

**FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC REDUX:
THE PRIVATE LIVES OF JANE AUSTEN
AND GRAHAM GREENE AS REPRESENTED
BY THE PUBLIC WORLDS OF FILM**

by

Valerie Gregory
BFA (Honours), Concordia University, 1978

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Approval

Name: Valerie Gregory
Degree: Master of Arts in Liberal Studies
Title of Project: FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC REDUX: THE PRIVATE LIVES OF JANE AUSTEN AND GRAHAM GREENE AS REPRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC WORLDS OF FILM

Examining Committee:

Chair: Steve Duguid, PhD
Professor Humanities and Liberal Studies
Director, Graduate Liberal Studies

June Sturrock, PhD
Professor Emeritus, Department of English

Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon, PhD
Associate Professor of Humanities
Graduate Chair, Graduate Liberal Studies

Patricia Gruben, PhD
Associate Professor
School for the Contemporary Arts

Date Defended/Approved:

Dec. 7, 2007



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Abstract

This project is an examination of the process by which the mediums of literature and film intersect within the context of novel-to-film adaptation, and in the depiction of the public and private spheres of the authors and directors. The novels of Jane Austen and Graham Greene and three contemporary film adaptations of their work are analyzed. The project considers how the authors' private and public lives influence their fiction, how the film directors' private spheres alter their perception of the novels, and the impact these factors have on the film adaptations, which are released into the public domain. The directors use biographical aspects of the authors' private and public lives in strikingly different ways to reflect contemporary cultural codes. The public/private dichotomy is also discussed. As technology transforms the ways in which films are viewed, the public/private spheres of the audience in relation to the content are also significantly transformed.

Keywords: Jane Austen; novel; Persuasion; film adaptations; Graham Greene; Mansfield Park; private sphere; cultural codes; public sphere; The End of the Affair

Subject Terms: film adaptations; public and private spheres; English fiction; motion pictures and literature

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my late brother,
Rodger Marlin Griffiths.

He taught me that kindness is the greatest gift,
even though he did not experience enough of it in his own lifetime.

He is not here to celebrate my achievement,
but he is always present in my heart.

May you know more kindness in the next life
than you had in this one, little brother.

"Be kind; everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." — Plato

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Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Introduction	1
Adaptation Theory	6
Public and Private Spheres	9
Chapter 1: Emerging from the Shadows — Private and Public Spheres in Film Adaptations of Jane Austen’s Novels from <i>Mansfield Park</i> to <i>Persuasion</i>	13
Mansfield Park	35
Persuasion	43
Chapter 2: Graham Greene and <i>The End of the Affair</i>	61
Conclusion	103
Works Cited	112
Bibliography	112
Filmography	115

Introduction

When I first contemplated this project, I was primarily interested in the adaptation process that transformed three well-known novels into films. The more I considered the topic, the more I realized that I was also fascinated by how the authors' private and public lives influenced their fiction. That fascination led to speculation on how the film directors' private spheres altered their perception of the novels, and the impact that might have on the film adaptations, which become part of the public domain. Exploring the answers to those questions was the impetus to this project, which examines adaptations of Austen's *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park*, and Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*.

The authors under discussion span more than two centuries — from Regency England to the England of the first half of the twentieth century — and represent entirely different literary careers. I chose these particular adaptations of their work because I wished to look at two quite different adaptations of Austen's novels, and more specifically, how the directors used the biographical aspects of her life to shape their films. At the same time, I wanted to compare those adaptations to a film adaptation of a more contemporary author such as Greene.

On the surface, these authors have little in common. Austen was an intensely private woman who rarely interjected her own life into her fiction, and whose work is much more popular now than during her lifetime. Greene was also

a private individual. Indeed, he made something of a fetish of his privacy by disguising himself in myriad ways in his novels. Yet simultaneously, and perhaps perversely, he inserted people and events from his life into his work more or less whole, with seemingly little concern for their privacy.

Greene enjoyed enormous critical and popular success both as a novelist and screenwriter in his lifetime, and was a public figure in a way that Austen was not. Their common bond lies in the numerous films made of their books. This cinematic link between them in the public sphere is examined in some detail in the following pages.

The filmmakers who adapted Austen's and Greene's novels imposed their own artistic and cultural codes to create personal artistic visions. Each has interpreted the authors' private spheres for different purposes. Director Patricia Rozema's adaptation of *Mansfield Park* depends upon distortion of the novel to bring in biographical elements of Austen's life, whereas those aspects are already present in the novel that director Neil Jordan adapts in *The End of the Affair*. Rozema is scoring political points in her adaptation, particularly in the light of recent post-colonial readings of the novel such as Edward Said's *Jane Austen and Empire*. Said argues that although direct references to slavery and all its horrors are scarce in Austen's *Mansfield Park* (89), they form a powerful sub-text of economic and moral corruption that is at the heart of her work.

Director Roger Michell and screenwriter Nick Dear's adaptation of *Persuasion* differs substantially. It is more or less faithful to the novel and resists the

temptation to speculate on Austen's private life while clearly addressing a late twentieth-century audience. Aside from the biographical distortion of some of the novels in the films, the economic imperatives of the movie industry also affect the adaptations, and these factors will be taken into consideration.

The stately mansions and drawing rooms of Austen's Regency England project a sense of order and graciousness that is at odds with the random vulgarity and public confessional mode of the technological age. Of course, the reality of the period was radically different — England was at war with France, and economic and social upheaval was taking a toll on the nation. Women were beginning to emerge from the domestic sphere into the public domain of novel writing and politics. Although Austen was not at the forefront of this movement, she was influenced by it, and these currents of change are subtly reflected in her novels, particularly *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*.

Before an analysis of the films is undertaken, it is important to elaborate on the ways that Austen's fiction was influenced by the political atmosphere in which she lived, and the impact of the wider public sphere on her work. Austen lived and wrote in the domestic sphere almost exclusively, yet publishing is clearly in the public domain. Women in the public sphere, "public women," were considered little better than prostitutes, a dichotomy that placed Austen in a difficult position. Writing is as an essentially ambivalent activity — it straddles the private and public spheres equally. Austen was doubtless aware of this, and as befits her clergyman's

daughter's strong sense of duty, decorum and social conservatism, her novels do not browbeat readers with the politics of social change.

Yet the political sentiments are there, nonetheless. Many modern critics of her novels have commented negatively on the perceived lack of politics in her work, referring to Austen in one instance as "a rather heartless little cynic...penning satirettes about her neighbours while the Dynasts were tearing the world to pieces" (Pinion 24-25). Marilyn Butler in *Jane Austen and The War of Ideas* argues that "the reforms she perceives to be necessary are within the attitude of individuals" (1) and that she did not promote wholesale changes among the middle-class landed gentry of which she was a part. Austen believed that a gentleman derived "personal dignity from the contribution he makes to an organic, hierarchical, small community" (2-3), and this theory could be expanded to include the more subtle contribution of women.

Such subtleties are Austen's strength. Her handling of didactic material in her novels is more masterful and understated than that of peers such as Maria Edgeworth, but it is equal in content (162), and reflects the general political partisanship of novels of the era. The twin issues of gender and the ideological awakening brought about by the French Revolution echo in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, and will be discussed further in some detail.

In the context of marketing her fiction, it is difficult to imagine that if Austen were living today that she would participate in the revelation of personal detail and public exposure many publishers and authors consider necessary to sell books. She

would not, for example, likely agree to be a guest on any television program that compelled her to reveal the minutiae of her existence for public entertainment and speculation. Nor would she probably approve of her life being superfluously grafted onto film adaptations of her novels as is the case in Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park*. Such crass manipulation of privacy, whether for financial gain or artistic purposes, would violate her strong sense of propriety and morality.

Most modern-day authors and filmmakers do not share her scruples, however, as evidenced by *Mansfield Park*, which uses shock tactics to make its points about feminism and post-colonialism. The impact of Rozema's film depends largely on viewers' familiarity with the original text. The contrast between the two gives the movie a controversial appeal that is applauded by some Austen fans, and derided by others. Some viewers, of course, appreciate the film on its own merits without the benefit of political or literary contexts.

Greene's *oeuvre* was more prolific than Austen's and spanned a 60-year period. A public figure who came to prominence in the heyday of radio and cinema, and the advent of television, Greene took advantage of each of these mediums to promote and showcase his writing, with mixed results in the arena of film, where the final product was beyond his control. His penchant for including his personal life in his novels brought him notoriety, particularly in relation to *The End of the Affair*, which mirrors his long-term affair with a married woman. Greene was also married, and a Catholic; circumstances that were not overlooked by his detractors, but which served to increase his public profile. Greene felt the sting of

the two-edged sword of publicity, which was not always to his liking, but was essential to fostering his literary career.

Adaptation Theory

Before an analysis of the adaptation process and the private/public construct is undertaken in the context of the films and novels, it is important to understand what is meant by the terms. Film theorist Geoffrey Wagner in *The Novel and the Cinema* posits one of the most widely discussed theories of film adaptation, dividing the practice into three distinct modes: *analogy*, where the film treats the novel simply as base material for the purposes of making a new work of art; *commentary*, where some degree of alteration is apparent, deliberate or otherwise; and *transposition*, in which a novel is depicted directly on the screen with minimal interference (222-223).

