in society I would alter if I could.. (18)

In the film Harriet herself tells Emma and despite her trepidation Emma is delighted, remarking that her sad career as a matchmaker is over. Although it is apparent that the segregated social order is maintained in the film's final pairings, Austen's sharper emphasis is blunted. Instead, one is inclined to interpret the conclusion in terms of the broad narrative tradition of lovers eventually sorting themselves into the right pairs after a tortuous build-up and with one couple being the most important. More specifically, it evokes the 'Merrie England' film tradition where the final marriage between hero and heroine is echoed in an attachment between his squire and her maid. Although this type of conclusion clearly smacks of social division too it is usually additionally justified in terms of the best-looking characters finding each other - a justification McGrath's *Emma* explicitly provides as well.

Both in film and novel Emma's conceited assumptions are corrected through her failure to match Harriet according to her own wishes. Most profoundly of all it is Harriet's becoming a rival for Knightley's affections - at least in Emma's eyes - that demonstrates the dangerous effects of her tinkering. The film downplays the extent to which her troubles arise from a meddling with the social hierarchy to stress instead the problems of interfering in romantic matters, but the original makes a clear connection between the two. Beatrice Marie suggests that Emma's sense of her superiority to Harriet is threatened as early as Mr Elton's proposal;

Elton's unwelcome avowal demonstrates the fragility of the triangle of external mediation; already Emma and Harriet are being cast not as model and epigone but as rivals. (19)

In both original and adaptation we are never really convinced of the possibility of Knightley's falling for Harriet. She is simply too silly, despite his

admission that Emma really has improved her. The difference between the two forms is that whilst the film constructs Harriet as *happening* to be fairly daft as well as being illegitimate, the original implies a more causal link between these factors. By making Harriet's illegitimacy the very substance of her introduction into the novel, and by revealing her to be a tradesman's daughter in the final chapter, the original frames and contextualizes her primarily in terms of her birth. In contrast, the film has a later scene in which Harriet herself tells Emma about not knowing her family - which avoids the text itself appearing to have a judgmental position, as is the case with Austen's narration. Neither does it involve a final revelation of her origins. A handling of her status which will not disturb the social values of viewers is thereby achieved.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Austen's novel, particularly for feminist critics, is the manner in which Emma's shortcomings and assumptions are corrected by Knightley. Ruth Perry provides a good overview of the critical interpretations;

The sexual politics of Austen's novel are usually understood as an odious big brotherism. Emma must be brought down a peg, must be cured of her vanity and arrogance, and by a man - Mr Knightley - who has watched over her, corrected her faults, and given her advice and guidance since she was a little girl. Emma must be taught not to manipulate people, not to interfere in their lives, not to think she knows what is good for them better than they do. Critics have varied in their assessments of Knightley's priggishness and Emma's culpability, but everyone recognises that he keeps reining in Emma's imagination and criticising her romantic scripts for Harriet from his more realistic vantage point, one founded in economic realities and due appreciation of rank and status. (20)

Although McGrath's adaptation does involve Emma's being advised, argued with, and even receiving a dressing-down from Knightley in much the same way as the original, this never assumes 'odious' proportions. As with the representation of Harriet and Robert Martin, small changes to an overwhelmingly faithful rendering of action and dialogue create a version which is more palatable to a contemporary audience. Perry's interest in *Emma*



centres on the interruption of female friendships by marriage, an issue of clear relevance to Knightley's interaction with Emma since his 'corrections' make her good enough to be partnered with him. Perry points to the very first sentence as Austen's construction of an anomalous heroine; a young woman with financial security and hence lacking the principal inducement of her other heroines to find a husband (21). Here, it appears, is a woman whose relationships with other women need not inevitably be suspended. By omitting the original's opening, the adaptation de-emphasises this suggestion, although Emma does later refer to her not needing to marry. A key-part of the original's set-up, which in turn structures negative evaluations of Knightley's treatment of Emma, is nevertheless muted.

The importance of female friendships and their inescapable dissolution by marriage is less keenly developed in the adaptation in other ways - an adaptive strategy that is clearly vital for a romantic comedy, since the genre posits pairing/marriage as an ideal state, the attainment of which is the narratives' structuring desire and resolution. Dwelling on the drawbacks or penalties of marriage would fundamentally jeopardize the operation of the genre's pleasures. Although Emma's missing her former governess is described, her loss of Harriet's friendship is not. This omission, already useful in terms of the film's handling of class issues, helps to side-step the negative effects of the main marriage plot and therefore of the Knightley/Emma relationship generally. Likewise, the relationship between Emma and Jane Fairfax, the friendship that everyone expects but which never blossoms and which Perry terms 'the great unfinished business of the novel'(22) is made less important. Jane functions rather less as a reminder of Emma's appropriate duty to cultivate the company of her less fortunate social peers, and therefore of the impropriety of her friendship with Harriet. Since the film mutes the representation of Harriet as unsuitable, the comparison with Jane as a more proper friend is lost and she

works primarily as a narrative device to complicate the Emma/Frank relationship. Emma's attempts to initiate a genuine friendship toward the end of the novel are not all translated onto film (her sending arrowroot is omitted) and the novel's preoccupation with female relationships and their severance in marriage is checked.

Whilst Perry argues that the novel leads inexorably to Emma's recognition that she *depends on* Knightley, and suggests that her wealth is not enough to anchor her in society - that gender is the real factor determining the need for security in marriage (23), the film develops a different conclusion. The scene in which he proposes to Emma stresses a *mutual* desire in which each party struggles with a different misunderstanding; she believes that he is intending to tell her of an attachment to Harriet, he that Emma may reject him. Knightley reveals that he has suffered as a consequence of his love, that he believed he saw Frank's influence in her cruelty to Miss Bates at the picnic, and that he was unable to bear staying in Highbury, near Emma. The novel's conclusion where - as Perry puts it - 'every man is confirmed in his right to choose and be accepted'(24) is avoided in favour of the sentiment that the right people have finally found each other. This figuration of the story's end is far more appropriate to romantic comedy and avoids the suggestion of fundamentally unequal power-relations at work in the principal pairing. Although the adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* highlighted the unfairness of property and capital being channelled through male succession, with women's financial status defined by their relations to men, the ending deflected attention from the general (historical) situation through the fullness of its jubilant resolution for the particular characters. The final marriages resolve the difficulties established at the story's outset. However, suggesting that marriage itself - the resolving device and narrative summit of romantic comedy - was undemocratic, a contract in which the female party was largely subordinate, would irretrievably damage the



functioning and pleasure of these films. Re-casting the Knightley/Emma pairing as an equal partnership avoids this unsettling interpretive possibility.

The adaptation also leavens with humour one key scene where Knightley and Emma disagree. Their discussion of Robert and Harriet is relocated to the gardens of Donwell, Knightley's home, where they participate in some archery, whereas in the original they talk inside at Hartfield. Emma's irritation is charted visually by her increasing wayward aim which culminates in an arrow glancing off the side of the butt and catching one of Knightley's wolfhounds. 'Try not to kill my dogs' he remarks with a smile, and thereby punctures the antagonistic mood which had built to significant proportions with his previous remark, 'better be without sense than misapply it as you do'. Although they soon resume their argument, this comic addition makes it more difficult to read Knightley's relationship with Emma in unpleasant terms.

Comedy is also added to the charitable visit which Emma and Harriet pay to a poor family in the village. Austen does not develop this scene beyond describing - in the most general terms - Emma's sympathy and usefulness to the poor and sick. We are told that they have left the cottage in the same paragraph that they approach it, and there is no mention of specific acts or description of the individuals or the cottage itself. The film does venture inside but doesn't risk upsetting either its nostalgia-evoking representation of the past or the general light tone by attempting an accurate or otherwise disturbing representation of poverty and sickness. When Emma places the basket of food she has brought on the table a lingering shot is suggestive of the wholesome ingredients in a soup advertisement, particularly in combination with the background music. Similarly, the sounds of coughing and a crying baby don't counteract the impression of a rather snug cottage with a well-polished table and glowing fire. As they exit, grimy washing is visible strung on lines, but the exterior seems appealing nonetheless. What is most striking about this episode,

however, are the subsequent flashbacks which actually exploit the visit for comic purposes.

Emma and Harriet encounter Mr Elton as they walk back and Emma begins a fictional story of Harriet's usefulness to ingratiate her protege with the vicar. Harriet's surprised expression cues a flashback of the visit. While Emma invents an account of her friend's actions we see Harriet inside the cottage, brushing off a cabbage leaf that has adhered to her shawl and knocking over baskets. We realize, retrospectively, quite how useless Harriet was and this is accentuated through juxtaposition with Emma's glowing description of her. It even appears that Harriet may ruin Emma's plan by being slow to catch on, not remembering to substitute herself for Emma in the narrative when encouraged to take up the story. The irony is compounded by Emma's failure to recognize that she is the object of Mr Elton's desire, that his contented listening is motivated by an interest in her, not her contrived account of Harriet's goodness.

Representing the visit in more real socioeconomic terms might jeopardize our engagement with the principal characters through the revelation of a whole under-class upon whose proximity to poverty their own wealth depends. Austen is able to allude to the visit in the briefest terms - poverty only being relevant as a narrative device in Emma's story - because the existence of a large social sector termed simply 'the poor' was assumed to be a fact of life. Whereas poverty in modern society is understood as a condition into which people may slip, and further as a failure of social and state mechanisms which should work to eliminate that condition, the notion of ending poverty would - in the early Nineteenth Century - have seemed as impossible as resisting a force of nature. Indeed, the existence of 'the poor' was understood as a natural phenomenon and - insofar as their circumstances were ever considered in causal terms - their poverty tended to be characterized as a consequence of their own shortcomings; of vice, slothfulness etc. The role of the landed classes in



perpetuating poverty (e.g English absentee landlords of Irish estates causing an influx of starving immigrants to Britain who then undercut the indigenous labour market) figures heavily in more recent social histories, criticism, and period dramas but contemporary attitudes and explanations that put blame or responsibility elsewhere were unsurprisingly preferred (and believed) by those who benefited from the status quo.

By fashioning a new scene from Austen's summary - and by ensuring that the representation of poverty is mild to say the least - the film avoids replicating the original's sense of the poor as a natural and permanent social fixture. McGrath takes Austen's cue - of Emma's believing that Mr Elton's seeing them upon such an errand will benefit Harriet - and expands it into a new dialogue with the addition of a specifically cinematic device; contrasting a flashback image with the soundtrack for comic effect. As with several of *Sense and Sensibility's* changes, a fragment from Austen's original is magnified into a new scene.

In the previous chapter it was argued that *Sense and Sensibility* became a romantic comedy in its transition to film, an argument that was facilitated by the profundity of the change. *Sense and Sensibility* is certainly Austen's least cheerful work and the assignation of the title's contrasting qualities to separate characters points inexorably to a didactic purpose quite different to the unqualified happy conclusion which Lee & Thompson's film offers. In comparison, *Emma* is clearly already both a comedy and a love story, so to talk of the adaptation's being a romantic comedy is not inherently suggestive of change. Nevertheless, although the critical focus has shifted to smaller alterations - detecting hints of social and moral lessons and authorial assumptions in the original that would not have sat easily with a modern audience - these changes have clearly been heavily concerned with ensuring that the adaptation functions and gives pleasure according to the protocols of the romantic comedy genre.

Modern audiences would not accept or feel satisfied with the moralistic

underpinnings and conclusions that pleased Austen's original readership and her later, Victorian, devotees. Her emphasis on the subordination of self to the benefit of society is wholly at odds with recent prevailing notions of the importance and integrity of the individual. The achievement of personal success and satisfaction - of ambitions and desires - is a *raison d'être* and moral outlook quite different to Austen's and that of her day. Whereas modern society celebrates tolerance and freedom of self-expression and is valued for its capacity to accommodate individuality, Austen's age saw the onus of accommodation as firmly on the individual, who must learn to accept and fit into the fixed social structure. In Austen's novels this sense is particularly acute precisely because she is ideologically opposed to the developing stirrings of individualism and social change, idealizing the static hierarchies that existed before the unsettling influences of the French and Industrial Revolutions.

This poverty of individual expectations was particularly acute for women. The prospect of marriage to a decent (if un-attractive and staid) man may well have seemed an appealing narrative outcome given the contracted range of possibilities (none of them really 'choices') available to women at that time. However, changes in attitudes, suffrage, employment, and sexual and gender conventions have rendered the parameters of female experience hugely different to the situation during the Regency, offering opportunities and choices unimaginable to Austen, her heroines or her early readership. What constituted a good match and a happy conclusion nearly two centuries ago requires significant alteration if it is not to seem a disappointing outcome for a modern romantic comedy. Therefore, as with *Sense and Sensibility*, a desire to structure the conclusion in more happily absolute terms is evidenced. Casting certainly works to this end, most especially in the representation of Frank Churchill and Mr Knightley. In the original a greater importance is assigned to the difference in ages between them, twenty-three and thirty-seven respectively. The film



seems to narrow this gap, not by verbally describing their ages any differently but by casting Ewan McGregor and Northam who do not appear to be nearly a generation apart. The sense that Emma is marrying a man significantly older than herself is reduced, firstly because the film includes none of the original's allusions to Frank's youth as opposed to Knightley's more mature appeal, and secondly because fiction film has long tended to partner its male leads with significantly younger women. Any residual disappointment that a modern reader might feel in the recognition that the wisdom and judgment Emma admires are only available from an older man is banished in the adaptation.

Although Northam is not a well-known actor like Grant or Rickman in *Sense and Sensibility* and does not therefore bring star cachet to counteract the more negative aspects of Austen's construction of age, looks and physique he is nevertheless more likely and appealing as a romantic lead than Austen makes Knightley. This is particularly true in terms of a comparison with Frank. When the novel's Knightley is first introduced his description does not refer to his looks; he is simply 'a sensible man about seven or eight-and-thirty'(25) whereas Frank is described more gushingly from Emma's perspective;

The Frank Churchill so long talked of, so high in interest, was actually before her - he was presented to her, and she did not think too much had been said in his praise; he was a *very* good looking young man; height, air, address, all were unexceptionable, and his countenance had a great deal of the spirit and liveliness of his father's.... (26)

This is not abundantly clear in the adaptation. McGregor does not, for example, bring the same impact to his initial appearance and subsequent physical appeal as Greg Wise's portrayal of Willoughby. Instead, the invented meeting between McGregor and Paltrow when her carriage breaks down in the ford makes him attractive in a roguish or caddish sense when it initially appears that he will not help her. Furthermore, an audience is perhaps less surprised that he turns out to be something of a scoundrel because of the value he brings from his

performances prior to *Emma*; as Renton, the thief, drug-user and dealer from *Trainspotting* and as a cynical journalist who helps dispose of a corpse in the black comedy *Shallow Grave*. This is admittedly a feature of the film's reception that will change as McGregor's 'meaning' comes to incorporate more roles - though not if they continue to have a picaresque quality. His subsequent portrayal of an amiably inept kidnapper in *A Life Less Ordinary* and a guest role in the American hospital drama *E.R* as a likable Scot who holds up a convenience store continue to suggest the same kind of inherent meaning, though his forthcoming appearance as the young Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars Part One: The Phantom Menace* may well mark a shift toward playing more straightforward 'good' characters.

As with the adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, casting works to ensure that the heroine's marriage is altered from a sensible and morally satisfying conclusion where staid and dependable virtues are commended over flawed attractiveness into a resolution where the heroine secures a handsome man *as well* as making the right choice. McGrath's film also makes it clearer that Frank Churchill would have been the *wrong* choice. Whereas in the original it is Emma who wrongly imagines a romantic connection between Jane Fairfax and Mr Dixon, (a suspicion which Frank will exploit to conceal his own engagement to Jane), the adaptation has Frank himself invent the idea. Although he does so to cover up his amusement at the conversation provoked by the mysterious gift (from him) of a pianoforte to Jane he is nevertheless rendered more clearly as the initiator of the deception rather than simply benefiting from Emma's fertile imagination. Similarly, the adaptation does not feature Emma's receipt of a mitigating final letter from Frank, via Mrs Weston, where he attempts to explain his conduct and asks forgiveness. As with *Sense and Sensibility's* excision of the scene where Willoughby makes a last appearance and explains himself to Elinor, the film does not muddy its clear conclusions. The wrong men are shunted to



sidelines and do not complicate matters by later attempting to portray themselves in a more favourable light.

These alterations collectively enable the film to fulfil audience expectations for a romantic comedy. What the narrative constructs as the moral and intellectual 'rightness' of the final pairings is not visually undermined by mis-matches at the level of physical appeal but is instead bolstered by matching like with like. Although Austen was not aiming for such a wholesale agglomeration of happy factors, the physical/visual construction of characters becomes more influential in the transition to film. To 'materialize' and constantly display an un-prepossessing Knightley would jeopardize an audience's sense of his fitness for Emma, inescapably foregrounding his surface qualities in a way that literary description does not, unless it obsessively repeats or adds to a character's description every time that character appears. Austen's minimal descriptions of Knightley work the other way. The fact that he is not as appealing as Frank is established, but it is the goodness of his acts and conduct of which we are insistently reminded and which a Nineteenth Century readership would certainly have seen as his important qualities. But in a movie genre concerned with the eventual attainment of pairings, pairings which audiences are cued to recognize and desire from a very early stage, film's tendency to prefer and emphasise physical attractiveness becomes an inescapable influence.

There are some losses in this transition from novel to screen. In accelerating and compressing events into an acceptable length for a narrative film some of the 'comic symmetry' which Bruce Stovel (27) describes is compromised. For example, the novel has *two* significant excursions, the first to Donwell Abbey, the second to Box Hill. The day at Donwell is organised by Knightley - who patiently resists Mrs Elton's attempts to manage it - and is marked by general satisfaction and in particular by Knightley's concern for the comfort and happiness of his guests. The picnic at Box Hill however -

orchestrated by the odious Mrs Elton - amounts to a breakdown of civility. Emma is rude to Miss Bates, Frank snubs Jane, and Knightley is obliged to take issue with Emma. The adaptation makes a single event of these two occasions and their distinct values are lost. Although it is clear that Emma's best qualities are both encouraged by and embodied in Knightley, the contrast with Mrs Elton - whose snobbery and egotism suggest the worst of Emma - is reduced.

Whilst the distinction between Knightley's openness and honesty and Frank Churchill's tendency for intrigue and deceit is generally well conveyed, one careless piece of new dialogue jeopardizes this construction. In an early scene at Hartfield Emma tells Mr Elton that Harriet is collecting riddles and Knightley remarks, as he passes, that he hasn't been asked to contribute. Emma replies; 'Your entire personality is a riddle, Mr Knightley. I thought you over-qualified'. Such a remark is patently at odds with the film's construction and valuation of Knightley's plain-speaking and predictable temper. The adaptation may not emphasise as strongly as the novel Frank's taste for charades and word-games but his behaviour is nonetheless constructed as the anti-social opposite to Knightley's conduct.

Only one major scene remains largely undiscussed - the picnic at Box Hill. Probably the best scene in both novel and film, it serves to demonstrate a concluding point... The adaptation realizes the original's potential highly successfully. Miss Bates' (Sophie Thompson's) response to Emma's rudeness is painful to watch as she stutters 'I.. I see. I see what she means' and continues to repeat what Emma has said. Reaction shots around the picnic spread of uncomfortable faces add to the unrelenting quiet, broken only by her voice. The scene almost refuses to end, to cut away to a happier moment or a different place. Characteristically, it is Knightley who breaks the hush by asking Miss Bates whether she will walk with him - but his kindness only emphasises her vulnerability for the audience. Immediately after they rise a cut follows, but to



maintain rather than relieve the emotional pressure. Knightley is seen catching up with Emma at the picnic's conclusion to condemn her behaviour and we are privy to her mortification as she looks away from him and her face eventually crumples into tears.

Although much of both the preceding chapters has dealt with the careful omissions and alterations of moments where the original bites a little too deeply - either for modern attitudes, or for the standards of the romantic comedy - this scene, which bites deepest of all, is retained. This is both possible and desirable because most changes relate to original elements which tend to endorse unacceptable sentiments. In contrast, this scene provides an explicitly *critical* and progressive comment on the vulnerability of single women. Although there is no documentary evidence to suggest that Austen lamented her unmarried status, as Ruth Perry argues from her analysis of Austen's letters (28), she was nevertheless more personally attuned to the condition of spinsterhood than any other state. Her preoccupation with marriage in her fiction may not point to an unfulfilled desire of her own but certainly indicates a recognition of the security it offered and necessarily of the perils of being single. The Box Hill episode demonstrates how it is possible to interpret Austen other than as a conservative and its retention in the adaptation shows how not all authorial sentiments relating to sexual politics and power require attenuating. The only danger the film runs is that Miss Bates' precarious situation is so well expressed that we do not forget it by the happy ending. Although Emma's pairing with Mr Knightley means *she* will not be subject to the dangers of being an old maid, and Knightley's influence means that Emma's behaviour toward her will never again sink into unkindness - Miss Bates' situation will not improve. She can only hope that others will treat her well.

THE HARDY ADAPTATIONS.  
PRODUCTION CONTEXTS.

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* First published in 1891.

*Tess.* Released 1979. France/UK.

Director Roman Polanski. Producer Claude Berri. Screenplay Roman Polanski & Gerard Brach & John Brownjohn. Directors of Photography Geoffrey Unsworth & Ghislain Cloquet. Editor Alastair McIntyre. Music Phillippe Sarde. Art Director Pierre Guffray.

Leading Players Nastassja Kinski *Tess Durbeyfield.* Leigh Lawson *Alec d'Urberville.* Peter Firth *Angel Clare.* John Collin *Jack Durbeyfield.* David Markham *Rev. Clare.* Carolyn Pickles *Marian.*

\*

*Jude the Obscure.* First published in 1896.

*Jude.* Released 1996. UK.

Director Michael Winterbottom. Producer Andrew Eaton. Screenplay Hossein Amini. Director of Photography Eduardo Serra. Editor Trevor Waite. Music Adrian Johnston. Art Director Joseph Bennett.

Leading Players Christopher Eccleston *Jude Fawley.* Kate Winslet *Sue Bridehead.* Liam Cunningham *Phyllotson.* Rachael Griffiths *Arabella.* June Whitfield *Aunt Drusilla.*

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*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are Thomas Hardy's last two novels, though he lived until 1928. In his last thirty years he wrote only poetry and an epic poetic drama, *The Dynasts*. Many believe that his cessation of novel-writing was largely due to the hostile critical reception *Jude the Obscure* received, a reception that had been to a certain extent prefigured in critical responses to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Although some readers and critics responded positively to the novels, others took considerable exception to what



they saw as immoral content and wilfully dissident opinions about marriage, religion "and all the obligations and relations of life which people hold sacred."

(1). In a letter to the *Yorkshire Post* the Bishop of Wakefield wrote that his disgust with *Jude the Obscure* had caused him to throw it into the fire. (2) The nature of the material that prompted this anger can be briefly indicated by the novels' title page epigraphs; 'A pure woman faithfully presented' and 'The letter killeth'. Through this first polemical subtitle Hardy argues that Tess is pure despite her possible compliance with her seducer, bearing an illegitimate child, becoming a 'kept woman' and eventually a killer. With the second he argues that the binding law of Christian marriage is stifling, even fatal, a dogma that causes misery both by keeping the wrong people together and the right people apart.

Hardy was himself trapped for many years in an unhappy marriage to his first wife, Emma, which unhappiness was surely a formative influence in the genesis of *Jude the Obscure*. Another major influence was the writing of the distinguished agnostic thinker John Stuart Mill, particularly his work of 1859, *On Liberty*. Although Hardy had contemplated training for the church as a young man he increasingly felt, just as his character Jude comes to feel, that the cruelties or plain indifference of life were counter-evidence to the idea of a benign God. Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, also published in 1859, may well have contributed to Hardy's questioning the Christian account of man's place in the Universe; he went to Darwin's funeral in Westminster Abbey in 1882 and claimed himself to have been 'among the earliest acclaimers' of his work. (3) Whether Hardy's work is interpreted as pessimistic, agnostic or possibly even in terms of the author's belief in a mean-spirited deity or fate it is important to recognize how his narrative closures, especially of these two novels, increasingly reject the Victorian/Christian conception of Providence. His refusal to graft happy endings onto stories conflicted with the prevailing Christian demand that

art be 'uplifting' (4) and highlighted the social and moral injustices that others glossed over.

Raymond and Merryn Williams describe Hardy as being born into the 'intermediate class' (5), of skilled artisans who were generally lifeholders or copyholders (a tenure of three generations) on a property. Located between the landowners and their labourers, this distinct fraction of society was largely wiped out by economic changes in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many migrated to factory work in the growing cities, others remained in the countryside but slipped into the labouring class beneath. Peter Widdowson observes that another tendency of this group was 'to be meritocratically upwardly mobile, and, by way of education in particular, to 'migrate' to both physical and *other* class locations.' (6) Hardy himself moved to London as an architect's pupil and 'became a (self-) educated young man - up to a point.' (7) He could not, however, receive the advanced classical education in Latin and Greek available at Oxford or Cambridge to the sons of the class above. Many of Hardy's acquaintances, particularly when he became a famous writer and began to circulate in literary and 'high' society, had enjoyed such opportunities, and he felt considerable resentment at the prevailing manner of access to University education. Widdowson maintains that Hardy 'was obsessed by class and class-relations' (8) and notes how elements of his first (lost) novel, the un-published *The Poor Man and the Lady*, which according to Hardy was 'a sweeping dramatic satire... (of) the squirearchy and nobility... the tendency of the writing being socialistic' (9) recur throughout his writing and particularly in *Jude the Obscure*. Both the novels discussed in the next two chapters deal with facets of Hardy's class-consciousness; Tess's family dissolves with the death of her father - the last copyholder - initiating her descent to the lowest form of rural labour, and Jude attempts to enter the University of Christminster (Oxford) but is disdainfully rebuffed.



Relationships and sexuality form another major perspective onto Hardy's life and writing, often interwoven with his absorption with class. Again, *The Poor Man and the Lady* proves an apposite handle to his lifelong preoccupations, its very title pointing to a thorny 'class/sex nexus'. (10) Widdowson describes Hardy's 'insecurity' (11) about his social position and sexual relationships as manifesting itself in his divided feelings for the wealthy upper-class women with whom his fame brought him into contact. On the one hand he enjoyed the attention of society ladies, particularly at a time (the 1890's) when his first marriage was seriously failing, on the other he felt a 'kind of inverted snobbery' (12) towards their superficial lifestyles and compared them unfavourably to the achievements and durability of women from his own background and the class below. Widdowson further observes Hardy's tendency to 'invest with a gratuitous sexual charge.. women and events otherwise innocent of erotic significance' (13) - both in fiction and poetry and in his accounts of his life. This 'male gaze' of Hardy's has, Widdowson notes, featured 'prominently and properly in recent feminist, and otherwise gendered criticism' (14), particularly of *Tess*.

Given that the author's representation of fictional women and connections with real women have formed a major strand of Hardy criticism in recent years it is noteworthy that his *Tess* should have been adapted into a film by Roman Polanski, a director who has attracted attention both for the controversial portrayal of women in his films and for his (equally controversial) sexual life and relationships. As a child of Polish-Jewish descent, Polanski was fortunate to have survived the notorious Krakow ghetto and the Nazi holocaust which claimed most of his family. In the final months of the Second World War he lived as a 'child-outlaw' (15), sleeping rough and eking a living on the streets of an occupied city. He later attended the Polish National Film School at Lodz where he made his first feature *Knife in the Water*, a disturbing story of a

young couple who pick up a handsome hitch-hiker and invite him to spend the weekend on their yacht. This first film established many of the elements which would recur in his subsequent work and 'which could be readily identified as Polanskian: quirky sex, nudity, madness, varying degrees of violence and an obsession with the central theme of domination of women.' (16)

Two incidents from Polanski's 'private' life have provoked headlines and coloured critical and popular responses to his films, leading Polanski to complain on more than one occasion that it is his life and not his work that tends to be reviewed. The first was the murder of his wife, Sharon Tate, by followers of the satanic cult leader, Charles Manson, and the second Polanski's alleged rape of a thirteen year-old girl, after which he fled the U.S where he is still (technically at least) wanted. *Tess* was made in France soon after this incident, the French Government not deeming the alleged offence extraditable. It seems likely that the British Government *would* have returned Polanski to America had he attempted to stay and film *Tess* in Britain - his first port-of-call after leaving the U.S. Moving Hardy's Wessex to Brittany raised questions of faithfulness to the original, but Timothy Burrill, a producer on *Tess* argues convincingly that changes in British farming practices since Hardy's time meant that 'the countryside in *Tess* is infinitely more accurate than it would have been had we shot it in the British West Country.' (17) Unfortunately, there was no Breton equivalent of Stonehenge - an important dramatic location in the story - and a polystyrene replica had to be built at considerable expense. Eventually, only one small scene, at a railway station, was shot in Britain and had to be filmed by the second-unit director Hercules Belville.

In choosing to direct *Tess* Polanski effectively invited the press and public to make connections between his movies and his life. His *Macbeth*, begun months after Tate's murder, had prompted similar attention. In *Newsweek*, Paul Zimmerman had written;



The parallels between the Manson murders and the mad, bloody acts of these beautiful, lost Macbeths keep pressing themselves upon the viewer. All that is good here seems but a pretext for close-ups of knives drawing geysers of blood from the flesh of men, women and children. No chance to revel in gore is passed up... (18)

And Pauline Kael, writing for the *New Yorker*, was explicit in her claim that Polanski himself had sought to inflect the film with elements of real-life tragedy; 'one sees the Manson murders in this *Macbeth* because the director has put them there.' (19) With *Tess* and its core story of a young girl's rape/seduction by an older man Polanski appeared to be repeating the pattern, causing the *Hollywood Reporter* to comment, as news of the project emerged, 'You'd have thought he would have had the decency to do a war film or something.' (20) The fact that *Tess* would be played by his teenage lover Nastassia Kinski added further fuel to what would anyway have been an inescapable parallel.

Polanski's history of treating actresses poorly also helped ensure that *Tess* would be subject to close scrutiny from feminist reviewers and critics. Filming *Repulsion*, Polanski had taunted and abused Catherine Deneuve, criticizing her in take after take, and whilst making *Cul-de-sac* the crew had threatened to quit unless the director apologized to Françoise Dorleac, whom he had forced to repeat takes of a scene in the freezing North Sea, eventually precipitating her collapse. Whilst several Polanski films have featured remarkable performances from their leading actresses - invariably of characters under unbearable emotional or psychological duress - his methods of eliciting those 'haunted, haunting' (21) portrayals have been questionable to say the least. Although there are no accounts of this aspect of Polanski's character raising its head during the filming of *Tess*, the movie did add to another element of his reputation - that of determined, and expensive, perfectionism. *Tess* ran, like most of Polanski's films, over schedule and over budget - eventually becoming, at 12 million

dollars, the most costly film ever made in France. Its producer, Claude Berri, felt betrayed, believed that Polanski had always intended to exceed the original budget, and came to regard the project as 'an extravaganza whose aim and intent was largely motivated by one thing: the self-preservation and aggrandizement of Roman Polanski' (22). *Tess* did finally make a considerable profit for Berri, but there was a nerve-wrenching year-long period when the film failed to attract a U.S distributor. Polanski's dubious legal status may well have contributed to the reticence of potential distributors, combined with a sense that the director was now beyond the pale. Finally, after *Tess* won critical acclaim in France, Columbia Pictures, who had originally turned it down, opened the film in New York.

*Tess* appeared on British and American screens in 1981, during the first terms of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, right-wing leaders who both invoked periods of their nation's pasts as ethical and moral ideals. Thatcher sought to mould Britain's economy and mind-set through the recuperation of a 'Victorian' ethos of personal success achieved through hard work and enterprise, frequently alluding to her own background as a grocer's daughter, while the expression of Reagan's moral and economic schemes drew heavily on the mythology of the West, and of the genre of 'B' Westerns in which he had appeared as an actor. But this ideal of rugged individualism had much in common with the celebration of personal success cherished by Thatcherism. It seems ironic that Polanski, a filmmaker so strongly associated with the sexual and other excesses of the sixties, (the free-wheeling era against which the Reagan/Thatcher years appeared a reaction) should have made such a restrained and conservative adaptation; so many of his previous works offering an abundance of material sure to offend the moral right. However, the director's knack for self-preservation and capacity for cruelty may also suggest a consonance with the 'looking-out-for-number-one' ethos so vaunted through



the early eighties but punctured by the stock-market collapse of 1987.

It is a pleasing irony that Michael Winterbottom, director of *Jude*, is a graduate of Oxford University, which Hardy represented as Christminster and which denies the novel's hero entry despite his intelligence and application. Winterbottom's screen work is, however, far removed from the lifestyles and preoccupations of Christminster's academic population. Starting out as a television editor, Winterbottom directed the first episodes of *Cracker*, a hard-edged crime series set in the North of England, as well as the 'searing' (23) four-part Roddy Doyle mini-series *Family*. His first feature *Butterfly Kiss* (1995) was described in *Variety* as 'An often breathtakingly original weld of road movie, lesbian love story, psychodrama and black comedy.' (24) He therefore brought to *Jude* a background of subject-matter and a filmmaking politics quite different to what might be discerned in the heritage adaptations of English literature. This included bringing Christopher Ecclestone - a *Cracker* colleague - to play the title role.