His terms and categories have been amended a number of times, but the basic paradigm remains. Brian McFarlane in *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, fleshes out Wagner's classification with a few terms from Roland Barthes' theory of narrative, such as *nuclei*, the hinge-points or *cardinal functions* of the narrative, and *catalysers*, which complement and expand upon the nuclei, i.e. fill in the narrative space between the hinge-points (10-11). A filmmaker bent on fidelity adaptation must preserve the cardinal functions. As Barthes notes, "a nucleus cannot be deleted without altering the story, but neither can a catalyst without altering the discourse" (95).

Other theories of adaptation are more philosophical in nature. The process of “spirit catching,” known more formally as the *psychic* concept of adaptation, pre-supposes that the adaptor looks for a balance between preserving the spirit of the original and creating a new form. As Kamilla Elliot writes in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, the notion that a text has a spirit to which readers connect psychically has its basis in the early nineteenth-century writings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (137). The spirit of a text passes from author to novel to reader-filmmaker to film to viewer; the psychic concept of adaptation “figures what transfers from novel to film as spirit and the task of adaptation as capturing that spirit and conveying it through changing mediums and forms to an audience...the form changes, the spirit remains constant” (138). Elliot discusses six concepts of the form/content debate in her text — *psychic* (discussed above), *ventriloquist*, *genetic*, *de(re)composing*, *incarnational* and *trumping* — but for the purposes of this project, only the *psychic* and *incarnational* apply.

The *incarnational* technique of adaptation — cinema as word made flesh — is literal recreation and translation into heightened states of reality. As Elliot points out, this vivid realism accounts for disclaimers such as “The events of this motion picture are purely fictitious,” and explains why many viewers believe that scripted events have as much authority as real ones.

According to Theodor Adorno in “The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture”:

...fictional characters never resemble their empirical counterparts no matter how minutely they are described...it may be due to the very precision of their presentation that they are even further removed from empirical reality; they become aesthetically autonomous. Such distance is abolished in film: to the extent that a film is realistic, the semblance of immediacy cannot be avoided. As a result, phrases justified by the diction of narrative...sound inauthentic in film. Film therefore, must search for other means of conveying immediacy (155).

The complex representational differences between the art of the cinema and the art of the novel are further detailed in a rare interview with writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez in the documentary *Tales of Solitude*. Marquez notes that in the film version of *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, his short story about villagers attempting to determine whether a homeless man with wings is really an angel, the filmmakers grappled with the idea of how to make his angelic image more abstract to viewers. In the short story, Marquez was able to sustain the ambiguity of his status; however, on film, a man with wings looks literally like an angel. Finally, the director decided to show the man removing his wings to wash his clothes while his hands and arms did the work of washing, rendering his image much less concrete and true to Marquez's literary intent. The abstraction of the man being both an angel and an ordinary man is more representative of the ambiguity central to the short story.

Somewhat in the same vein as Marquez, author Virginia Woolf also wrote about issues of inter-art adaptation. Despite her use of cinematic stream-of-consciousness techniques and *montage* in novels such as *To the Lighthouse* and

Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf had reservations about the new art form. In an essay that appeared in 1926, the year after *Mrs. Dalloway* was published, she expressed concern that the medium of film appealed to the “primitive” eye without engaging the intellectual processes of the brain. But her concern was offset by admiration for the medium’s potential, and its incorporation of other art forms:

Yet if so much of our thinking and feeling is connected with seeing, some residue of visual emotion which is of no use to either painter or to poet may still await the cinema...Something abstract, something which moves with controlled and conscious art, something which calls for the very slightest help from words or music to make itself intelligible, yet justly uses them subserviently — of such movements and abstractions the films may, in time to come, be composed. Then, indeed, when some new symbol for expressing thought is found, the film-maker has enormous riches at his command. The exactitude of reality and its surprising power of suggestion are to be had for the asking (272).

Such powerful suggestions of visual reality form the basis of film adaptations of Austen’s and Greene’s novels. Now it is time to consider briefly how these adaptations reflect the merging of the public and private spheres.

Public and Private Spheres

The blurring of the public and private spheres commonplace in modern and postmodern society began during Austen’s lifetime. Intimate relationships between individuals acquired legitimacy, as did the concept of individual rights and freedoms taking precedence over the state. Writers and poets such as Lord Byron used their private lives in their public writing, and furthered the cult of personality that is so ubiquitous today. Novel writing in particular, and writing in general, was

a private/public endeavour as discussed in the first section of this introduction. Such disparate authors as Byron and Edgeworth represented their moral, political and personal perspectives in their fiction. But the eighteenth and nineteenth-century novelists' greatest achievement was to change "the reader's relationship to the consciousness of the central character" (Butler 166). Readers were more sympathetically than critically involved in the inward experience of a novel (167), a phenomenon that continues to this day. Austen pre-dated the psychological novels of Henry James, however, her use of free indirect discourse in *Mansfield Park* and particularly, *Persuasion*, allows readers to identify deeply with her heroines and perceive events and feelings from their point of view.

The "right to privacy" is a virtual mantra in contemporary western culture, which heralded the twentieth century with Freud's psychoanalytic theories and the immersion of individuals in their intimate spheres. Until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, it was not a familiar paradigm. Privacy was viewed as a disadvantage (Spacks 5) both psychologically and physically, with psychological privacy viewed as the biggest threat to the social order, and to "vulnerable persons" (5) such as women and children. Privacy was connected with secrecy, with the wearing of "masks of various kinds...to retain control of secret thoughts, feelings and imaginings...with performance, as well as with seclusion" (5). Austen and Greene each created characters adept at masking their feelings — for example, Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, and Maurice and Sarah in *The End of the*

Affair — and used their fictional private and public narratives to add tension and complexity to their novels.

Spacks emphasizes that individual “privacy” is separate from the public/private split, and refers to Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s definition that “Such privacy as we do have in our homes is family privacy...and this...prevents— individual privacy” (258). Austen’s domestic sphere and its close living quarters, combined with her gender, precluded a lack of personal privacy, whereas Greene assumed all the freedoms and privileges of a man in an age where privacy was his right to keep, and also his right to divulge.

Austen and other women of her class were confined to the private sphere almost exclusively. Men in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, however, were beginning to cooperate in the public sphere through the growth of coffee houses, literary and other societies, voluntary associations, and the press (176). The advent of industrialism, the emancipation of women, and the expansion of technology further created an emphasis on interpersonal intimacy among strangers.

It is important to note that the concept of the “public” is used in two senses in this project. The first sense is as in public affairs such as politics, war and society, while the other refers to the public revelation of private life. In the latter sense, Richard Sennett in *Fall of Public Man*, argues that “People are working out in terms of personal feelings public matters which properly can be dealt with only through codes of impersonal meaning” (5). The sociologist contends that this pervasive trend erodes the boundaries between public and private, and concludes

that in public life, the “absorption in intimate affairs is the mark of an uncivilised society” (340).

How these definitions of public and private spheres and adaptation processes relate to the novels and films under discussion will be explored in the following pages. By doing so, I hope to reach a deeper understanding of the influence of the private/public construct, and an enhanced appreciation of the novels and the films.

Chapter 1:
Emerging from the Shadows — Private and Public Spheres
in Film Adaptations of Jane Austen’s Novels
from *Mansfield Park* to *Persuasion*

This chapter examines two film adaptations of Austen’s work: Canadian writer/director Patricia Rozema’s 1999 *Mansfield Park*, and British screenwriter Nicholas Dear and director Roger Michell’s 1996 *Persuasion*. It analyzes how the author’s private sphere influenced her novels and the ways in which that domestic sphere is reflected in the broader public sphere of film in the cultural context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The adaptation process that shapes the films, and how that process is represented on screen, is also discussed.

Just as the twentieth century felt the impact of film’s visual imprint, the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries saw another art form, the novel, come into its own, particularly as a vehicle for women writers who were emerging from the shadows of the domestic sphere to subtly influence the public domain. A compelling example of this visual dominance and how it is reflected in the public sphere is the contrast between the representation of slavery in Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, and in Rozema’s *Mansfield Park*. In the book, slavery is a subtext that is rarely referred to directly, even though the author had personal knowledge of it through her father, who was a trustee of a plantation in Antigua (Tomalin 289) and from her own reading of abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson and William Cowper (289).

Her reticence can be attributed in part to a desire to keep her writing ambitions on a private scale, and a reluctance to enter into public political discourse. Rozema, however, uses the themes of slavery and post-colonialism as the overt context of her film, and as a political and feminist statement about the lack of freedom for women in Austen's era.

The author lived in a time of social upheaval marked by the Napoleonic Wars, the French Revolution and the waning power of the aristocracy due to the democratizing effect of war, revolution and technology upon the middle and lower classes. The suffering of the lower classes increased as more land became enclosed, and as traditional livelihoods disappeared with the expansion of industrialization. Much has been made of Austen's "failure" to directly address these public issues in her novels, but it can be argued that her approach was far more subtle — certainly more subtle than Rozema's adaptation — and that like all good writers, she wrote about what she knew best, which was her own domestic world. In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne Mellor associates the feminization of discourse in Austen's novels with the domestic sphere, but notes that they "frequently employed the novel as a site of ideological contestation and subversion...and a sustained interrogation of existing social codes" (9). In the image-drenched world of film, such ideological concepts are difficult to portray, and Rozema resorts to using tawdry dramatics to underscore her points.

In assessing Austen's incalculable contribution to Mellors' literary "subversion," it must be remembered that during her lifetime the novel was not

universally accepted. Indeed, many prominent people thought novelists fomented the growing immorality they perceived around them in a rapidly changing England. Vicesimus Knox, the former headmaster of Austen's father's school, was scathing in his assessment: "If it be true that the present age is more corrupt than the preceding, the great multiplication of Novels has probably contributed to its degeneracy" (Wilks 76). Austen emphatically did not share this opinion. In a letter to her sister Cassandra in 1798 discussing an offer to subscribe to a library that stated proudly it offered more than novels, she writes that "[She] might have spared this pretension to *our* family, who are great Novel-readers and not ashamed of being so... (26)."

Yet Austen was not above poking fun at the melodramatic conventions of some of the popular Gothic novels of her day. *Northanger Abbey* is a relentless satire of such novels:

The windows, to which she looked with particular dependence, from having heard the General talk of his preserving them in their Gothic form with reverential care, were yet less than what her fancy had portrayed. To be sure, the pointed arch was preserved — the form of them was Gothic — they might even be casements — but every pane was so large, so clear, so light! To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stone-work, for painted glass, dirt, and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing (128).

Her ability to mimic these novels underscores Austen's dedication to the art form that dominated her creative life and provided her with an outlet to voice her opinions about the importance of family and the social influences brought to bear on it. As with many women of her class, lack of economic independence and small

quarters shared with female family members were realities of home life (Shields 139). She wrote in her family's busy drawing room at a table where she could hide her work beneath a sewing basket should someone disturb her. Austen's habit of writing where she could observe the daily goings on of family members and visitors continued until her final days at Chawton Cottage.

While her writing conditions may have been unavoidable, they serve as a powerful analogy to Austen's embrace of the domestic sphere and the inexorable blurring of that sphere with the public world toward the end of her life as her novels gained popularity with the general public, England was transforming into the Industrial Age, and the authority of the aristocracy waned. Her understanding that everything in life flowed from family is expressed best by Carol Shields in *Jane Austen*: "Out of her young and questioning self came the grave certainty that family was the source of art...what families do to us and how they can be re-imagined or transcended" (9). This trust in the world she knew, the serene knowledge that it was a world worth writing about, is famously revealed in a letter offering writing advice to her niece Anna: "You are now collecting your People delightfully, getting them exactly into such a spot as is the delight of my life;—3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on" (*Letters* 275).

Although Austen's country village expanded figuratively into other towns and cities as her novels gained popularity during her lifetime, this intensely private woman could never have envisioned a time when her writing encompassed a global village and made her a household name through the mediums of film,

television and the Internet. Austen's novels have transcended the immediate privacy of her family circle to include a public world of popular entertainment, mass media, literary criticism and academia.

It may seem strange that the novels of Jane Austen are frequent objects of plunder for adaptation by filmmakers. This late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century author who compared her writing ambitions to painting on "a little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory," is an unlikely source of so much popular entertainment nearly two hundred years later. Yet her modest literary landscape of country towns and close-knit families tempts contemporary audiences with the false comforts of an imaginary world of pastoral bliss, elegant manners and well-tempered morals. This artifice, however, does not diminish the universality of Austen's characters, or the sharpness of her satirical perspective on every facet of social intercourse.

The blurring of the public and private spheres that is commonplace in modern society began during Austen's lifetime as the power of the family unit and the intimate relationships it contained spread into the larger community. In the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries men began cooperating together in the public sphere out of a sense of personal public responsibility that enabled them to act together without being intimate one with another. The advent of industrialism and technology, and the budding emancipation of women further created a growing emphasis on interpersonal intimacy among strangers.

Sociologist Richard Sennett, who writes extensively on urban life, contends in *Fall of Public Man*, that this ability to cooperate impersonally has diminished, if

not vanished in postmodern society, through “tyrannies of intimacy” (337) that are the antithesis of authentic experience and self-knowledge. Sennett defines these tyrannies as taking two forms: “*Madame Bovary* is an emblem of the first sort...the Stalinist legend of the good little Communist who turned his parents in to the secret police, the emblem of the second” (337). He theorizes that this authentic image of self has become our true obsession, but like every obsession, it has turned on itself and formed a finite and essentially uncommunicative system, resulting in a destructive culture of narcissism. This narcissistic culture is an intimate way of perceiving society that signals the loss of sensitivity to the public sphere. Sennett maintains that “Narcissism sets up the illusion that once one has a feeling, it must be manifest—because, after all, ‘inside’ is an absolute reality” (335). The public domain becomes redundant when individuals see themselves as more important than the communities they live in.

In Austen’s era, this highly individualized perception of society was not the norm; indeed, her fiction often assumes that society acts *upon* people who are duty-bound, particularly if they are women, to conform to its codes, although she allows that individuals such as Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* and the Crofts in *Persuasion* have a quiet power to change the status quo.

Sennett also dissects the postmodern desire to meld the public and private spheres, to confuse the self with social class and ultimately, self worth (332). He hypothesizes that nineteenth-century Parisian and Victorian urban society was the genesis of this trend. Its reaction to the independent, self-actualized individual that

the emerging capitalist culture was creating was to impose boundaries that were strict and artificial to limit intrusion on private life (148). Postmodern society has swung the pendulum in the opposite direction by intensifying the cult of the individual and applauding the freedom of people to communicate anything they choose to anyone who will listen. The result is a communication and information overload, compounded by the lack of an authentic private sphere and a healthy *res publica* (4).

Sennett theorizes that government is now seen almost solely within the realm of the influence of personality, and that postmodern society chooses to see government as individual, charismatic people and not as politicians working for the larger good of the public domain (280), which is the mark of an “uncivilized” society (340). He also maintains that “the mass media infinitely heighten the knowledge people have of what transpires in society...and inhibit the capacity of people to convert that knowledge into political action...passivity is the ‘logic’ of this technology” (283). This results in an apathy toward the political process, which would doubtless strike Austen as strange. She lacked the freedom to express herself openly in the public sphere and relied on subtlety and restraint to effect change, yet many women (and men) today lack even the desire to participate.

Sennett argues further that most people do not trust public figures even though they know details, often salacious, of their private lives (280), which in postmodern society should instill confidence that they are “just like us.” Indeed, details of private lives are so ubiquitous in the public domain that many people

expect to have access to them, however superfluous they might be, and distrust those unwilling to share them.

The excessive interest in the private sphere of strangers such as politicians and celebrities often goes hand in hand with the conviction that community is a product of the universal and mutual disclosure of private life. The Romanticism that emerged in the early-nineteenth century with its quest for exclusive identity and individuality has transformed itself in the twenty-first century into domination of the intimate sphere by means of the public *faux* intimacy of electronic media and the usurpation of public life by Sennett's twin tyrannies of intimacy.

While Sennett's theory that forced intimacy has corrupted public life is controversial, it could be argued that intimacy, and the technology of modern intimacy, compels contemporary society to be insular in much the same way women of Austen's generation were confined to the private sphere and denied a role in public life. Women's role in the public sphere expanded significantly during the twentieth century when women began working outside the home during wartime. That role was accelerated by the feminist movement in the last half of the century when the majority of women sought careers in the public domain. It could be viewed as ironic that men as well as women now spend large amounts of time watching television, and working and playing on computers at home; even if other people are present, these are essentially solitary activities in the domestic sphere.

Aside from the appeal of a "simpler, gentler" world in Austen's novels, another aspect that remains compelling to postmodern audiences is the *Cinderella*

factor. The allure of the over-riding feminine Romanticism behind eighteenth and nineteenth-century notions of love in her fiction cannot be underestimated. In the world of Austen's self-contained, capable heroines, there are no unhappy endings, only the ideal of true love between equals (Mellor, *Romanticism* 61) and the mature knowledge of how frequently that ideal is compromised. The notion of love and marriage based on intellectual compatibility and mutual respect was appropriated by the feminist movement of the last half century, and surfaces in the films under discussion in this chapter, yet it has its roots in the literature of Austen and her peers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More and Catherine Macaulay, among others.

Mellor argues that "like Mary Wollstonecraft and Catherine Macaulay, Jane Austen insisted that the English women of her day were little better than domestic slaves, bought and sold on the marriage market, and kept at home by fathers and husbands under 'restraint'" (58). Austen may have believed that marriage was based on economic security for women, and that women, such as Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, were treated as chattel, but there is equal evidence in *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice* to suggest that she also believed in genuine physical and romantic attraction between the sexes. Anne Elliot certainly does not think of Frederick Wentworth only as a provider; her passionate feelings toward him are evident when she turns down an offer of marriage two years after their separation (Austen, *Persuasion* 27).

Austen's gender politics are perhaps too subtle for contemporary viewers and at odds with modern feminist sensibility. As will be discussed more fully later, her understated politics often prompt filmmakers to embellish and modify them to mirror current cultural norms, such as the necessity for sexual explicitness in romantic love. Austen's solid identification with the middle class (Mellor 61) and her veiled questioning of the moral and political practices of the landed gentry and aristocracy further endear her to westernized modern audiences who may enjoy watching the nobility at play, but are not likely to support their undemocratic rule and harsh treatment of women and minorities.