Winterbottom formed Revolution films with producer Andrew Eaton in March 1994 and won script development funds for *Jude* from the BBC. Production funds of 4 million pounds were secured from Polygram Filmed Entertainment International, for which Polygram obtained all rights except British television, which remained the property of the BBC. Upon its release most critics were quick to draw attention to the differences between *Jude* and other Hardy adaptations and heritage films;

As modern, sinewy, and seriously stuck in the bog of poverty as recent adaptations of Austen, Forster, James and Wharton have been nervelessly romantic and entranced with the leisure of wealth, Winterbottom's movie basks in the clean truth of catastrophe. (25)

Chapter Two of this study has already discussed various ways in which Winterbottom's adaptation rejects and reverses the heritage aesthetic, refusing to

construct a nostalgic account of the British past. Although it will be demonstrated that *Tess* is not a straightforwardly nostalgic text, its often soft-hued cinematography and representation of the countryside anticipates the more nostalgic period dramas of later in the 1980's, a tendency which reached its apotheosis with *A Room With A View* in 1986. But *Jude* is clearly a response to that nostalgia and its political foundations. Although his film was released at the very end of the long period of Conservative government in Britain, Winterbottom's political tenets appear to have been forged during (and against!) the Thatcher years. Her call for a return to Victorian values gave Winterbottom an occasion to rework Hardy's criticism of those values, showing them to be as cruel now as then.



## CHAPTER 5. TESS.

The previous chapters on Austen adaptations have been largely concerned with changes - great and small - which alter the materials of the originals so that the resulting films fit the genre of the romantic comedy more comfortably. A later chapter on the Merchant/Ivory version of E.M.Forster's *A Room with a View* also examines this type of transformation. Throughout this study it is my contention that changes from novel to film are not so much a necessary and inevitable consequence of formal change - in terms of the expressive or communicative potential of the different media - but owe much to filmmakers' sense of what audiences will find acceptable, especially in terms of the pleasures and protocols of the movie genres towards which the adaptations are structured. Structuring a film towards a particular genre is shown to be an important strategy for filmmakers, facilitating audience engagement and comprehension and allowing adaptations to be marketed and approached according to recognizable groupings. Although Austen's *Emma* was already both a comedy and a love story it nevertheless required various alterations in order to emerge on film as a romantic comedy. So, to what literary genre does Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* belong and to which film genre Polanski's *Tess* ?

In her essay '*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* : Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form' Penny Boumelha describes the original thus;

Structured primarily as a tragedy, the novel draws also on a number of other genres and modes of writing: on realism, certainly, but also on a melodrama that itself reaches into balladry, and, of course, on polemic. (1)

Added to this bouillabaisse of generic elements is the debate of whether Hardy's style and preoccupations are those of a Victorian rustic or a proto-modern writer, or indeed whether his *Tess* may be considered as a modern or post-modern work. The overload of nomenclature does not lighten from source

to derived text; Roman Polanski described his adaptation as both 'a great love story' (2) and a 'modern tragedy' (3) and Peter Widdowson regards the film as a 'romantic tragedy' (4). Clearly, the idea of tragedy provides a starting point for analysis of both works, especially since the fundamentals of the story change little in adaptation...

Born to a poor family in the process of becoming poorer the beautiful Tess is raped/seduced by the wealthy Alec. She leaves him and their infant child, Sorrow, dies. Tess later finds love with Angel, unconventional son of a vicar, who nevertheless abandons her on their wedding night when he learns of her past. After much physical and emotional hardship Tess returns to Alec as his mistress, largely to support her mother and siblings. Angel repents his decision and returns to Tess, but too late. Owing to her current circumstances she turns him away. However, stirred both by Angel's visit and Alec's provocation Tess kills Alec and joins Angel. The couple enjoy a few days of freedom and happiness together before they are found by the police. Finally, Tess is hanged for Alec's murder.

By any reasonable calculation this story contains more than enough unfortunate events in conjunction with tantalizing - but denied - opportunities for happiness, along with the eventual demise of its main protagonist, to be termed a tragedy. However, it appears that critical - and particularly popular - discussion of film has considerable difficulty with the category of tragedy. It does not, in a sense, exist, other than where it is imported with a story from another medium, and even then tends not to be left as a free-standing generic description but is usually appended to another term, e.g 'romantic tragedy'. Conversely, drama has no such difficulty with the word; *Macbeth* and *King Lear* and *Hamlet* are simply tragedies, not 'royal', 'Scottish or Danish royal' or 'accession-related' tragedies. In film, whilst Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* could reasonably be defined as a tragic or tragedy-Western it is infinitely more likely to be termed



just a Western, and never just a tragedy. To omit the 'Western' part of the definition would be an unfamiliar or contrived act within generic discussion of film for the setting, era, and clothes all constitute its principal generic identity - while the eventual and inevitable death of its central characters in a hopeless, dreadful finale does not. However, it appears that drama employs different criteria. In another corpse-littered denouement - the end of *Hamlet* - the rendering of Danish history with appropriate costumes is wholly subsidiary, effectively irrelevant in generic terms (indeed, is usually omitted). What matters, what defines, is precisely the dreadful ending and the inevitable path thereto.

The film industry frequently appears reluctant to employ the term tragedy - especially 'tragedy' alone - as a description, advertising ploy, or marketing category. This is probably because tragedy has strong stage and literary connotations which may be perceived as off-putting to the young audiences whom the film industry pursues so vigorously. An analysis of industry data-collection techniques concerning audience composition and viewing habits confirms the importance that is afforded to the younger market, which, as Claire Monk argues, is such a preoccupation for the industry because its patterns of attendance 'accord... most closely with their conception of the regular cinema-goer.' (5) Monk notes the 'symbolic, as well as commercial' (6) importance of the regular cinema-goer to an industry desperate to predict the factors that make a box-office success and which depends on audience information to target-market its movies. In a business where each product is essentially a risky and expensive prototype, data about tastes and preferences is crucial, and the category of viewers who appear to offer consistent and predictable patterns of attendance is a cherished market. The bulk of such research in the UK is conducted through the CAVIAR (Cinema and Video Industry Research) surveys. These are funded by the Cinema Advertising Association which consists entirely of the two major

British players; Carlton Screen Advertizing and Pearl & Dean. (7) Monk cites these surveys' presentation of data as compelling proof of the film industry's (and of course advertizers') youth orientation; information about 7-19 year-olds is broken into five separate age bands, whereas audiences aged 45+ are treated as a single group. (8)

However, although the industry appears reticent in its use of the term tragedy, it has less difficulty with tragedy as content and tragic elements in a story are not likely to be downplayed or excised in an adaptation. (A fact evidenced by my story synopsis applying to both texts). With a film such as *Tess* - unlikely to be pitched at or especially appealing to younger cinema-goers - its tragic content and the suggestion of tragedy in its advertizing material would not have been problematic, and - in conjunction with its literary associations - would have constituted part of its appeal to an older audience. However, since box-office returns are commonly modest for movies which have a reduced appeal to younger audiences, profitability is only likely to be achieved if the budget is concomitantly slim. Hence the concern of producer Claude Berri as Polanski massively exceeded the planned costs of *Tess*. In the case of adaptation there is another fairly obvious reason why adapters tend to leave the tragedy 'in' while they may take the sting out of Jane Austen's treatment of class for example... While Austen's stories can emerge recognizably intact after being subtly changed to keep a late Twentieth-Century audience comfortable with the text's politics and values, an emasculated tragedy would simply not be the same story. Class can be made an invisible playing-field in Austen adaptations - potentially problematic only if one reads counter to the intention of the text - while Tess's fall and her delayed but inevitable death are the backbone or structuring dynamic of *Tess*.

Rather than de-emphasising the story's tragic quality Polanski's film instead mutes those aspects of the original which give it a melodramatic flavour,



particularly by cutting several 'gothic' scenes and instances where improbable coincidences drive the plot. In addition to this process, the film also loses a significant degree of the original's polemical force. Although Tess's story inherently provides an opportunity for criticism of the conventional morality that precipitates her end, the film loses Hardy's authorial voice where he rails directly at society and social standards rather than indirectly - through his characters' speech, thoughts, and actions. For example, when Sorrow is buried Hardy describes that area of the churchyard as 'that shabby corner of God's allotment where He lets the nettles grow, and where all unbaptized infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the *conjecturally damned* are laid.'

(9) (my italics) Polanski's film does not repeat - through voice-over for example - these authorial judgments and criticisms; we must form our opinions on the basis of what unfolds in the 'live-action', such as the refusal of the Vicar (Richard Pearson) to give Sorrow an official burial because of the censure this would provoke from his parishioners.

However, before discussing Hardy's criticism of contemporary morality any further, this chapter will address the toning-down of melodrama that occurs in the adaptation to determine what effect this has on the balance of the new text. Penny Boumelha described (p1 of this chapter) how Hardy's novel has a complex generic identity, where the dominant tragic theme - enacted mostly in a realist mode - contends with a strong vein of melodrama. This mixture proved awkward to tolerate for many early readers and critics - an interpretive tendency stretching long into the twentieth century - who struggled to reconcile Hardy's detailed rendering of rural life with his enthusiasm for the heightened emotionality and reduced credibility of melodramatic style. Peter Widdowson charts the development of this species of Hardy criticism, culminating in the 1970's vogue for 'humanist-realist' approaches to literature which assume both an externally-knowable 'real' world and the capacity in language to accurately

apprehend that world (10).

Hardy, against the grain of much of his writing, has, from the earliest reviews, been hauled into consonance with such a world-view and such an aesthetic. (11)

Whilst celebrated for characters whose stories were seen to reveal fundamental truths about human nature as well as for his descriptions of the countryside, particularly for constructing a record of a vanishing way of life, Hardy's work was also regarded as suffering from a variety of 'faults'. Paramount amongst these shortcomings was his attraction to melodrama, also his use of coincidence - itself a common feature of melodrama plots - as well as his 'pessimism' and sometimes awkward or uncomfortable style, particularly his references to art. (12) Connecting all these supposed inadequacies was their tendency to undermine realism, to threaten the very believability that the 'best' aspects of his writing fostered. Interestingly, more recent interpretations of Hardy have celebrated the variety - or mixture of 'voices' - in his novels as evidence of his work being significantly post-modern. Jean Jacques Lecercle maintains that Hardy deliberately opts for a polyphonous style;

...to let violence erupt on the surface of the text, to follow the lines of flight it indicates, to let the minor voices engage in their babble/Babel, in other words not to erase the contradictions from the text. To describe this choice we can borrow Bakhtin's term, 'polyphony'... (H)e accepts the violence of an unstable language as an integral part of his style, he lets the different languages within him speak out and contradict one another. This is why the narrator speaks like Tess, but also like Alec and Angel; why he indulges in flights of lyrical fancy, and also speaks the pedantic words of improving knowledge. Hence this impression of instability, of eruptive violence. (13)

It may be worth noting that Lecercle's elegy to Hardy's style seems to be in danger of over-correcting previous interpretations, of falling into that same pitfall of 'hauling' a writer 'into consonance' with the prevailing fashions of theory - particularly in terms of the high degree of intentionality he ascribes to the author. His account of Hardy's 'choice' to adopt a polyphonous style does not accord with our biographical knowledge of the writer's concern about the quality



of his prose which led to his 'studying Addison, Macaulay, Newman, Gibbon, and leading articles in *The Times* in an effort to polish up his style'. (14) One need not agree with Merryn Williams - who goes on to argue that this effort led to 'many disastrous attempts at sophisticated prose which disfigure even his finest novels' (15) - to sense that Hardy's particular style may not be a consequence of a deliberate effort to give free rein to many conflicting voices but the result of trying to contain and unite them.

Whether one believes that Hardy was consciously writing - John the Baptist-like - decades ahead of a literary and interpretive method currently in vogue, or whether his novels are simply amenable to postmodern approaches, it remains obvious that the melodramatic element of his writing runs counter to the realist element. (And this holds equally true whether one celebrates or bemoans the presence of conflicting and competing voices within a single text.) Polanski's decision to axe many of the most melodramatic scenes (the 'worst' I would imagine, for pre-postmodern tastes) results in a film that is more unified in terms of narrative style and more realist in terms of believability. Retaining the original's melodrama and polemics alongside the principal tragic theme and tone would have proved an unsatisfactory mix for audiences. Whilst some genres and modes are successfully combined in single texts - e.g the inclusion of a degree of comedy in many recent action blockbusters such as *True Lies* and *Independence Day* - Hardy's original compound could not have transferred successfully. Chapter 1 of this study discussed the popular - negative - conception of melodrama as failed or unsubtle tragedy with severely diminished believability. It seems evident that Polanski was mindful of this conception and did not want to include material that would make his film appear to oscillate between 'real' tragedy and its dime-store cousin. Reproducing such material might well have been interpreted as Polanski's failing to adapt a tragic novel, rather than his succeeding in bringing out all aspects of Hardy's multiform

original.

Realism is clearly a far more important part of Polanski's project than of Hardy's, where it is achieved in particular scenes but then abandoned in others. The fact that the adaptation is a period drama, whereas the original was set in its own time, is a major factor in the increased importance given to attaining and sustaining a realist mood. Historical accuracy of dress, setting and speech are invariably key elements of period adaptations, an important constituent of their appeal to audiences. Originally written as representations of contemporary life, they become in adaptation windows onto a bygone era. The attainment of period verisimilitude is both challenging and expensive for the filmmaker and pleasurable for viewers who enter lives and times they could not otherwise see. Given the effort of achieving this type of realism and the pleasure it affords, filmmakers are unlikely to seek to undermine it through narrative elements which compromise believability.

If period evocation is an aspect of Hardy's work that has become more important with the passage of time and in the transition from page to screen, the force and relevance of his polemical interventions has waned; not that his opinions on his contemporary moral and social issues or his methods of expressing them are seen as de-valued, but because society has altered and much of what Hardy railed at has changed and disappeared. A modern audience would not find it shocking that Tess be presented as 'Pure' and would overwhelmingly reject the Victorian standards that censured her and her author. The shifts he sought in sociosexual mores have been largely effected and probably exceeded. It would, therefore, be largely redundant to reproduce the more direct authorial commentary and interjections. Their elision also works to maintain the realist tone, allowing access to the story-world to feel un-mediated.

An additional result of these alterations is that they cause the film to relate differently to ideas of modernity and post-modernity than the original. The



'faults' which made it difficult for the critics of more than twenty years ago to unreservedly regard Hardy as a great writer are now recognized as the 'fault-lines' of 'competing discursive 'plates'' (16) an interpretation that allows the novel to virtually leapfrog modernity and become a 'contemporary post-modern text.' (17) By excising the melodrama and muting Hardy's polemical voice the film simplifies the original's mixed narrative style and therefore debars itself from sharing that as a claim to post-modern status.

However, Hardy's original has several interesting points of contact with modernism too. Tony Pinkney observes that 'modernism in one sense begins when the static, mythic or circular (non-)temporality of the 'organic community' ends' (18) and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* certainly charts the collapse of a mode of rural society with older structures of labour and living being swept away. Tess leaves her own community and experiences a range of jobs and lifestyles, from swede-hacker to kept-woman, that all fall outside the bounds of expectation which held previous generations. Her ceaseless and accelerating motion through 'the experiential possibilities of the individual self' (19) - mother, milkmaid, mistress, murderer - may be regarded as intrinsically modern. Yet Pinkney notes how difficult it is to define modernity, to fix its key features or historical limits;

As critics of many persuasions have pointed out, 'modernism' is the most frustratingly unspecific, the most recalcitrantly *un*periodizing, of all the major art-historical 'isms' or concepts. (20)

Tess (and Jude's) transit through different places and roles may well be comparable to the exploration of identity in Joyce and Woolf but such an emphasis is not necessarily or uniquely modern. Pinkney argues that the 'celebration of dynamism, the delirious multiplication of the possibilities of self, substantially precedes and succeeds this particular phase' (21), citing Wordsworth's *The Prelude* as an example. Another feature considered central to modern art works, their 'making strange' or 'de-familiarizing' of subjects to

renew our perceptions or reveal hidden, 'normalized', ideological structures is also traceable back to the Romantics; 'Coleridge and Shelley had spoken of "stripping the veil of familiarity from common objects" long before Viktor Shklovsky dreamed up *ostranenie* ... and formal dislocation, obviously enough, continues to characterize many works, from the French *nouveau roman* onwards, that we might now want to term post-modern.' (22)

Raymond Williams discerns another vital strand of the constitution of modernism which actually reaches back beyond the modernists; its figuration of the teeming city as (paradoxically) a place of loneliness and alienation. (23) He quotes Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (a draft of which was finished in 1805 but which was only published - posthumously - in 1850) and James Thomson's *The Doom of a City* (1857) as earlier examples of this theme;

O Friend! one feeling was there which belonged  
To this great city, by exclusive right;  
How often, in the overflowing streets,  
Have I gone forward with the crowd and said  
Unto myself, 'The face of every one  
That passes by me is a mystery!'

(Wordsworth)

The cords of sympathy which should have bound me  
In sweet communication with earth's brotherhood  
I drew in tight and tighter still around me,  
Strangling my lost existence for a mood.

(Thomson)

Although Tess does undergo loneliness and alienation, her's is not an urban story and she also experiences companionship and friendliness from the community at Talbothays. *Jude the Obscure* matches far more closely - for the title character at least - this characterization of modern experience. Jude's 'agonized consciousness' (24) as he reads in his unpleasant city room - tired but striving to learn, captivated by Sue but constrained by Arabella - mirrors our conception of the confusions, dislocations and mental struggles of that key



modern figure, the emigre artist in (usually self-imposed) exile. (25) In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* it is Angel Clare, another restless intellectual, who most closely fits this paradigm, indeed Hardy describes his feelings as 'the ache of modernism'. Angel's disaffection with the particular religious thinking of his father and brothers takes him into farming where it appears for a while that he has found an alternative ideal in the natural purity of Tess. When that purity is revealed to be 'false' he goes abroad, at the expense of his health, and eventually returns too late to retrieve a lasting relationship with his wife.

So, if Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* contains elements which may be termed modernist (though those elements have also been shown to stretch both earlier and later than the period broadly understood as the era of artistic modernism: the first half of the twentieth century) can Polanski's, largely faithful, adaptation be regarded as a modern text? Certainly it shares those thematic elements already discussed; the dissolution of the organic community, Tess's progress through different identities, and Angel's dissatisfied restlessness. However, and crucially, *Tess* displays none of the formal elements associated with cinematic modernism such as the abandonment of linear narrative in favour of story fragments, non-traditional characterization, or obtrusive and self-publicizing formal technique. (26) These elements are fundamentally anti-realist, whereas the entire project of Polanski's omissions and alterations is to increase the realism and basic believability of Hardy's story. Perhaps then, the same changes which prevent the film from being considered - as some consider the novel - post-modern, also prevent it from being regarded as modern.

Polanski's omission of most of the original melodrama begins rather innocuously when Alec (Leigh Lawson) and Tess (Nastassia Kinski) part after their first meeting. In the novel the suggestion that Alec is likely to spell trouble for the heroine has already been signalled clearly to the reader in phrenological terms normally associated with Arthur Conan Doyle; he has 'an almost swarthy

complexion, with full lips, badly moulded... touches of barbarism in his contours... (and a) bold rolling eye.' (27) After Tess's departure Alec returns to the marquee in the grounds for a singularly villainous aside;

When d'Urberville got back to the tent he sat down astride on a chair reflecting, with a pleased gleam in his face. Then he broke into a loud laugh.

"Well, I'm damned! What a funny thing! Ha-ha-ha! And what a crumby girl!" (28)

Polanski has no such aside for Alec to gleefully ponder on how to begin his machinations; the scene of their meeting cuts instead to the Durbeyfield family cottage days later with Mrs Durbeyfield reading the letter - ostensibly written by Alec's mother - inviting Tess to come and work on the d'Urberville's poultry farm. Interestingly, in Jane Marcus' savagely critical review of the film, 'A Tess for Child Molesters', she maintains that Polanski's direction of Leigh Lawson amounts to a 'sympathetic portrait of a rake' that fails to suggest how 'diabolically evil Alec really is' (29) One cannot help feeling that Hardy's Alec is already a rather one-sided or stock character and that cutting material like the above does not really diminish any sense of Alec's badness so much as avoid making him a laughable (and therefore less threatening) screen presence. In his introduction to the 1985 Penguin edition A. Alvarez remarks that 'Alec d'Urberville swaggers and twirls his moustache like the villain in every Victorian melodrama' (30). Were Alec rendered faithfully on screen it is likely that he would sometimes bear an unfortunate similarity to those often-parodied villains of early U.S. silent films who tie hapless heroines to railway tracks then mug and caper lasciviously before the intervention of the hero. As it stands, Leigh Lawson's more human and believable Alec also suggests his capacity to harm Tess in a way that a straightforward rendering would not.

Marcus is more justified in her criticism of Polanski's omission of the 'gothic' baptism scene where Tess christens the dying Sorrow before a congregation of her younger siblings in the candlelight of the Durbeyfields'



cottage. One suspects that Polanski cuts this scene as part of a general policy of tidying away all those moments where Hardy develops the melodramatic, gothic, or macabre in order to create a more realistic film which will dwell solely on the tragic, doomed love story. However, it is arguable that this famous scene could be retained without jeopardizing the story's believability in a way that other scenes (to be discussed next) could not. This argument is given weight by the fact that Polanski actually transposes the heightened emotionality of Hardy's baptism scene to the moment where Tess plants a makeshift cross on Sorrow's grave before departing for Talbothays. Although Polanski observes the same effects of point-of-view as Hardy - ending the scene with a close-up of the marmalade jar of flowers - he also employs music that builds strongly, including bells, which develop into deep spreading notes. In conjunction with the dawn light this music introduces a clear emotional weight to the scene which Hardy chooses not to, having already built to something of a crescendo earlier. Marcus explains the alteration not in terms of directorial strategy which relates to narrative style, but in explicitly ideological terms which simultaneously signal her theoretical colours and profound distaste for the director;

Polanski must have his reasons for failing to show this legendary scene in graphic detail on the screen. And the reason is that there is an unwritten rule against showing a woman justified in usurping male power. Only a priest can baptise. And a priest has a penis. (31)

There are, however, several scenes and moments from the original which Polanski could not retain without undermining his realist project and - in all probability - provoking at least scepticism or at worst laughter. On the morning of their marriage Tess trembles inexplicably at the sight of the old carriage which will take her from the church. She states that she 'must have seen it in a dream', a phenomenon which Angel blithely explains as her having heard 'the legend of the d'Urberville Coach - that well-known superstition of this county'. However, Tess maintains that she has never heard of the legend and asks Alec to explain it

in greater detail;

"Well - I would rather not tell it in detail just now. A certain d'Urberville of the sixteenth or seventeenth century committed a dreadful crime in his family coach; and since that time members of the family see or hear the old coach whenever - But I'll tell you another day - it is rather gloomy. Evidently some dim knowledge of it has been brought back to your mind by the sight of this venerable caravan."

"I don't remember hearing it before," she murmured. "Is it when we are going to die, Angel, that members of my family see it, or is it when we have committed a crime?"

"Now, Tess!"

He silenced her by a kiss. (32)

This story of a ghostly carriage - worthy of Poe or Hawthorne - is precisely the kind of narrative device that Hardy's detractors deplored and which Polanski clearly believes would weaken his film if included. It is worth noting, however, that Hardy does not completely preclude a realistic explanation for this gothic phenomenon; despite her two protestations to the contrary it remains possible that Tess has heard - and subsequently forgotten hearing - of the superstition and this half memory may account for her unease. Similarly, Tess's heightened emotional state - having only just discovered that Angel had not read her letter of confession - may contribute to her susceptibility, particularly in terms of fears relating to her 'crime' of having an illegitimate child. The story of the d'Urberville coach is taken up again in the original by Alec who explains that it is indeed 'held to be of ill-omen to the one who hears it' (33); though with this later reference Hardy is employing the story to emphasise the difference between Tess, an authentic 'blood' d'Urberville, and Alec, a 'sham' d'Urberville whose father bought the title but who cannot experience this and other ancient connections to the family.

Another gothic device which the film elides is Hardy's stating that the great house where Tess and Angel are to spend their wedding night is - by unfortunate coincidence - an old d'Urberville property. Most particularly noticeable is Polanski's omission of the family portraits, two hundred years old,



of Tess's forebears whose features are suggestive of 'merciless treachery' and 'arrogance to the point of ferocity'. These unpleasant reminders of her family history are compounded by their physical similarity to Tess, whose 'fine features were unquestionably traceable in these exaggerated forms'. (34) These paintings serve a significant narrative function in the original; not only do they anticipate difficulties on the wedding night, they also 'check' Angel at an 'irresolute' moment from (probably) joining Tess on the bed when he catches sight of one. (35) Widdowson regards the omission as 'surprising' because the portraits are potentially 'very filmic' (36) and explains it as a consequence of the film's playing down 'the sense of Tess as a victim of history' through the old d'Urberville connection. He neglects, however, to associate the historical/mystical links between Tess and the ancient d'Urbervilles in terms of their ghostly/gothic/melodramatic qualities and to explain their omission as a wholesale rejection of such properties in favour of a realist style.

Not all the original's melodramatic and credibility-stretching scenes relate to an eerie bond between Tess and her family. The most 'heightened' and protracted scene occurs days after Tess has acquainted Angel of her past and he fails to forgive her. In the middle of the night Tess sees Angel - crossing a 'stream of moonlight' - and entering the bedroom. A false hope is raised, for both Tess and the reader, that Angel has decided to consummate the marriage and has therefore forgiven her. Unfortunately, his 'eyes are fixed in an unnatural stare' and we realize that he is sleepwalking. (37) Murmuring to himself - "Dead! dead! dead!" - he picks up Tess and 'rolled her in the sheet as in a shroud'. Angel carries Tess to the landing - where it seems for a moment that he might be intending to drop her, or both of them, to their death below - before beginning an increasingly improbable somnambulistic journey. Tess is carried - 'the absence of clothes taking much from his burden' - over a 'voluminous and deep' river, the sleeping Angel managing to negotiate 'the bare plank... lying a

few inches above the speeding current'. Their journey culminates in a suitably gothic location, 'the ruined choir of the Abbey-church', where Angel places Tess in 'the empty stone coffin of an abbot' and kisses her lips before falling into a deep immobile slumber (38). After several minutes Tess begins to shiver - 'the sheet being but a poor protection' - so she walks the (still sleeping!) Angel back to the house and leaves him on his sofa bed. The next day he has apparently no recollection of the night's events and Tess makes no reference to what took place.

The adaptation does not include this scene; which I have described at length to give some indication of its overwhelming combination of melodramatic action and high gothic setting. This excision surely indicates that Polanski's other omissions are not so much due to his de-emphasising Hardy's idea that Tess is ill-fated because of her family (a sub-theme which does not relate particularly to this incident) as they are evidence of a far more sweeping policy of removing the melodramatic and unbelievable. In his 1924 *Conversations in Ebury Street* George Moore specifically criticised the melodrama of the sleepwalking scene (39) and it appears that Polanski was anxious to avoid such brickbats, even if the many omissions of this type ran the risk of his adaptation being termed unfaithful. What is remarkable about these omissions is that they do not result in allegations of unfaithfulness to the original (whether fidelity is conceived as either good or bad!) Widdowson notes how positive reviews consistently praised the film's faithfulness (40), a critical tendency which suggests either (a) that the reviewers were simply unfamiliar with the novel, or (b) - and I suspect this to be the case - that many reviewers shared the non-postmodern perception that such melodramatic scenes are instances of Hardy writing aberrantly or badly and that to elide them is entirely desirable and does not constitute infidelity. In short, they believed some elements of his writing to be more 'Hardy' than others and were prepared to dismiss sections which fail to match the standards set by the 'best' or 'truest'



examples.

Polanski's elision of such material - achieving a more even narrative tone than the original - may be interpreted as somewhat out of character. Most of his previous films had involved extreme or shocking incidents and their presence is arguably identifiable as a Polanskian signature. His adaptation of *Rosemary's Baby* had punctuated the realistic representation of a New York couple's life with scenes of black-magic, including the rape of Mia Farrow's character by the Devil. Its sustained realism and absence of traditional horror genre cues contrasted shockingly with the explicit (for the sixties) representation of occultism and sex. Polanski's personal appearances in several of his films also indicate that moderation had scarcely been a guiding principle in his filmmaking. Appearing in drag in *The Tenant*, as a thug who slices open Jake Gittes' (Jack Nicholson's) nostrils in *Chinatown* and spoofing horror movies in *Dance of The Vampires*, Polanski's oeuvre gave little indication that his *Tess* would restrain rather than revel in excesses. Equally, having responded to the Manson murders and their attendant media scrutiny with his gory *Macbeth*, perhaps the only way in which he could surprise audiences and critics after the rape allegations was to direct a subdued film - an approach that may also have been intended to suggest either his contrition or innocence.

Two further omissions relate to Alec and substantiate the argument that Leigh Lawson's portrayal is not so much that of a de-fused villain (as Marcus would have us believe) but is rather a version of Hardy's character which is built less heavily from stereotype, with consequent gains in realism. In the original Alec makes numerous visits to Tess - after having discovered that she is working at Flintcomb-Ash - to persuade her to return to him. Polanski does not reproduce all these encounters, and this is wholly justifiable in terms of his needing to achieve a reasonable economy of time to keep *Tess* to a manageable length; (my video version is nearly three hours long). However, one of these

encounters is also a rather melodramatic scene and its omission simultaneously helps achieve the unity of narrative style for which Polanski appears to be striving... In chapter Fifty Tess is digging a patch of allotment and does 'not for a long time notice the person who worked nearest to her', 'a man in a long smockfrock' who edges his way nearer. As the mystery individual inches himself closer Tess notices the light of the bonfire reflecting on 'the steel prongs of his fork' before she finally recognizes 'the face of d'Urberville' ! (41)

This revelation, (sudden to the character, yet profoundly unsurprising to the reader) is again reminiscent of Arthur Conan Doyle's writing, particularly the dual inability of the narrating Dr Watson to (a) recognize his sleuthing friend when Holmes is disguised as a sailor or tramp, and more interestingly (b) to successfully reproduce the surprise for the reader through his narration. Hardy, like Watson, manages to make it seem that he intends to structure the appearance/revelation as an equal and simultaneous shock for both reader and character while his deliberately obscure yet insistent (non)descriptions of the mystery individual work the opposite way, inviting us to guess long beforehand whom the person is. With his gleaming fork and face lit by the fire Hardy's Alec is indeed portrayed in diabolical terms - he even revels in the idea himself, alluding to himself as "the old Other One"(42). However, if Marcus is referring to this melodramatic use of iconography and Polanski's excision of the scene when she describes Lawson's Alec as less 'diabolically evil' than the original, one is surely inclined to think that such elements of the novel do not really contribute to the sense of Alec as dangerous. Equally, there are detectable echoes of this kind of description in the film's scene where Alec comes to try to persuade Tess when she is working on the threshing machine. As it darkens Alec is framed sitting by an open cottage door - with orange/red light glowing inside - and steam from the machine wafts in front of the camera, partially obscuring him. There is a possible reference here to Alec's being at the gateway to Hell,



inviting Tess to join him.

However, this potential interpretation is diluted firstly by the realistically-motivated justification for all the visual elements (light from the cottage, steam from the machine) and by another - more metaphorical - explanation arising from that last object. The threshing machine, which Hardy describes as 'a buzzing red glutton' (43), also embodies a more tangible threat to Tess and her family. Jack Durbeyfield's job as a haggler places his family in a marginal - and disappearing - rural class, semi-independent but also economically precarious; a fact demonstrated by their financial downward spiral after the death of their horse. With changing agricultural and transport methods such a class lost its foothold and tended to be subsumed into the labouring class beneath, a transition Tess enacts in the novel. Penny Boumelha points out how this and related sections of the novel have encouraged several critics to concentrate solely on its social and economic aspect and to regard Tess as an embodiment or representative;

For some, concentrating on such scenes as the Lady-Day move and the threshing-machine, she is the representative of an order of rural society threatened by urbanism, mechanisation, and the destruction of stable working communities. Thus, for Kettle, she typifies the proletarianisation of the peasantry; for the agrarian traditionalist Douglas Brown, she embodies 'the agricultural community in its moment of ruin'; (and) for the Weberian Lucille Herbert, she marks the moment of transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*.. (44)

The 'nouveau riche' Alec is a beneficiary of the changes that harm the Durbeyfield family - usurping even their original name and identity - so Polanski's decision to frame him through the steam of the threshing machine (the 'engine', literally, of these social upheavals) may be simultaneously an echo of the original's rather heavy-handed satanic allusions as well as a nod to Hardy's discussion of painful rural change. Marcus - perhaps unsurprisingly - maintains that Polanski's use of the threshing machine fails to suggest 'the brutal industrialization of farm work' and instead 'titillates a modern urban audience

in the electronic age, because its quaint rhythm and noise seems idyllic'. (45) Her remarks certainly suggest that Polanski's portrayal of the machine - and by extension other aspects of the story - is value or judgment free in a way that Hardy's is not and that one's interpretation is highly determined by prior familiarity with the novel and criticism (and in her case by one's attitude to the filmmaker!). Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with Marcus' perception that Polanski's handling attempts - in some soft-focused or cloying way - to take the ache out of Tess's labour and to preclude such allegorical or socially-informed interpretations.