Indeed, Austen has never been more popular. The past twelve years from 1995 to 2007 have seen an explosion of film and television productions based on Austen's novels. Between 1995 and 1999 alone, seven film and television productions brought five of Austen's six novels to millions of people around the world. Two more dramatic films were released in the summer and fall of 2007, and the American television station PBS is premiering four new Austen adaptations and a biographical drama about her "lost loves" in 2008.

Audiences, the majority of whom may not have actually read the novels but hanker after an accessible literary connection, flock to movie theatres, tune into the latest mini-series, and rent DVDs and videos to get their latest dose of Austen. From the immensely successful BBC TV-series *Pride and Prejudice* in 1996 to the irreverent Bollywood *Bride and Prejudice* in 2005, the vicar's daughter from Hampshire has never been more in demand. Before commenting on these versions,

a brief examination of what constitutes visual culture, of which film is an essential part, is necessary.

The twentieth century saw the rise of visual culture, specifically film, which has become, along with television, the primary purveyor of visual culture. But what is meant by visual culture? David Morgan writes in *The Sacred Gaze: religious visual culture in theory and practice* that visual culture refers to the images and objects that convey particular ways of seeing — in other words, culturally coded images — and contribute to the social, intellectual, and perceptual construction of reality (6).

Visual culture operates predominantly in the public sphere, a collective experience shared in a public space such as a movie theatre, or in private homes in front of televisions or computer screens with carefully coded symbols and visual messages recognized by all participants. As Brian MacFarlane notes in *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, “In reading a film we must take into account extra-cinematic codes apart from the cinematic ones” (29). In these codes he includes the cultural codes “involving all that information which has to do with how people live, or lived, at particular times and places” (29). Just as a reader in Austen’s time automatically identified a curricle as a symbol of wealth and danger, contemporary filmgoers unfamiliar with curricles relate to images of opulence in which a curricle might appear. An expensive sports car is an equivalent image to a curricle in current visual parlance.

In addition to signifying cultural coding, images generate different responses determined by the medium in which they are represented. As defined by the late communications' guru Marshall McLuhan, film and the written word are "hot" mediums because they elicit intense emotional reactions that allow for message completion (23). Television and computers are "cool" mediums that demand greater audience participation, but limit viewers' emotional responses. In film, the director selects images for viewers, which limits their interpretation. It is true that users exert control over television and computers by turning off a switch or clicking on a mouse, but that does not negate their inherent qualities. The very act of switching on and off is a form of participation. McLuhan's "hot" and "cool" paradigm of mediums could be updated to include watching DVDs and reading books on computers and television, which give viewers the option of experiencing a "hot" medium in a "cool" format. Filmmakers and authors generally prefer more conventional choices to preserve the integrity of their work, but if the goal is to be seen and heard, most have accepted the compromise.

The technique of editing further inhibits ambiguity. The more rapid and numerous the edits, the more the viewer's focus is directed, and the more specific the meaning. Sequences where long shots are used convey much greater ambiguity than scenes where the camera is more invasive. The tendency of so many contemporary filmmakers to edit frenetically, presumably to keep the audience's attention, makes retaining ambiguity in film difficult, but not impossible, given that

viewers seek an intimate connection with the characters portrayed on screen where emotion is most often conveyed through close ups of actors' eyes and faces.

Like most novelists, Austen wrote fiction based on elements of personal experience, family history, cultural context, creative impulse and imagination — elements of a private narrative made public narrative through her art. Yet it seems that she rarely drew directly on her personal narrative for her novels, preferring to invent characters and adventures in what might be thought of as “a deliberate choice on her part to separate life and literature” (Shields, *Jane Austen* 71). Even in her imagination, Austen remained unwilling to report on what she did not experience in real life: the conversations of men when women are not present, sexual life, and marriage proposals (72). She may have also been protecting the private sphere of her characters, which reflected the typical attitudes of her time toward the public revelation of such intimate details. As noted earlier, no such reticence exists on the part of modern-day filmmakers — Rozema, Dear and Michell exploit, extrapolate and create their own details about characters' private lives for dramatic effect and entertainment.

Political theories about the division between private and public worlds vary widely. Mellor, *In Mothers of the Nation*, argues that, “The values of the private sphere associated primarily with women—moral virtue and an ethic of care— infiltrated and finally dominated the discursive public sphere” (11). Claudia Johnson in *Women, Politics and The Novel*, offers another political perspective on Austen's fiction. She theorizes that Austen's interest in abolitionist writers, while

understated in *Mansfield Park*, reflects the marginalization of women writers and other political concerns of her time:

As a consequence, they smuggle in their social criticism, as well as the mildest of reformist projects, through various means of indirection—irony, antithetical pairing, double plotting, the testing or subverting of overt, typically doctrinaire statement with contrasting dramatic incident...Austen shares with these, as well as with unequivocally radical novelists, such as Wollstonecroft and Hays, the device of centering her novels in the consciousness of unempowered characters—that is, women. This technique, instead of vindicating the status quo...enables Austen to expose and explore those aspects of traditional institutions—marriage, primogeniture, patriarchy—which patently do not serve her heroines well (26).

This marginalization of women is powerfully depicted in the film adaptations of *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, although perhaps not in the way that Austen intended.

The idea of a nation-state based on the “family-politic” that evolves gradually and rationally under the mutual guidance of both mother and father was viewed as the new human and civic ideal (Mellor 65). This idea is introduced in Austen’s fiction, particularly in *Persuasion*, and is echoed in the film adaptation. Upper and middle-class women were encouraged to effect that ideal through the practice of charitable works in schools and hospitals, which were occasionally depicted in Austen’s novels as a practical and safe entry into public life. Philanthropy went hand in hand with the unspoken private moral persuasion of women, a persuasion that was close to Austen’s heart.

The combination of sense over sensibility and political awakening was a potent brew. Although Johnson and Mellor place Austen in a tradition of eighteenth

and nineteenth-century women novelists who are skeptical of conservative ideology, and posit the theory that Austen's novels use the vocabulary of the family as a paradigm for the condition of the state, focusing on "the discourse rather than the representation of politics" (Johnson 27), this is not a fully satisfying explanation. While it has some validity in light of what is known about Austen's reading proclivities and her scorn for the behaviour of the royal family, particularly the Prince Regent and the kind of "loose" society he encouraged as represented by the Crawfords in *Mansfield Park*, it is far from the only reason Austen chose to write.

She wrote about what she knew in her limited private sphere, and although she used her formidable talent and wit to satirize and describe human nature in the comedies of manners she produced, it appears she clearly loved her subject matter more than the politics it evoked. Austen is never less than honest in her writing. She was deeply traditional and moral, although she had complex attitudes toward patriarchy as evidenced by her male characters such as Sir Thomas Bertram in *Mansfield Park* and Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion*. Whatever her convictions may have been, she preferred to use delicacy and wit to make her points.

Mansfield Park provoked the strongest range of reactions from film and literary critics of any Austen adaptation in recent memory. It was alternately praised and condemned for its feminist interpretation of the novel's heroine, timid Fanny Price, its anachronisms and inaccuracies, its overt attack on slavery and patriarchy, its free-wheeling irreverence toward the Austen principles of propriety and obedience to duty, and its disregard for the theory of fidelity adaptation.

Austen purists are enraged by Rozema's loose adaptation, post-colonial emphasis on feminism, slavery and politics, and her addition of a sex scene between Maria Rushworth and Henry Crawford (IMDB).

Nick Dear's and Roger Michell's adaptation of *Persuasion* met with a kinder fate than *Mansfield Park*; it is generally considered one of the more faithful cinematic adaptations of Austen's work, taking liberties with the text but remaining true to the spirit of the novel (IMDB). Dear adapted and contemporized Anne Elliot in his screenplay without needlessly sacrificing her nineteenth-century values, or damaging the structural integrity of Austen's novel.

Whatever adaptive mode a filmmaker chooses reflects the cultural codes of the age they live in, and to a much lesser degree, that of the era represented on screen. Both films under discussion in this chapter, particularly *Mansfield Park*, illustrate the difficulties and pitfalls of taking well-known classics and interpreting them in the cultural context of modern audiences. Viewers may revel in the lavish costumes and settings of the films — *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility* are prime examples — and simply enjoy the visual feast with little regard to the nuances of context and characterization. The enduring popularity of costume dramas makes nineteenth-century novels popular subjects for adaptation, although the history on display is often loaded with contemporary cultural codes that bear little relation to the original texts. Feminist film theorist Imelda Whelehan argues that:

Gender, class and other social differences are inevitably ideologically reconstructed in our own image more often than with reference to values of the past...With adaptations of classic texts from earlier

periods, therefore, it is not only a question of filling in the visual 'gaps' that appear to be suggested by the adapter's interpretation of the original. There is often the temptation to portray a scene from a late twentieth-century perspective...ironically, to sustain the adapter's sense of what is authentic to the text. Such decisions are often made on the basis of being faithful to what the author would have expressed had they possessed the freedom to discuss certain subjects (3).

Instances of Michell's and Rozema's interpretations of what Austen might have written if she were steeped in the casual feminism and psychoanalytic theories of the late-twentieth century are omnipresent in their film adaptations. One example is the proliferation of the female gaze in *Persuasion*, with dashing stage actor Ciaran Hinds as Captain Wentworth routinely photographed in low-angle shots that emphasize his potent masculinity, the splendour of his naval uniform and the swagger of his strut through the streets of Lyme Regis. Then there is the suggestion of a lesbian attraction in a scene of almost unbearable familiarity between Fanny Price and Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, a direct representation of Rozema's private life as a lesbian filmmaker who explores feminist and lesbian themes in much of her work.

But what of the male gaze, which is more commonly discussed in film theory? Film theorist Laura Mulvey defines it in these terms:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure...with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact...Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator...with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen (27).

Other theorists, such as E. Ann Kaplan, reject Mulvey's insistence on a strict psychoanalytical feminist perspective on the gaze:

But the important question remains: when women are in the dominant position, are they in the masculine position? Can we envisage a female dominant position that would differ qualitatively from the male form of dominance? Or is there merely the possibility for both sex genders to occupy the positions we now know as masculine and feminine (28).

Kaplan's stance reflects the duality of the gaze, which is prevalent in *Persuasion*, and imbues the film with much of its understated emotional impact. Aside from using the camera to lovingly photograph Wentworth, Michell uses Anne's gaze at her former suitor to authentically express the emotions that are given voice in the novel as interior narrative, but which are not narrated in the film. Similarly, when Wentworth turns his gaze onto Anne at the film's mid-point, he silently communicates his conflicting emotions about their relationship.

Filmmakers also know that viewers impose their own perceptions of gendered cultural codes onto the artists' interpretations. For instance, postmodern readers consciously or unconsciously perceive Fanny's passive, painfully dutiful presence in the novel as a classic symptom of abuse (Shields 154). When her initial shyness in the *Rozema* film quickly changes to acts of rebellion, her behavior is interpreted by most viewers as a perfectly justified, even rational form of empowerment — "girl power" in contemporary speech. This significantly alters Austen's characterization of Fanny, who would not have dared to be so bold toward her superiors, and to whom "self-actualization" was an unknown concept.

Fanny may be repressed, a Freudian term also unknown in Austen's day, by her social class and gender, yet her persona remains essentially unchanged in the novel. It is the people around her who are transformed in degrees by her innate moral "goodness."

In Rozema's reworking of the novel, it is Fanny who changes, and the people around who her stay the same; their moral bankruptcy is simply revealed. This betrayal of Austen's protagonist occurs again when Rozema weaves a scene from Austen's own life into her film by having Fanny accept Henry Crawford's marriage proposal one day, then renege on it the next. A similar incident occurred in Austen's life (106), but it does not make sense in the context of Fanny's character with her high standards of love and duty either in the novel, or the film. It is a distinct blurring of Austen's private life into Rozema's personal feminist stance, which is then translated into the public sphere of film.

Similarly, the depiction in *Persuasion* of Anne Elliot's older sister Elizabeth in crude comic strokes is a bizarre choice that falls flat, both as a contrast to the more refined Anne, and in terms of credibility: no gentlewoman running a household in Regency England would ever behave with such boorishness and lack of social grace, particularly in the presence of guests. Yet the director chose to re-write Dear's screenplay to include it for reasons that remain unclear, but may have been intended to underscore Anne's family status as an unwanted spinster.

If a film adaptation is a product of the culture that creates it and an expression of the ideological factors operative in that culture, then adaptations of

Mansfield Park and *Persuasion* reveal more about the beliefs and opinions of artists from a twentieth-century perspective than they do about the original creator. Compounding the individual perspectives of artists are the commercial demands, the “bums in seats” economics of the film industry, which increasingly define independent and art films, as well as Hollywood blockbusters. Writers and directors must make certain concessions to financial backers if they want their work produced. Films are edited to a marketable length, generally a two-hour limit, feature a “bankable” star or actors who can “open” a film, and in the case of art films, which are “platformed” in key markets rather than widely released, receive thoughtful reviews to encourage attendance and word-of-mouth recommendations.

One aspect of these commercial considerations is that the vast majority of filmgoers are no longer responsive to the heavily theatrical “classic” films of the past where stage actors delivered lengthy bouts of dialogue between sips of tea or sherry in ornate drawing rooms. In the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, rapid and sophisticated editing techniques mirror, or perhaps create, shortened attention spans while special effects, naturalistic sets, location shooting and a cultural fluency in explicit scenes of sex and violence have irrevocably altered the cinematic landscape. The majority of modern viewers expect to be actively entertained at the same time as they watch a “literary” film.

Older televised versions of *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* illustrate vividly these changes in audience preferences. The 1983 BBC-TV mini-series, *Mansfield Park*, and the 1971 BBC-TV mini-series, *Persuasion*, are examples of fidelity

adaptation — they are true to the novels, almost to a fault. This adaptive process is transpositional; the classic novel is faithfully rendered, a process Martin Amis describes in the online *The New Yorker* as “artistic midwifery to get the thing out of the page and onto the screen in as undamaged state as possible.” While television allows generous time for a mini-series to unfold — the mini-series *Mansfield Park* is 312-minutes long compared to the movie’s running time of 102 minutes — length alone does not account for the difference in audience perception and acceptance of the two mediums.

As noted earlier, it could be argued that the mediums are radically different and impose their distinctive qualities on viewers’ reactions. The process of adapting the written word, another “hot” medium to “hot” film, lends itself to Barthes’ theory of nuclei and catalysers and how the deletion of either of these elements changes the discourse: drastically in Rozema’s *Mansfield Park*, less so in Michell and Dear’s *Persuasion*. Commercial considerations do not enter into McLuhan’s equation of “hot” and “cold” mediums other than the reality that television has the potential to reach greater numbers of people, but is not considered to be as important as film, which reaches fewer people, but has greater critical and artistic prestige. Television is making inroads to film in this regard with the proliferation of cable networks offering more “movie-like” programs with large budgets, location shooting and top-rated talent, but film remains the gold standard of commercial success.

Watching films on DVD is an uneasy bridge between the mediums, but it is an ultimately “cool” experience because television remains the principal,

distancing medium. Viewers routinely discuss and comment on what they're seeing, but because they generally watch TV in their own homes, they are more willing to sit for longer periods to observe a novel play itself out on screen. Filmgoers pay substantially more to see a film and must sit in crowded and often uncomfortable conditions; as such, they necessarily demand a higher level of gratification. The shoddy production values, "stagey" acting, fluffed lines and reliance on huge swaths of drawing-room dialogue, particularly in the BBC-TV version of *Persuasion*, would be tolerated today on television by only the most die-hard Austen fans, and laughed off the screen at movie theatres.

The *Mansfield Park* mini-series fares somewhat better with more outdoor locations, although it too bears the brunt of a low budget and tawdry effects such as painted backdrops of the ships at Portsmouth. Director Howard Baker eschews voiceover narration in favour of using Fanny's letters to her brother William to articulate the heroine's inner thoughts. The novel's narrator in the mini-series *Persuasion* is clumsier; Anne Elliot's character, portrayed by a glamorous actress with mile-high hair, addresses the camera directly in keeping with the theatrical convention of soliloquy. By the time the BBC-mini-series, *Pride and Prejudice*, burst onto TV screens in 1996, budgets were higher, and stunningly good-looking stage and film actors were cast to cavort in lush fields and emote in sumptuous interiors. The rapturous audience response raised the stakes for the cascade of Austen re-makes that followed, including the Academy Award-winning *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion*, which were released in the same year.

Mansfield Park

In the film version of *Mansfield Park* released in 1999, Rozema appears willing to forego material authenticity in favour of a revisionist post-colonial and feminist interpretation of Austen's most dour heroine, and most complex and unsympathetic novel. The filmmaker's analysis of her screenplay, *Mansfield Park*, and her intent in adapting the novel is elucidated in the director's commentary feature of the DVD of the film. Rozema's explanation is crucial to understanding her analogous adaptive process. She says in the commentary that her film is a "collage," a composite of Austen's novels, her journals, letters and early writings.

Her emphasis throughout is on presenting Fanny as Jane Austen made flesh and blood: a writer, an independent thinker, a woman who refuses to be wholly bound by patriarchy even if it means living in poverty. Her Fanny is heavily modernized and "liberated" — she is poised, outspoken, and defiant from the outset. Her sunny personality is immediately at odds not only with the novel, but also with Rozema's imagery of a brooding, claustrophobic, down-at-heels Mansfield Park, a foreboding physical presence that mirrors the oppressive secrets and unhappiness of its occupants.

Extreme close-ups of pens, books and paper are among the first objects photographed inside the house, and Fanny is soon shown writing and quoting from Austen's early work.¹ This theme of freedom and independence through reading,

¹ I am referring to her playful and exploratory writings in *Juvenilia, in Minor Works*, 1787-93. Ed. R.W. Chapman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

writing, and talking about writing, is reinforced visually throughout, most notably at the end, when the wimpy and somewhat dim Edmund is shown reading and praising his wife's work. He is truly a "new age" leading man, sensitive and supportive — just the kind of man who is embraced in current feminist culture.