A final melodramatic moment excluded from the film (I have dwelled on these at length to demonstrate the extent of the adaptation's generic streamlining) takes place during Tess's visit to the d'Urberville family vaults in Kingsbere. Unlike the scene of Alec's 'surprise/disguise' appearance this is not an instance of omission partly explicable in time-economy terms, for the film handles the scene at considerable length, excising only one key segment. In the original Tess reads the Latin inscription and then 'passing near an altar tomb' is suddenly struck by 'an odd fancy that the effigy moved'(46) This seemingly ghostly phenomenon is explained when Alec leaps from the slab upon which he had been reclining. He stamps his heel on the floor above the crypt and remarks - with suitably boisterous impropriety - "That shook them a bit, I'll warrant". It is worth noting that whilst the adaptation's cutting of this and other scenes does succeed in presenting a less alloyed narrative style than Hardy it also diminishes the novel's sense of predestination. By not including this scene and the sleepwalking scene - where first Tess and then Alec are placed in corpse-like positions - Polanski does not graphically anticipate their deaths in the same way as Hardy. However, such strongly-presented foreshadowing is perhaps inherently melodramatic itself, in which case its loss accords conveniently with the adaptation's narrative project.



Instead, the film introduces a subtler type of clue to future events by linking Tess and Alec's first and last encounters through the presence of a carving knife and fork used by Alec to slice a joint of ham. In the scene of Tess's first visit to Trantbridge we see Alec slicing some meat in the marquee - an act not specified in the novel - and after Angel's (Peter Firth) meeting with Tess at Sandborne we see Alec performing the same act (again, not in the novel) while cruelly taunting the distraught Tess. Polanski has Tess/Kinski say nothing after returning from her encounter downstairs (despite Hardy's including a long - if broken - soliloquy overheard by the housekeeper). Instead Kinski stares fixedly at Lawson's hands as he uses the carving knife, anticipating (rather like a weapon mounted on the wall in a Chekhov play) the use to which it will eventually be put. This suggestion is reinforced by our memory of the object's first appearance and suggests a pleasing irony - particular to the film - that the knife which formed part of Alec's arsenal of generosity and charm in his first meeting with Tess should be earmarked as the instrument of her revenge in their final scene together.

Perhaps the largest single alteration which the adaptation effects is its elision of Alec's 'conversion' from rake to fire-and-brimstone preacher and subsequent lapse. This omission unquestionably increases the credibility of the story, because Alec's turnaround is a somewhat flimsy passage in the original - never convincingly explained - and were it portrayed in the compressed form required by the change in media it would be less credible still. The shift in favour of increased believability is also doubly secured through this omission because in the novel Alec changes his ways after an encounter with Angel's father, Rev. Clare, who berates him for his licentiousness without realizing that his own son has married one of Alec's conquests. This plausibility-straining coincidence is lost when Polanski decides to omit Alec's conversion, as are several 'near-misses' before the marriage when news of the Alec/Tess

relationship threatens to reach Angel's ears as a result of the exchange between Alec and Rev. Clare. (Another of the novel's 'close-shaves' is also lost through the omission of a small scene where Angel strikes a man in a public-house who was on the verge of mentioning Tess's past) In omitting the conversion and lapse Polanski further adds to the construction of Lawson's Alec as a 'real' character, rather than one heavily determined by stereotype.

The result of these changes and omissions is that the adaptation acquires a more straightforward generic profile than the multifaceted original. Widdowson's description of the film as a 'romantic tragedy' certainly pulls together the two principal themes that remain, the love story and the tragic nature of Tess's adult life, though he fails to point out that they are enacted in a mode which is more unwaveringly realist than the novel. It is also possible however that characterizing the film as a romance or love story conceals a more complex second meaning than is evoked by the eventual (and tragically curtailed) Angel/Tess pairing. For it is also suggested - in both texts - that Alec loves, or comes to love, Tess, though she does not love him. Despite Alec's numerous flaws - even including his being a rapist - his relentless pursuit of and pleading with Tess are clearly more profound than simply the wiles of rake, eager to satisfy his desires. His attempts to win back Tess also come at a time when Angel's absence is causing her the worst suffering - both physically and mentally - in the dispiriting environment of Flintcomb-Ash, leading readers and viewers alike to wonder whether Tess, and particularly her family, might not be better served by a return to Alec.

The film love story usually suggests a frustrated and delayed pairing between an ideal - or ideally suited - couple. Alternative partners tend either to be rendered in unsympathetic, or at least unappealing terms or - if portrayed sympathetically - they are re-paired in an additional match, subsidiary to the principal couple. The 'right' pairing is usually understood by an audience early



on, invariably by the simple act of recognizing the male and female leads, in which case the desired outcome is signalled even before the film begins through the conjunction of promotional material with extra-textual knowledge of stars. This mechanism applies not just to 'lightweight' texts but also to those films considered to represent the zenith of the love story genre; in Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient* - also an adaptation, and also a tragic romance - it is a matter of little doubt that Ralph Fiennes and Kristin Scott Thomas will constitute the principal couple. In contrast, Polanski's *Tess* does not use established stars which combines with the ambiguous suitability of both Tess's lovers to produce a 'love story' which is far more open - in terms of an audience's interpretation and sympathies - than most romances.

The other element of Widdowson's 'romantic tragedy' definition - which I continue to regard as the most apt generic handle to *Tess*, despite the film's rather slippery relationship with the expectations that term structures - is tragedy. Although the early part of this chapter dealt with cinema's difficulty with the term tragedy, I nevertheless believe that an audience going to view *Tess* did so with the anticipation of a tragic theme. This is evidently the case for viewers with specific knowledge of the novel but I would contend that this also holds true for viewers with knowledge of Hardy generally - either through having read another of his novels, or simply as a consequence of familiarity with popular conceptions of his work, e.g his 'pessimism'. The film's promotion would also have served to structure expectations of a tragic story. Sombre and 'heavyweight' advertising and peripheral material signalled the 'tragedy' while avoiding the word itself. Kinski's brooding features dominated the poster and stills (47) and established a serious tone for the movie.

A key concept in discussion of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is fate. Widdowson's argument that the notion of Tess as a victim of history is down-

played in the adaptation has already been alluded to and connected to the muting of melodrama but the idea of Tess as fated bears more lengthy consideration. At least two possible interpretations arise from the phrase 'victim of history'. There is the sense in which Tess is a victim of her family history, that she may be paying the price for the evil deeds of d'Urbervilles long since dead. (Her real problems do, after all, only begin once her ancestry is revealed and the Durbeyfields attempt to reconnect with the past using Tess as the instrument of that connection.) And there is the second sense in which Tess is a victim of historical change - suffering as her own class crumbles - as well as because the standards of her time (itself become history) subject her to censure and exclusion as a result of her relationship with Alec.

There are many instances in the novel where Hardy alludes to fate, either as the authorial voice or through the speech of his characters. In conversation with her brother Tess likens their circumstances to that of a blighted apple surrounded by other, splendid, fruits. (48) Their own 'world' or 'star' is simply a bad one, and this unfortunate fact determines the course of their lives. After Tess's rape by Alec, Hardy asks 'why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus?' and partly explains the event as a slow-working 'retribution';

Doubtless some of Tess d'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time. But though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature; and it does not mend the matter. (49)

Here Hardy is clearly suggesting that Tess's fate is in some way a supernatural consequence of the deeds of her forebears, that she is a victim of history in the way first outlined above. However, a reader is liable to problematize this 'question' of Hardy's in much the same way as they might interrogate his famous statement from the novel's conclusion that the 'President of the Immortals... had ended his sport with Tess' (50), which suggests a rather



different, personified, process of fate. For in a very obvious sense Tess is raped, suffers, and is eventually put to death because Hardy wants her to be. He chooses to put his character through these ordeals and to question why events unfold as they do is surely disingenuous. Hardy's determining power within the story-world is precisely that of a 'President of the Immortals'; he makes everything happen.

These quotations suggest two interesting lines of enquiry. The first concerns the complex nature of whatever it is Tess struggles against and finally loses to (Fate, Society, her nature, her time, her author, a malignant God?). The second concerns the author's peculiar engagement with his character, to the extent of seeming to regard her as a real person. This phenomenon is best evidenced in the - often noted - sentence where Hardy describes Tess's style of speech as something 'which will never be forgotten by those who knew her' (51). Alvarez describes this (deliberate?) lapse as an 'extraordinary personal intrusion' 'when Hardy seems to forget that Tess is a character in his own fiction and begins to talk about her like an old love, whom he has lost but cannot forget.' (52)

In diminishing the novel's gothicism and by removing Hardy's authorial voice the adaptation necessarily alters the variety of possible explanations for what happens to Tess, for why she is quite so unlucky. With the original's polemic reduced to what can be inferred from the actions of characters and with the suggestion of eerie forces at work effectively debarred by the constant use of a realist mode, viewers are necessarily inclined to seek explanations for events more in terms of the characters and their ability to determine or resist possible outcomes. The novel has given rise to a variety of explanations for Tess's end, which are worth outlining in brief before considering how we understand the fate of Tess as played by Kinski. Some critics combine the concept of Tess as the representative of a dying class with the more spooky elements of Hardy's references to the old d'Urberville connection. Holloway describes Tess as 'a

protagonist who incarnates the older order, and whose decline is linked... with an inner misdirection, an inner weakness' (53). Interpreting Holloway's explanation, George Wotton stresses how it revolves around the notion of her weakness as 'a result of her heredity' (54). Tony Tanner posits a wider justification for Tess's suffering, arguing that Hardy is not so much condemning 'specific social anomalies' as describing 'a universe of radical opposition, working to destroy what it works to create, crushing to death what it coaxes into life' (55) Southerington interprets Tess's struggle as a contest between Society and Nature, putting the blame more securely on conventional morality.

(Tess's fate) is caused solely by ill-adapted social ordinances.. so long as social codes fail to take account of reality, for so long does man expose himself obtusely to tragic possibilities. Heredity, economic forces, time, chance and consequence shape Tess's career and bring about her downfall. Only social convention *causes* it. (56)

Others have concentrated on Tess's sexuality as the reason for her being crushed. Thurley describes Tess as having 'fallen' - the problem being not so much her 'fear of censure' but the painful self-knowledge that she has 'yielded out of her own sensualism' (57). Penny Boumelha also describes Tess as 'doomed by her own sexuality' (58), linking this idea to the various other accounts (of which the above is a small sample) to indicate that Hardy may be offering so many possible or partial reasons for Tess's downfall in order to question whether events are explicable at all;

(T)he multiplicity of 'explanations' offered for Tess's tragedy, form part of the novel's onslaught on moral dogma and absolutism, and.. they have as their primary effect to undermine the authority of the whole notion of explanation.(59)

In contrast, the film's realism invites us to infer that there is a reason or reasons for what happens to Tess. It can offer neither the supernatural powers Hardy alludes to, nor opt for the post-modern perspective that the story's *raison-d'être* is the futility of explanation. By unifying the method of address to that of



presenting a comprehensible world the film necessarily suggests that such questions can be answered. Broadly, viewers are invited to blame both Alec and Angel, and possibly society. Alec rapes Tess (though there is the possible interpretation that it is 'violent seduction') and makes her his mistress, and later Angel fails to judge her as he wishes to be judged himself. Despite his abstract intellectualizing he is still bound by conventional morality, won't judge Tess for her true worth, and precipitates her return to Alec. We may also infer a degree of blame for a society that afforded men like Alec such power and which structures the moral codes that condemn Tess for being raped/seduced. If this is further intended as a comment by Polanski on the hypocrisy and unfairness of judging the sexual habits of others, then it must be acknowledged that such an expression threatens to backfire. Whilst the director may well have wanted to rebuff the prurient media attention to his private life since the Manson murders, there was also an easy and uncomfortable parallel to be drawn between himself and Alec. (Hence Marcus' rage at what she discerns as Polanski's attempts to humanize that character.) Also - and this is key to certain criticisms of the film - we are inclined to debate Tess's own role in her fall, to question whether she might, at various junctures, have acted more forcefully or intelligently to determine her own future.

Marcus condemns Polanski for not showing us 'Tess the powerful', (60) arguing that Kinski portrays a meek and submissive girl who repeatedly acquiesces to masculine dominance;

He will not let Tess speak or act. She is passive throughout, and lying down for much of the film. Hardy's Tess is upright. She walks and talks and works and struggles and grows from child to woman under the loving hands of her creator who subtitles his novel 'A Pure Woman', taking the part of a male sympathiser of heroic womanhood. Polanski is a voyeur of victimisation who infantilises our Tess. (61)

However, much of what Marcus identifies as Polanski's unfaithful sexist alterations to the novel can be seen to originate from Hardy's portrayal of Tess.

This suggests that she is bemoaning not so much the violation of the novel, as criticising an adaptation/reading that does not accord with her own deeply subjective interpretation of that novel. Penny Boumelha describes how Hardy's Tess is already in a trance-like or sleepy state for much of the novel - especially at important junctures.

(P)articularly at moments of.. erotic response, consciousness is all but edited out. Tess is asleep, or in reverie, at almost every crucial turn of the plot... Tess is most herself - and that is, most woman - at moments where she is dumb and semi-conscious. (62)

One even notes how Polanski reverses some of these incidents, by omitting the sleep-walking scene where the passive Tess is carried for example. It is arguable that Polanski even structures Tess as more active by showing two key scenes - the rape, and her wedding-night account of her history - which Hardy passes over. Marcus' criticism suggests that she has derived a proto-feminist Tess from Hardy's novel - largely by selective emphasis and elision - and has sought to confirm her opinions of Polanski by reading his *Tess* equally selectively. The binary opposition of Hardy as 'male sympathiser of heroic womanhood' and Polanski as 'voyeur of victimisation' is collapsed both by a more objective assessment of the original and by our biographical knowledge of Hardy's politics.

Many readers have noted the erotic and voyeuristic dimension of Hardy's descriptions of his heroine, particularly centring on her 'mobile peony' (63) mouth to which his narration obsessively returns. Boumelha argues that the 'narrator's erotic fantasies of penetration and engulfment enact a pursuit, violation and penetration of Tess in parallel with those she suffers at the hands of her two lovers.' (64) In the scene where Tess practices whistling for Alec's mother's birds there is already undeniable erotic potential that makes Marcus' criticism of the scene in the film as 'obscene' (65) seem wilfully naive toward the novel's content. Polanski never gets closer to Kinski's face than medium close-



up, even though Hardy's descriptions of her mouth sometimes verge on pornographic extreme close-up;

And it was in her mouth that this culminated. Eyes almost as deep and speaking he had seen before, and cheeks perhaps as fair; brows as arched, a chin and throat almost as shapely; her mouth he had seen nothing to equal on the face of the earth. To a young man with the least fire in him that little upward lift in the middle of her red top lip was distracting, infatuating, maddening. (66)

The author's voyeuristic pleasure is also evident in his treatment of the three other milkmaids at Talbothays, whom Hardy twice describes in a state of collective deshabelle. On the first occasion they are watching Angel through the window - a scene Polanski renders faithfully;

Neither of her three chamber-companions had got into bed. They were standing in a group, in their nightgowns, barefooted, at the window, the last red rays of the west still warming their faces and necks, and the walls around them. All were watching somebody in the garden with deep interest, their three faces close together: a jovial and round one, a pale one with dark hair, and a fair one whose tresses were auburn. (67)

Hardy's fondness for posing his milkmaids in rather titillating physical proximity is more fully realized in the scene where Tess reveals that she is to marry Angel and this dramatic news gives the author sufficient justification for the nightgown-clad girls to perform a more involved multiple embrace, this time centred on Tess;

And by a sort of fascination the three girls, one after another, crept out of their beds, and came and stood barefooted round Tess. Retty put her hands upon Tess's shoulders, as if to realize her friends corporeality after such a miracle, and the other two laid their arms round her waist, all looking into her face. (68)

Polanski decides to omit this scene, and probably saves himself from an accusation of inventing quasi-lesbian framings to spice up his adaptation. If anything, the reverse is true; he positively downplays this aspect of the original. Whilst the suggestion that Hardy includes such a scene in his novel may be incredible to many readers, Rosemarie Morgan reminds us that his first published novel *Desperate Remedies* is notable for its 'homoerotic' possibilities.

The relationship and 'powerful physical attraction' between the older - and somewhat 'masculine' Cytherea Aldclyffe, and the younger Cytherea Graye can surely not be interpreted by a modern reader in any other way. (69)

Central to any discussion of Tess's character and the author's regard for her is the rape/seduction by Alec. Hardy does not describe the event, and although Polanski initiates a portrayal it is deliberately ambiguous, using soft-focus and 'mist' passing between camera and actors just as viewers are trying to decide whether Tess is succumbing or resisting. In an interview (also discussed by Widdowson) Polanski fielded the inevitable rape/seduction question by trying to suggest that the act itself is inherently ambiguous, rather than just the manner of presentation;

'(I)'s both, actually, or neither... It's half-and-half. It happens by insistence, and by using physical strength in certain ways. But physical strength was almost inevitable in those days; it was part of Victorian courtship. Even on her wedding night a woman might be expected to resist.' (70)

Whilst this is the type of statement which feminist critics might justifiably be expected to seize upon as evidence of the filmmaker's incorrect sexual politics it is useful to consider what the implications for the story are if Tess definitely is raped. Many of Hardy's revisions to his original text for later editions concern the event in the Chase and they generally 'emphasise chastity and reticence at the expense of passion and spontaneity' (71). Alec is more clearly identified as a probable rapist by the 1892 insertion of the phrase "A little more than persuading had to do wi' the coming o't" (72) in reference to Tess's baby. The adaptation omits this phrase and adds a brief montage of Tess and Alec's few weeks together as lovers, which - although Kinski's manner is somewhat melancholy and dreamy - inevitably suggests Tess's complicity rather than Alec's culpability. These changes could presumably be cited as Polanski's attempting to re-cast Alec's conduct, as his suggesting that Tess 'really wanted it anyway'. However, this problem relates directly to an unresolved question raised by the novel; is



Tess the 'pure woman' of the subtitle only because she is not to blame, because she has been raped, or does Hardy want his readers to consider her pure even though she may have willingly given herself to Alec?

The second interpretation is clearly the more radical - more in tune with contemporary and feminist thinking - but Hardy's revisions suggest that he was proposing the first, that he intended to make Tess more clearly a victim and therefore to make Alec and Angel more to blame (the former for the rape itself, the latter for failing to understand that Tess didn't comply with Alec as an equal - as he himself did with his lover in their brief London affair). Although Polanski may be criticised for not adequately condemning Alec as a rapist this also permits a more liberal conception of Tess's purity. By making the first sexual encounter ambiguous, and by showing Alec and Tess together, with her 'doubts' evident despite the idyllic - near parodic - setting and iconography of rowing boat, parasol and pair of courting swans, Polanski is necessarily proposing that Tess can be allowed a sexual mistake, be allowed to enjoy sex without love, and still be 'pure' - the object of our sympathy. In this context it is worth noting that the adaptation effects a significant change to Angel's account of his liaison in London. Whilst in the original Angel has 'eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger' (73) the film's Angel (Peter Firth) has a sexual history which more exactly mirrors Tess's; his illicit affair is "over in a few weeks". By establishing an equality of sexual experience between Angel and Tess the film stresses the injustice of his rejection while maintaining Tess's 'right' to have continued her own relationship with Alec beyond their first sexual encounter.

Lance St John Butler describes an extra-textual event which further problematizes Marcus' conception of Hardy as a male sympathiser of heroic womanhood. In 1892, 'a year after the publication of *Tess* (he) refused to become a Vice-president of the Women's Progressive Society because he did not believe in their main aim, namely women's suffrage, as he explicitly told the lady who

invited him'. (74) Clearly, Hardy and his writing present a confusing message in terms of his thoughts on the role and treatment of women in society. There is obviously something 'in' *Tess* that has led Marcus and the Women's Progressive Society amongst others to celebrate the novel and to make inferences about the author's politics. The qualities that are fastened on are probably Tess's resilience, her stubborn independence as she moves from job to job, her refusal to beg for help, and the eventual silencing of her lover/nemesis, Alec. The celebration of these qualities seems to obscure other facets of her personality that accord less well with a feminist reading, such as her tendency to passivity - to reaction rather than instigation - and her lack of resourcefulness. For Marcus and others these appear on film as inventions of the adaptation when they are in fact present in the original. ( Their Tess is precisely that, somebody quite different to Hardy's Tess; a political reconstruction who serves a new purpose.) What throws these character traits into bolder relief in Polanski's film is not that they are suddenly invented or emphasised, but that the numerous other elements that constitute (improbable) causality in the original are muted. Without the suggestions that Tess's fate is due to genetics, or supernatural retribution, or a mean-spirited God, viewers seek to understand what happens to her more in terms of her behaviour, and we are inevitably led to ask the same questions and reach the same conclusions as Alec/Lawson, who asks;

"What is this strange temptation misery holds for you?.. There is a point beyond which obstinacy becomes stupidity. Are you in love with this drudgery?"

Several reviewers of the film accused Polanski of de-emphasising the poverty and suffering of the original in favour of elegiac cinematography of the countryside;

The Durbeyfield family's poverty, and the village's poverty, is obscured in *Tess* by the magnificent photography and landscapes, and Tess's beauty, rather than a contrast to the hardship and poverty the family is mired in, is, instead, an extension of the beauty of the land. (75)



However, such criticism suggests a skewed interpretation of the novel; a point Widdowson makes in his analysis of many contemporary reviews. If one chooses to fix on Hardy's social observations and criticisms as the most significant element of his novel and to overlook his nostalgic and often paradisiac descriptions of areas of 'Wessex' then it is entirely likely that much of the film's photography will appear too lavish. Yet features of Hardy's original description such as 'the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Var Vale' (76) invite a superlative - rather than restrained - visual style and it is certainly not the case that the film presents an unvaryingly beautiful image of rural life.

The scenes at Flintcomb-Ash cannot reasonably be accused of creating a soft impression of the most unpleasant types of agricultural labour. Tess's first working day there begins with a close-up of muddy boots and dress-hems as she and Marian work at 'swede-hacking' on a cold winter morning. This shot pulls back to extreme long-shot of many labourers - bent-backed - working in a massive field. Their clothes are drab and a cold light reflects from the surface water in which they are obliged to stand. This change in shot-size suggests firstly the specific unpleasantness of the job - ( working in the cold and wet, mud adhering to tools, clothes and vegetables alike) - before driving home its enormity. Tess and Marian share a sip of gin and the scene cuts to a continuation of the labour, where the workers prepare the swedes in a half-walled barn that exposes them to the elements. Tess is criticized by Farmer Groby and the two women laugh desperately as they recall happier times at Talbothays. This scene in turn cuts to Tess packing her 'best' shoes early one morning in order to walk the considerable distance to Emminster to see Angel's father. She changes her shoes upon arrival to make herself more presentable but her courage fails her and she doesn't speak to Rev. Clare outside the church. To compound her misery her walking boots are discovered by Angel's brothers and

his one-time intended, Mercy Chant, who take them to give to a 'needy' person. The grey light that pervades this sequence of scenes combines with the events to mark the time at Flintcomb-Ash as the low-point of Tess's life.

Widdowson remarks specifically on the 'deadly Victorian 'interior' of Angel and Tess's first breakfast together after their wedding-night confessions' (77). This scene again provides counter-evidence to suggestions that the film's visual style simply romanticises or weaves nostalgia from the keener and more bitter aspects of the original. Tess and Angel are shown in profile, separated by the length of the table which occupies much of the width of the frame. The chimes of a grandfather clock and sounds of their crockery and cutlery draw attention to the fact of their not talking. But when Tess does speak it is to suggest that Angel can divorce her. Irritated by her 'ignorant' suggestion Angel rises and advances to the foreground, the camera tilting up and pulling back a little to accommodate him. Although their left/right separation is no longer as clear, the gulf between them is now suggested by depth of field; Angel is held in medium close-up and Tess remains in long shot as he upbraids her for acting like his 'servant' by picking up his napkin. He returns to his seat and the camera reverses its previous two changes by tilting down and tracking back in to the original - very formal - shot of the couple at opposite ends of the table; the return to this framing emphasises that the conversation has brought them no closer.

The bulk of the film's representation of the countryside and rural life is attractive, however, though Polanski is basically only following Hardy's pattern of having the season and environment mirror Tess's emotional condition - happiest at Talbothays, most wretched at Flintcomb-Ash. One of the film's most pleasant visual episodes arises from a concentration on a detail of the novel where Hardy mentions the whey dripping from 'wrings' as part of the cheese-making process. A circling shot of the dozing milkmaids in their loft room is merged with the sound of Angel's flute (the film substitutes a flute for the



original's harp, recognizing that to 'materialize' that instrument would constitute a metaphor of comical proportions). This moving shot pauses at the top of their spiral staircase and cuts to a close-up of the wrings hanging above troughs on the ground floor. The sound of their dripping is pleasantly soporific and merges with images from the slowly-exploring camera as it pans and dollies (possibly on a steadicam) around the dairy room. The cream-coloured conical wrings are side-lit and contrast gently with the other tones from silver pails, dark shadows, brown wooden troughs, and most notably the almost glowing orange of the waxed cheeses. Viewers are roused from this bucolic reverie by the appropriate device of a cock-crow which cuts to the scene of a happy communal meal in the farmhouse.

It is worth noting that this type of 'ideal' representation - wholly appropriate for the Talbothays phase of *Tess* - is not very different to Hardy's use of ideal or idealizing points-of-view to describe various countryside locations and journeys between them. Hardy begins describing the Vale of Blakemore in chapter two as 'for the most part untrodden as yet by tourist or landscape-painter' (78) yet immediately launches into his tour of the area using precisely the type of perspective such travellers would use. The atmosphere is, he says, 'so tinged with azure that what artists call the middle distance partakes also of that hue' (79). Consistently Hardy charts Wessex in terms of the point-of-view of walkers, artists, and tourists, of people who look about themselves to *appreciate* what they can see. Hardy's familiarity with Dorset never verges into indifference but constantly employs ideal visual surrogates, occasionally soaring into a 'bird's eye' (80) view to range even more fully.

The idea of 'light' also features in many of Hardy's descriptions, not simply in terms of painterly analyses of views but also as an emotional effect. Tess's happiness is frequently explained as an operation or consequence of light. When Tess and Angel are at their happiest - before the wedding - Hardy describes her

affection as a 'photosphere' which 'irradiated her into forgetfulness of her past sorrows'. Her problems are described as waiting 'like wolves outside the circumscribing light' but at this best time 'She walked in brightness'. (81) Conversely, when she tries to win Angel over after he has rejected her because of her past she conceives this failure in terms of the absence of light: 'she knew that he saw her without irradiation'. (82) Reviewing the film, Andrew Rissik took particular exception to its use of light. He described the new work as;

..a collation of second-hand picturesque effects.. (of which) probably the most offensive.. is the ubiquitous gold light that shimmers around and about almost everything on the screen, as if this were a Biblical movie and we were awaiting the Incarnation. (83)

Polanski may well be guilty of using light in a less specific way than Hardy, of using light effects simply to suggest or emphasise beauty. However, it is clearly more difficult for the filmmaker to suggest - without language (narrowly defined) - the exact meanings Hardy creates with his use of light. For Hardy's 'light' is not light itself, but only ideas about light. With Polanski's film the reverse is true: real light (not necessarily 'natural', but nevertheless real) is captured on film and reanimated through the light of the projector and onto the screen, from which ideas of its significance may be inferred. Without voice-over, and without characters discussing light, the film cannot achieve the very same variations of meaning that Hardy's writing achieves, though it may offer multiple effects and applications of light without giving each quite such a fixed value. (I accept that film does have at its disposal a certain 'vocabulary' of light effects e.g the face lit from below connoting horror, or the chiaroscuro look of film noir suggesting the hidden dangers of the city.) Polanski's film does however achieve one remarkable and completely original light effect...

On the wedding morning Tess/Kinski decorates Angel's room with flowers and upon leaving finds her letter of confession - undiscovered - beneath the rug at the door. The implications of this discovery are vast; Angel does not



know about her past, has not understood and forgiven her, and the wedding is imminent. The significance of this 'bombshell' is made most evident when Tess turns away from the door, and the camera - moving with her - catches the sun directly, causing a flare on the lens to erupt and engulf the whole frame. Tess's 'flash' of overwhelming realization is literalized in this blinding device. This choice of effect poses a difficult question for those given to fidelity criticism. Is Polanski to be applauded for using light, for attempting the same 'vocabulary' as Hardy? Or is it the case that the filmmaker has reversed the original's scale of values relating to light (where Hardy constructs its absence as the marker of bad times or moments) ? Has the filmmaker appreciated, woefully misunderstood, or wilfully contradicted the original?

These questions suggest the tendency of fidelity criticism to lead down dead-ends of interpretation and to obsess over minutiae. The possibility that believable cases for both arguments can be made also indicates the amenability of the practice to critical slipperiness. Subsuming such questions is the notion that difficulties in adaptation result mainly from the rigours of trying to exchange written language for film language at a specific or lexical level - of deciding that a description of a face equals a lingering close-up etc. But as these case-studies suggest, the profoundest alterations in adaptations arise not from mistranslations of precise effects and devices but from far larger restructurings at the level of genre - un-picking aspects of the originals' generic identities and shaping the new texts toward destination movie genres.

## CHAPTER 6. JUDE.

The previous chapter demonstrated how Polanski's *Tess* reduced several elements of Hardy's novel - primarily melodrama, the gothic and improbable coincidences but also the novelist's polemical voice. The consequence of this streamlining of narrative modes was that the adaptation was more realistic, with the principal tragic theme not alloyed or undermined by the other elements. This chapter will argue that Winterbottom's *Jude* is also heavily determined by a paring away of certain generic qualities and that what remains is consequently a more realistic text than the original. However, it will also argue that *Jude* offers a very different brand of realism to *Tess*.

The adaptation's exclusion of coincidences, melodrama and gothicism will be discussed, but not at such length as was the case with *Tess* - mainly because the original involves these elements considerably less than *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and also because parts of the discussion on this topic from the previous chapter can be seen to apply to *Jude* too and therefore should not require such full elaboration. Equally relevant to the film's increased realism are the considerable changes to the original dialogue; most of the novel's rather wordy and drawn-out exchanges are whittled away and altered to spare contemporary speech which would not jar in a late Twentieth Century conversation. This major alteration is heavily implicated in the film's turning-down of the novel's polemical volume since much of the original dialogue sounds like (in fact is) the rehearsal of arguments on issues which occupied Hardy, such as marriage, sex and family-life. This is not to argue that the adaptation is apolitical or uninterested in these matters but to suggest that Winterbottom has acknowledged that to repeat Hardy's arguments exactly *as he argued them a century ago* would be largely redundant. Instead, the film emphasises the difficulties of ambition, love, gender-relations and social



pressures as they transcend time, making them relevant to related forces in late twentieth century Britain.

This reduction of Hardy's criticism will also be evidenced in significant changes to parts of the original structure where realism is subordinated to Hardy's desire for lengthy argument and peroration. This includes the excision of characters such as Gillingham, Widow Edlin, and Physician Vilbert who facilitate - often rather obviously - debates, exchanges, and events which contribute to the novel's polemics. This curtailing is more generally evident in alterations to the original's highly formal construction, particularly the precise 'matching' of events that occurs in the novel's final phases (omitted from the film) where Jude and Sue *both* return to miserable lives with their original, legally sanctioned, spouses. These changes, in conjunction with the film's often bleak visual style and the highly significant casting of Christopher Eccleston as Jude, help to place *Jude* in relation to a corpus of screen texts which despite being realistic are quite distinct from *Tess*. This chapter will contend that *Jude* is related - both thematically and stylistically - to a genre of British television from the 1990's (itself connected to a group of British films) rather than fitting into a tradition or continuum of adaptations of classic English literature.

The tendency of melodrama plots to hinge on coincidence and Hardy's often criticised fondness for this device were discussed in the previous chapter. Winterbottom's film elides at least five coincidences from the original. He chooses - like Polanski - to render causality more realistically with the result that characters relevant to the central role seem less one-sided than they threaten to appear in the novel. (This process was seen in *Tess* in Alec's being less of a stock villain than the novel suggests.) In an incident omitted from the film - chapter ten 'At Marygreen' - Jude happens to overhear two of Arabella's friends discussing how she may well have tricked him into marriage either by

deliberately planning to seduce him or by claiming to be pregnant when she knew she was not (1). This coincidental access to Arabella's 'scheme' precipitates an argument with his new wife and an increased deterioration of their already shaky relationship. Arabella is revealed starkly as the destroyer of Jude's ambitions, physically and morally coarse, and deceitful to boot. The film, by contrast, inclines us to believe that Arabella (Rachel Griffiths) did not fake a pregnancy - though it does not completely preclude that possibility. A departing letter from Arabella - heard in voice-over - includes the sentence 'I know you think I tricked you into marrying me but I swear I really believed I was pregnant'. Whereas when Jude confronts the novel's Arabella with hints of what he has overheard she replies coldly "That was nothing.".. "Every woman has a right to do such as that." (2) The film's more sympathetic portrayal of Arabella will be returned to later, particularly in terms of its softening of the original distinction between Arabella as bestial and Sue as ethereal. This repeatedly suggested distinction which tends to render the two women as influences or forces which act on Jude rather than as human stories in their own right also signals the extent to which realism is not an over-riding aim or principle of the novel.

Other unlikely coincidences the adaptation omits include Jude and Sue's staying at the same inn where he spent the night with Arabella a month earlier. Coming immediately after Sue's departure from Phillotson, this upsetting information - unwittingly revealed to Sue by a waiting-maid - foreshadows the influence Arabella will continue to exercise over Jude's fate, both through her own interventions and especially through the revelation and actions of their son, Little Father Time. Two chance encounters between Arabella and Phillotson are also excluded from the film. On the first occasion Arabella reveals that Sue had not had sex with Jude prior to her separation from Phillotson - an issue pertinent to the novel since this (non) act constitutes the grounds for their divorce - and at the second meeting Arabella informs him of Sue's sudden regard



for the sanctity of her original marriage and her separation from Jude. Indeed, Hardy's awareness of the strains placed on the novel's plausibility by Arabella's unerring knack of encountering Phillotson and thereby propelling the story's circular motion back to the original pairings causes him to comment on why these encounters occur;

Arabella having made her home at Alfredston, and the schoolmaster coming to market there every Saturday, it was *not so wonderful* that in a few weeks they met again - the precise time being just after her return from Christminster, where she had.. (been) keeping an interested eye on Jude. (3) (my italics)

The tendency of these coincidental encounters to foreshadow future tribulations, heighten emotions, and direct the original story on its remarkably neat course are all demonstrated in Sue's 'chance' sighting of Phillotson in the Remembrance Parade at Christminster. Jude notices that Sue has turned pale and begun to tremble. She explains that she had spotted Phillotson across the way and attempts to explain her fears whilst acknowledging Jude's logical point that she is now free from his influence;

"Yes, I suppose so. But I am weak. Although I know it is all right with our plans, I felt a curious dread of him; an awe, or terror, of conventions I don't believe in. It comes over me at times like a sort of creeping paralysis, and makes me so sad!" (4)

No reader can be in any doubt that Sue's connection with Phillotson has not come to an end; her fear is so insistently stated in 'dread', 'awe', and 'terror'. She correctly anticipates with 'conventions' and 'paralysis' the mechanism and nature of her return to the schoolmaster. After the death of her children she will dogmatically adhere to the Biblical and societal conventions she had previously scorned and opposed, sinking firstly into a type of intellectual torpor and finally - in the ultimate sacrifice of giving herself sexually to Phillotson - into physical non-resistance. In omitting this chance sighting and Sue's subsequent remarks the adaptation diminishes the original's sense of Jude's life-course as intricately and irresistibly *plotted*, either by supernatural influence or by an author attempting to demonstrate - through Jude's

disappointments - the unfairness of society or existence itself. An increase in realism is doubly secured by downplaying these two facets of Hardy's original, the adaptation clearly wanting Jude's tragedy to feel wholly credible.

As with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy places the central character of *Jude the Obscure* at the end of a family history which merges unpleasant facts, folklore and superstition. This history is most fully revealed to the character not just in the course of the story, but specifically during the important transition from youth to adulthood. Awareness or a sense of this history causes fear or uneasiness and occasionally precipitates actions. In chapter eleven 'At Marygreen' Jude asks his aunt Drusilla about his parents and discovers that his mother had drowned herself after a final argument with his father. Drusilla explains that;

"The Fawleys were not made for wedlock: it never seemed to sit well upon us. There's sommat in our blood that won't take kindly to the notion of being bound to do what we do readily enough if not bound." (5)

When Jude departs for home he walks deliberately to the centre of a large frozen pond, presumably motivated by a combination of depression over his marriage and inspiration from Drusilla's story (or perhaps these simply catalyze the mysterious 'sommat' in his blood). He jumps up and down but the ice does not give way and he walks back to the edge wondering 'What was he reserved for? He supposed he was not a sufficiently dignified person for suicide.' (6) The adaptation alters this episode completely. Drusilla (June Whitfield) and Jude (Christopher Eccleston) do not discuss his family - so the suicide is never mentioned at this or any stage in the film - and her explanation for his marital difficulties is simply that "Fawleys are not cut out for marriage". Although dialogue is radically cut throughout *Jude* it is significant that this instance removes both a melodramatic 'back-story' and a rather gothic allusion to a biological/superstitious determinism working to thwart the family. Also omitted is an instance of pronounced narrative foreshadowing, for when Jude



leaves he does not attempt suicide; the action simply cuts to his return to an empty house, Arabella having departed. The original's relevance would be lost anyway for Winterbottom chooses not to end the film as the original with Jude's death following a virtual suicide by his trekking to see Sue in cruel weather whilst ill. Interestingly, Hossein Amini's screenplay *does* include Jude's walking onto a 'frozen lake' but it is less than clear that this is a suicide attempt. Amini writes that 'In the distance we see him skidding and sliding like a kid' (7); there is no mention of his jumping or striving to crack the ice. This event also takes place on the way *to* rather than *from* Drusilla's, so it could not have been envisaged - even if it was written as a suicide attempt - as an act motivated by what she said.

Another macabre tale about the deeds of Jude's ancestors which the adaptation omits is Widow Edlin's story - recounted to Jude, Sue and Little Father Time - of the man whose wife left him to stay with friends, taking their child with her... The child died, and the wife refused to allow him to bury the body alongside his family, prompting him to break into the house to steal the body. Being caught, he was tried, hung, and gibbeted for burglary. (8) This tale is told on the night before Jude and Sue intend to marry and it prompts the little boy to exclaim "If I was you, mother, I wouldn't marry father!" (9) *Jude the Obscure's* most dreadful incident is dually foreshadowed in this story; the hanging anticipates the means by which Little Father Time will kill his siblings and himself, while the dead child in a coffin is suggestive of the triple funeral that follows. The presence of Little Father Time as a listener not only suggests (retrospectively) that the story provided partial inspiration for his final actions - rather like Jude's more immediate response to learning of his mother's suicide - but his words specifically point to dreadful consequences arising from a Sue/Jude union.

Christine Brooke-Rose identifies several of Hardy's links and segues as

melodramatic foreshadowings which let readers in on the 'terrible traps that are preparing for Jude'. (10) Chapter Six 'At Melchester' begins;

Meanwhile a middle-aged man was dreaming a dream of great beauty concerning the writer of the above letter. (11)

Brooke-Rose describes this and similar transitions as 'ultra-simplistic shifts of focalisation derived from popular forms, almost of the 'little-does-he-know type'.. like cutting in the cinema'. (12) Yet the adaptation resists exactly this type of melodramatic device, not simply by virtue of not including phrases like the above in voice-over, but by not using approximate cinematic devices. Matches on actions, graphic matches and similarities of dialogue could all be employed to suggest a chain of influence or causality connecting a shot with its predecessor, but they are generally not used. Instead, *Winterbottom* repeatedly uses images and violent sounds of steam trains to punctuate the phases and removals of Jude's life. This device is both realistically motivated, for Jude does use the train for many of his most significant journeys, and a rejection of the original's melodramatic foreshadowing technique. Furthermore, it achieves an increased connection with modernity by emphasising not only the literal relevance of the train to human life but also affording it the narrative function of accelerating temporality by linking key phases in the story. This is not to say that Hardy was unaware of the significance of the train, quite the reverse; Sue's exclamation that she would rather visit a railway station than a cathedral (13) indicates Hardy's prescience in gauging the spirit of the next century. Rather, it confirms that *Jude* is the result of selecting from Hardy's many voices and - in this instance - choosing his interest in the impact of modernity rather than his taste for devices culled from older and less revered modes.

A final example of Hardy's delight in the gothic, in rural myths and ghostly tales, is the story told by the churchwarden while Jude and Sue work at the re-lettering of two stone plaques of the Ten Commandments in an old church.



Although the adaptation retains the scene to demonstrate how Jude and Sue's unmarried condition hinders their employment and financial prospects - particularly in ecclesiastical work - it omits this curious story. Provoked by the sight of an 'unsuitable' couple restoring the Ten Commandments the churchwarden begins to recount how 'somewhere about a hundred years ago' in a nearby church some stonemasons were employed at exactly the same task as Jude and Sue... The job went on late into Saturday night and the men having been drinking since the afternoon they became increasingly drunk, finally falling down unable to work..

...but when they came to themselves there was a terrible thunderstorm a-raging, and they seemed to see in the gloom a dark figure with very thin legs and a curious voot, a-standing on the ladder, and finishing their work. (14)

The next morning when the service began it was noticed that the Commandments had been painted with the 'Nots' left out! Hardy concludes this scene with Jude's dismissal by his contractor who has been suddenly summoned to the job-site on account of complaints concerning Jude's suitability. Jude is 'too independent to make any fuss' (15) and the novel does not include his making any reply to his contractor. However, while the adaptation omits the spooky tale of the devil rephrasing the Commandments it adds a pithy rejoinder for Jude. When Mr. Biles tries to justify the dismissal by saying "You never told us you weren't married." Jude replies "I never realized it was a necessary qualification for a stonemason." The gothic is cut, but the unfairness of the dismissal is stressed through Jude's ironic response. A modern movie audience would probably not interpret Jude's silence - if this had been reproduced - as evidence of his 'independence.' With the invented reply Jude is clearly not begging for his job back, rather he is stressing - both for the churchwarden and viewers - the irrelevance of the reason given to his ability or fitness to perform the work. Christianity is no longer a hegemonic discourse and the sexual lives and relationships of employees are no longer considered a legitimate area of enquiry

or influence for employers, as they were in Victorian Britain. With our vastly different sense of industrial relations we are probably more disposed to celebrate the airing of reasonable grievances than stoicism. We are certainly less inclined than readers of a century ago to appreciate the Christ-like values of silent suffering and far more likely to appreciate the bitter-sweet possibilities of registering contempt for one's superiors in a succinct parting shot.

A major change between novel and adaptation concerns Jude's ambitions *beyond* gaining a University degree from Christminster. In the original Jude initially dreams of becoming an arch-deacon or perhaps even a bishop. (16) After a period of working as a stone-mason in Christminster he begins to reflect on the 'vague labour' (17) of reading he has conducted up to this point and decides to apply directly to some College Masters for advice relating to entrance. After receiving a deflating rejection letter he gets drunk and makes a bitter public display of his learning by reciting the Nicene Creed in Latin to a disreputable audience in a bar. Later, repenting his drunkenness, he reflects that his intellectual ambitions are destined to fail and decides that he should attempt to enter the church 'as a licentiate' (a licensed preacher, but without an appointment). However, his increasing entanglement with his cousin Sue soon leads him to recognize that even this far less-esteemed (but perhaps spiritually valuable) occupation is an impossible ambition because he is 'a man of too many passions to make a good clergyman.' (18) The second half of the novel charts the increasing rift between himself and the church, from wanting to believe but not to be an example (19) to refusing to even take ecclesiastical stone-work. He finally exclaims to Sue after her mental about-turn on marriage and Christianity, "You root out of me what little affection and reverence I had left in me for the Church". (20)

By contrast, the adaptation makes no reference to Jude's having any fixed



goal beyond Christminster. Also missing are the significant changes in his reading habits - determined by his mutating ambition and its ultimate collapse - and evident in a shift from 'pagan' classical works to religious texts and culminating in a ceremonial book-burning. It is never suggested that the film's Jude has any theological aspirations, so the connection between his Christminster dreams and his later difficulties arising from conflict with church doctrine on marriage is largely lost. Although Christminster is clearly rendered as a rarefied strata of the society that censures and rejects Jude generally, a core irony is missing. For in the novel Christminster is the conduit by which Jude hopes to join the very body which he later comes to regard as the source of all his woes. However, this alteration is not necessarily a flaw. The purely intellectual aspirations of the film's Jude, their thwarting and his relationship with Sue provide ample dramatic grist, and the omission of Jude's theological ambitions probably makes the story more amenable to a modern audience. Although Jude's dream of rising through the Anglican ranks might have seemed a worthy ambition to Hardy's original readership, the intervening years have seen church attendance become a minority practice while access to higher education has been vastly increased. The ideal of a University education therefore provides a free-standing objective - for narrative purposes - making the further goal of a church career unnecessary and more likely to create a gulf, rather than bridge, of empathy between character and viewer.

The most obvious example of the adaptation's recasting of Jude in a less Christian light than the original is its omission of several instances where he imagines himself as Christ-like. In Chapter six 'At Marygreen' Jude talks aloud, unaware that Arabella is listening, and borrows a phrase from Matthew - Chapter 17, verse 5 - (21) fantasising of a personal relationship with Christminster like that of Jesus to God at the Transfiguration;

...I can work hard. I have staying power in abundance, thank God! and it is that which tells... Yes. Christminster shall be my Alma Mater; and I'll be her

beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased. (22)

Jude's tendency to compare himself with Christ is also demonstrated after his drunken recitation and a night spent sleeping in Sue's chair. Journeying to Marygreen he thinks 'what a poor Christ he made.' (23) A few pages later, having decided to aim at being a simple preacher rather than reaching high office in the church, he makes a more optimistic forecast of his life according to a Christian model.

He considered that he might so mark out his coming years as to begin his ministry at the age of thirty - an age which much attracted him as being that of his exemplar when he first began to teach in Galilee. (24)

Lance Butler draws attention to the 'over one hundred direct references in the novel to Christianity, Christ and the Church' (25), to the significance of Hardy's naming his University city 'Christminster', and concludes that 'Jude's life is hung on a sketchy outline of Christ's... faintly visible under the many levels of Hardy's story.' (26) In abandoning this facet of Jude - and structuring his Christminster dream as a self-sufficient goal rather than as a stepping-stone - the adaptation is obliged to alter the terms of his relationship with Sue Bridehead. Whereas the novel charts Jude's progress from his being a young man hoping to enter the church to his being effectively an atheist, the film starts with Jude already far nearer that destination. Sue's role in 'converting' Jude to radical views is necessarily diminished and key original scenes which stress Jude's Christian naivete alongside Sue's non-conformity are significantly changed...

In Chapter three 'At Christminster' Sue ventures alone into the countryside and purchases two plaster statuettes from a gypsy, nudes of Venus and Apollo which she wraps in leaves before taking them into her room above the shop of ecclesiastical supplies where she works. (27) Later, in conversation with Jude she describes how her employer has deliberately destroyed "some statuary of mine". Importantly, Jude is unaware of what exactly the figures were



and makes an assumption that reveals his tendency to conceive of matters only in narrow Christian terms;

“Too Catholic-Apostolic for her, I suppose? No doubt she called them Popish images and talked of the invocation of the saints?” (28)

Sue does not properly explain why her employer has taken exception to her statuettes and amuses herself at the expense of the unwitting Jude by employing his idea of an excess of Catholicism when she replies;

“It was for quite another reason that she didn’t like my *patron-saints* (my italics) (29).

In Sue’s description of Classical figures as her ‘patron-saints’ Hardy establishes her in an oppositional relationship to Church conformity but familiar with and able to subvert the terminology of that tradition. Conversely, Jude is shown - despite his much-vaunted learning - to operate within a smaller frame of reference, and Sue’s wit passes over his head.

In the adaptation Jude is present when Sue buys the plaster figures and the above exchange does not take place. Although he is surprised and remarks “You’re not going to buy those, are you?” he is not represented as so naive as in the original. Sue wraps the figures in leaves and he takes the opportunity to press her on the inconsistency of her making a ‘revealing’ purchase only to hide it out of sight. Jude walks backwards, a little in front of Sue in order to look her full in the face, and asks “Why are you wrapping them up?” Whereas the original demonstrated Sue’s concern about her purchases provoking censure only when she was alone, and then allowed her to assert her intellectual superiority in a later dialogue with Jude, this refigured incident is more suggestive of banter between equals. Although the scene continues with Jude’s conceding rather meekly that Sue is much cleverer than him, this ‘fact’ has not really been adequately established for the audience. His propensity for gazing at her is more suggestive of his developing romantic fascination that it is

interpretable as a sign of intellectual awe. Sue is certainly represented as intelligent and unconventional but this is not demonstrated at Jude's expense quite as strongly as it is in the novel.

Sue's capacity to outsmart a man is more convincingly displayed in the episode where she and Phillotson take a party of schoolchildren to see a model of Jerusalem, a scene which the film alters significantly through a small change in dialogue. In both versions Sue objects to the certainty with which the exhibitor has located the relevant parts of his reconstruction of the ancient city and goes on to ask Phillotson why Jerusalem is so important anyway, "Why not Athens, Rome, or Alexandria?" Phillotson makes the conventional reply that Jerusalem is of paramount importance because of its significance to Christians. Jude encounters the school-master and his assistant a little later and Phillotson jokes that Sue is "clever" to criticize the model so unmercifully. At this point novel and film diverge vastly. In the original Sue replies;

"No, Mr Phillotson, I am not - altogether! I hate to be what is called a clever girl - there are too many of that sort now!" answered Sue sensitively. "I only meant - I don't know what I meant - except that it was what you don't understand!" (30)

Whereas the adaptation has Sue reply;

"Please don't call me a clever girl Mr Phillotson. There are too many of *us* about these days"

Not only does the adaptation make Sue more assertive by not having her reply trail weakly off, it completely reverses her original claim that she does not belong to the type known as 'clever girls'. The alteration is highly significant because the novel involves repeated claims from Sue about her singularity; she stresses that her sense of being ill-suited to society's conventional female role is particular rather than indicative of a more widely developing phenomenon. Penny Boumelha notes in her first paragraph on *Jude the Obscure* that 'Sue is in no way representative of any discernible movement, although organised



feminism had already appeared in fiction... (31)'. However, Winslet's portrayal is largely without the 'hesitations, evasions and tentativeness' (32) that Boumelha identifies in the original as preventing Sue from fully belonging to either the feminist camp or the related genre of the 'New Woman'. In making Sue more direct and less given to qualifying her remarks the adaptation shapes her as a more modern character - certainly a character more likely to be understood by a modern audience. This is not to suggest that the novel's Sue was not a comparatively radical character for contemporary readers. Rather, it is that the adaptation up-dates so much dialogue, particularly by drastic cutting, that Sue's speeches, with their qualifications and frequent agonizings over meaning, would - if rendered more faithfully - make her appear somewhat stranded in the language and ideas of Hardy's time compared to other characters. The film also omits the original 'back-story' where Sue reveals that she had a 'friendly intimacy with an undergraduate at Christminster' who taught her a 'great deal' and lent her books. (33) This change works similarly to modernize Sue's intellectual - and particularly feminist - credentials by suggesting that she has taught herself rather than developed her ideas through association with a man. Peter Rothermel finds the original version helpful in explaining Sue's lapse - an interpretive option not available to the movie audience;

We know that many of Sue's progressive notions were hers only second-hand, taken over from her undergraduate boy friend. That may be part of the reason why they could later on so easily and totally be replaced by the backlash of an imagined compulsion to obey irrational dogmatism. (34)

The adaptation also effects considerable changes to Sue in terms of comparisons between herself and Arabella. This alteration is significant because it works to diminish Hardy's didactic project of having Arabella destroy Jude's intellectual plans and Sue erase his spiritual aspirations. (Of course, this aspect of the original is already deeply compromised by the film's making obscure (!) Jude's ambitions and not dwelling on his Christianity.) Most evident in the

novel's construction of their roles are the *differences* between the two women. They are exactly opposite in almost every respect; a tendency which draws attention to the story's plottedness, with a consequent reduction in realism. Hardy returns insistently to the physical characteristics of Sue and Arabella, characteristics which are seen to bear an indexical relationship to their intellectual and moral make-up.

We first encounter Arabella rinsing pig's innards in a stream. She throws a pig's penis at Jude to attract his attention and is described as;

'not exactly handsome, but capable of passing as such at a little distance, despite some coarseness of skin and fibre. She had a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of a Cochin hen's egg. She was a complete and substantial female animal - no more, no less.' (35)

This first description contains all the elements to which subsequent references and descriptions return. Her ability to *seem* attractive is suggested; a duplicitous trait which is later enacted in her practice of making dimples and her use of a hair extension. Her 'coarseness of skin and *fibre*' (a conveniently indefinable property) introduces the idea that her physical flaws are evidence of a deeper malaise. Her large breasts suggest her abundant sexuality and the novel charts the expansion of her bosom with age in tandem with the lengthening of the distance at which she can pass as handsome; in the later stages of the novel Arabella appears increasingly 'frowsy' under bright light and in the morning. Her affinity with farmyard animals - and coarse unrestrained sexuality - is introduced through her very first act of throwing the penis at Jude, and the reference to a hen's egg anticipates the egg she keeps in her cleavage - a measure which excites Jude's interest and precipitates his first sexual encounter.

However, while Arabella tends to the animal side of humanity Sue is positively ethereal. Descriptions repeatedly emphasise her petiteness. She is 'light and slight' (36), 'light-footed' (37), and possessed only of 'small, tight, apple-like convexities (in) her bodice, so different from Arabella's amplitudes' (38). As



with Arabella, her physical constitution is representative of other qualities. Jude calls her "you spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear, sweet, tantalizing phantom - hardly flesh at all; so that when I put my arms round you I almost expect them to pass through you as through air!" (39) Hardy's insistence on drawing Sue thus leads him into virtual repetition as fifteen pages later Jude describes her as a "phantasmal, bodiless creature." (40) Just as Arabella's excess of body mass and parts paralleled her enthusiasm for sexual contact so Sue's shortage of physical heft and protuberances is implicated in her lack of "animal passion" and her consequent reluctance to sleep with either the undergraduate friend, Phillotson or Jude. Whilst Arabella is literally and metaphorically connected to the earthiness and grossness of pigs, through the family trades of pig-keeping and pork-butchery, Sue is repeatedly likened to birds. Jude (41), Sue herself (42), the narrator (43), and Gillingham (44) all allude to her as a bird, and her releasing of the pigeons which were soon to be eaten emphasises the difference between herself and Arabella's callous attitude to animals and their slaughter.

The film erases many of these carefully-structured oppositions between the two women. Arabella throws a pig's heart - not penis - at Jude, so whilst her indifference to gore and disregard for animal suffering is fully established in the slaughtering scene it is not quite so graphically connected to her sexuality. Although the adaptation includes the moment where Jude discovers that she uses a hair-extension there are no obvious instances of her making dimples - an act the original specifies on numerous occasions as evidence of her strategy of entrapment. In casting Griffiths and Winslet as Arabella and Sue the physical distinctions between the two characters are largely lost. The former appears long-limbed and physically free rather than voluptuous - especially in the early scenes where she climbs a tree and chases a piglet at the wedding - while the latter is neither willowy or petite. Winslet is far more likely to be interpreted (still

positively!) as 'fresh-faced', or having a particularly 'English' complexion - characteristics established by her role as Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*. Indeed, the scene where Marianne sees her one-time suitor, Willoughby, with the elegant Miss Grey hinges on physical differences between the two actresses. Winslet's slightly plump frame, combined with her portrayal of Marianne's unrestrained 'country' bearing make for a crushing comparison with the slender body and icy demeanour of Lone Vidahl as Miss Grey. Given that Winslet has not subjected herself to a de Niro-esque regime of bodily transformation between the two films she cannot convey near-opposite physical values from one to the next.

Of greater significance than the narrowing of the physical gulf between Sue and Arabella are the alterations to their dialogue and behaviour. Sue is shown smoking a cigarette on several occasions - an act which the novel never mentions - and whilst this works to reinforce her non-conformist credentials it simultaneously undermines the 'purity' and 'untouchability' which form a key facet of her personality in the original. This is particularly evident in the film's scene where Jude introduces Sue to his work-mates. She is completely at ease in the noisy environment of the tavern; chatting, smoking, drinking, and even pirouetting beside the counter. This addition is noteworthy because the original structures familiarity with drink and drinking-places and an assured manner with 'rough' or 'disreputable' men as being the preserve of Arabella; although the novel's Sue is eloquent on *theories* of equality and mixed-gender company she is less confident in *practice*. Winslet's Sue is consistently portrayed as more physically and emotionally *grounded* than in the novel, by omitting references to her smallness, or being a 'spirit' or bird-like, and by including a particularly gory and graphic birth scene to match the painful unpleasantness of Arabella's pig-killing.

The portrayal of Arabella becomes more sympathetic; an encounter is



added to the Kennetbridge Fair scene between Little Jude (never described in the film as 'Little Father Time') and herself. Little Jude sits on the grass inside a marquee with his half-sister and Arabella comes to speak to him. Although he is shy and doesn't want any of the cake she has bought, she is gently persistent in her attempt to have a conversation with her son and gives the impression that she is close to tears when she leaves. This is very different to the novel where Arabella only manifests interest in her son as a means of unsettling Sue, describing him as "My boy and Jude's" and remarking impishly "I half feel as if I should like to have him with me!" (45) The adaptation's altered construction of Arabella is confirmed in the scene of the children's funeral. In the original she does not even attend and when she meets Jude later to discuss events is 'utterly unable to reach the ideal of a catastrophic manner' (46). In the new text she waits near the gate of the graveyard to speak to Jude and whilst she says that this might not have happened had she kept the child her manner is more suggestive of self-reproach than an attempt to blame Jude. Her parting words - "It wasn't your fault, Jude" - are clearly intended to show her attempting to assuage his feelings of guilt and grief. Refiguring the Arabella/Sue distinction may be regarded as a part of the 'neutering' process in adaptation, making the new text more acceptable to a contemporary movie audience. A more starkly-drawn Arabella, common, cruel, and badly-spoken, might run the risk of being interpreted as an ill-considered caricature of the rural working-class, particularly if her physical and moral characteristics were merged, and particularly if she were compared with a prim and pristine Sue. Narrowing the divide between the two women works in a related manner to *Sense and Sensibility's* re-presentation of Lucy Steele; it avoids a potentially negative evaluation of the adaptation's politics

Since the original story registered the impact of two very different women on Jude's aspirations it tended toward unreality in its insistence on the differences between them. Although neither Sue nor Arabella are

uncomplicated 'types' - Sue in particular being a character who has attracted much critical attention - the novel nevertheless tends to make them significant only in terms of how they influence Jude. Penny Boumelha observes that Sue 'is made the instrument of Jude's tragedy, rather than the subject of her own.' (47) She argues that;

'the reader's knowledge of her exists only through the perceiving consciousness of Jude, and so it is that after his death, she is not shown at all; Arabella takes on Jude's role of interpreting her to us.' (48)

Although the film's Sue is often seen from Jude's idealizing perspective - secretly observed through a window, followed down streets, or lingered on in conversation - this does not amount to any kind of erasure of her personality, or its appropriation for narrative purposes. The device of Jude's 'memory' after her departure - a montage of previous happy scenes cross-cut with new images of her directly addressing the camera - not only confirms her importance to him but strengthens her autonomous significance too. We are reminded of her intelligence and sparkle not simply as something Jude has lost, but as important qualities in their own right, eclipsed by her lapse into dogma and conformity. Similarly, the new ending where Jude and Sue part in the graveyard implies that her role in the tragedy is more that of an equal than a subsidiary to Jude.

In his analysis of *Jude The Obscure* Peter Widdowson argues that satire and not tragedy is the 'appropriate term' to describe Hardy's fiction and particularly his last novel. (49) He describes the operation of this satire as dual; firstly a critical depiction of sexual relationships in a class society, and secondly an undermining of realism as a fictional discourse. (50) Approaching Hardy's work from this perspective enables the reader, Widdowson notes, to better explain the modes and elements of Hardy's fiction which many critics have regarded as flaws and faults. (51) If the principal goal or property of his novels is not the evocation of tragic realism, but its deconstruction, then such anti-realist features as melodrama and authorial interjection become instrumental



rather than aberrant. The relevance of Widdowson's argument to the present study and to Hardy adaptations is great, for it is just such material which is invariably omitted and it is precisely a tragic realist tone that is sought and achieved by the omissions.

Widdowson argues that Hardy's satire was directed at 'readers who are seduced by the fictions constructed on behalf of a specious Christian/humanist society by its dominant cultural mode of representation: 'tragic realism.'" (52) Of course, most readings, criticism, and adaptations of Hardy position him as a practitioner, rather than a castigator of this mode. Focussing on Hardy's construction of tragic realist narratives but sweeping under the carpet the strategies he employs to simultaneously ridicule and debunk the assumptions that underpin such narratives results in what Widdowson would see (with justification) as an inaccurate estimation of the author and his texts. Although their oppositional relationship to Christian orthodoxy and prevailing sexual mores is discerned, the internal critique of realism and tragedy as authentic modes of representation is not. Interestingly, Widdowson senses (though he provides no proof) that the 'late-Victorian flak' which *Jude the Obscure* prompted was motivated not only by its 'immoral' content, particularly its representation of marriage and marriage laws, but also by its 'discomforting' textual strategies which assault the 'cherished tenets of humanism' and 'its handmaiden, realism.' (53)

Arabella is a particularly important character in Widdowson's analysis, and the character whom, he believes, most readings have tended to undervalue and mis-recognize. (It is therefore unsurprising that the present study - which has dwelled heavily on those aspects of Hardy's originals which run counter to their realist and tragic qualities - has identified her as the character most radically changed in adaptation.) Widdowson describes Arabella as 'the novel's internal and self-deconstructing satiric voice.' (54). He notes how, in a dialogue with

Phyllotson on the subject of his releasing Sue, she appears to voice rather reactionary attitudes which then shift into a bitter caricature of male (and Christian, and legal) attitudes to women and marriage; "There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women. Besides, you've got the laws on your side. Moses knew. Don't you call to mind what he says?" (55) Her reappearances and chance meetings with other characters serve to drive the plot, and simultaneously threaten its believability through their obvious instrumentalism.

Most significantly, Widdowson identifies Arabella as playing a crucial part in the novel's final phases, which, he argues, are a debased parody of a tragic ending rather than its uncritical enactment... While Jude lies dying, having earlier been tricked into re-marrying Arabella whilst drunk, she curls her hair in the mirror before leaving to attend a Christminster 'festivity' taking place that day. Noise from this occasion and "Hurrahs" from undergraduates float into the room, and Jude dies. Returning later, Arabella remarks to herself "To think he should die just now! Why did he die just now!." However, rather than spoil her enjoyable day, she tells her companions that he is only sleeping and returns to the festivities where it appears she is likely to embark on a relationship with the quack physician Vilbert. Later, when she has had Jude's body laid out, 'the joyous throb of a waltz' is audible from the College their room abuts. (56) The 'focus is not on Jude as tragic hero, but on the 'satire' of Oxford - of the meretricious 'Theatre' that Christminster represents - and of a working-man's aspiration to become a member of it.' (57) Widdowson argues that Arabella's function is that of 'the carnivalizing degrader of Jude's idealism' and even an alternative 'heroine', part of what Hardy identifies earlier as the 'real' (i.e non-University) life of Christminster, 'who mocks the effete intellectual self-identification of readers obsessed by the humanist-realist 'tragedy' of Jude's and Sue's story.' (58)



In Winterbottom's adaptation the above scenes do not, of course, take place. Commenting on the film, Widdowson notes how it avoids material that would 'make a mockery... of the intense love-story, of its contemporary 'relevance', of the tragedy of these young lives, but most particularly of the 'authentic' realism which the film has so lovingly strived for in acting and setting throughout.' (59) Although he does not fasten on the adaptation's elision of melodramatic and gothic material - nor observe that the same took place in *Tess* - he does state, more generally, that scenes missing from the film 'are those which degrade the decorum of tragic realism.' (60) An omitted scene which he does draw particular attention to - since his critical take on *Jude the Obscure* concerns satire - is the comic battle in Phillotson's schoolroom, the style and content of which is strongly suggestive of Henry Fielding, especially of the mock-epic description of the brawl outside the church in *Tom Jones*. In Hardy's scene 'a churchwarden was dealt such a topper with the map of Palestine that his head went right through Samaria' and the rector's nose is bloodied 'owing to the zeal of an emancipated chimney-sweep who took the side of Phillotson's party.' (61) The inclusion of such a raucous scene, if filmed in a manner which replicated Hardy's comic tone, would unquestionably diminish the serious realism which *Jude* seeks to evoke.

Widdowson describes the adaptation's changes to Arabella as 'domesticating' (62) and 'neutralizing' (63); terms that chime with the present study's conception of neutering. Whilst he doesn't argue that a faithful presentation of Arabella might prove unacceptable to audiences in terms of the portrayal of social class, her earthiness and lewdness sharply contrasted against Sue's superior and elevated demeanour, he points to the narrative effects, especially to the ending, of leaving her untouched. He finds in *Jude*, and its re-figuration of her, compelling proof of his reading of the original as satire: 'Hardy's anti-humanist, anti-realist satirical fiction can only be granted the status

of classic tragic realism precisely when all those elements of his text which make such a reading tenable are stripped out or suppressed.' (64)

Assuming Widdowson's analysis to be true - that the anti-realist elements in Hardy's novels, and especially *Jude the Obscure*, constitute an attack on the mode of tragic realism, a mode Hardy believed embodied and served the interests of the dominant society he railed at - then Winterbottom's adaptation is a far less radical text than Hardy's original. Later in the chapter it will be discussed how *Jude* employs a visual style which works to suggest the harsh reality of life. This 'look' - in conjunction with casting and the basic theme of Jude's being denied University access because of his class - suggest the film's oppositional politics and certainly its differences from the genre of Heritage films. Yet the use of its particular tragic realist mode to supposedly accurately represent and interrogate society suggests a gulf between itself and the original. Widdowson suggests that *Jude* takes the form it does because '(r)uling cultural ideologies never could abide works of art which reveal - in displaying the factitiousness of their own modes of (mis)representation - that the 'literal truths' claimed by and for those ideologies are no more than self-interested fictions.' (65)

Comolli and Narboni's article 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' (discussed earlier, in the section on Authorship) is clearly relevant here. Distinguishing and categorizing films by their relationships to ideology, the *Cahiers'* editors describe a category of films 'which attack their ideological assimilation on two fronts', firstly by taking a directly political subject, and secondly (the act without which the first part is politically ineffective) through 'a breaking down of the traditional way of depicting reality' (66). Although not a film, Hardy's original seems - in Widdowson's analysis - to operate at this level of challenging the 'signified' and (&with) the 'signifier'. Conversely, *Jude* may be interpreted as - and clearly is in Widdowson's view - one of 'those films... which have an explicitly political content... but which do not effectively criticize the ideological



system in which they are embedded because they unquestionably adopt its language and its imagery.' (67)

Two broad 'authorial' possibilities may be inferred from the fact that *Jude* takes the form it does. Firstly, that Winterbottom - and his screen writer, Amini - read *Jude the Obscure* as it is widely and popularly understood, as a tragic realist novel, and regard the mixture of other conflicting elements as flaws. Excising these elements, they have striven to produce what they believe to be an otherwise faithful work, whose up-dating and modern resonance are fundamentally in tune with the original. Secondly, there is the possibility that Winterbottom and/or Amini have sensed that Hardy deliberately sought to undermine realism but have decided not to follow this path. This may be because they prefer the interpretation of Jude as a tragic hero, despite what Widdowson's believes to be Hardy's deconstructive intent. Also, it seems clear that highlighting the multiplicity of elements, the satire, the anti-realism etc. would not have been a wise commercial decision. A century of readings has not favoured this approach, nor has most criticism, nor previous Hardy adaptations.