Claudia Johnson, in an article for the online *Times Literary Supplement*, refers to Rozema's Fanny as "Austen's presence as a narrator," something she finds sorely lacking in other film adaptations of Austen's oeuvre. Rozema uses Fanny's letters to her sister Susan as a voiceover narrative device, and has Fanny speak directly to the audience to reveal her inner dialogue. She excises Fanny's naval brother, William, who plays a key role in the book, presumably to emphasize "sisterhood" in its literal and political sense. Austen's early writings provide another narrative dimension of the Fanny/Austen hybrid. When Fanny quotes snippets from Austen's girlhood scribbling to the ever-adoring Edmund, Rozema divulges not only Austen's evolution as a writer, but how writing acted as a refuge, an escape and a conduit for Austen's rich emotional and intellectual life, a life that she was often inhibited from fully expressing in any other way because of her gender's restriction to the domestic sphere. Rozema's narrative technique exposes Austen's early talent and her irreverent wit, and softens Rozema's feminist discourse by using humour rather than didacticism to underscore her themes.

The other critical factor to consider in Rozema's adaptation of *Mansfield Park* is her description of the novel in the DVD commentary as "a meditation on captivity and servitude in all its forms." Its emphasis on slavery and servitude

frames the film, and its relation to Fanny, who is imprisoned by her gender as much as her social class, is evident from the beginning. As Fanny travels from Portsmouth to her relatives at Mansfield Park, she hears singing from ships at sea. The coachman tells her the voices belong to "black cargo," slaves brought on their way to the Caribbean. A short time later, her aunt, Mrs. Norris, informs Fanny that she is unwanted, a cruel vignette that does not take place in her presence in the novel. Another scene soon follows of her uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram, telling his daughters to be nice to Fanny but to always remember that she "is not one of them." Mrs. Norris and Lady Bertram then proceed to treat their poor relation as little better than a troublesome servant.

Scant years later, in the compressed passage of time necessary to the cinema, a scene in Fanny's unheated schoolroom-turned-bedroom shows her reading a passage from Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy, by Mr. Yorick* to Edmund. Fanny's reference to a starling who "can't get out," a line uttered by Maria Bertram in the novel as "'I cannot get out,' as the starling said" (127), re-surfaces under different circumstances in the film when Maria is caught by Fanny in *flagrante delicto* with Henry Crawford and says, "I can't get out, I can't get out" in relation to her marriage. Birds are a leitmotif in the film; in a scene near the end Fanny watches birds flying free over a river as she looks out a window narrating the conclusion. The free-flying birds represent her new freedom as Edmund's wife and as a writer, the captive bird is clearly Rozema's metaphor for the slavery and colonialism that Mansfield Park is built upon, the patriarchy and

primogeniture that enslave women in marriage, and the suffocating boundaries of social convention and the domestic sphere.

Rozema sprinkles references to slavery throughout the film. At one point, Sir Thomas stands in front of a map of Antigua after returning from the island unexpectedly; at another, a drunken Tom contemptuously alludes to slavery on the family's West Indies' plantation as "paying for the party," referring to the comfortable Mansfield Park way of life. In a later scene greatly expanded from the original (213), Fanny is emboldened to challenge Sir Thomas when he compares slaves to mules and muses about bringing one back to England as a domestic:

Fanny: "Correct me if I'm in error Sir Thomas, but I've read, sir, that if you were to bring one of those slaves back to England there would be some argument as to whether or not they should be freed here...if I'm not mistaken."

Sir Thomas: "I must say you've changed considerably, my dear."
Fanny: "I've done some reading on the matter. Thomas Clarkson to be specific. Under Edmund's guidance."

Edmund: "Fanny has a voracious mind, father, as hungry as any man's and her writing is remarkable, father, in a style entirely new."

Sir Thomas: "Yes, good, yes...your complexion is so improved."

Edmund: "I trust you'll see as much beauty of mind in time?"

Fanny becomes further politicized when Sir Thomas turns a proprietorial gaze on her, as her drunkard father will later in the film, and proposes to give a ball in her honour to show her off. She storms out of the room, announcing to Edmund, "I'll not be sold off as one of your father's slaves." Rozema then indulges in a heady dose of melodrama as Fanny jumps on her mare and rides off astride, not side-

saddle as was the custom, into a rainstorm while a hidden microphone records her agitated breathing in case anybody misses the point.

After Fanny refuses to marry Crawford and is banished to the visceral sounds and smells of poverty in Portsmouth, Rozema further cements her slavery theme by having Fanny comment to Henry just before accepting his proposal, "Poverty frightens me, and a woman's poverty is slavery even more harsh than a man's." This line refers not only to the obvious material poverty of a woman without social connections or a husband, but to the gendered private prison of middle to upper-class women such as Austen that reduced their life's "work" to "busy nothings" — sewing or playing a musical instrument — and severely limited their exposure to the public sphere. As Shields writes in *Jane Austen*:

The reality of her situation as she approached the age of twenty must have been shocking. She had no profession, and none would be offered to her. Governessing, school teaching—there was little else for women in her position, and she scorned both. She was without money of her own, except for a £20 allowance a year from her father, and this dispensed in quarterly lumps (39).

Austen's firm resolve to forge her own literary path throughout her life despite a lack of material rewards was made clear in a letter she wrote to James Stanier Clarke in response to his request that she dedicate her next novel, *Emma*, to the Prince Regent: "I am fully sensible that an Historical Romance, founded on the House of Saxe Coburg might be much more to the purpose of Profit or Popularity, than such pictures of domestic Life in Country Villages as I deal in—but I could no

more write a Romance than an Epic poem...No—I must kept to my style & go on in my own Way...I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other” (183).

Austen’s depiction of Fanny’s bleak future without the Bertrams was more extreme than her own position, but only marginally. Rozema compounds the misery by portraying Lady Bertram as a laudanum addict, her daughters as moral ciphers, Mrs. Norris as a bitter and controlling cheapskate, Fanny’s mother as defeated and useless, and Mary Crawford as a licentious and mercenary pragmatist. Every female character, with the exception of Fanny’s sister Susan, is warped and wounded in some fashion by patriarchy.

The most explicitly political scene, however, and the most blatant example of Rozema’s ideological revisionism, occurs when Fanny returns from the purgatory of Portsmouth — Rozema’s imagery of her parents’ house is dark, cramped and dirty — and discovers Tom’s sketches of his father’s sexual and physical brutality toward his slaves.² Fanny’s horror is articulated by the screams of slaves on the soundtrack, and amplified by Sir Thomas’ violent reaction to her discovery. He banishes her from the room, tears the sketchbook into pieces, throws it into the fire, and tearfully begs his son’s forgiveness.

Rozema makes the inescapable suggestion that Sir Thomas feels some remorse for the effect his abuse of power has had on his eldest son, and the rest of this most dysfunctional of families. Austen’s treatment of Sir Thomas’ realization is

² The illustrations are taken from *Illustrations on the Horrors of Slavery and “the Revolted Negroes of Surinam”* in J.G. Stedman’s *Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition, Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, which include illustrations by William Blake.

much subtler and unconnected to Tom: "something must have been wanting *within*...some active principle had been wanting, that they [his daughters] had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice" (448). His guilt is cemented when Austen adds, "Bitterly did he deplore a deficiency which now he could scarcely comprehend to have been possible...he had brought up his daughters, without their understanding their first duties, or his being acquainted with their character and temper" (448).

As Claudia Johnson notes in the *Literary Times*: "Small wonder no one has been standing in line to film *Mansfield Park*: the earnest clergyman, the dignified father, the vivacious young lady, the dashing young man, even the good girl are all benighted, and their country house tainted. To discover why, we must address what some read Austen to avoid: politics." Rozema's ardent politicization of her heroine has its share of negative and anachronistic character repercussions. Fanny's self-possessed, rebellious demeanour jibes too harshly with her social class and makes her an implausible poor relation in an era when people "knew their place." She is tomboyish, roughhousing with Edmund, bounding gracelessly up and down stairs, riding her horse aggressively, and buoyantly confident that she will one day be accepted as an equal by all the Bertrams.

Rozema has Fanny call herself a wild beast, a line lifted directly from one of Austen's letters to her sister, Cassandra: "If I am a wild beast, I cannot help it; it is not my fault" (85). While her Fanny is an improvement over the downcast, pallid Fanny of the BBC-TV mini-series, she is far from being a realistic embodiment. She

is not the “spirit” of Austen Rozema wished to capture. That spirit was fun loving, witty, occasionally caustic, but always socially correct and refined; such as the Jane Austen described by Claire Tomalin in *Jane Austen: A Life*, and in Shields’ literary critique, *Jane Austen*.

Mary Crawford and Lady Bertram are similarly depicted as overwrought for no discernible reason. Only Mrs. Norris, played by the wonderful Lindsay Duncan, rings true. Duncan is also cast as Mrs. Bertram, one of Rozema’s more brilliant manoeuvres. Perhaps it was partly Rozema’s desire to titillate audiences that led her to write an erotically charged scene between Fanny and Mary, and to make Mrs. Bertram a laudanum addict. Yet such literal character representations of her political revisionism weaken her polemic. After all, Rozema portrays Fanny’s mother as a pathetic fool, given to uttering such clichés as “I married for love” to her eldest daughter as a cautionary tale against turning down Henry Crawford’s marriage proposal. In her DVD commentary, Rozema acknowledges that the line was greeted by hoots and howls in movie theatres; she claims, somewhat implausibly, that she intended it to be funny. It would seem likely that a feminist filmmaker such as Rozema would portray the downtrodden Mrs. Price more sympathetically, although it must be noted that even Austen gave her short shrift, referring to her as “so comfortless, so slatternly, so shabby” (400), and rarely mentioning her in the novel.