Whilst the generally accepted notion of Hardy's best novels as tragic realism can accommodate Winterbottom's alignment of *Jude* with a recent TV aesthetic and genre of gritty nihilism (discussed later) it is doubtful that audiences would appreciate or enjoy a *Jude* that sought to dismantle cinematic realism and point up their own 'blindness' in consuming and believing it. (Widdowson's argument assumes that the tragic realism of *Jude* is ideologically equivalent to the late nineteenth century mode of literary tragic realism which he believes Hardy to be critiquing and therefore that to be truly faithful Winterbottom would have had to effect an equivalent critique in his own medium.) Whilst Malle's *Zazie dans le Metro* does translate the original novel's examination of literary language into a critique of cinematic language, this is a more light-hearted text which does not seek to reveal falsity and ideological

underpinnings in cinema's dominant mode of realistic representation. Combining such an approach with Hardy's bitter subject-matter would probably have resulted either in an unpalatably antagonistic text, since audiences would inevitably be positioned as ideological dupes in the majority of their viewing, or the satirical/deconstructive intent might go unrecognized (like Hardy's) with the elements that undercut realism seeming simply failures of judgment and taste rather than purposeful devices.

Hardy's mixing of polemics with broader concepts of 'fate' works to undermine the realist aspect of his novel. His 'targets' in the polemical parts of *Jude the Obscure* are several and their parameters not always clearly defined. He draws attention to the unfairness of access to University, to the pain caused by the binding contract of marriage and to the cruelty of a society that judges those who live outside its moral and religious codes. Equally, he cannot resist the suggestion that Jude's difficulties and the painfulness of his life are also caused by forces more profound than specific social factors. As with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy implies that the machinations - or plain indifference - of fate direct the title character. He refers to Jude doing battle with his 'evil star' (68) and to his childhood 'perception of the flaw in the terrestrial scheme' (69), a sensation shared by Sue and Phillotson years later when they remark respectively that "Nature's law (is) mutual butchery!" (70) and that "Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society; and we can't get out of it if we would!" (71) In implying that the novel's heartache may be attributable to such an overwhelmingly nihilistic phenomenon Hardy necessarily qualifies his more specific criticisms of concrete social forces and institutions. This is also evidenced in the breakdown of the Jude/Sue relationship. Despite *not* marrying - to avoid the difficulties they regard as inherent in that contract - they fail to spare themselves those difficulties and much of the laboriously developed



criticism of marriage is subsumed by the impression that Hardy regards the problem as residing deeper still, in the very character of sexual and romantic relationships.

The tendency of Hardy's polemics to become alloyed with his more sweeping 'explanations' of the state of things - the element of his work widely interpreted as 'pessimism' - is relevant to the changes made by the adaptation. Both aspects are diminished with the result that the new text feels more realistic. Firstly the film diminishes his specific polemics - by cutting material where characters are used as vehicles or mouthpieces for a point-of-view such as the exchanges between Phillotson and his friend Gillingham where the former takes an 'advanced' or unconventional view of releasing Sue while the latter represents the voice of conformist society. Secondly, it does not contain - as *Tess* chose not to contain - allusions to a global and immutable unfairness against which characters struggle in vain. These omissions tend to make the locating of the responsibility for the principal characters' unhappiness somewhat difficult. Although the film's Sue does make references to 'domestic laws' needing to take 'different temperaments' into account, it does not sustain a critique of late Victorian morality with anything approaching the deliberateness of the original; (and of course the filmmakers do not have late Victorian morality as the prevailing standard against which to set their text, though echoes persisted in Conservative moral pronouncements on the value of family life with marriage at its centre.) And as with *Tess*, where the original novel constructed causality as a rather murky mixture of social forces, authorial privilege and superstition, the filmmaker's decision to simplify that mixture would appear to pose potential difficulties in creating a new causality. The numerous changes in favour of realism and particularly the modernizing of dialogue encourages an audience to approach *Jude* as a story fundamentally amenable to contemporary interpretive strategies. Yet any alternative mode or

explanation for Jude's tragedy and that of those in his orbit needs to account for events previously made intelligible in no small degree by the suspension of disbelief.

*Jude*, like *Tess*, can be regarded as a 'romantic tragedy', containing as it does sufficient of the story elements particular to those generic terms. Equally, I believe that the adaptation also lends itself to interpretation in terms of certain British television programmes and movies. Importantly, this interpretation works to contextualize the generally depressing perception of life invited by the events in *Jude*. The casting of Christopher Eccleston as Jude provokes comparisons with the television dramas in which he has appeared - *Cracker*, *Hearts and Minds*, and *Our Friends in the North* - as well as his previous film role in Danny Boyle's *Shallow Grave*. These texts have in common a largely negative view of society and human nature. Characters are often cruel, or perform cruel acts, and the texts' realism is understood at least partly in terms of the representation of selfishness as a dominant tendency while altruism and idealism are either absent or difficult to implement. This world-view also informs *Trainspotting*, (another Boyle-directed movie) which culminates in its 'hero', Renton, choosing to abandon his erstwhile friends and disappear with their loot. It is common for broadly sympathetic characters to demonstrate bad traits (beyond the cliches normally employed to add spice to lead parts) such as Fitz in *Cracker* being unfaithful and deceitful to his wife. More importantly, some roles are neither clearly sympathetic nor unsympathetic, such as the trio in *Shallow Grave* who simultaneously amuse and unsettle an audience with their merciless 'interviewing' of potential flatmates. It is also common for characters to develop or reveal their 'bad sides' in the course of the story. This forms the narrative basis of *Shallow Grave*, with Eccleston as David becoming particularly obsessive and violent, while the detective who raped a colleague in one *Cracker* storyline made a shocking precedent for TV drama in that he was not a character



'brought in' for that one story but part of the original cast. This is not to suggest that Eccleston reprises this species of character in *Jude* - his portrayal is likable and encourages our sympathy - rather it indicates some of the meanings his presence may potentially bring to the film. Clearly, these meanings would be dissipated into irrelevance if they did not somehow 'chime' with related cues and material in the film, and although Eccleston does not convey the negative individual values often present in these texts *Jude* appears thematically and visually bound to their bleak world-view. Brian Appleyard describes this strongly nihilistic aesthetic thus;

British Television has, for years, been in love with a very narrowly conceived idea of realism. Shows such as *Cracker* and *Prime Suspect* are based on the view that realism consists of a sort of bleak, gritty pessimism about human nature. Indeed, whenever a police-type show was praised by the industry and by critics, one could invariably predict its style - grainy, harsh - and its content - depressing... The underlying belief was that reality is intrinsically nasty and brutal, and that it was the broadcaster's job to expose this. (72)

It is precisely this conception of realism which informs *Jude* and marks it out as different from other adaptations of classic literature. Reviewed positively in *The Independent*, it was described as 'A triumph.. not pretty costume drama.. tragic, raw and brutal' (73). Widely understood as his most pessimistic work, Hardy's final novel has found a modern correlative in this genre of grim screen texts and the adaptation deliberately plays on that closeness, inviting interpretation in those terms. Interestingly, the effort to make *Jude* suggest this species of realism is so pronounced that it compromises both literary fidelity and the other 'realism' of Hardy's locations. The TV and film texts recognized as key constituents of this genre are almost without exception set in the North - either in the North of England or Scotland - and *Jude* borrows from their scenic palette, using Northern locations and emphasising dull colours in both urban and country scenes to convey the hardness of his life. The decision to film in such locations as Durham and Edinburgh - and particularly to render the urban

environment as generally depressing - is highly revealing and suggests that Winterbottom regarded the bleak aesthetic, which as a *Cracker* director he had helped establish, as a paramount consideration.

Hardy's Christminster is universally understood to represent Oxford, indeed his substitution of fictitious names for real place-names is so well documented that many editions of his novels contain a glossary for matching the two and a map of his 'Wessex' with its surroundings. Yet *Jude* is so eager to suggest gritty Northern meanings that it does not employ Hardy's 'real' setting because it would probably evoke contrary values. Television programmes which have used Oxford as a backdrop, such as *Brideshead Revisited* and *Inspector Morse*, generally lean heavily towards positive, romantic photography of the city and its 'dreaming spires'. In these and other texts images of College quadrangles, or the Bridge of Sighs, or the domed roof of the Bodlean library function as a visual shorthand for 'Oxford' and are invariably intended to carry pleasant associations. In rejecting Oxford as a location (and I assume that using Edinburgh's Royal Mile was not a *cheap* alternative) the adaptation avoids these associations and manages to convey Jude's rejection by the college, and its indifference to his dreams, as part and parcel of the city's harsh aspect. Images of the Remembrance day parade, where hard-faced Dons process along a stony thoroughfare, certainly succeed in suggesting the meanness of the city - even in its great moments - as recognized by the older, chastened Jude. However, this impression of the city - and indeed life generally - is present from the beginning rather than developing consequent upon Jude's experiences. Only when Jude as a child gazes at Christminster in the distance (probably a matte shot) does the film evoke positive meanings for the city. Jude's early time in Christminster is rendered as happy through his new association with Sue and his as yet unthwarted ambition; it is not related to his delight in the architectural fabric of the place as it is in the novel, where he traverses the city, gazing at colleges and



touching their stonework.

*Jude* also bears considerable similarity to many films directed by Ken Loach. To a large degree this is because Loach is preoccupied with the North of England and with difficulties experienced by working class individuals and families in their personal lives and (un)employment. Even in some of his pictures set outside the North e.g *Riff-Raff* - based around a London building site - and *Land and Freedom* - about the Spanish Civil War - his ongoing fascination with Northern mores and material is evident. The workers in *Riff-Raff* are mainly Liverpudlians and Geordies, with a Scot (Robert Carlyle) as the central character, while Ian Hart in *Land and Freedom* plays a down-to-earth Liverpudlian involved in the fight against fascism. Beyond the 'Northern' settings and other broad congruences several Loach films provide startling parallels with *Jude*. The most obvious starting point is *Kes*, about a Yorkshire boy who finds and rears a kestrel. Like the child in *Kes*, the young Jude is a skinny loner, physically and emotionally bullied, who finds something (in his case the ideal of Christminster) in which he then takes an obsessive interest. Jude's beating at the hands of Farmer Troutham recalls the treatment of the boy in *Kes* from his Games Master and his elder brother while the shot of a gibbet of dead crows - never mentioned in the novel - recalls the fate of the kestrel. *Family Life*, about a girl's fall into schizophrenia, shares *Jude's* theme of an individual who struggles to be understood and is eventually beaten by the system. *Ladybird* *Ladybird* also pits its principal protagonist against an intrusive and domineering state - in this case Social Services and the Immigration authorities - and the remarkable opening of *Poor Cow*, in which the female lead is filmed giving birth, is a probable inspiration for Winslet's particularly graphic child-birth scene. Whilst certain narrative similarities can be attributed to chance parallels between Hardy's novel and Loach's oeuvre, other of these resonances take the form of additions and alterations particular to the

adaptation. This suggests that Loach's work was probably a formative influence on Winterbottom and his *Jude*.

In his article on *Trainspotting*, Bert Cardullo notes how it is related to Loach's films by their common rejection of the dominant cinematic mode of depicting English society - a mode he describes variously as an 'Oxbridge-Thatcherite view of the world', 'the view through yuppie eyes' and 'the British-museum tradition of Alexander Korda.' (74) Cardullo cites *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* as examples of this tendency, and it seems probable that, with the exception of *Jude*, all the films in this study could be categorized thus. Although *Jude* may be grouped with other literary adaptations simply by virtue of having a celebrated literary original, it appears in all other respects to structure itself in an insistently oppositional relationship to the heritage film. Northern rather than southern, not dissipating the central narrative focus either by emphasising subsidiary performances or offering visual pleasures of architecture, landscape and costume, *Jude* consistently reverses the heritage aesthetic and the reassuring view of Britain which heritage film perpetuates and exports. It thereby bridges the British traditions of literary adaptation and contemporary social-problem movies, borrowing from the latter to figure the past represented in the former. Made at the end of the longest period of Conservative government in Britain, *Jude* shares and expresses the growing public sense of disillusionment with that administration and rejects its nostalgic view of the national past which it had evoked as part of its moral and political project

It is also probable that Loach's films - starting in the late 1960's - were also influential in the development of the genre or movement of gritty pessimistic realism that Appleyard identifies, though there are significant differences between the two bodies of work. Loach's films often tend toward a semi-documentary style of filmmaking and sometimes the use of non-professional actors, who make up most of the cast in *Kes*. The unlikely casting of stand-up



comic Crissy Rock, who takes the lead in *Ladybird Ladybird*, also indicates his enthusiasm to work outside the more traditional practices of fiction film. On the other hand, the downbeat cinematography and nihilistic outlook of *Cracker* and *Prime Suspect* are carefully orchestrated and amount to a style of mal du siècle chic of which numerous variants exist, e.g. the silvered chiaroscuro and disillusionment of *Seven*. It is tempting to regard these different brands or modes of realism as virtual opposites; one authentic and ideologically committed, the other a slick and contrived style. But *Jude* reveals the absence of a clear defining gulf between them. The 'Northern' feel and subject-matter of employment and relationship difficulties is a common feature of both. And whilst several episodes in *Jude* suggest the influence of Loach, its invitation to the audience to use a fundamentally nihilist logic to understand the film's events works largely because of our familiarity with this aesthetic in the TV texts. This invitation cannot really be refused, for the apparatus of Hardy's causality has been significantly dismantled, leaving only a depressing conception of 'reality' that fortuitously accords with traditional notions of Hardy's pessimism. Alignment with a contemporary genre becomes a kind of fidelity.

THE FORSTER ADAPTATIONS.  
PRODUCTION CONTEXTS.

*A Room With a View.* First published in 1908.

*A Room With aView.* Released 1986. UK.

Director James Ivory. Producer Ismail Merchant. Screenplay Ruth Praver Jhabvala. Director of Photography Tony Pierce-Roberts. Editor Humphrey Dixon. Music Richard Robbins. Art Directors Gianni Quaranta & Brian Ackland-Snow.

Leading Players Helena Bonham-Carter *Lucy Honeychurch.* Maggie Smith *Charlotte Bartlett.* Denholm Elliot *Mr Emerson.* Julian Sands *George Emerson.* Daniel Day-Lewis *Cecil Vyse.* Simon Callow *Rev. Beebe.*

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*A Passage to India.* First published in 1924.

*A Passage to India.* Released 1985. UK.

Director David Lean. Producers John Brabourne & Richard Goodwin. Screenplay David Lean. Director of Photography Ernest Day. Editor David Lean. Music Maurice Jarre. Art Director John Box.

Leading Players Judy Davis *Adela Quested.* Victor Banerjee *Dr. Aziz.* Peggy Ashcroft *Mrs Moore.* James Fox *Cyril Fielding.* Alec Guinness *Godbole.* Nigel Havers *Ronny Moore.* Art Malik *Mahmoud Ali.*

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Travel provided E.M.Forster with much of the material for these two novels. A year in Italy with his mother followed by a cruise to Greece in 1902-3 gave him inspiration and grist for his early novels, including *A Room with a View*, which satirize the English abroad and their failure to fully engage with foreign culture. (1) Later, as an established writer following the critical success of *Howards End* (1910) he visited India for several months in 1912-13, including a period with Syed Ross Masood, a young Muslim he had tutored in England and



for whom he 'developed an intense affection'. (2) After war-service with the Red Cross in Alexandria, he returned to India from 1921-2, working for a spell as personal secretary to the maharajah of the native state of Dewas Senior. His contact with Indians and with Anglo-Indian British imperial administrators precipitated his depiction of the difficulties of cross-cultural relationships in *A Passage to India*. Appearing five years after the infamous Amritsar Massacre of 1919, when the the British Army shot scores of un-armed Indians, *A Passage to India* would have been interpreted by contemporary readers as a critical allusion to that incident. The novel's subject of an alleged rape of an English woman by an Indian and the consequences of her allegation clearly echoed the Amritsar situation, where an attack on a white woman prompted an Imperial clamp-down which led to unrest and rioting, eventually culminating in the marketplace killings. Cited ever since as an example of Imperial brutality and forming a focal reference and historic juncture for Indian Nationalism, the massacre became a key scene in Attenborough's 1982 biopic *Gandhi*.

Forster had intensely disliked Tonbridge, the public school he attended for several years, and later drew a thinly veiled portrait of the school as Sawston in *The Longest Journey*, his third novel. 'It aimed at producing the average Englishman' he wrote 'and, to a very great extent it succeeded.' (3) He characterized its products as having 'well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds and undeveloped hearts' (4) and many of his novels involve a contrast between these 'average' Englishmen and 'sensitive' Englishmen more like himself. However, Christopher Gillie argues that 'it would be a mistake to assume that Forster felt only hostility and contempt' (5) for the capable muscular-Christian types who dominated English and particularly Imperial society for much of his life. In *Howards End* Forster describes the relationship between the sensitive but sheltered Schlegel family and the average but energetic Wilcoxes, arguing in his epigraph - "Only connect..." - for better mutual understanding

and a recognition on both sides that each contributes to the existence of the other.

After Tonbridge, Forster enjoyed King's College Cambridge, where he found friends and, in the intellectual society The Apostles 'a stress on the value of personal relationships inspired partly by G.E. Moore,' (6) a philosopher a few years older than himself. King's College and the spirit of friendship he encountered there proved a major influence on Forster's writing and thinking. In his biography of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Forster wrote glowingly of the sense of wholeness and connection which the place inspired;

As Cambridge filled up with friends it acquired a magic quality. Body and spirit, reason and emotion, work and play, architecture and scenery, laughter and seriousness, life and art - these pairs which are elsewhere contrasted were there fused into one. (7)

After the death in 1945 of his mother, to whom he was very close, Forster took an honorary fellowship and made the College his permanent home until his own death in 1970. The importance of friendship forms a major theme of *A Passage to India*, where an Englishman, Fielding, remains loyal to an Indian friend, Aziz, despite bitter censure and ostracism from the Anglo-Indian community. In his essay 'What I believe' Forster described personal relationships as 'something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty' (8) and was sure that the value of friendship, of human connection, should absolutely transcend the demands imposed by nationality.

Forster's homosexuality is another factor that inflects and informs his writing. Gay sex was illegal for most of his life and the trial of Oscar Wilde had taken place while Forster was a teenager; so with the exception of the posthumously published *Maurice* (1971), homosexuality is never explicitly present in his work and did not for many years constitute a theme for its criticism. However, most criticism since the publication of *Maurice* and the expansion of biographical information about his gay relationships has discerned a gay significance implicit in most of his stories. The friendship between



Fielding and Aziz has been considered in gay terms, a reading made more convincing by the knowledge that Forster himself had a cross-race relationship with a foreign man, Egyptian tram-conductor Mohammed-el-Adl. Certain elements from *A Room with a View* have been subject to gay readings too, especially the scene in which several male characters take a nude bathe in a pond, and the character Rev. Beebe, who seems oddly pleased when engagements are broken off. Although the wider public may have been unaware of this 'content', such elements would surely have been recognized by friends, amongst whom *Maurice* and several short stories with homosexual themes had been discreetly circulated long before their publication. The closest Forster came in his lifetime to public sexual controversy was his appearance at the 'trial' of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960 where he spoke for the defence. It is interesting to consider the very different treatment these two adaptations afford the gay potentialities inherent in the originals; in *A Room with a View* the story's gayness is knowingly suggested, whereas *A Passage to India* rigorously whitewashes such content.

Merchant/Ivory, the production team behind *A Room with a View*, consists of Indian producer, Ismail Merchant, and American director, James Ivory, in collaboration with Polish/Indian writer Ruth Praver Jhabvala. Merchant was born in Bombay to 'middle-class Muslim parents' (9) and as a child witnessed the violence of Partition in 1947, his own family choosing to remain in India when many Muslims left for Pakistan. In 1958 he went to New York to take an MBA where, in his free time, he began watching European movies which quickly 'became a passion'. (10) A talented networker, Merchant became acquainted with Indian performers Madhur and Saeed Jaffrey - then acting in New York - and managed to put together a tiny budget for a short film on a mythological Indian subject, *The Creation of Woman*, which Saeed Jaffrey narrated. With the finished film Merchant set out for Hollywood, intending to

secure an Academy Award nomination. Informed by the Academy that his film could not be entered as it had not played for the minimum three days at a commercial cinema, he quickly persuaded a cinema owner to book the picture and had it seen by sufficient Academy members to garner a nomination. This episode anticipates the practices and qualities that Merchant brought to the Merchant-Ivory collaboration; an ability to wring the maximum value from small budgets - giving films the appearance of being more costly productions than they are, and what Robert Emmet Long describes as his skill at persuading 'well-known stars to appear in his films for considerably less than their usual salaries, offering the inducement of quality movies by which they would like to be remembered'. (11)

Ruth Praver Jhabvala has worked with Merchant and Ivory since 1961 when the Producer and Director called at her Delhi house hoping to make a film of her novel *The Householder*, a coming-of-age story about an Indian teacher. Her earlier novels and short stories generally deal with India, and more particularly with the contact and conflict between Western and Indian cultures, while her more recent work has arisen out of her experiences living in New York. Whilst maintaining this successful career as a writer of fiction she has written the screenplays for nearly twenty Merchant-Ivory pictures.

Born into an upper-middle-class family in California, James Ivory studied architecture and fine-arts before joining the graduate filmmaking program at the University of Southern California. His thesis film *Venice: Themes and Variations*, a documentary about painters' different views of the city, was shown at the Edinburgh Festival in 1957 and mentioned in the *New York Times* as one of that year's ten best documentaries. As with Merchant's first picture, this film established certain hallmarks that would distinguish their subsequent Merchant-Ivory work; an 'extraordinary visual sense' manifested in 'expert composition', a 'rapt interest in buildings' and particularly old structures, and a



tendency to narrative 'obliqueness' to 'the unstated things, the shaded meanings.'

(12) These elements also figure in negative responses to Merchant-Ivory movies; they are commonly criticized for their 'prettiness', for a touristic postcard figuration of the times and places they represent, and for a lack of pace. Whether valued positively or negatively these qualities do suggest an interesting consonance with Forster. In *Aspects of the Novel* Forster makes a wry campy acknowledgment that novels need to be plotted while indicating his own attraction to narrative byways, digressions and atmosphere; "Yes - oh, dear yes, there has to be a story". (13) And Ivory's own impression of Forster's novels is not of taut narrative construction;

The odd thing about Forster, as far as I was concerned, was that I never had a very clear sense of the stories. I could remember some of his characters, everyone in *A Passage to India*, for example, and, of course, Cecil Vyse from *A Room with a View*, but by no means all of them. And perhaps that's how it should be, since Forster didn't think his plots were anything, or in any sense important; it was everything else that was significant. (14).

*A Room with a View* began Merchant-Ivory's series of Forster adaptations, which continued with *Maurice* (1987) and *Howards End* (1991). John Caughie neatly summarizes their influence when he observes that they have 'luxuriated in Englishness, becoming a brand-name for the heritage film'. (15) Earlier, the team had developed their 'rich visual style' (16) of period recreation with two successful adaptations of Henry James novels, *The Europeans* (1979) and *The Bostonians* (1984). It is perhaps ironic that filmmakers whose first films were set and made in India and who have scant personal connections (of ethnicity, residence, family etc.) with Britain - Jhabvala alone having been educated in England - should have become synonymous with adaptations of English literature in general and with E.M.Forster in particular. It is unquestionably ironic, given their strong associations with India, that it was not they who adapted Forster's last and most famous novel *A Passage to India*.

Forster had consistently rejected offers for the film rights to his novel, convinced that any adaptation would be a 'travesty' (17). He did however grant permission for Indian writer Santha Rama Rau to adapt the courtroom scene for the stage. David Lean saw the production in 1960 and enquired about the rights but 'struck the usual brick wall.' (18). Following Forster's death in 1970 the executors of his estate at King's College rejected a series of advances to adapt *A Passage to India*. Joseph Losey, Merchant-Ivory and Waris Hussein - who had directed a TV version of Rau's play - were amongst those turned down. In 1980 Professor Bernard Williams, 'a film enthusiast' (19), became Provost of King's and considered the issue of an adaptation more favourably. The producer Lord Brabourne who had long wanted to adapt *Passage* approached Williams and secured the rights in 1981. 'The contact stipulated that Santha Rama Rau would write the screenplay and it reserved the right to approve the director'. (20) Brabourne submitted a list of six potential directors, with Lean's name at the top, and the College agreed.

David Lean had not made a film since *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), a romantic tragedy set in Ireland, which met with wide critical disdain. Pauline Kael's review in *The New Yorker* homed in on those elements of the movie - and Lean's later pictures generally - which many critics disliked;

He probably enjoys working with his characteristic gentleman-technician's tastefully-colossal style. But tasteful and colossal are - in movies at least - basically antipathetic. Lean makes respectable epics and that's a contradiction and self-defeating... The only reasons for placing this story in 1916 were to legitimize the fact that every idea in it is shopworn, and to build sets. For years, during the making of a Lean film, publicity people send out photographs of the handsome director standing in the cities he has built, and then the movies arrive and he never seems to have figured out what to do in those sets. They have a gleaming pictorial look - everything is posing for a photograph... The emptiness of *Ryan's Daughter* shows in every frame, and yet the publicity machine has turned it into an artistic event, and the American public is a sucker for the corrupt tastefulness of well-bred English epics. (21)

Kael was, however, wrong in this instance about the power of the



'publicity machine'. Unlike *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*, two previous Lean epics that involved much costly set building and which many critics greeted unenthusiastically, *Ryan's Daughter* was not a success with the cinema-going public. The combination of critical scorn and relative box-office failure prompted Lean into a self-imposed exile from filmmaking. His acquaintance Nic Roeg recalls that 'He was in shock and fury and startled and dismayed... He had had some poor reviews, but he had never been smashed... he was in a state of catatonic shock from it. He couldn't believe it.' (22)

Lean had begun as a runner at the Gaumont Studio in 1926, becoming by the early 'thirties one of the top editors in British film. In 1942 he co-directed, with Noel Coward, the naval wartime drama *In Which We Serve*, and launched a directorial career that included more films from Coward scripts - *This Happy Breed* (1944), *Blithe Spirit* (1945) and *Brief Encounter* (1945) - celebrated adaptations of Dickens - *Great Expectations* (1946), *Oliver Twist* (1948) - and a final phase of what Caughie terms 'wide-screen, 'big' theme, Oscar-winning epics'. (23) starting with *Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) and continuing with *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) and *A Passage to India* (1985). With *A Passage to India* Lean was actually obliged to forego the widescreen format he preferred since one of the film's backers, Home Box Office, an American cable TV company, wanted a format that would reduce more easily to a television ratio. In all other respects, however, Lean strove to reproduce the epic dimensions of his other, late, movies; a style which had prompted Brabourne to offer him the project in the first place - 'David Lean was my idea of the great British director. The scale of the films is what I like so much. The way he saw everything in such a huge way.' (24)

After much correspondence Lean eventually rejected Rau's screenplay and decided to script the movie himself. He believed that Forster's representation of Anglo-India was overly harsh and intended that the film of *A Passage to India*

would redress this perceived imbalance;

Forster, oh dear, oh dear, I think he hated the English out there. And he was a queer, and you can imagine how they must have disapproved of that... The dislike was mutual, but I've toned down a lot of that. It's all very well to criticize the English, but just take a look at New Delhi... look at the postal system - which works. We've left them all sorts of bad things, I suppose, but they've got some very good things. (25)

Forster's gayness is, for Lean, a causative factor in the author's inability to appreciate the benefits of Empire, so in his re-telling of the story it was to be doubly 'straightened' - offering a less critical view of Anglo-India and precluding those gay readings made possible by the original. Lean himself observed that Forster's resistance to an adaptation probably stemmed from a fear that it would necessarily take a particular side; 'He was frightened that whoever made it would come down on the side of the English or the Indians, and he wanted it balanced. Mind you, I don't think the book is balanced.' (26) Forster's fears were, on the basis of Lean's approach to the task, well founded.

In making alterations that would inevitably be considered politically-motivated Lean re-opened the examination of the story as political - the years since its publication having seen a developing, alternative, focus on its spiritual or mystical qualities (the properties Lean's adaptation downplays). Lean's changes were in tune with the nostalgic 'Raj Revival' of the mid-eighties; writing in 1987, Bryan Turner had observed;

In contemporary Britain, there is a strong mood of post-colonial nostalgia, represented in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* (1987) and in the recent plethora of films and television documentaries on the loss of imperial power and world influence. (27)

Prior to Lean's film, the TV miniseries (though epic in terms of cost and narrative sweep) *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984) and *The Far Pavilions* (1984) had demonstrated the public taste for drama set in Imperial India. The discussion of nostalgia in Chapter 2 has already addressed the significance of the Thatcherite refiguration of history and its tendency to put a more favourable



spin on Empire; Salman Rushdie - whose novel *Midnight's Children* sought to redress such fictional treatments of India by making Indians and the post-Independence era its principal subjects - described the 'rise of Raj revisionism (as the artistic counterpart of the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain.'

(28)

## CHAPTER 6. A ROOM WITH A VIEW.

Similarities and connections between Forster and Austen have not gone unnoticed. Chapter 2 of this study discussed how Austen's and Forster's novels, whilst set in and concerned with their own times, evidenced nostalgia for earlier periods. Conversely, adaptations of their work tend to construct the periods represented as objects of nostalgia. This chapter will discuss how and why - in tandem with alterations which make the adaptation work as a romantic comedy - Merchant-Ivory's *A Room with a View* uses and changes Forster's original to evoke nostalgia for the Edwardian era.

John Sayre Martin makes a lengthy comparison between Lucy Honeychurch, central character of *A Room with a View*, and the eponymous heroine of *Emma*. Both are 'sheltered product(s) of a well-to-do family', both have 'been surrounded by rich, pleasant people who, so far as (they are) concerned, constitute life' (1). The novels chart their exposure to new difficulties and emotions, to confusion and love. This disruption of their old lives concludes happily, after a series of misunderstandings and muddles, with marriage to the 'right' men.

More than Forster's other four novels, it (*A Room with a View*) recalls Jane Austen. With due allowance for changes of fashion and idiom, most of the characters might have stepped from the pages of one of her books, and Summer Street, the home of her heroine and her family, is the sort of quiet English village about which she wrote - Highgate (sic) or Longbourn - a century later. Forster's novel, too, displays a gift for satire and comedy that recalls the art of the earlier novelist. (2)

His topographical slip notwithstanding, Martin's observation appears to ring true and leads inexorably to a closer comparison of the novels' resolutions, given their correspondence at the level of character and situation. Martin draws our attention to significant divergence between the texts in terms of the heroines' management of private and public life. Austen's *Emma* achieves a



successful reconciliation of both spheres, her personal and romantic problems being resolved when she follows the moral code of public conduct exemplified by Knightley. In contrast, Lucy only achieves a personally satisfying union with George at the expense of alienating her family and friends.

Forster's universe is divided. Living in a larger, less integrated world, he sees a fundamental dichotomy between public life and private, between the aims and needs of society and those of the individual... For Lucy, as for her creator, the satisfactions of the inner life are incompatible with a completely integrated relationship with the outer. (3)

In *A Room with a View*, and Forster's other novels, the nineteenth century moral certainties which bring clarity and tidiness to Austen's conclusions are replaced with difficulties and doubts which anticipate the dislocated subjectivity of modern experience.

V.A. Shahane reads *A Room with a View's* ending differently to Martin and most other critics, seeing a holistic, and optimistic, congruence of forces rather than a qualified settlement. Taking Northrop Frye's formula for an 'essential comic resolution', 'an individual release which is also a social reconciliation' (4) Shahane maintains that Forster satisfies these criteria because;

Lucy's individual release is also social reconciliation between the elite upper middle class and the working men of middle class in England. George works on the British Railways. (5)

However, Shahane's interpretation seems highly suspect. It ignores the coldness and censure which Lucy's love for George provokes from Mr Beebe, the previously amiable vicar, and from her brother and mother - which within the novel's parameters amounts to a near universal response. Mr Emerson may be delighted by Lucy's choice but he himself has long sacrificed public approval in favour of an individual ethics. Shahane's reading also depends upon the value ascribed to Lucy and George's class differences. Even when attempting to stress the socially reconciliatory meaning of their union Shahane can only celebrate a pairing *within* the middle class, and it is less than clear that George and Lucy

represent the extremities of that band. George's wide reading, his travel to the Continent, and initial favourable reception from Freddy Honeychurch - representative of the *jeunesse doree* - locate him rather higher than the lowest end of the middle class. The Merchant/Ivory adaptation (1986) also indicates a possible upward trend in the Emerson's class status by having George/Julian Sands speak with a more measured and refined voice than his father/Denholm Eliot; a difference that cannot be wholly attributed to George's melancholy air. This difference may however be explicable in terms of the film's invention of fairly broad strokes - bumbling gestures and speech especially - to characterise Emerson Senior's unconventionality.

Perhaps the clinching argument that Forster would not have intended to construct the George/Lucy marriage as emblematic of a reconciliation between personal and public expectations that successfully transcends class boundaries is detectable in another novel, *Howards End*. Here, the results of cross-social contact are shown to be a mixture of disaster and success. The relationship between Leonard Bast - the lower middle class clerk - and Helen Schlegel - who belongs to the upper middle 'rentier' class - results in his being killed, her having an illegitimate child, and the emasculation of the Wilcox family - into which her sister has married. Although the novel concludes with a family - of sorts - residing in the house of the novel's title, it is clear both that this arrangement does not meet with approbation from most other characters and that a heavy human price has been paid for this limited resolution. Forster may prefer and celebrate the privileging of personal relationships over wider social allegiances but he consistently represents the choice as painful and laden with consequences which will not easily recede.

Endings may seem a perverse point of entry into an analysis of the adaptation of *A Room with a View*. However, this approach is motivated by its consideration alongside two Austen adaptations. The Austen adaptations



feature alterations to the original endings which aim to sweep away any residual sentiments which might diminish the happiness necessary to the finale of the romantic comedy. It seems probable that such a policy might be at work in the Forster adaptation too, should the filmmakers' intention be to fit the story within that film genre. The fact that Forster's original resolutions are themselves more emotionally alloyed and qualified than Austen's - in terms of an inmitigable private/public divide - suggests that the extent of such alteration may be greater.

Whilst *A Room with a View* is regarded as Forster's happiest novel, a social comedy that centres on a developing romance between its two principal characters, its contents still require judicious shoe-horning - some subtle, some more drastic - to be repackaged as a romantic comedy. In its final chapter Lucy and George return, on their honeymoon, to the Pension Bertolini in Florence - the place of their original meeting. Lucy reads a bitter letter from her younger brother, Freddy; 'the Honeychurches had not forgiven them; they were disgusted at her past hypocrisy; she had alienated Windy Corner; perhaps for ever.'(6). The couple also discuss the Reverend Beebe, a family friend who, Lucy maintains - 'will never forgive us - I mean, he will never be interested in us again. I wish that he did not influence them so much at Windy Corner'(7). Mr Beebe's disapproval has already been signalled to the reader in the crucial encounter of the previous chapter, between Lucy and Mr Emerson. His response to the revelation of Lucy and George's love is clearly negative. To the overwrought Lucy his face seems 'suddenly inhuman' (8) and he says ' "I am more grieved than I can possibly express. It is lamentable, lamentable - incredible"'. When asked by Emerson what is wrong with his son, Beebe's tone shifts from surprise and disappointment to truculence; ' "Nothing, Mr Emerson, except that he no longer interests me. Marry George, Miss Honeychurch. He will do admirably."'(9)

The Merchant-Ivory adaptation effects considerable changes to these two

key scenes. Beebe/Simon Callow simply does not enter the drawing room where Lucy/Helena Bonham-Carter and Emerson are talking and the rather acrimonious exchange is therefore excised. The film's final impression of Mr Beebe is not one of irritation and animosity, but that he has kindly invited Emerson to rest in the vicarage while the removers work in his house. Similarly, the novel's oblique foreshadowings of Beebe's hostility to the Lucy/George romance do not find their way onto the screen. On several occasions Forster punctures and problematizes the presentation of Rev. Beebe as a jolly and informal vicar, more kindly and moral than the novel's other clergyman, the brittle and loveless Rev. Eager. In Chapter three Forster states that;

Mr Beebe was, from rather profound reasons, somewhat chilly in his attitude towards the other sex, and preferred to be interested rather than enthralled. (10)

And when he learns of Lucy's breaking her engagement with Cecil/Daniel Day-Lewis, Beebe's 'attitude' is expanded upon, though still not fully explained;

His belief in celibacy, so reticent, so carefully concealed beneath his tolerance and culture, now came to the surface and expanded like some delicate flower. 'They that marry do well, but they that refrain do better.' So ran his belief, and he never heard that an engagement was broken off but with a slight feeling of pleasure. (11)

Although both these disclosures reside in the omniscient authorial voice rather than in dialogue and do not therefore lend themselves easily to transposition, their omission nonetheless effects the construction of his character. New dialogue could have been added or, to maintain the hidden nature of this other side to his character, the film could employ some reaction shots of Beebe - unseen by other characters - which might function as 'asides' to the audience, elliptical hints of contrariety beneath his generous exterior. As it stands, the absence of Forster's descriptions or equivalent film devices means that Beebe's complexity is diminished and the happy ending is made far more



straightforward. The film is not obliged to accommodate a character-type unthinkable in the genre of romantic comedy - a generally sympathetic figure opposed to marriage and romantic union who never changes his mind on the subject!

The film does conclude with Lucy and George sitting in the window of their room in the pension, with Lucy reading a letter from Freddy, but her comment on what he has written scarcely approximates to the familial censure Forster describes in the original. Her remark "Silly boy, he thinks he's being dignified, I mean, everybody knew we were going away in the spring." makes little sense unless a viewer is familiar with the novel. It may suggest an unconventional departure, possibly an elopement, but does not convey the extent of the displeasure that they, and particularly Lucy, provoke in the original. An audience has no reason to believe that the world of Windy Corner is significantly closed to them, that George and Freddy will not - for example - play tennis again, or that they won't take tea with Mr Beebe. The final scenes in Florence are cross-cut with images of Charlotte/Maggie Smith reading a letter from Lucy in bed. Although these may remind an audience of the lonely possibilities that Lucy would have faced had she not seized her chance for love, this never threatens to overwhelm the happy conclusion. Instead, one feels that although Charlotte is single herself she has found some happiness in being - ultimately - instrumental in bringing George and Lucy together; a role which the adaptation magnifies considerably from hints in the original.

The above omissions and changes enable the adaptation to satisfy audience expectations of the romantic comedy genre. Structuring the film towards this genre - the most likely and sensible destination, given the fundamental story materials - is a commercial imperative. Although an adaptation could have been faithfully rendered so as to include the difficult elements (censure and even ostracism from the Honeychurches, the

disappointment and strangeness of Rev. Beebe) such a portrayal would have been unsatisfactory to audiences. Cued by the narrative's subject matter of a delayed or blocked romance, in combination with the generally light tone and succession of comic/ironic exchanges, viewers are 'set up' to expect romantic comedy. Not delivering the happy ending that forms a prerequisite element of that genre, but alloying and qualifying it, would leave audiences feeling surprised and cheated. There is no 'technical' reason - at the level of film vocabulary - why an alternative rendering could not have been achieved; just as it would not be impossible to conclude a genuinely shocking horror movie with a Busby Berkeley style musical number. But it would be unthinkable. Although genres do mutate and develop, it is hard to see what gain - especially in commercial terms - would be made from initiating a sub-genre of 'not-altogether-happy' romantic comedies. Genres imply a contract between audiences and filmmakers, different sets of protocols and expectations with which viewers approach and enjoy different types of films. The basics of *A Room with a View* (as with *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*) indicated that romantic comedy should provide the genre-contract according to which the film would be adapted, and through which it would be received. Most of the original novel already fulfilled the terms of that contract, and much of the work of adaptation consisted of altering those elements which did not.

Implicated in the refiguring of the novel's conclusion into a virtually unqualified happy ending for the adaptation is the question of whether Forster's novel - and his other work - can be termed modern. Jeremy Tambling argues that 'Forster's attachments are nostalgic, dwelling on a Britain which is agricultural, non-industrial, pre-motor car' (12). Whereas 'modernity may be defined in terms of the experience of the urban', (13) Forster demonstrates an affection for the pastoral, and an allegiance to Victorian liberalism; gentle values ill-suited to the tumultuous twentieth century. Tambling contends that Forster's



interest in 'friendship' held him back from a more transgressive and modern evaluation of British and Imperial life - 'made him unable to move out of nostalgia, or sexual diffidence about himself and about gender-issues, or to become incisive about the enormity of British rule in India.' (14)

Paul Delany maintains that 'Forster remained a perpetual Edwardian' (15) and that this explains his appeal for 'England's nostalgia industry'. And Elizabeth Langland, writing on *Howard's End*, argues that Forster 'seems to have recourse to a nineteenth-century liberal humanism in resolving his novels, an emphasis that sets at naught the complexities of literary modernism.' (16). His contemporary Katherine Mansfield described his work as failing to properly engage with the serious issues; 'E.M.Forster never gets any further than warming the teapot.' (17)

It seems that so many critics draw attention to Forster's leanings toward the political, social, and literary modes of the nineteenth century precisely because his writing so often threatens to engage with later ideas. Criticism consistently points to his stopping short, short of an effective perspective on his chosen material, short of a modern vision (despite his connection to such arch-modern subject matter as homosexuality and gender, Empire, travel and 'otherness'), and usually, his stopping short of greatness. Mansfield and Langland both allude specifically to what he starts but does not finish, or finish 'satisfactorily' and this impression is implicitly shared in much new criticism (18) which has found Forster interesting but paradoxical or hard to pin down.

Peter Hutchings, writing specifically on the adaptations, also criticizes the failure to fulfil, to adequately interrogate complexities - though he refers not to Forster's relationship with his subject matter, but to the films' elision of issues which are raised in the originals.

Forster films function as exhibits in an Edwardian theme park, providing a vision of a period in which none of the conflicts felt in that period - and felt, albeit differently, today - need to be noticed, or in which the present is the tragedy awaiting that world. The vision of these films often presents an historical husk, a

static, untroubled past only disturbed by the banal negotiations of romantic love. (19)

It is these most interesting aspects of Forster, Hutchings maintains, which the adaptations tend to gloss over; to skip and elide the very questions which - most critics contend - Forster's novels raise but inadequately answer. The films' emphasis is on those features which, for many literary critics, prevent Forster being 'heavyweight' or 'a modernist'; on his belief in beauty and the countryside and their recuperative capacity, on the comforts and pleasures available to a dominant culture that should - perhaps - merit condemnation not celebration.

The adaptation of *A Room with a View* certainly involves a plethora of changes and stylistic approaches which capitalize on and stress the original's representation of English country life and picturesque beauty in Italy, emphasising romantic and nostalgic pleasures while de-emphasising any elements that portray the period as being in flux; social, political or technological. The principal pleasure of Edwardian life as presented in the Merchant-Ivory/Forster films is its permanence, an evergreen stability which film-goers know to be illusory - soon to be shattered by the First World War and upheavals in labour and capital - though the upper middle class characters seem wholly unaware of impending change. Hutchings draws attention to the substitution of Charlotte for Lucy as the companion for Eleanor Lavish/Judi Dench when the two ladies get lost in the streets of Florence. He describes this change - probably accurately - as a 'textbook screenplay nicet(y)' aimed at 'distributing the action around the cast.' (20) What he neglects to point out is that the substitution has the additional benefit - for the evocation of nostalgia, and the emphasis on romantic comedy - of removing a portion of politically-centred dialogue between Lucy and Miss Lavish. Lucy describes her family as 'Radicals.. out and out' referring to Gladstone, Ireland, and the glass over the front door being broken at the last election, her brother blaming the Tories. (21) Although ironic comedy dominates the exchange, with both women asserting their democratic leanings



and credentials despite their favoured economic status, this exchange still serves to locate them within a political and temporal continuum - an effect inimical to the defused period evocation sought by the adapters.

Another significant omission occurs toward the end of the novel after Lucy's breaking her engagement with Cecil. She and her mother disagree over her plans for the future - particularly her sharing a London flat with another girl;

"And mess with typewriters and latchkeys," exploded Mrs Honeychurch. "And agitate and scream, and be carried off kicking by the police. And call it a Mission - when no one wants you! And call it Duty - when it means that you can't stand your own home! And call it Work - when thousands of men are starving with the competition as it is! And then to prepare yourself, find two doddering old ladies, and go abroad with them." (22)

The film has Mrs Honeychurch's outburst begin and end with 'typewriters and latchkeys'. There is no mention of the suffragettes' protests, neither is the possibility of Lucy's finding work connected to the state of the labour market. Lucy's possible future assumes a purely individual - and largely narrative - significance and is disconnected from wider social forces and movements. As with the previous omission the intent is to develop a period evocation where fashion, architecture and speech are scrupulously rendered but transitional forces - those powers responsible for the 'now' and 'then' gap which makes such backward gazing pleasurable - are swept under the carpet. Depoliticizing such material - making the Edwardian status quo seem acceptable and unquestioned - makes the adaptation a politically complacent text (both to historical and contemporary society), productive of languor rather than consideration or agitation. Its romantic idealizing of the past works to soothe, not shock, easing an audience into forgetting contemporary issues by conjuring a milieu where such difficulties are absent. If *Jude* seeks to 'shake-up' British literary adaptation by depicting the past as unjust (and thereby demanding a critique of the present) then *A Room With A View* is clearly a major constituent text in the tendency Winterbottom opposes - its virtual denial of political change, or the need for

such change, is easily interpretable as Thatcherite.

One alteration which clearly seeks to maximize the original's representation of comfortable English country life involves Lucy's home, Windy Corner. Whereas the novel begins Part Two (Chapter Eight: *Medieval* ) with the interior of the house, the drawing-room curtains shut and Freddy and Mrs Honeychurch within, the adaptation signals the shift to England more panoramically and confirms director James Ivory's architectural predisposition. An extreme long shot reveals a large and very attractive house, dwelling on it for several seconds before cutting away to Cecil proposing to Lucy on the lawn, observed surreptitiously by Mrs Honeychurch through the curtains. The novel does not describe Windy Corner fully until Chapter Eighteen and then in terms quite different to those suggested by the film.

Whenever Mr Beebe crossed the ridge and caught sight of these noble dispositions of the earth, and, poised in the middle of them, Windy Corner - he laughed. The situation was so glorious, the house so commonplace, not to say impertinent. The late Mr Honeychurch had affected the cube, because it gave him the most accommodation for his money, and the only addition made by his widow had been a small turret, shaped like a rhinoceros' horn, where she could sit in wet weather and watch the carts going up and down the road. So impertinent - and yet the house 'did', for it was the home of people who loved their surroundings honestly. Other houses in the neighbourhood had been built by expensive architects, over others their inmates had fidgeted sedulously, yet all these suggested the accidental, the temporary; while Windy Corner seemed as inevitable as an ugliness of Nature's own creation. One might laugh at the house, but one never shuddered. (23)

The adaptation features a house which is not a 'cube' but a longer vernacular building with many pointed eaves and gables. A lingering camera and tranquil music clearly suggest that this house represents the apotheosis of country living, not ugly in any way, as does the decision to foreground the property at the beginning of the English scenes. A title reads, not *Medieval* - which relates to Cecil's bearing - but simply *Home*. England and the beautiful house are thereby amalgamated into a single impression, pleasant and reassuring. It is also notable that the property doesn't have an obvious 'addition'.



In keeping with the adaptation's emphasis on permanence and stability the house seems entirely original.

Related to this difference between the two texts is the adaptation's omission of all the back-story relating to Lucy's family. Forster remarks that the 'society out of which Cecil proposed to rescue Lucy was perhaps no very splendid affair, yet it was more splendid than her antecedents entitled her to.' (24) The film never alludes to her father's occupation, though Forster describes him as 'a prosperous local solicitor (who) had built Windy Corner as a speculation at the time when the district was opening up.' (25) Most significantly Forster describes the phenomenon of 'people who came, not from the district, but from London, and who mistook the Honeychurches for the remnants of an indigenous aristocracy'. (26) It appears, from the changes in the representation of Windy Corner and the skirting of the Honeychurches' family history, that the Merchant/Ivory film cues its audience to make a similar mistake - and never disabuses them. While Forster presents the family as the product of social mobility and change, the adaptation shies away from referencing provisionality and mutability. The pleasure offered by the spectacle of the Honeychurches is - ostensibly - contingent upon the impression that *they have always been thus*. Viewers are led to interpret the Honeychurches as Edwardian equivalents to Emma Woodhouse's and Knightley's families in *Emma*. A key element of the adaptation's nostalgic strategy, this (mis)construction posits such families - through their retention of property, capital, and influence - as guardians of stability and paradigms of Englishness. For audiences who sense that their own era is excessively subject to (undesirable and levelling) socio-historical change, that "the country's not what it was" or "being English doesn't mean anything nowadays" such a construction is seductive.

The film's architectural preferences and its narrative methods appear to merge in the scene where Cecil and Lucy walk through Summer Street, stopping

for a talk with Rev. Beebe about Sir Harry Otway's search for a tenant for his newly constructed 'villa'. The camera moves with Cecil and Lucy in an unselfconscious manner, stopping when they stop and allowing an audience plenty of time - and space within the frame - to appreciate the location. Stylistically, red brick predominates, along with black beams spaced into whitewash. Some buildings may be genuinely Tudor while others seem later, Mock-Tudor, though the use of an 'authentic' location affords a confusing range of possible interpretations owing to the time lapse between Forster's novel (1908) and the adaptation (1986). Surrey-style buildings which trope the features of earlier periods and which would have seemed comparatively recent to Forster now carry a certain value of 'oldness' and 'tradition' in their own right. The film certainly seems to value all the buildings equally, only drawing our attention to one structure - 'Cissie Villa' - as aberrant. The camera cuts ahead from Lucy and Cecil to frame the villa, dormer-windowed and with a 'For Lease' sign legible. Cecil and Lucy enter the frame from the right and pass left, the camera static throughout. The anticipation before they enter and the delay after they pass invite us to reflect on the meaning of the building. In part this is narrative foreshadowing - the Emersons will rent the property and the George/Lucy romance will thereby be facilitated. Equally, the enhanced value the adaptation affords Windy Corner and the Honeychurches is thrown into relief by contrast with the newer structure. It is questionable, however, whether any significant number of viewers recognize or dwell on the architectural difference, given the clearer message or clue afforded by the 'For Lease' sign.

The adaptation also changes the Emerson's family history, omitting the novel's mystery about the circumstances of Mrs Emerson's death. Raised early in the story by the Rev. Eager's cryptic pronouncement to Lucy and Charlotte that Emerson has murdered his wife in the sight of God this dark secret is only explained in the penultimate chapter. Emerson tells Lucy that years earlier he



had refused to have his son baptised, but George caught typhoid in childhood and his mother 'thought it a judgement'. She summoned the Rev. Eager, but although George recovered she fell ill and died herself - the clergyman blaming the father's refusal. The film makes no reference to George's mother, so the last encounter between Lucy and Emerson has the single function of facilitating the lovers' union. Its subsidiary function, the unravelling of a long-running enigma, is lost.

Although all but the briefest novellas require considerable cutting to be accommodated into a reasonable running time for a feature film it is nevertheless useful to examine just what is omitted from the original and what effect these omissions have on the new text. In this instance it is clear that the principal romantic plot is simplified by the removal of a distraction - albeit an interesting one, and one that is tangentially relevant to the romance since the mystery partially informs Lucy's evaluation of the Emersons. The film's project of down-playing social change in favour of constructing a historically-hued playing-field for romance is also assisted by the change. The shift away from church-going and atheistic thinking are still presented in the film, but do not assume such significant value as in the original. When Eager and Emerson disagree in Santa Croce, the former describing the church as built by 'faith' and the latter remarking that this means 'the workmen weren't paid properly' the exchange is essentially interpretable in terms of Emerson's blunt speaking and his basic humanism. Similarly, Cecil's sneering injunction to the ladies on their way to church, 'Be good!' is evidence of his critical and contemptuous nature. The subjects of faith and church-going (or not) work as additional elements of character delineation which augment impressions developed elsewhere - not as issues in their own right. They are certainly disconnected from the story's core - the George/Lucy relationship. Many of the original's anti-clerical references do not find their way onto the screen and by making Rev. Beebe uncomplicatedly

kind the adaptation structures a fairly simple good vicar/bad vicar distinction between him and Rev. Eager - an even-handed approach which makes the new text seem neutral on the subject of the church and clergymen.

A key scene, both in original and adaptation, is the murder in the Piazza Signoria witnessed by Lucy, who faints and is caught by George. It is the inaugural moment of their relationship, recognized as such by George, but confusing for Lucy, whose acknowledgment and acceptance of their mutual affection will require most of the remainder of the story. All literary critics read the scene as an 'awakening' for Lucy though they vary in the extent to which they interpret the stabbing as sexually metaphoric and in the significance they ascribe to Forster's choice of a male (& foreign) body as the subject of the physical act. To a contemporary reader the sexual overtones should be fairly obvious, making this scene a 'symbolic loss of virginity' (27)...

Against the advice of her spinster chaperone Lucy ventures into the streets of Florence late in the day, seeking something beyond the normal boundaries of tourist exposure to Italy. She buys postcards which Charlotte had earlier persuaded her not to, including Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, a female nude. However this minor transgression is insufficient to satisfy her desire for new experience; 'though she spent nearly seven lire the gates of liberty seemed still unopened'.(28) A paragraph concludes with the sentence 'Lucy desired more' and is immediately followed by a lengthy description of the tower of the Palazzo Medici which Lucy 'wistfully' gazes at, rising 'out of the lower darkness'. James Buzard remarks that the tower 'acquires lavishly phallic contours' (29), an accurate estimation of Forster's prose and intent given that to Lucy 'It seemed no longer a tower, no longer supported by the earth, but some unattainable treasure throbbing in the tranquil sky.'(30) Immediately after Lucy's contemplation of the tower two Italians begin to argue over money and one is stabbed, an event Forster describes as his being 'hit lightly in the chest'. The dying man gazes at



Lucy, a trickle of blood running over his unshaven chin, at which crucial moment Lucy sees George looking at her and falls, climactically, into a swoon. Her first words upon coming to are, "Oh, what have I done." (31)

George escorts Lucy back to the pensione. They stop at a parapet of the embankment above the Arno, look at the river and talk. George takes the opportunity to throw away Lucy's postcards which had become stained with the Italian's blood. Forster makes it clear that the experience represents a maturation for George too; 'the boy verged into a man' and reflects that ' "something tremendous has happened; I must face it without getting muddled. It isn't exactly that a man has died."' (32) Avoiding any sexual spin on events John Sayre Martin makes a relatively naive interpretation of what exactly George feels and of what has taken place;

This 'something tremendous' is not simply the murder that they have witnessed, it is the bond of mutual sympathy, as yet only half-conscious, that their common experience has engendered. (33)

Shahane's evaluation of the scene also skirts the issue. Like Martin, he recognizes that the Italian's blood represents something more 'real' than the art-postcards it transforms, themselves emblematic of the constrained and passionless life Lucy would lead by marrying Cecil - who thinks of Lucy as a artwork rather than a feeling being. However, he only alludes in the most tactful terms to the physical alteration to Lucy this scene anticipates;

This scene is highly suggestive of the process of transformation, of Lucy and George from adolescence into youth, from innocence into experience. Despair is dissipated and the will to live is evoked. Lucy's release, however transient, from barbed civilities into passionate involvement, appears to receive in the form of the Italian's blood a kind of religious sanctity. (34)

Buzard makes clear the interpretive possibilities his predecessors avoid;

What cannot yet happen for Lucy and George.. can be symbolically enacted on the body of a random Italian and registered as foreshadowing: there is sexual fulfilment to come for Lucy, but we must all wait. The wish-fulfilment reading proposes an escape from alienation into spontaneous, instinctive participation in the elemental forces of life, which are embodied by the stereotypical image of the male Italian as a fount of uncontrollable passions. In this scheme, the tourist is

the public image of the sexually uninitiated or even maladjusted individual, the virgin or voyeur, who has never learned to 'really live'. (35)

He argues that the 'dark and turbulent energies' this scene arouses 'may be accounted for by the allowance that *A Room with a View* is a marriage plot written by a homosexual man seeking some sanctioned vehicle for his own desires.' (36) The use of violence as a correlative for sex and the additional displacement of using a male body as the site of penetration may explain the reluctance or inability of some (earlier) critics to fully interrogate the murder's symbolic meaning, particularly in terms of Forster's sexuality.

Ivory begins his version of the scene interestingly. After buying the postcards from a stall Lucy walks into the piazza, removing her coat. An ascending crane shot which also pulls back makes her progressively smaller within the frame, until she eventually merges with the other figures. Swelling music combines with this dramatic camera-position to mark a significant moment and leads into a montage of statues 'in aggressive and martial postures' (37). This begins with a figure holding a severed head and includes - most significantly - a frontal shot of the loins and midriff of a nude male brandishing a short sword. This obvious initial conjunction of sword and penis (both pointing the same way) helps establish a sexual significance to the stabbing. Harsh and menacing brass notes punctuate the music once the montage begins and conclude with Lucy, seeming somewhat overwhelmed, toward the centre of the peripherally arranged statues. The montage is thus retrospectively motivated as Lucy's point-of-view and achieves - according to Hutchings - a successful rendition of the 'threat of Italy to bourgeois proprieties and sublimations' (38) suggested in the original.

However, Hutchings also argues that the scene quickly reverts to 'romance mode' because 'Shock isn't really something that can be accommodated within the film's limpid aesthetic'. (39) This assessment of the scene seems rather unfair



considering the sudden and disorienting close-ups of the struggle, the dying man's bloody mouth and rolling eyes, the bystander's hand which passes close to the lens and the use of slow-motion. This combination of content and formal elements does amount to an impression of Lucy's shocked state though the 'romance mode' Hutchings condemns may also be detectable in the presentation of George, whose being dressed in white lends rather obvious 'heroic' overtones to his arrival - particularly in contrast with the dark clothed and swarthy Italians. The crashing cymbals during the struggle may also seem rather predictable. An overhead shot which frames Lucy's fainting and being scooped up by George may give the impression of being 'romantic' too, though it is worth noting that this aerial framing partially equates to Forster's own description of her faint, when her view of the palazzo 'fell onto her softly, slowly, noiselessly, and the sky fell with it.' (40) Interpreting Ivory's depiction as a romantic re-interpretation would however accord with a critique of the film as depoliticized and Thatcherite. If the sequence does somehow gloss the sharper elements of Forster's rendering then this refiguring works to the same end as the political omissions discussed earlier, making the adaptation a less unsettling text than the original.

What does seem to take place during this, and other, scenes is the film's entering into a knowing and referential relationship with viewers familiar with the original while simultaneously presenting a more straightforward version (more romantic, more heterosexual, more nostalgic) for viewers who are not. The nude with the sword will clearly chime with one's anticipation to see how the film will represent the stabbing as a sexual metaphor - but it's highly unlikely that a non-reader will afford it much significance beyond the ominous shift in soundtrack and lapse in realistic editing. Similarly, many readers will be interested to see how Ivory will handle Lucy's gazing at the 'throbbing' tower, a moment which might threaten to become ridiculous if rendered cinematically so

as to approximate to the original description. A succession of rack-focuses with music at suitably rhythmic intervals would most likely provoke laughter, particularly if preceded by an image of the Botticelli postcard. Instead, Ivory eschews the tower altogether until the conversation above the Arno. It occupies the centre of the frame into which George and Lucy walk, through an archway - to its left and right respectively; a framing which is held for several seconds. The cognoscenti may enjoy the metaphoric possibilities of this framing - tower inside the arch, George and Lucy alone together - all the more because the tower is such a fearsomely obvious symbol in the original and only acquires meaning in the derived text, given that the framing is in itself fairly innocuous, if one enters into dialogic play between novel and film.

Hutchings' criticism of the film's subduing 'shock' moments in favour of gentler, more romantic, renderings seems more just when he applies it to George and Lucy's first kiss at the trip to Fiesole. He argues that 'the pastoral love scene is without any sudden turn or realisation which - for Forster - is the necessary precondition for erotic connection'. (41) In the original, Lucy is looking for the Reverends Eager and Beebe but is misunderstood by the coach-driver who leads her to George. After walking through thick undergrowth she is surprised to find herself suddenly in a small terrace of violets, bathed in sunlight. George sees her close by, advances and kisses her. Before she has time to respond they are interrupted by the arrival of Charlotte. In the adaptation Lucy is again led by the driver who has misunderstood her request but she sees George first, clearly visible in a sea of barley. She approaches before he turns, then he suddenly advances and kisses her. Hutchings attributes the change to 'Ivory's taste for panoramas' and it is certainly evident that although George's masculine embrace takes her by surprise she had nevertheless been aware of his presence and approached deliberately.

However, as with the stabbing in the Piazza, in this episode the adaptation



does play with the themes of the original. When Charlotte and Miss Lavish are left together by Lucy's departure they begin an 'adult' conversation of which we hear fragments. Charlotte asks "And did she really marry this Italian?" and Miss Lavish replies "In the church at Monteriano, a youth, ten years younger than herself." This new dialogue which suggests the passionate and transgressive possibilities afforded by Italy and Italians - a theme which Hutchings maintains the Piazza scene downplays - is followed by a shot of the reclining coach-driver smoking a cigar. The convention of the post-coital smoke is well established in twentieth-century visual media and is clearly referenced here. The youthful and handsome driver is first seen sideways on, head back; he exhales deeply and sensually to the film's 'theme' music 'Oh! mio babbino caro' from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. Viewers looking for intersections between Forsterian themes and film iconography may possibly see this moment as relating back to the Piazza scene, given the physical similarity between killer and driver. The complex relationship of sexual awakening which involves Lucy, George, Italy and Italian men is further suggested by Miss Lavish's remark that something in the Italian landscape inclines one to romance and by the fact that an Italian is *again* facilitating a dramatic encounter between the lovers.

Jeremy Tambling describes the Merchant - Ivory films as projecting a "beautiful' rather camp vision, with beautiful unthreatening actors, quite knowing about homosexuality, which indeed has become, in certain 'acceptable' forms, part of mainstream British culture.' (42) This phenomenon is certainly evident in the film's handling of the bathing scene where Freddy, George and Rev. Beebe take a nude dip in a pond near Windy Corner and are disturbed by the passing by of Lucy, Cecil, and Mrs Honeychurch. This is not, however, to argue that the original scene does not have a significantly gay flavour of its own - blending Forster's pastoral tastes with a delight in physical liberation, absurdity and impropriety.

Both John Sayre Martin and Shahane draw comparisons between this scene and similar scenes in D. H. Lawrence, though Martin remarks that 'unlike Lawrence, Forster also sees .. the sheer fun of the thing.' (43) Although neither critic connects this scene to Forster's homosexuality, Shahane (unwittingly?) stresses this interpretive possibility, describing it as a 'comic and gay episode' and reflective of 'the gaiety and comic charm of Forster's creative art'. (44) It seems highly probable that this scene is, like Buzard's assessment of the Piazza scene, a 'sanctioned vehicle' for Forster's desires - lending itself to a gay reading (particularly for the biographically well-armed critic), but also offering pleasure and entertainment beyond the boundaries of gender-preference. It certainly offers the pleasure of transgressing rigid standards of public decorum, particularly in relation to the uncovered body (itself a strong theme of gay politics and expression). The comic climax of the bathing episode is in fact its escalation from a shared and private male activity to an 'in your face' encounter with shocked non-participants, particularly Cecil, who represents 'buttoned-up' conformist culture. However, their arrival also puts an end to the all-male idyll - an indication of Forster's sense that such pleasures were easily interrupted and curtailed by prevailing moral forces.

The film lends additional weight to the bathing sequence in a variety of ways, amongst which casting is particularly significant. Simon Callow's status as an 'out' actor - and since the making of *A Room with a View*, his gay role in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* - cues an audience to make associations and interpretations relative to his sexual status. This phenomenon is clearly heightened when the story materials themselves have an intrinsic gayness - amongst other properties. Both Callow and Rupert Graves, who plays Freddy, reappear in another Merchant/Ivory - Forster adaptation, *Maurice*. Because of its explicitly homosexual theme, Forster would only allow the novel to be published posthumously (1971) and the adaptation (1987) came a year after *A*



*Room with a View*. Graves plays Alec Scudder, a gamekeeper with whom the title character eventually consummates his inclinations, so as with Callow, Graves brings a particularly gay significance to one's reading of *A Room With A View*, though not of course at the time of its release.

What their presence achieves is the film's increased participation in an evolving agglomeration of actors, writers, characters and themes of which Englishness, Forster, Lawrence, gamekeepers, the upper classes, skinny dipping and frolics in the country are all features. These elements are ultimately connected to all other zones of literary and film culture by never-ending chains and intersections of casting, authorship and subject-matter but do form a discrete and recognizable sub-set, particularly in terms of recent British cinema and adaptations of 'quality' literature. When Callow is framed leading Graves and Sands purposefully from the (Cissie) villa the imminence of an interesting moment is heralded stylistically - by the 'stagy' placement of actors and their deliberate advance toward the camera - but it is primarily their location within this snowball of meanings that sensitizes our critical antennae as viewers.

Whilst Martin and Shahane both dwell on the scene's Lawrentian characteristics it also bears comparison with a much earlier work, Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* and the episode of the Bower of Bliss, Book 2, Canto 12. This connection suggests itself not only as a consequence of those etymological developments of which Shahane may or may not be blissfully unaware, but because of a variety of textual similarities. Forster describes the pond as 'set in its little alp of green' and the flooded grass which 'showed like an emerald path' (45) in which setting the two young men and the vicar first bathe gently, then splash and run and play. Spenser's Guyon encounters a not dissimilar spectacle after wandering through 'faire and grassy ground/Mantled with green' (46); a fountain, decorated with 'shapes of naked boyes' who 'seemd with liuely iollitee,/To fly about, playing their wanton toyes.' (47)

Spenser's description of the Bower assumes positively Hefneresque proportions as Guyon encounters 'Two naked Damzelles' who - like Forster's bathers - don't have quite enough water to keep themselves covered and 'wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde/Their dainty parts from vew of any, which them eyde' (48) Similarly, Forster describes George splashing and ducking the others and the adaptation has all three indulge in some grappling, and whilst they try to cover themselves when surprised by the arrival of other *characters* the film is no more shy than Spenser's nymphs in its relationship with the audience. It is further interesting to note that the film's (nude male) wrestling again emphasises the Lawrence comparison - recalling the fireside antics of Alan Bates and Oliver Reed in Ken Russell's (1969) adaptation of *Women In Love*.