Persuasion

If Rozema's adaptation of *Mansfield Park* is as overtly political as Austen's novel was nuanced in its critique of social mores, Dear's and Michell's adaptation of *Persuasion* is a visual sonnet to Austen's *Cinderella* story for adults. *Persuasion*'s heroine, Anne Elliot, is well born, yet much like Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, she exists on the fringes of her family as a person whose opinions and needs are of no concern. The eldest of Austen's heroines, she is a spinsterish 27, living her life as though it were already over, endlessly mourning the moment she rejected the man she loved in an act of duty toward her godmother: "She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older; the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning" (13). The essence of the novel is revealed by this sentence with its emphasis on loss, duty and eventual happiness in love, a novel that shares more with *Mansfield Park* than might first be imagined. In psychoanalytical terms, "plain-Jane" Fanny and Anne are victims of emotional trauma, shadow figures who gain strength through adversity and by virtue of their moral superiority to finally become the stable centre of their extended families.

Anne's self-sacrifice shapes, and nearly destroys her life, yet Austen never has her rebel against her painful circumstances although she does critique the unfair treatment of women, particularly in her depiction of Mrs. Smith, who is unequivocally presented as the victim of men — first at the hands of her unwitting husband, then by Anne's suitor, William Elliot (206). The passage in the text where Mrs. Smith shows Anne a damning letter from Sir William (200-201) becomes a

stormy scene in the film when Anne stands up to her father and insists on visiting Mrs. Smith instead of accepting an invitation from snobbish Lady Dalrymple.

As played by decidedly unglamorous stage actor Amanda Root, Anne is one of the walking wounded: stoic, devoted, dutiful, and ultimately, successful in regaining the love she thought she had lost irrevocably. Anne becomes the fictional embodiment of the “ideal new woman” extolled by Austen and other women writers, embracing reason, caution and virtue while still being true to her inner self, and gaining a rare second chance at life.

The opening and closing shots of the film are of the sea, the first signifying the return of Wentworth to Anne’s life; the last, the life journey he and Anne will take together. In the first half of the film, Michell paints the screen in a luminous, autumnal palette that complements Anne’s grief-stricken features; she is a woman forgotten by her lover, and by her family — her self-identity lies in her inner suffering. When her father’s creditors become too pressing and the family estate is rented to the Crofts, Wentworth’s sister and her admiral husband, it falls to the ever-capable Anne to prepare the house. In a masterful scene not in the novel, the camera glides over the servants draping the furniture with ethereal white shrouds as Anne sorts through the storage room and Chopin plays a sad refrain on the soundtrack. She finds a navy list with Wentworth’s name on it, which the camera quickly reveals, but it is her face that signifies her emotion to viewers. John Wiltshire writes:

The scene eloquently, but without eloquence, represents the idea that Anne has an intense inner past history...and simultaneously that she

has no one with whom to speak. A close-up shows Anne's face looking out of the shot, whilst the voice of Lady Russell forms a bridge...into the next sequence, ironically manifesting this absence: 'For eight years, you have been too little from home, too little seen...'
(94).

Wiltshire links the scene with the symbolic passage of time, the suspension of a life, the death of an era and the beginning of another (89). Drifting amidst a cinematographic sea of white, Anne's sadness and loneliness is palpable, although her face is expressionless except for her large, dark eyes. In the following scene, she attempts to broach the subject of Wentworth with Lady Russell and is politely but decisively rebuffed. At that moment, her sorrowful expression resembles that of a wounded doe.

As Wiltshire notes, these lines of dialogue in the script were taken from Anne's "free indirect discourse" in the novel (21-22) to signify to audiences the depth of her feeling and grief, and to allow "everything that is not spoken...[to be] invested by the viewer in her face" (Wiltshire 95). This is a prime example of the "message completion" of McLuhan's theory of "hot" mediums. As mentioned earlier, film acting relies heavily on close ups of faces and eyes and small gestures, and lack of expression is often as meaningful to spectators as emotion. The aforementioned scene is pivotal to the film for a variety of reasons: it powerfully establishes Anne as a sympathetic character with a grievous psychological history, it defines her standard reaction of reflexive withdrawal when her needs are shunted aside, and it encourages viewers to be emotionally involved in her future.

Director Michell reinforces Anne's isolation by frequently placing her in solitary shots. She is filmed in profile and in long shots looking out of windows, trailing behind the others, or sitting on the periphery of the action playing piano, or simply listening. Other film adaptors of Austen's novels use similar techniques, framing their protagonists in windows, doorways and claustrophobic rooms to emphasize their virtual imprisonment in the domestic sphere.

Michell zooms in on her face for reaction shots every time she is slighted by an insensitive comment or action of another, much in the style of a television situation comedy director. When Anne sees Wentworth for the first time in eight years she clutches a chair to divulge her controlled emotion; when Walter Elliot turns his male gaze on her at the pier in Lyme Regis, she experiences a *frisson* of female vanity; later, she uncharacteristically primps in front of a mirror. Is she thinking about Elliot, or Wentworth's reaction to his admiring gaze? Michell leaves the ambiguity for the audience to unravel.

In the DVD commentary to *Mansfield Park*, Rozema discusses experimental techniques such as shooting 30 frames a second instead of the usual 24 to achieve a slight suspension in time, a technique she employs effectively in the scene where the Crawfords are first introduced to herald a new and dangerous way of life. She uses several cameras simultaneously in the card party that follows to project a heightened sense of social interaction and dramatic tension to what otherwise might have been a static scene. Michell relies on more conventional camera work to accentuate Austen's bittersweet love story. The camera fairly caresses Anne and

Wentworth when they are in the vicinity of one another; it follows their glances, searches their faces, and captures every touch and potential intimacy. The audience feels their erotic connection without either of them speaking a word, *homage* to the power of images and subtle expressions in a “hot” medium to convey intense, complex emotions.

Michell also uses images of nature as a conduit to explore personal and political themes. The sea symbolizes freedom for Anne and Wentworth, along with war and its broadening economic and social opportunities. The rolling vistas of pastures with grazing sheep represent the rural and cloistered quality of Anne’s village existence while the vast enclosed parklands of the landed gentry and aristocracy depict a disappearing way of life. That life necessarily excludes the poverty of tenants and peasants who are rarely present in Austen’s novels, although Michell poignantly illustrates Anne’s lowly status in her family when she departs for Bath in the back of a cart with a goose for a companion, not unlike a peasant woman. This contrasts vividly with the grand departure of Sir Walter Elliot and Elizabeth before her.

When Sir Walter, played by Corin Redgrave, takes leave of Kellynch Hall for Bath, the look of bemused contempt on his face as he looks at the row of sullen servants lined up in his honour speaks volumes about his character. The equally contemptuous Elizabeth’s haughty directions to the over-worked Anne to visit the tenants and say a traditional farewell also rings hollow — that is a duty that should be performed by Sir Walter and not his under-valued daughter.

Suzanne Pucci remarks in her essay, "The Return Home, The Parkland in the Picture," that nearly every Austen film adaptation begins with "riders and often inhabitants approaching the enclosures of the parks and country estates" (139). As the camera follows the riders' progress, the country houses are visually compressed into sites of domestic intimacy, an essential and prevalent theme in Austen's work. Homes become a dominant visual focal point in the film versions to underscore the isolation of family and village connections from the larger world (139). Inward-bound exposition shots such as these are a filmmaking technique used to imprint cultural codes and sub-textual images upon viewers. Any spectator who has ever seen an Austen adaptation can likely describe the exterior of at least one building and the interior of one or more rooms, yet the novels contain scant physical description. This expositional sub-text is crucial to film where a sense of place — also known as an establishing shot — is of paramount importance. Viewers recognize images more easily than they recall them, and a strong sense of place can set a mood and impart information on many levels.

It is an interesting corollary to note that Austen's own creativity seems to have flourished only when her domestic life was stable — she was prolific during most of the 25 years she lived in the Steventon vicarage and in her later years at Chawton Cottage, but wrote little except personal letters during her nine years in Bath (Shields 86). Shields writes that "her attachment to nature and to the calm of Hampshire was genuine, and each temporary uprooting had brought, at its conclusion, renewal and the recaptured appreciation of the deep value she placed

on home, the one place where she had a measure of autonomy and encouragement and where she felt as ease with her creative self" (87).