Another touch which heightens the transgressive potential of the original is George's putting on Rev. Beebe's clerical collar when he is otherwise naked and leaping back into the pool. Whilst Forster clearly delights in the impropriety of the vicar's forgetting the expectations of 'parishioners' and 'Rural deans' to enjoy a swim with young friends the adaptation compounds the impropriety by making this most obvious symbol of his responsibilities part of the fun. Beebe's presence itself mobilizes particularly British cultural values relating to sexuality, nudity and propriety. More than most nations Britain is perceived to enjoy a somewhat schizophrenic attitude to these matters, combining prurient interest with an outward public concern for respectability, particularly professional respectability. The *Carry On* films are a notable manifestation of this dual persuasion, mixing innuendo and costume (period, medical, military etc) as is streaking at sporting events.

However, if the bathing party which shocks Cecil has a definite gay value as a spectacle, it is also worth noting that the film codes Cecil himself in quite pronounced gay terms. Daniel Day-Lewis already brings a gay resonance to the part as a result of his contemporary gay role in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985),



though this meaning may fade for more recent viewers who are likely to associate him with heterosexual values after his performances in *Last of the Mohicans* (1992) and *The Age of Innocence* (1993). Hutchings describes the opposition the adaptation structures - between George as active and manly, and Cecil as effete and 'literary' - as an outing of 'homosexual undercurrents' in the original. (49) He draws attention to a significant moment when George tells Lucy that 'Cecil is the sort who can't know anyone intimately, least of all a woman.' A cut to outside shows him waving away an insect and spilling his tea, 'effectively underlining Cecil's effeteness.' Elements of this tendency are also evident in the original's construction of Cecil which Eric Haralson describes as an 'already corrupt gender style.' (50) Haralson notes how Beebe's warning cry "Hi! Hi! Ladies!" 'seems to collapse Vyse with his female companions'. (51)

To whatever extent the original provides material for a gay interpretation of Cecil, neither novel nor film offer a clear sexual politics. The heterosexual romance provides the principal direction for both texts and gay counter-currents only arise from cloudy hints and biographical inferences. Owing to changes in attitude and law the film may be freer to address gay issues than Forster felt himself, and may employ a cast attuned to gay sensibilities, but is nevertheless bound to the straight love story, emphasising it through significant omissions and simplifications. The knowing ensemble does occasionally acknowledge the gay potential, in the bathing scene for example, but this work is undone elsewhere by simplifying Beebe and inevitably not interrogating the reasons for his (omitted) shift in attitude toward George and Lucy. Perhaps most significantly, the adaptation does not reproduce the disturbing hints and suggestions of the original as vital elements of character, which lent depth and often strangeness to their more straightforward public presentations. (a point Tambling makes in closing) (52) Instead, these possible peculiarities are nudged and winked across the screen in referential play with some viewers but never

really make for complex characterization.

The extent to which the adaptation seeks a more comfortable and simple presentation of its characters than that structured by Forster is also indicated in its use of titles. The film begins with a succession of titles framed below or within neoclassical motifs and borders. One title reads 'In Florence' and is followed by a succession of frames or 'cards' for the characters who will appear in the Florence sequences; 'Maggie Smith - Charlotte Bartlett, a chaperone' and 'Helena Bonham-Carter - Lucy Honeychurch, her cousin and charge.' etc. Suggestive of playbills these titles and descriptions both invoke a British theatrical heritage - itself celebrated in the casting of most Merchant - Ivory films - and cue an audience in terms of what they should expect from the players. They initiate the process of creating a nostalgic sense of the past by using a traditional stage-setting method from a longer-established medium - and indeed early cinema - eschewing the more standard method of exposition where the 'live action' begins straight away and an audience establish the story-situation within a few minutes. One traditional filmic method of establishing location is referenced however; the titles 'In Florence' and 'In England' have motifs of the Palazzo Medici and Tower Bridge respectively in the top left corner of the frame. Whilst Tower Bridge is probably a more distinct and recognizable structure, especially in terms of national associations, this use of a *representational* method in conjunction with the *conventional* title gestures toward the familiar cinematic shorthand of using images like the Empire State Building or the Eiffel Tower to indicate New York or Paris.

Critics of the film, and Forster adaptations generally, point to the manner in which modernist elements are subdued, resulting in somewhat conservative texts that construct a more golden view of the past than Forster ever intended of his present. There is clearly a great deal of textual evidence - particularly in terms of an analysis of omissions from the original - to substantiate such a



critique. However, the film is nevertheless engaging and has a great deal to commend it - particularly the acting - and it may only be fair to reflect on the difficulties of trying to bring literary modernism to the screen. It is arguable that cinema is a, perhaps *the*, modern form par-excellence and as such should be able to tease out some interesting fragments from Forster's original. John Orr describes cinema as having two truly 'modern' phases; 'a silent cinema of Murnau, Dreyer, Lang, Bunuel, and Eisenstein and a sound cinema which crystallizes in the 1960's and early 1970's' (53) with films such as *Hiroshima mon Amour* and *A bout de Souffle*. However, modernity in the cinema has rarely extended to adaptations of the landmark texts of modern literature. Where authors have most notably broken with convention in terms of characterization, and narrative coherence, e.g. 'stream of consciousness', adaptation becomes problematic. The most striking project of literary modernism - the abandonment of realist prose - has usually proved inimical to adaptation.

Financial considerations have doubtless been at the core of this failure, with few backers believing that films which eschew narrative clarity are likely to make a return on investment. Forster's novels, which might be termed faintly modern or proto-modern, lend themselves to adaptation primarily in terms of their non-modern properties - their nostalgic world-view, their belief in a natural order, and in the case of *A Room with a View*, its romance. The adaptation's emphasis on these properties must, in no small degree, be financially motivated too. John Orr describes the 'quest to exorcise the attractions of the romantic' as a key part of modernity and modern culture, arguing that modern cinema has attempted to 'break with the organic structure of the romantic world-view'. (54) In evaluating the adaptation of *A Room with a View* it is important to recognize the extent to which the original is already a significantly romantic text with modern whispers which problematize but never overwhelm its principal direction.

## CHAPTER 8. A PASSAGE TO INDIA.

The most obvious alteration which David Lean's adaptation of *A Passage to India* effects to the original is its increased emphasis on Adela Quested, the young woman who travels to India, rather than on Aziz and Fielding, the Indian doctor and English schoolmaster who form a friendship despite separatist cultural conventions. This alteration is determined by key differences in ideology and texture between novel and film. Peter Hutchings describes what he terms 'Lean's revisionist view of the British in India' - suggesting that the film is less critical of Anglo-Indians than the original which the director felt to be overly 'anti-English, anti-Raj and so on'(1). Relatedly, the film is more 'masculine' than the novel, creating epic and exotic visuals of scenery and public events rather than attempting to reproduce Forster's more intimate style and taste for smaller details. Homosexual overtones to the Fielding/Aziz relationship are carefully muted - an approach quite different to the gay-inflected Merchant/Ivory productions - and, despite the increased attention to Adela, she is described within a highly traditional discourse of female hysteria. The crucial event in the Marabar cave, which Forster studiously (and mysteriously) elides, is rendered in realist terms by Lean as a mental disruption with tangible (and predictably sexist) physical symptoms of shaking, laboured breathing and tears. This chapter will examine *A Passage to India* in terms of these and other differences, looking at the representation of India and Empire in both texts.

Whereas Forster begins his novel with a description of Chandrapore - the Indian city where most of the action takes place - the film begins in England with Adela/Judy Davis buying her ticket to Bombay. This opening is certainly effective in its own right. The image of the whirling tops of many black umbrellas, strongly top-lit and shiny with rain, makes an striking start to the action proper, contrasting well with the faded Indian frescoes of the title



sequence. Important expository information is conveyed in this 'invented' scene between Adela and the P&O Clerk. Her name and the fact that she will be travelling with a 'Mrs Moore' are established. Adela's inexperience - a significant factor in future events - is suggested in her reply to the Clerk's question of whether she's visited India before; it is her "First time out of England". Lean's opening also raises questions for the viewer as well as establishing a situation. Whilst two of the pictures which Adela looks at in the office lend themselves to straightforward interpretations in terms of period travel and tourist India - pictures of the Suez Canal and the Taj Mahal - the third picture - of the Marabar caves - has an uncertain meaning. Adela gazes seriously at it, prompting the Clerk to remark, "Those are the Marabar Caves; about twenty miles from you at Chandrapore". Adela continues to stare and replies obliquely; "I see". This picture and her response to it begin to prepare the viewer for the importance the caves will assume in the story, while ostensibly treating another place. This approach echoes Forster's, who begins his first Chapter; 'Except for the Marabar Caves - and they are twenty miles off - the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary.'(2) The Chapter concludes two pages later with a second reference to 'the Marabar Hills, containing the extraordinary caves.'(3) In both texts it is apparent that there is something unusual about the caves, but no indication of what. As well as the mysterious caves Lean's opening prompts important questions about Adela and her travelling companion. How are they connected? - given that they have different surnames, and why is Adela only 'probably' going to be staying on in India?

The P&O Clerk's remark that "the Viceroy's on board.. tends to liven things up." is immediately followed by a cut to the boat just arrived in Bombay weeks later. Massed ranks of troops and cheering crowds greet the arriving Viceroy and his wife in a sequence which emphasises the political and stylistic gulf between Lean and Forster. Forster's opening de-romanticizes Chandrapore,

stressing its ordinariness: 'edged rather than washed by the Ganges', 'never large or beautiful' (4) while Lean begins his treatment of India with a bang. Military band music accompanies panoramic images of crowds. Pennants flutter on the lances of mounted native troops. The Viceroy and his wife are first seen - tiny figures in extreme long shot - passing through a giant archway on a red carpet. Confetti flutters down toward the camera from tall buildings as their open carriage passes through the streets. Whereas Forster's first chapter only briefly describes the English Civil Station, dwelling mainly on the indigenous and natural features of Chandrapore, the river, sky and gardens of 'toddy palms and neem trees and mangoes and peepul', Lean starts his Indian scenes with an imperial spectacle, offering the visual pleasures of Raj pomp and pageantry.

There is however a hint of criticism, or at least another perspective on the Raj, within this fairly celebratory scene. Amongst the many images of cheering Europeans and troops there is a medium close-up of Indian women looking sternly and warily at the arrivals - a reminder that this elaborate welcoming ceremony is not only orchestrated but partisan. Similarly, the band music that accompanied the shots of the well-ordered reception ends abruptly with an image of a throng of Indians on the dockside shouting up at the arrivals, possibly for work as porters or to greet others who emerge from their own exit, low down on the boat. Mrs Moore/Peggy Ashcroft is revealed to be an old lady, standing alongside Adela on deck. Their conversation as they disembark and on the railway between Bombay and Chandrapore, a thousand miles away, settles most questions for the viewer about their circumstances. Adela has come to India to (probably) marry Ronny, Mrs Moore's son - the city magistrate at Chandrapore.

The film's early scenes merit consideration because, much like *Sense and Sensibility* they are the site of considerable invention and addition to the novel and, by the time the film action equates to the original important changes have already been effected. It becomes clear that Lean will construct a more



traditionally Western version of India than Forster, exotic and colourful. Restructuring the story to give increased importance to the English in India brings the film into closer narrative and ideological alignment with the genre or cycle of other Raj-Revival texts of the mid-eighties, and hence with prevailing public tastes. Whereas a more faithful version of Forster's original would have devoted more screen-time and narrative weighting to the Indian characters, this version allows Adela and Mrs Moore to function as audience surrogates for British (and U.S) viewers, experiencing the vibrant sub-continent for the first time. As the two women find a carriage to take them to the train Station they encounter a succession of Orientalist stereotypes and icons; women in black 'purdah' face-veils, the ubiquitous snake-charmers, and huge amounts of yellow flower garlands - objects which recur throughout *A Passage to India*. This list is added to when they halt at Chandrapore and Ronny/Nigel Havers drives them through the noisy and bustling bazaar on the way to his bungalow. Vivid colours catch the new arrivals' eyes; the bright saris of Indian women, cross sections of water melon, trays of powdered dyes, peacock feathers, garlands (again) and finally a corpse shrouded in white cloth and carried by bearers.

In place of Forster's interest in philosophical and spiritual aspects of Indian culture mixed with botanical and zoological detail - itself a 'version' or partial impression of India - Lean constructs a setting more heavily determined by imperial ideology, nineteenth century travel literature, adventure stories and European (mis)conceptions of the East. His beautifully shot images of 'local colour' which is both attractive and unfamiliar are suggestive of John Donne's evocation of 'the India's of spice and Myne' (5) and the Metaphysical poets' interest in discovery and exotica generally. This is particularly true in the collision of the exotic with the erotic, which will be discussed later with the scene of Adela at the temple inhabited by monkeys. The construction of India as wonderful but also strange and dangerous also owes a lot to Rudyard Kipling's

tales of a seething country policed by the firm but benevolent English who prevent it from harming itself. Ironically, this is a logic of occupation held by the film's criticised Anglo-Indians like Ronny who claims that he does 'good' in a 'benighted country'. It is further ironic that Lean's rather tactless justification for his *A Passage to India*, that "as far as I'm aware, nobody has yet succeeded in putting India on the screen."<sup>(6)</sup> should result in a film which does nothing to deconstruct traditional Western notions of India as strange and exotic.

The railway journey to Chandrapore also serves to introduce Mr and Mrs Turton; Richard Wilson and Antonia Pemberton. He is the 'Collector' or chief administrator of Chandrapore, Ronny's 'burra sahib'. Their conversation over supper in the dining compartment sets up the principal themes of the story. Ronny and Adela's chaperoned meeting in the Lake District is explained and leads to Mrs Turton's compliment that he has "become a proper sahib, just the type we want". However, this produces a concerned expression from Adela who guesses that this is not a transformation (or maturation) for the better. Her concern is justified when Mrs Moore's remark "We look forward to seeing Indians" meets with an expression of shock from the Turtons. They explain that "We don't.. East is East, Mrs Moore... It's a question of culture". The theme of division is suggested visually in two shots of the landscape that enclose the conversation in the dining car. The first is of a tower or minaret, the only object at the left of the frame with the red of the sunset dominating. The second, which immediately follows Turton's remark, is a statue of a horse at the far right of an otherwise empty frame, with blue from the night sky and moonlight on water. Both these highly attractive shots are held for several seconds and while they ostensibly contribute to atmosphere rather than propelling the narrative they invite interpretation in terms of different colours and opposite sides if considered as a pair.

The negative value attributed to Ronny's becoming a sahib is confirmed



later when, in their compartment, Adela asks Mrs Moore whether Ronny could really have changed. Mrs Moore replies "he could, that's why you've come here". Empire is described as a bad influence, becoming the major factor in determining whether Adela will marry. The last image of the railway journey before the arrival is of many Indian men sleeping on the ground beneath a railway bridge, with one sick man coughing. Therefore, when the train arrives in Chandrapore the next morning the welcoming reception for Turton, of which Ronny is a part, has become a more suspect proceeding for the viewer than its larger counterpart which greeted the Viceroy. A miniature version of that first scene, it suggests the Imperial practice of subdivided administration with an endlessly descending chain of command. The Turtons' conversation on the train and his appearance when they disembark - pith-helmeted and carrying a switch - develop less pleasant meanings of Empire than those evoked in the Bombay scene. Its effects on Ronny are also suggested when Mrs Moore nervously observes his first meeting with Adela on the platform. Adela clearly expects a more demonstrative embrace but receives only a restrained peck on the cheek before he briefly abandons her to take his place in the welcoming line. The destructive effects of the Turtons and Empire are finally confirmed when a close-up of the Union Jack is revealed to be the flag on the bonnet of their official car. Speeding through Chandrapore, its horn being continually sounded, it knocks two Indians from their bicycles; Dr Aziz/Victor Banerjee and Mahmoud Ali/Art Malik.

This is our first glimpse of the story's principal Indian character, whom the novel introduces at the beginning of the second chapter before any of the English appear. It is also a fairly cursory glimpse; although the two men discuss the English as they dust themselves off, saying that "they all become exactly the same", we do not learn their identities. Their professional status, Doctor and lawyer respectively, is suggested by their clothes but the action cuts back to the

arriving English before we learn anything more about them. Ronny drives them to his bungalow in the Civil Station - ironically called Fairholme - and the film offers another cryptic reminder of the Marabar Caves. Ignoring most of the bungalow Adela gazes out at the view asking "Are those the Marabar Hills?" and then adding - with a strange expression and intonation - "...with the caves?" This exchange is then followed by the first suggestion of Adela's desire for sexual fulfilment. She sits on the edge of her bed and looks both coy and happy when Ronny knocks on her door - clearly hoping that he will enter, as perhaps do the audience. However, he only says "Good night". Adela appears disappointed and gazes wistfully into the mirror. The image of the mirror dissolves into a sign which reads Court of the City Magistrate; Adela and Mrs Moore are then seen watching Ronny at work. He delivers a guilty verdict and a sentence of two months hard labour before descending to talk to his mother and Adela who have been shown by a colleague what are considered to be the sights of Chandrapore - all of which are imperial rather than indigenous.

At the club Adela's frustration at not seeing the 'real India' become more apparent as she dispiritedly handles a cucumber sandwich - a food item particularly suggestive of both English civilization and unexcitement. Mrs Moore recognizes her frustration and explains that "Adventures do occur but not punctually". This remark is followed by a cut to Dr Aziz - who will figure prominently in Adela's Indian adventure - and the film finally takes up the events narrated in the original. Aziz is about to have supper with Mahmoud Ali at the house of Hamidullah/Saeed Jaffrey. Their meal is interrupted by the arrival of a chit from Major Callendar - the chief surgeon - to summon Aziz, his junior. Aziz takes a tonga to Callendar's bungalow, finds he has left without leaving a message, and then has his tonga rudely commandeered by the Mrs Callendar and Lesley to take them to the club. Left without transport Aziz walks to a quiet mosque where he encounters and befriends Mrs Moore, who has been



equally repulsed by club culture. This chance meeting sets in motion all future events.

The early differences between Forster and Lean in *A Passage to India* strongly determine the meaning and value of subsequent parts of the film which adhere more closely to the order and events of the original. By the time Aziz appears other characters - all English - have been introduced and had their important characteristics defined. This is not to suggest that Forster's characters are static - both Adela and Mrs Moore undergo transforming experiences - but to indicate that fundamental elements of the story situation have been established *without* the involvement of the Indian characters. Lean wholly reverses Forster's beginning by starting not in India and with Indians but in England and with the English. Jeremy Tambling describes this altered emphasis as 'almost overtly racist in its sense that the interesting people... are the British who are about to leave India' (7). He points to the casting of Alec Guinness in the prize part of Professor Godbole, the enigmatic Hindu, as a further example of Lean's de-Indianizing of Forster, comparing the film with *The Jewel in the Crown* in terms of its emphasis on the English. This similarity was clearly also felt by the makers of *The Lenny Henry Show* - roughly contemporary with both texts - which for several weeks featured a parody skit 'The Jewel in India's Passage'.

However, criticism of Lean's reworking must be tempered by an acknowledgment that Forster's original is not a transparent representation untainted by European and Imperial influences. Literary criticism repeatedly points to the limits of Forster's antagonism to Empire. Benita Parry argues that '*A Passage to India* can be seen as at once inheriting and interrogating the discourses of the Raj' (8). A circumscribed criticism is revealed when Mrs Moore rues Ronny's attitude to India and her voice slides into a more authorial narration;

One touch of regret - not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart - would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution. (9)

It is apparently suggested that there could exist a better and acceptable form of Empire, that colonization would not be quite so bad were it administered by gentle and friendly men. Forster's belief in the power and value of friendship is exemplified by Fielding whose loyalty to Aziz over his countrymen enacts Forster's own claim that 'If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.' Forster's attachment to liberal-humanism - discussed in the previous chapter - blinds him to the inevitable interconnections between capitalism, Empire and exploitation and leads to a naive faith in a remedy too mild for such an enormous situation. Parry maintains that Forster actually recognizes in this his last novel the 'effeteness of liberal codes in the colonial situation' and argues that 'Forster's consciousness that social connections will fail... sends him in pursuit of spiritual communion between Mrs Moore and both Aziz and Godbole.' (9) This reading certainly points to a major alteration between the original and the adaptation where Aziz and Fielding's last meeting is **not** suggestive of the impossibility of British/Indian relations and the spiritual connection between Godbole and Mrs Moore is handled weakly.

If Forster fails to acknowledge the far-reaching and catastrophic effects of Empire he is nevertheless incisive in his characterization of most British characters and description of social events. Turton's response to Fielding when all the British meet at the club after Adela accuses Dr Aziz of attempted rape is a good example of Forster's enmity;

The Collector looked at him sternly, because he was keeping his head. He had not gone mad at the phrase 'an English girl fresh from England', he had not rallied to the banner of race. He was still after facts, though the herd had decided on emotion. Nothing enrages Anglo-India more than the lantern of reason if it is exhibited for one moment after its extinction is decreed. (10)



Such criticism is absent from the adaptation but this cannot really be cited as evidence of a political reworking since it resides in the authorial voice and could only be included as voice-over or allocated as dialogue. More telling is the manner in which Lean's film handles the original's 'live action' and in this respect Forster's satirical and critical description is largely retained and equalled. Aside from their racist behaviour, the shrill lispy voice of Mrs Callendar as she takes Aziz's tonga, Mrs Turton's Urdu with Home Counties pronunciation at the 'Bridge Party', and the derisory singing and dancing at the club show are clearly intended to provoke a negative response from the viewer. Lean's changes certainly do not extend to a more generous treatment of those characters most criticized by Forster, though the increased presence of Mrs Moore and Adela does somewhat dilute the original by providing a British audience with more access to those characters who are not negatively portrayed, which therefore increases the probability that they will be identified with. The reverse is true for Aziz whose late appearance diminishes the possibility of our fastening onto him.

Lean's construction of India as mysterious and in certain respects unknowable does to some extent originate from Forster. However, a sustained comparison suggests that Forster's is the more sympathetic and interested engagement with Indian culture. Although both texts describe Mrs Moore's (and Adela's) experience of the Marabar as frightening and confusing, Forster has anticipated - and partly explained - what will happen there in the tea party at Fielding's. Godbole sings a song in which he plays the role of a milkmaid, entreating the reluctant Shri Krishna to come to her. Mrs Moore is struck by the apparent negativity of the song and asks whether he comes in another song.

'Oh no, He refuses to come.' repeated Godbole, perhaps not understanding her question. 'I say to Him, Come, come, come, come, come, come. He neglects to come' (11)

Mrs Moore's experience of nihilism and religious doubt is contextualized by Godbole's song. The 'ou-boum' echo of the cave which seems to murmur

'Everything exists, nothing has value' (12) remains mysterious but is also interpretable in terms of the fears of an old woman recently exposed to different and perplexing creeds. Lean omits Godbole's song - which might well have strained the plausibility of a painted Alec Guinness - but in so doing he contributes to the simplification of the Marabar experience. Mrs Moore's confusion, rendered in realist terms like Adela's 'hallucination', becomes merely the panic of an old lady in claustrophobia-inducing surroundings. The strange stare she receives from Godbole at the tea party invites our interest but explains nothing. After her exit from the cave Lean includes a close-up shot of the moon, seen by the collapsed Mrs Moore sitting in her chair, which is perhaps intended to suggest that her experience has cosmic connotations as well as physical symptoms, but it is never made clear that she experiences a crisis of faith.

Although the continuing decline in church-going throughout the twentieth Century has meant that adaptations have usually needed to downplay original material that relates to Christianity if they are not to alienate an audience, it is interesting to question whether such a practice is necessary where the religious material is non-Christian. If anything, Christianity's slump from a hegemonic position in Western society has opened a space for interest in alternative belief systems and cultural practices. Whilst this interest may well be characterizable as an ersatz, dabbling, pick'n'mix kind of participation, the recent receptivity to such concepts and activities as feng shui, t'ai chi, meditation and yoga clearly points to a growing interest in alternative (non-Christian) beliefs. The Western genre has, for instance, demonstrated an increasingly sympathetic interest in the ritual and religion of Native Americans, e.g. *A Man Called Horse* (1970) where there is a great stress on authenticity. More recently several Westerns have emphasised moral consonances between Native American belief structures and green politics, e.g. *Dances With Wolves* (1990). Such portrayals



invariably critique European morality and behaviour. A similar depiction of Eastern religions, juxtaposed with the conduct of the Anglo-Indians, could probably have been accommodated in the adaptation of *A Passage to India* without the film sundering itself from Western audiences.

Unlike Forster, Lean does not attempt to ground the baffling and mysterious aspects of India in terms of its religious and spiritual traditions. This is most evident in his abandoning of Forster's tripartite structure of Mosque, Caves and Temple which correspond to three spiritual traditions, Islam, Jainism and Hinduism. (Jainism dates from at least the 5th Century BC. An ascetic and atheistic offshoot of Hinduism, its pessimistic outlook is echoed in Mrs Moore's nihilistic thoughts after leaving the cave.) Titles could very easily reproduce Forster's structure and invite interpretation in terms of these religious differences, but Lean's changes go deeper than simply not signalling Forster's original sub-division. Whilst it is clear that the first meeting between Mrs Moore and Aziz in the mosque is important, the film's alterations to the opening mean that it loses its primacy and becomes one in a succession of encounters the new arrivals experience. Similarly, the simplification of what occurs to Mrs Moore in the Marabar erases the original connection to Jain thinking, and Lean's enormous changes to the ending do away with Forster's construction of Hinduism as an all-encompassing fusion of good and bad, of all events and matter.

The adaptation includes only the briefest glimpse of Godbole performing his religious duties in the Hindu ceremony that Forster describes at such length in the penultimate chapters. His unprompted recollection of Mrs Moore and of a wasp, seen originally by her and never by him, are not included; they are replaced by his cryptic and silent 'Goodbye' at the railway station as she departs; a lonely hint of their spiritual connection.

Forster describes the final ceremony as joyful and theopanic;

Infinite Love took upon itself the form of SHRI KRISHNA, and saved the world. All sorrow was annihilated, not only for Indians, but for foreigners, birds, caves, railways, and the stars; all became joy, all laughter; there had never been disease nor doubt, misunderstanding, cruelty, fear. (13)

But this happy resolution only lasts as long as the celebrations. Disagreements return when Fielding and Aziz take a ride together before Fielding's departure. Although the two men seem personally reconciled they - and the reader - are made fully aware of their immense political differences, differences which inevitably impinge upon friendship. Fielding jeers at the idea of India as a nation and Aziz retorts "India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort!" (14) Although the men wish to embrace, their horses swerve apart and 'the earth .. the temples..the palace.. the birds.. and the sky' respond to the idea of their friendship with "No, not yet" and "No, not there". Lean's conclusion replaces this ambivalent final meeting with a handshake between the two men and no references whatsoever to Indian nationhood. Instead, a sense that their friendship has endured is conveyed. Earlier, Aziz has been remorseful over his misunderstanding in thinking that Fielding had married Adela, not Stella - Mrs Moore's daughter, exclaiming 'what a blunder!' The idea is not developed - as it is in the original - that he and Fielding are now on opposite sides *irrespective* of his choice of wife. The novel makes the remaining divisions between the two men much clearer;

(Fielding) had thrown in his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a countrywoman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations, and already felt surprise at his own past heroism. Would he today defy all his own people for the sake of a stray Indian? Aziz was a memento, a trophy, they were proud of each other, yet they must inevitably part. (15)

A major alteration of Lean's is the substitution of an invented scene - where Adela bicycles into the Indian countryside - in place of the car accident she and Ronny experience in the car of the Nawab Bahadur (a minor character who



does not appear in the adaptation). Both scenes result in Adela reversing her decision not to marry Ronny. However, the differences in the process of Adela's changing her mind are typical of the new spin Lean puts on Forster's story. In the original Ronny and Adela are seated next to each other when 'her hand touched his, owing to a jolt, and one of the thrills so frequent in the animal kingdom passed between them and announced that all their difficulties were only a lovers' quarrel.' (1) This is immediately followed by a slight accident, Adela claiming to have seen the car strike an animal with a hairy back - probably a hyena. Upon returning to the bungalow Adela takes back her refusal and the young couple tell Mrs Moore both about their engagement and the accident. Mrs Moore shivers when told of the crash and remarks cryptically 'A ghost!'; which curious remark makes no sense until two pages later;

Nine years previously, when first he (the Nawab Bahadur) had had a car, he had driven it over a drunken man and killed him, and the man had been waiting for him ever since. The Nawab Bahadur was innocent before God and the Law, he had paid double the compensation necessary; but it was no use, the man continued to wait in an unspeakable form, close to the scene of his death. (17)

Lean employs a more obvious catalyst to provoke Adela's desire and cause her to retract. Adela cycles away from the city and stops beneath a signpost with three Indian names (Chandrapore, Gundore, and a third not wholly visible). This three-way signpost echoes a similar sign seen when Adela first arrived at the Civil Station which read Trafalgar Rd, Kitchener Av, and Wellington Rd. The similarity is deliberate and suggests that Adela is now on the verge of an interesting experience, a brush with the exotic. Whilst the archetypally British names, in conjunction with the regimented bungalows and red pillar box, anticipated Adela's frustration at being distant from the real India these signs indicate her proximity. The film's theme music builds as she stares into a 'gateway' formed by a broken wall, an arch and the long grass. Adela advances and the theme halts as she looks at a broken female statue, then restarts as she

reaches a dilapidated Saivite temple of erotic stone carvings. The statues are non sexual at first but eventually become embracing figures at which Adela stares in fascination as a female voice joins the music track.

Large-breasted women figure strongly in the photographed carving and may be interpreted not only as a ubiquitous aspect of this type of sculpture but as Lean's development of a Forsterian sub-theme. For when Dr Aziz discusses Adela with Fielding he remarks that she has 'practically no breasts' and offers to arrange for his friend 'a lady with breasts like mangoes' - an offer which Lean further specifies into 'Bombay mangoes'. Lean appears to be suggesting that Adela is not just gazing at images of sexual union which she would like to enjoy but also at physical attributes she would like to possess. These attributes are not only emblematic of a capacity for sexual pleasure and fruition - a theme reinforced by the trailing vines and creepers which spill and curl over the temple - they are also connected to a deeply stereotypical conception of 'foreign' women who promise a sexuality that is mysterious and Eastern.

The fact that Adela does not belong - or is insufficiently qualified - for the pleasures of the temple is revealed when the music suddenly becomes ominous and threatening. A troop of monkeys appear at the top and descend to chase Adela away. The aggressive monkeys are presumably suggestive of a violent and exotic masculinity which the virginal Adela - dressed in white - is incapable of accommodating. This suggestion is confirmed in two later scenes - both also inventions of the adaptation - where Indian men are costumed as monkeys. The first occasion is during a glimpse of the festival of Mohurram, an occasion which immediately follows Adela's charge of attempted rape and which causes consternation for the British community, especially the women. The second is when Adela is being driven to the trial through crowds of protesters and a 'monkey-man' leaps onto the car before being dragged off and beaten by the police. In both cases they demonstrate transgressive, 'animal', behaviour which



is constructed as particularly threatening to Western women.

After her 'escape' from the temple Adela cycles back to the bungalow, where she arrives - hot and bothered - to be met by an anxious Ronny. Her encounter with Eastern sexuality has provoked her desire and she seeks satisfaction in the sanctioned form - and suitably moderate dimensions - of Ronny. She quickly 'takes back' the refusal she made at the polo field. Lean's alteration - and especially his repetition of the monkey motif - are probably his crudest touch in his treatment of *A Passage to India* - the most obvious instance of his trading in stereotypes. Hutchings describes it as an 'implicit racial equation' (18) and the scene is not only revealing in terms of what Lean has added, but of what he has left out. In excising the car accident with the suggestion that they have struck a 'ghost' Lean again demonstrates his uninterest in the subtle spirituality of the original. Events which Forster makes deliberately unclear are transformed into physical and observable manifestations; either by scripting new scenes or by showing (and necessarily deciding) what the original leaves out - as exemplified in the scene of Adela's breakdown in the cave. Materialization becomes not simply a rendering in a new medium but an act of political reinscription. For Hutchings, this realist impulse is analogous to the subjugating and ordering processes of Empire itself;

Where the novel presents troubling uncertainty, the film presents prosaic evidence of the kind appropriate to an imperial vision. (19)

Lean's influence in *A Passage to India* is clearly decisive; not only directing, but scripting and editing too (uniquely in this study). The prefatory section has already discussed how Lean dismissed Santha Rama Rau as screenwriter despite Rau's participation having been required by Forster's executors at King's College as a precondition of the adaptation. Combined with the authority he would have inevitably enjoyed from his status within the industry as a senior, highly successful, multiple Oscar winner, this amounts to a

great likelihood that *A Passage to India* bears the stamp of his will. It is also notable that of all the six adaptations and directors considered in this study and their various political articulations and emphases, only Lean seems to have regarded his original as *too* critical and sought to re-tell the story in a manner that feels frankly reactionary; a perception substantiated by the director's oft-quoted pronouncements on Forster and Empire. The Imperial connections of producer Lord Brabourne (whose father had been a Viceroy of India and whose wife is the daughter of Mountbatten, the last Viceroy) also suggest a climate of production that would have been amenable to a less swingeing representation of the Raj and its officers.

However, the film is also the product of an entire British political climate. The Falklands conflict of 1982 had stirred a considerable degree of quasi-imperial sentiment and the national mood of celebration (stimulated by Margaret Thatcher's urging to "Rejoice!" and the Sun's gleeful "Gotcha!" headline after the sinking of the Argentine battleship General Belgrano) centred on the supposed recovery of Britain's ability to enforce her will abroad. Literature's and television's interest in the Raj, the popularity of which doubtless helped precipitate this adaptation, derived in no small degree from the fact that that institution epitomized absolute British command. So, to make *A Passage to India* more critical of British rule than it already is might well have jeopardized its success by contradicting prevailing sentiments and deviating too much from the formula that had made for such popular television.

The trip to the Marabar Hills is revealing not just in terms of Lean's handling of Mrs Moore's and Adela's experiences but also of his desire to deliver gigantic visuals, a tendency strongly anticipated in the Bombay scene. Conversely, Forster avoids any leaning toward the epic or romantic in his description of the journey to the hills. Adela has to exaggerate her enthusiasm for Aziz's elaborately arranged trip because she is preoccupied with thoughts of



her future following the decision to marry and although Forster describes the sunrise over the extraordinary hills he does not build to a crescendo. Instead, he describes the sight as disappointing;

They awaited the miracle. But at the supreme moment, when night should have died and day lived, nothing occurred. It was as if virtue had failed in the celestial fount. The hues in the east decayed, the hills seemed dimmer though in fact better lit, and a profound disappointment entered with the morning breeze. Why, when the chamber was prepared, did the bridegroom not enter with trumpets and shawms, as humanity expects? The sun rose without splendour. He was presently observed trailing yellowish behind the trees, or against insipid sky, and touching the bodies already at work in the fields. (20)

Forster consistently practices this policy of diminution in the build-up to Adela's mysterious scramble down the hillside and away from the cave. For example; Aziz has arranged an elephant to transport them to the hills from the station and many villagers have gathered to watch the goings-on but this potentially vibrant moment is also characterized as hollow;

The scene was agreeable rather than not in the mild morning air, but there was little colour in it and no vitality. (21)

Confusion and disappointment also mark the episode - omitted from the film - where there is some doubt over whether an object seen in the distance is a tree stump or a black cobra. The party cannot agree. Similarly, the villagers walking alongside cannot give a definitive answer when asked about some whitewashed mounds seen by the track. Are they graves, or the breasts of the goddess Parvati? The villagers give both replies. 'Nothing was explained, and yet there was no romance'. (22) Lean's treatment offers the reverse to Forster's downplaying, delivering the romance that the original withholds. Inside the railway carriage Aziz/Banerjee begins to explain that the ladder he has brought is related to the ladies' "big surprise". There follows a sudden cut to an elephant, which the ladder will be used to mount. It has been elaborately decorated with coloured paint - the sight of which makes a dramatic segue from the railway to the ascent proper.

Lean quickly shifts again from close observation of the elephant to an extreme long shot of the procession climbing the hill. There is no music, only a breeze which flutters the white garments of the men who follow on foot and a regular sound from bells fastened above the the elephant's hoof. Visually lavish, this scene offers the archetypal pleasures of tourist experience - of getting the best view, of experiencing what is purported to be the 'essence' or 'spirit' of the country. It is deeply ironic that Forster's original characterizes this touristic desire as flawed and impossible to satisfy; Adela's wish to see the 'real India' is revealed to be an 'addled quest' which ends in chaos and disruption for all involved. The connection which Forster exhorts us to make in the epigraph to *Howards End* is seen as impossible to achieve in *A Passage to India*, good intentions notwithstanding.

The connection to India which Lean's film offers in these panoramic shots is not only determined by the ideology of tourism - itself an offshoot of the map-filling impulses of colonization and Empire; sharing their desire to move through, occupy and know the foreign - but is also heavily predicated by his previous filmmaking. Both *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago* offer grandiose photography of landscape and appear to suggest that this method best conveys the essential meaning - of romance, vastness, mystery etc - of the relevant country. *Lawrence* in particular serves to confirm that Lean's large-scale approach facilitates quasi-imperial conceptions of the foreign. In both *A Passage to India* and *Lawrence* a single European achieves heroic status by combining immersion in the other culture with the increased determining power which is constructed as the prerogative of the white man. Both texts characterize the 'native' as having particular talents and strengths - of loyalty, religious fervour etc - but also as being lacking in the area of execution, being unable to see things through properly, and benefiting from marshalling by the Western mind. It is important, however, to acknowledge that this racism does



not originate wholly from Lean. Forster too is guilty of uncomfortable generalizations.

At the moment when he (Fielding) was throwing in his lot with the Indians, he realized the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them. They always do something disappointing. Aziz had tried to run away from the police, Mohammed Latif had not checked the pilfering. And now Hamidullah! - instead of raging and denouncing, he temporized. Are Indians cowards? No, but they are bad starters and occasionally jib; the British Raj rests on it; the respect and courtesy Fielding himself enjoyed were unconscious acts of propitiation. (23)

Although this passage appears to begin as Fielding's point of view it eventually drifts into authorial narration. This merging of subjectivity is heightened by the many parallels between character and author; both English, liberal, roughly the same age, strong believers in the value of friendship, and estranged from the politics of India's imperial rulers while inevitably enjoying the fruits of colonization. Given these similarities it is difficult not to regard Fielding's views as those that most closely approximate to his author's. And in this instance it is clear that he engages in inherently racist generalizations of a type evinced in wide variety of texts involving Hero-Europeans in a foreign environment. T.E.Lawrence's journal, John Buchan's *Greenmantle*, James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, and the Tarzan stories in most of their numerous manifestations all repeat the theme of the powerful and competent white man who inspires loyalty and admiration from the natives. Interestingly, most of these stories claim to demonstrate a great affection for whichever non-European people are being described while they invariably hinge upon an unspoken concept of superiority. Double-edged characterizing is common, such as the native's possession of uncanny but also 'primitive' skills of tracking, travelling or concealment (which the white hero will also acquire *in conjunction* with his European/post-Industrial faculties). Simple unswerving devotion from the native retainer toward the hero is another back-handed compliment in that it describes the faithful servant as brave but also rather

dense. The long-running popularity of 'faithfulness' as the ideal native quality probably dates from Defoe's (& Crusoe's!) *Man Friday* and exemplifies the scale of superiority that underpins such stories both in terms of its obvious meaning and by its unfortunate correlation to popular stories of animal loyalty and self-sacrifice, usually dogs. Little separates the actions and value ascribed to a *Lassie* or *Greyfriars Bobby* from *Gunga Din*.

However, although Forster does (occasionally) let slip phrases which descend from such familiar Western conceptions of the 'native' he also manages to outstrip such limiting characterization and move away from a purely Eurocentric point of view. Rustom Bharucha (24) draws attention to an exchange between Aziz and Hamidullah where the latter tries to encourage the acquitted Doctor to stick to his profession and earn the respect of the Europeans. Aziz replies "There are many ways of being a man: mine is to express what is deepest in my heart." Bharucha describes Aziz's reply as a moment of *Tarass* - meaning the capacity to absorb feelings, emotion and atmosphere of a place or another person. He compares this assertion of a non-European scale of values to the gentle but effective oppositional politics advocated by Gandhi in terms of its rejection of a Western conception of masculinity and action in favour of a more feminine strategy. Unsurprisingly, the adaptation loses this scene as it loses much of the original's description of Aziz's love of Persian poetry and interest in the Moghul Emperors. Riding to the Marabar caves he says that he 'dreams of riding into battle beside Alamgir' but this throwaway line functions for the viewer as it does for Adela - an exotic name, suggestive of history and perhaps romance, adding to the 'authentic' feel of the trip but bereft of any meaningful connection to the country or the themes of the story.

Victor Banerjee's playing of Aziz generally secures our sympathy though his histrionic tendencies are certainly portrayed in such a way that the contrast with British reserve does not always favour him. After the trial, in place of his



moving reply to Hamidullah, Lean shows us Aziz in Indian costume applying eyeliner before his bitter exchange with Fielding. Although his expression is defiant this moment plays upon a highly stereotypical conflation of the foreign and the effete. Aziz's rejection of the Chandrapore British is charted visually in his abandoning of Western dress and further described as a feminizing process. It is ironic (as are many of Lean's alterations) that this moment is reminiscent of the experience of Forster's Indian friend Syed Ross Masood whose fellow students at Oxford mocked him for wearing scent. As with the altered ending, Aziz's acts of rejection are de-valued from their original worth - defiance becomes unattractive petulance.

A major area of difference between novel and adaptation is that the gay subtext - or at least moments with a distinct gay flavour - do not find their way onto the screen. The evidence for a gay interpretation of Forster's *A Passage to India* is varied. The many similarities between the author and Fielding invite further analysis of his relationship with Aziz, despite the fact that their conversation and interaction is generally resolutely heterosexual. The surprise and censure that is provoked within the novel by the Aziz/Fielding relationship is representative of both mainstream and establishment responses to homosexuality. Fielding finds himself publicly insulted and shunned as a consequence of his friendship and feels obliged to quit the club - which he had never felt particularly at home in anyway - all of which parallels the experience of many gay men. Biographically, the cross-race relationship echoes Forster's friendship with Masood - with whom he desired to enjoy a physical relationship too, but was gently rejected. In the introduction to the 1989 Penguin edition Oliver Stallybrass argues for a comparison between the two friendships in gay terms;

In the relationship between the two there are erotic overtones such as we are surely justified in finding in the relationship between Fielding and Aziz. (25)

Forster did eventually have a homosexual relationship with a Muslim, Mohammed-el-Adl, an Egyptian tram conductor Forster had met in Alexandria in 1916 when working for the Red Cross. Although not an Indian the similarities between Mohammed and Aziz are greater than those with Masood. In 1920 he was imprisoned for six months by the British on a false charge. He wrote to Forster and complained of the humiliation and ill-treatment he had suffered and died of consumption in 1922 after seeing Forster one last time a few months previously. The writing of *A Passage to India* was already underway, their relationship and his experiences surely an influence in its genesis. (26)

Forster's description of heterosexual romance is generally considered unconvincing, unsurprisingly so, given his inclinations and range of experience. The sudden union of Helen Schlegel and Leonard Bast in *Howards End* and the exchanges between Lucy Honeychurch and George Emerson are both rather improbable. *A Room with a View* does however alert the reader to the likelihood of a displaced homosexual theme informing the action in what purports to be a straight story. Rather like the stabbing of the Italian in the Piazza one may interpret the Aziz/Fielding relationship as determined by what Forster felt able to publish without provoking outrage. Their friendship is convincing because Forster was writing about what he knew and lived. The unsatisfactory conclusion of the friendship, with disagreements separating both sides, is like all other Forster endings; a mixed resolution where private happiness and public propriety are broadly incompatible. As such, the 'No, not yet' and 'No, not there' which the environment seems say to the men's relationship is exactly the judgment faced by Forster and others wishing to live as gay men; a force he felt so strongly that not one of his novels could feature a wholly comfortable resolution.

Perhaps the most convincing claim for the validity of a gay reading of Forster's original is Lean's handling of the most relevant moments in his



adaptation. Without exception they are 'sanitized' or excised in what amounts to a homophobic policy of denial. The most important scene in a gay reading of the friendship is their first meeting and the intimate exchange of a collar stud; the alterations to this scene establish the pattern of suppression followed throughout the remainder of the film. Aziz/Banerjee arrives early at Fielding's bungalow, before his host has finished washing and changing. He takes the opportunity to look around and pays particular attention to two items of which the original makes no mention. The first is a photograph of World War One tank, placed alongside an armistice mug, and the second is a mounted cricket bat, although Forster makes no reference to Fielding's activities during the war and alludes to him playing tennis but never cricket. Both objects carry a considerable significance, affording Fielding heightened 'masculine' credentials of a type that would have been anathema to Forster. These changes are wholly unfaithful to the letter and spirit of an author who preferred friendship to patriotism and avowed a profound distaste for his experiences of public school life at Tonbridge. However, they are clearly intended as important markers of manliness - preemptive strikes for straightness - by a director anxious to defuse the latent homosexuality of a well-known scene.

Sara Sulieri Goodyear considers the original's exchange of the collar stud - which she calls 'an erotic interaction that demands attention to its own cultural outrage' (27) - at considerable length. Lean shortens this episode considerably, removing portions of dialogue that lend themselves to a homoerotic reading such as Aziz's "Let me put in your stud. I see... the shirt back's hole is rather small and to rip it wider a pity" (28). Crucially, Aziz *does not* put the stud in for Fielding, who initially has considerable difficulty trying to do it himself in the original; it is handed over quickly and followed by a traditional handshake (exactly like the handshake Lean invents to conclude the relationship) before Fielding quickly inserts the stud himself. The change is vitally important, for the

original establishes not only the self-sacrifice of Aziz but also demonstrates the trust - physical and cultural - placed in him by Fielding who stands with his neck bowed while Aziz puts in the stud. The insertion also acquires a metaphorical value; like the collar and stud, their relationship is developed through a small aperture, with the help of goodwill, but is not achieved without some tearing.

In Lean's version Aziz's generosity is still maintained (for Fielding doesn't appreciate that the stud is not a spare, and its absence will provide an opportunity for Ronny to criticise him) but the gentle intimacy that marks the original is largely lost; Aziz's gift does not oblige the Englishman to bend. This 'straightening out' of Forster is repeated at the end of this tea party scene. In the original Forster describes a naked man who comes out of the water tank where he had been gathering water chestnuts. He emerges upon hearing Godbole's song (itself omitted from the adaptation) 'his lips parted with delight, disclosing his scarlet tongue' (29) Although his appearance is - as Goodyear puts it - 'singularly non-phallic.. focusing instead on the mouth' (30) Lean nevertheless decides to omit the original's only instance of (male & visible) nudity. Also lost is the original parallel between Fielding's nudity - concealed from the Indian, Aziz - and that of the water chestnut-gatherer's 'colonized body' (31) - visible to all Fielding's guests; male and female, Indian and Anglo-Indian. It may be worth acknowledging one further change to this scene; Fielding is shown to be showering, not taking a bath as he does in the novel. Perhaps, anxious to dispel any of the homosexually-tinged vulnerability Fielding displays in the original, Lean assumes that the change in his ablutions helps him 'keep on his feet' and distances him from the supposedly 'oriental' act of bathing and hence from Aziz who shows such an interest in hammams, tanks and the movement of water.

Another moment from the original where Forster focusses on the male body is significantly altered - the spectacle of the punkah-wallah who works the fan in the Magistrate's Court;



Almost naked, and splendidly formed, he sat on a raised platform near the back, in the middle of the central gangway, and he caught her (Adela's) attention as she came in, and he seemed to control the proceedings. He had the strength and beauty that sometimes come to flower in Indians of low birth. When that strange race nears the dust and is condemned as untouchable, then nature remembers the physical perfection that she accomplished elsewhere, and throws out a god - not many, but one here and there, to prove to society how little its categories impress her. This man would have been notable anywhere; among the thin-shouldered, flat-chested mediocrities of Chandrapore he stood out as divine, yet he was of the city, its garbage had nourished him, he would end on its rubbish heaps. (32)

In the adaptation Forster's punkah-wallah becomes an old man, fully dressed. Clearly, the sight of an attractive and nearly naked man need not be intrinsically gay but Lean seems not to want to take any chances. His reversal of Forster's loving description is so absolute, so determined in its alteration (young to old, strong to skinny, bare to covered) that it cannot be interpreted as a chance difference but as further evidence of a heterosexualizing of the original. It is also sad, given that Forster's life and writing were significantly determined by fear of being open about his homosexuality, that his oblique suggestions are whittled away in a work of a supposedly more tolerant age.

Perhaps most troubling for Lean is the facility with which Forster's construction of 'untouchability' lends itself to an interpretation that transcends caste and includes homosexuality. The physical magnificence of the fan-puller whereby nature proves to society 'how little its categories impress her' is not only determined by the doubly 'transgressive' pleasure of viewing the male, foreign body, it is surely also an allegorical rejection of society's notion of gay men as degenerates. The adaptation's distaste for the original's gay value is also evident in the ending where the men's horse ride and accompanying disagreement is changed in favour of their parting handshake on the road. In the original Aziz is 'half-kissing' (33) Fielding as he exclaims that they can only be friends when the English have been driven from India. In losing the horse-ride Lean necessarily loses the prophetic meaning of the horses which 'swerve' apart despite their

riders' wish to be friends but this does not preclude him from a more demonstrative parting between the two men. The resulting handshake concludes their relationship in the same stilted and unconvincing fashion as Forster is often accused of making his heterosexual lovers' interaction.

It is odd that Lean should appear so anxious to elide the original's gay elements when his *Lawrence of Arabia* had lent itself to homoerotic readings. For example, Lawrence's/Peter O'Toole's relationship with the Arab youth, or the scene where he tries on Arab robes for the first time, shedding his masculinist British inhibitions as he turns and twirls in self-absorbed pleasure, which can easily be interpreted as somehow gay, a celebration perhaps of gender exploration through cultural transfer. Lean had originally wanted O'Toole to play Fielding, writing in a 1981 letter to Brabourne and Goodwin that;

Peter has that star quality. He can be very sensitive to distress. He also has another asset; a strange sexual ambiguity which I played up in *Lawrence* but would play down with Fielding. (34)

Lean offers no explanation for why he always intended to play down this aspect. One cannot help wondering how a Merchant/Ivory production would have handled that side of *A Passage to India*, given their knowing treatment of gayness in other Forster adaptations.

Casting does not create such significant differences between original and adaptation as was found in *Sense and Sensibility* where both Hugh Grant and Alan Rickman are more attractive than their characters as described by Austen. However, several actors do bring a value to their role that does not accord with Forster's original construction. Alec Guinness's performance as Professor Godbole is the most obvious example and can be interpreted on various levels. Firstly it evokes the 'blacking-up' of white actors in Black and White Minstrel shows and more recently the tradition of noted actors winning acclaim and awards for playing 'difficult' parts where the conveying of a physical disability or



mental condition is deemed more impressive than a 'normal' role. (Daniel Day Lewis in *My Left Foot*, Dustin Hoffman in *Rainman*, and Anthony Hopkins in *The Silence of the Lambs* all secured Best Actor Academy Awards for such performances) What connects the two is that an inherent bias determines the opportunities for such roles; black actors did not play in the Minstrel shows and individuals with genuine deformities or conditions such as autism do not achieve success in major films. Instead, by being represented through 'normal' white actors such differences achieve marketability and acceptability and the performer achieves repute precisely because one is aware of the difference between the representation and reality. Although this tendency peaked in the late 'eighties and early 'nineties it was not without a precedent. In the 'thirties Paul Muni was noted for a variety of roles in which - with the help of make-up - he played unlikely characters to convincing effect, especially as a Mexican in *Zapata*.

Such transforming performances need not carry entirely negative associations however. Guinness's performance(s) in multiple roles in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* places him in a tradition of make-up and disguise (beyond the usual pretence involved in acting in fiction films) which does not raise uncomfortable questions of representation. Nevertheless, the transition from comedy to a straight role, and particularly the playing of another race makes such a transformation - or attempted transformation - more sensitive and difficult. In *A Passage to India* Godbole is not only the film's representative of Hinduism - the other Indian characters being Muslims - he is also the only Indian who appears relatively immune to the effects of the British. Even though the Indian lawyers - played by Indian actors - win the case for Aziz they are nevertheless functioning within the colonial system, a situation which causes Mahmoud Ali to exclaim "we are all slaves." Conversely, Godbole does not appear at the trial and moves to a Native State, away from British rule which had never seemed to

impact on him with any force, even when he was nominally subject. By casting a British actor as Godbole Lean in a way deprives India of a character who offered a type of passive resistance to colonial rule, whose philosophy of predestination necessarily rejects the great value that Empire attaches to individual achievement in the name of Imperial conquest - a dogma exemplified by historical figures such as Clive and Rhodes. Casting a white actor in this prize role also served to heighten the sense of injustice felt by many that the film was not directed by an Indian. In fact, during a row on set Victor Banerjee told Lean he was "obnoxious", that he wasn't the greatest director in the world, that Satyajit Ray was, and that if there were any justice Ray and not Lean would have been making this film! (35)

It is also arguable that the casting of Richard Wilson and Nigel Havers as Turton and Ronny respectively creates a less negative valuation of Empire than that constructed by Forster. For a British audience from the 'nineties onward Wilson is irreversibly connected with the character Victor Meldrew from the TV comedy series *One Foot in the Grave*. Although this was not a factor in the original response to the film, and will count for nothing with viewers not familiar with the programme, it will prove a difficult association to shift for viewers who are. Wilson's drawling voice is so singular, and so strongly associated with his TV catch phrase, that one struggles to accept his portrayal of Turton on its own terms and not to believe that his unpleasant exterior hides - like Victor's - a better nature. Havers too has strong associations with TV comedy, particularly the long-running series *Don't Wait Up*, in which he played an amiable doctor. His meaning is also strongly determined by his performance, before *Passage*, in *Chariots of Fire* as a privileged and - again - amiable sprinter. The influence of British TV comedy also extends to Clive Swift who plays Major Callendar but is more recently recognizable as the long suffering husband of Hyacinth Bucket in *Keeping up Appearances*. The meaning all three bring to



more recent viewings of *A Passage to India* is clearly not an intrinsic mistake of the adaptation - as one might reasonably regard Guinness's Godbole - but an unforeseeable consequence of their subsequent careers. This factor does not mar the film, since their performances are internally sound and do not (indeed could not) play on their TV alter-egos. However, it is still worth noting that Lean does not use actors commonly associated with 'bad' or unpleasant roles.

In conclusion one might say that Lean does not so much rewrite *A Passage to India* as reread it, for despite his alterations he mostly keeps to the pattern of the original; his changes are fundamentally those of emphasis. Often individually small, but collectively significant, Lean's changes put a new value on the materials of Forster's original. As with *A Room with a View* there is a tendency toward simplification - particularly of the endings - where both films achieve a concluding tidiness that the originals refuse. Another similarity - of *Passage* and of all Forster adaptations - is their construction of the past as rather more golden than Forster thought his present. Although *Passage* describes the racism and unfairness of Imperial administration it simultaneously evokes more pleasant connotations of the Raj, period travel, lifestyle, and exotic India which Forster avoided but which make it much closer in content and spirit to other Raj-Revival texts. Perhaps the most problematic aspects of Lean's adaptation are his refusal to engage with the original gay elements and the reduced contribution he affords the Indian characters. These reactionary changes are particularly acute because *A Passage to India* is already an Imperial novel - albeit probably the limit text of Raj discourse in that it is both informed by and critical of Imperial preconceptions - and already a novel which hides its author's - and its own - gayness. It is a pity that Lean's engagement does not match - in either aspect - the already circumscribed treatment afforded by Forster.

## CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION.

The previous chapters have demonstrated that changes which take place in the adaptation of certain novels into films are often genre-related, with some texts being shaped towards a particular film genre and others diminishing or omitting the felt presence of an original literary genre or generic mode. Other changes and omissions have been discussed which are also concerned with making the films acceptable and accessible to modern movie audiences. The distinction between these two types of alteration is not absolute; certain elements of original material that might hinder a romantic comedy might also prove uncomfortable for film audiences generally, for example. Although all adaptations presuppose a prior model, this study has focussed on instances where original novel and subsequent film are separated by many years. It has not therefore argued that genre-shifts and 'acceptability changes' determine the shape of all adaptations, but has suggested that they are likely to be an influence in the adaptation of older novels - those often termed classics.

Genres provide a fundamental way of reading and enjoying films, and the genre-related changes this study identifies have been explained in terms of filmmakers wanting to ensure that their products operate successfully in relation to genre categories that audiences understand and enjoy. The three romantic comedies considered already offered, as original texts, a high degree of consonance with that movie genre, making it their most obvious and commercially-viable destination. Other original elements which might have compromised their functioning according to the protocols and audience expectations of that genre, e.g the final pairings not seeming wholly pleasing, or (relatedly) the endings not seeming unmitigatedly happy, were therefore altered. With *Jude* and *A Passage to India* the destination genre was even more specific. *Jude* was moved into alignment with a grim genre of 1990's TV (e.g *Cracker* )



whose pessimistic brand of realism worked to 'make sense' of the original's unhappy content and conclusion. And the alterations to *A Passage to India* enabled the film to belong to, and offer similar pleasures to, the Raj-Revival genre of the mid 1980's. Including texts such as TV's *The Jewel in the Crown* this popular genre or grouping evoked nostalgia for Britain's imperial past, and shaping the adaptation according to its protocols (and the political climate of that time) enhanced its audience appeal and financial prospects.

This study has proposed the term 'neutering' to designate those omissions and changes to original material which would not sit easily with modern movie audiences. Neutered material has often involved original scenes or actions where characters are criticized or parodied in class terms. Both the Austen adaptations were seen to have muted the novels' presentation of certain characters' faults as being consequences of their inferior birth. Although the films reproduce the originals' narrative preoccupation with characters marrying the 'right' partners and continue to portray the 'wrong' partners as morally and intellectually flawed, they do not propose as clearly as does Austen that the factors which make them unsuitable are often determined by their class position. Not all such alterations relate to class however. *A Room with a View* involved several significant changes which enabled the resulting film to work much more straightforwardly as a romantic comedy by refiguring the original ending to one where it appears that the final marriage will make most of the other characters happy. *Jude* also toned down Hardy's original distinction between the characters Sue and Arabella, a distinction which, if retained, viewers might have felt to be clumsy and offensive, signalling the story's polemic too obviously and compromising its realism.

The past has been a recurring topic in this study, with the novel-to-film changes often working to refigure the originals' presentation of their own times. This has been shown to be a complex negotiation where the films desire to

emphasize particular aspects of the past as positive or pleasant but simultaneously downplay others which might offend or trouble viewers. On the one hand most of these adaptations have sought to evoke nostalgia for the past, describing gentry/bourgeois lifestyles and settings in overwhelmingly desirable terms, on the other they have avoided suggesting the inequitable socio-economic preconditions on which such lifestyles depended and have downplayed material that referenced political forces and the likelihood of change.

Not all the adaptations considered have presented nostalgic accounts of Britain's past however. *Jude* worked by emphatically reversing the aesthetic of the heritage film - the genre to which all the other films in this study could be said to belong and/or relate. Rather than offering visual pleasures of landscapes, country houses and period costumes, it presented the characters' lives as hard and stark. In terms of its presentation of the past *Tess* appeared to fall midway between *Jude* and the other adaptations; with some scenes figuring rural life attractively and others suggesting its hardship. In fact, the more visually appealing or nostalgic aspects of *Tess* may be understood as a precursor (both stylistic and thematic) of the Heritage genre which would flourish in the 1980's. Both the Hardy adaptations did however share in the practice of trimming away unwanted original generic elements - in their case, primarily melodrama. Although *Jude* strove so hard to reject the narrative tactics of heritage cinema it nevertheless found itself employing this key facet of their approach to adaptation. Just as the Austen adaptations and *A Room With a View* cut material which might have compromised the films' functioning as romantic comedies, so *Jude* omitted the melodrama which might have compromised its assiduously developed version of tragic realism.

*A Passage to India* offered the most problematic kind of nostalgic pleasures. Whilst the adaptation did retain original material which criticized the worst of Imperial conduct and attitudes it also engaged in alterations which



worked to dissolve Forster's more complete denunciation of Anglo-India. By partly shifting the narrative focus away from the Indian characters and offering spectacular pleasures of landscape and Raj pageantry, the film evoked a considerable degree of nostalgia for Britain's Imperial past whilst simultaneously depicting its cruelty and racism. These changes moved the film into alignment with the Raj-Revival genre and were also identified as consonant with the politics of its director, David Lean, who believed Forster's novel to have been over-critical of the Raj.

*Sense and Sensibility* made nostalgia problematic in another way, not by offering an ambivalent or contradictory representation of an unjust past which the original figured more critically, but by actually heightening the original's emphasis on a subject which might well jeopardize the film's nostalgic construction of early nineteenth century gentry life: namely the social and economic subjugation of women. The film adds new scenes and dialogue where the unfairness of male-only inheritance and the impossibility of (upper middle class) women seeking employment are discussed. These additions certainly mark the film as a politically-engaged reworking, and evidence the evolving nature of the Heritage genre, but they also threaten an audience's view of that period as desirable, preferable in certain respects to contemporary life. Given that the adaptation cannot resolve these problems that women faced by rewriting history - allowing them to inherit, work etc. - it allows the all-encompassing happy ending of the romantic comedy genre to solve the heroines' individual difficulties so completely that the general historical circumstance is largely forgotten. The past becomes therefore a place in which women are rescued and its pleasant figuration is unspoil by sustained consideration of what exactly they have been rescued from.

The six adaptations have been discussed (Chapter 2) in terms of their place within a national culture. The fact of each film having a celebrated literary

original provides an initial meaning in the experience of all these texts, locating them in close relation to a national literary canon or 'honour roll' and beginning the agglomeration of values that they collectively and individually suggest. Their participation in a valued literary culture, itself associated primarily with past 'classics' rather than present output, enhances the sense these films overwhelmingly develop of a national past which is pleasant and which enjoyed a stability derived from internal social order and international preeminence. (Austen is primarily suggestive of domestic security, Forster of an era when the British abroad enjoyed - and assumed as their right - the subordination of others) The novels (and their adaptations) provide a vestigial connection with these bygone eras, with British literature consumed worldwide in vast amounts though its Empire and sense of supremacy and fixed identity have disappeared. Even where the intention was not to evoke nostalgia for the national past, e.g. *Jude*, the connection with Britain's literary heritage still served to suggest participation in a great national culture and probably worked to draw a similar audience to those who viewed *A Room With a View*, *Sense and Sensibility* etc. though they proposed quite opposite accounts of Britain's past. *Jude's* relative box-office failure may well be explicable in terms of its rejection of a charming and reassuring aesthetic that audiences have come to expect from adaptations of English literature.



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- (18) Defined by Tambling (p1) as "work informed by narrative theory, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminist or gender-criticism or by Althusserian Marxism or Foucaudian approaches to discourse."

- (19) Hutchings, Peter. 'A Disconnected View: Forster, Modernity and Film.'  
in Tambling. p218.
- (20) Hutchings, in Tambling. p222.
- (21) Forster. pp 37-38.
- (22) Ibid. p214.
- (23) Ibid. p195.
- (24) Ibid. p129.
- (25) Ibid. p129.
- (26) Ibid. p129.
- (27) Buzard, James. 'Forster's Trespasses: Tourism and Cultural Politics'  
in Tambling. p16.
- (28) Forster. p61.
- (29) Buzard. in Tambling. p17.
- (30) Forster. p62.
- (31) Ibid. p62.
- (32) Ibid. p64.
- (33) Martin. p94.
- (34) Shahane. pp 56-57.
- (35) Buzard. in Tambling. p17.
- (36) Ibid. p18.
- (37) Hutchings. in Tambling. p223.
- (38) Ibid. p223.
- (39) Ibid. p223.
- (40) Forster. p62.
- (41) Hutchings. in Tambling. p223.



- (42) Tambling. (notes on Hutchings' essay) p226.
- (43) Martin. p101.
- (44) Shahane. p61.
- (45) Forster. p148.
- (46) Spenser, Edmund. *The Fairie Queen*. Penguin. 1987. p373.
- (47) Ibid. p376.
- (48) Ibid. p376.
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- (51) Ibid. pp70-71.
- (52) Tambling. (notes on Hutchings' essay) p226.
- (53) Orr, John. *Cinema and Modernity*. Polity Press. 1993. p2.
- (54) Ibid. p3.

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- (2) Forster, E.M. *A Passage to India*. Penguin, 1989. p31.
- (3) Ibid. p33.
- (4) Ibid. p31.
- (5) Donne, John. 'The Sunne Rising' *The Metaphysical Poets*. Penguin, 1966. p61.
- (6) cited in Tambling. p215.
- (7) Ibid. p226.
- (8) Parry, Benita. 'The Politics of Representation in *A Passage to India*' in Tambling. p134.
- (9) Forster. p70.
- (10) Ibid. pp174-175.
- (11) Ibid. p96.
- (12) Ibid. p160.
- (13) Ibid. p285.
- (14) Ibid. p315.
- (15) Ibid. p313.
- (16) Ibid. p103.
- (17) Ibid. p111.
- (18) Hutchings. in Tambling. p218.
- (19) Ibid. p219.
- (20) Forster. pp149-150.



- (21) Ibid. p152.
- (22) Ibid. p152.
- (23) Ibid. pp181-182.
- (24) Bharucha, Rustom. 'Forster's Friends' in Tambling.
- (25) Stallybrass, Oliver. in Forster. p8.
- (26) Biographical information from Bharucha, in Tambling.
- (27) Sara Sulieri Goodyear. 'Forster's Imperial Erotic' in Tambling.
- (28) Forster. p83.
- (29) Ibid. p95.
- (30) Goodyear. in Tambling. p159.
- (31) Ibid. p159.
- (32) Forster. pp220-221.
- (33) Ibid. p316.
- (34) Quoted in Brownlow, Kevin. *David Lean*. Faber & Faber. 1996. pp 672-673.
- (35) Ibid. p672.

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