When Austen's heroine Anne leaves her simple life and travels to Lyme Regis and Bath, the film's colours are brighter, virtually popping off the screen. The sea sparkles blue and Anne is more animated and talkative. As her confidence and femininity flower, her true character is revealed and she is engaging, even attractive, more like her muted but self-possessed presence in the novel, and the mini-series version of *Persuasion*. Her intrinsic worth is obvious when contrasted with the rest of her family — her selfish sister Mary, brutish Elizabeth, her insipid cousins and her stern mother substitute, Lady Russell. The classical white spaces of the Elliot's rooms and the Pump Room at Bath are a visual parallel to the white shrouds of Kellynch Hall, only this time they hint of re-birth and Anne's escape from the "elegant stupidity of private parties" (Austen, *Persuasion* 130) to a more rewarding intellectual and emotional life with Wentworth.

Written when Austen was 41 and already ill with the disease that would kill her, *Persuasion* is, as Dear suggests in the DVD commentary to the film, her most modern and mature love story. And yet the ending, which readers appreciate as being one of the most powerful and moving in literature, was not Austen's original conclusion. Two new chapters were added to change the original ending from Anne passively accepting Wentworth's proposal to more actively encouraging it, perhaps "rewriting the trajectory of her own life and giving it the gift of a happy ending" (Shields 170). Shields speculates that Austen's advancing illness prevented

the author from “fixing” the character of Anne Elliot, a character that she wrote to her niece Fanny “is almost too good for me” (*Letters* 355). That Austen may not have always been enamoured of all of her heroines is obvious in the same letter, “Novels and Heroines; — pictures of perfection...make me sick & wicked” (355), which reveals that she was rarely satisfied with an idealized version of her characters, preferring a more realistic portrait of human behaviour.

Somewhat perversely, Austen’s portrayal of Fanny as unforgiving toward other “sinners” such as the Crawfords didn’t stop her from making them the most interesting characters in the novel. The author treats Anne quite differently than Fanny, making her far and away the most fascinating character in *Persuasion* even though she is viewed as unimportant by the other characters. She may be virtuous, but she is never quite as self-assured as Fanny Price until she decides to pursue the man she loves.

The added challenge of adapting a novel in which the narrative largely takes place within the interior discourse of the protagonist is complicated, as scriptwriter Dear recounts in the DVD commentary to *Persuasion*:

There's almost nothing in the way that Jane Austen describes the psychology of the two central characters...that would be out of place in a story set today -- with the one exception that because of the nature of society in those days, the woman actually can't be active...And that's the main structural point of the story, and the most difficult one to achieve: How do you have a central character who's in every scene but who has to be passive throughout?"

His solution was to take an Ingmar Bergman-esque approach to adapting the text by emphasizing the psychological intensity of Wentworth and Anne and the realism of their “held in” behavior.

The presentation of the inner life of the heroine, which is shared only with the reader, is conveyed primarily by images, textual references to dialogue and cultural codes that reflect viewers’ expectations. Anne never breaks through “the fourth wall” to address the audience directly, and voiceover narration is used to brilliant effect only once when Wentworth’s voice is heard narrating his proposal letter to her with Anne’s voice added in as the letter builds to a climax. Rarely has an actor’s face captured the sheer emotional and physical joy of love so profoundly, yet when Root turns away from the camera, she masterfully conceals Anne’s feelings — true to character and social convention, she must keep her happiness a secret until she is able to give Wentworth her answer. The result of Dear’s attention to narrative detail is a film that feels intensely personal to spectators, and contemporary in the pragmatism of its cultural coding without losing its sheen of historical accuracy and literary merit.

Yet Dear and Michell also changed Austen’s heroine to fit modern expectations, although not as substantively as Rozema altered Fanny. Consider the unbearably tense concert scene in the movie where an agitated Anne directly approaches the jealous Wentworth. This does not occur in the novel for the simple reason that it would be completely unacceptable for a respectable woman to pursue a man so obviously. Yet the ruse works in cinematic and intuitive terms —

the literal physical transformation of Anne from a perpetually pale and tired creature, so altered by emotional suffering that Wentworth barely recognizes her, to a radiant, erotically vibrant and confident woman — and compels viewers to identify with her.

Dear has endowed Anne, as Rozema does, with a liberated modern woman's ability to speak her mind freely and assertively as her character evolves. In a scene near the end of the film with Captain Harville about the capabilities of men and women to love, she says as Wentworth looks on:

Harville: Let me just observe that all histories are against you, all stories, prose and verse. I don't think I ever opened a book in my life which did not have something to say on woman's fickleness.

Anne: But they were all written by men.

This slight alteration of Austen's prose sounds innocuous to our ears, but it is something that Austen would never allow her heroine to say because it would humiliate a man. Instead, she gives the line to Harville, who says to Anne, "But, perhaps, you will say, these were all written by men" (170). That remains a revolutionary statement despite being uttered by a male character; it is perhaps the most baldly stated pre-feminist sentiment in all of Austen's novels. Austen then has Anne say, "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything" (170).

That Wentworth remains in the room writing his letter to her during this conversation implies that this dialogue was meant for him since the two have no

other means of direct communication. Anne's/Austen's stance on the education of women and their entry into the public sphere is as pure a declaration of independence as if she had burned her chemisette. Mrs. Croft is further presented as an ideal woman, a feminist prototype and role model for Anne, both in the film and the novel. She is straightforward, believes women are rational creatures and freely expresses that she is happiest when travelling with her sea-faring husband (33). Her luckless friend Mrs. Smith and the elder Musgraves are the only people in the film who show her any tangible affection at all, aside from Mrs. Croft and the admiral, and it is clear from the close ups of Anne reacting silently to the Crofts' conversation that she fantasizes such a life of equals for herself with Wentworth.

In her biography of Austen, Claire Tomalin describes *Persuasion* as "a remarkable leap into a new mood and a new way of looking at England" (259). She applauds its emphasis on the navy's meritocracy and new breed of woman in Mrs. Croft, its romanticism (in direct contrast to *Mansfield Park*), and connects it to Austen's own life as a sort of tribute to herself and all the women "who had lost their chance" that the author knew in her own life (258-259). Unlike the *nouveau riche* Henry and Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, whose moral dissolution and carelessness Austen clearly disdained, the "new social order" as represented by the Crofts, and emulated by Anne and Wentworth in *Persuasion*, is to be embraced.

As commented on earlier, a frequent theme in all of Austen's writing is evident in *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park*: the woman who follows her heart with her head rather than bending to society's every convention — marriage to

unsuitable men, for instance — finds some measure of happiness. While that echoes modern sentiments, most of her heroines also believe that submission to duty is not simply a social necessity, but a female virtue, which they cultivate diligently. Few women in the twenty-first century would accept that premise, even if they identify with the *Cinderella* iconography of the films. Yet modern career women are just as duty bound to the domestic sphere in many ways as their predecessors. Mothers and wives still have clearly defined roles, and many single women still yearn for marriage and motherhood and all that it entails in the domestic sphere.

The evolution of Anne and Fanny's characters in the films reveals a fundamental difference between modern viewers and readers in Austen's era. Each starts out as a woman/girl with no voice and becomes a woman with plenty to say. In *Persuasion*, Anne deviates from the traditional role of heroines in the private sphere. Instead of being overcome by Wentworth the first time that he proposes, she exercises a moral sense of duty and respect by doing what her erstwhile guardian, Lady Russell, wants.

Although she exercises rationality and control when dealing with Wentworth, she also harbours a strong love for him and joins sensibility with sense — a balance between characteristics of both spheres. Austen has Anne say "I was right in submitting to her [Lady Russell's] persuasion and if I had done otherwise I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience. I have now, as far as such a

sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; duty is no bad part of a woman's portion" (180).

Those lines are not spoken in the film because audiences today would not accept such "doormat-like" behaviour from a heroine, and Michell and Dear have been careful to pander, however subtly, to contemporary social norms. Modern women who are offered a second chance at love are expected to "fight for their man," especially single, independent women, no matter how successful or accomplished they might be in the public sphere. Any other response would be dismissed and derided.

The postmodern notion that passivity is always a form of active subjugation is at work here; what is not understood is that Anne, as a refined woman and the moral centre of the novel, is frozen into inaction by an excess of social constraints. Patricia Spacks discusses in *Privacy* the eighteenth-century idea that the "social disadvantages of individual privacy outweighed its individual attraction. Privacy presented... dangers both to the social order and to vulnerable persons (women and the young)... as a psychological possibility, it appeared to encourage hypocrisy, a major focus of anxiety in the period: people might employ masks... to retain control of secret thoughts, feelings and imaginings" (5). Spacks elaborates that the fundamental principle of politeness is self-sacrifice, but that such a mandate runs the risk of suppressing "the kind of self-love that grounds the command to love one's neighbour as oneself... Austen was fully alert to this risk" (113). Austen was

also alert to the absolute necessity of individuals — her heroines — standing alone and relying on their inner strength and conviction, a very modern concept.

Much of the tension in the novel and the film comes from the reader/viewer wondering whether Anne will ever take the initiative and pursue Wentworth with the only subdued means available to her, or if she will let him slip through her fingers again. If *Persuasion* is the most autobiographical of Austen's novels as several literary critics suggest, then it would be an impossibility for her, a clergyman's daughter and proper gentlewoman, to have her heroine make a direct overture to Wentworth, much less kiss him in the street as a circus troupe prances by, which occurs implausibly in a scene near the end of the movie.

While Austen's pre-feminism is understated but heartfelt, adaptations of Austen's novels set in postmodern times such as *Clueless*, *Bridget Jones' Diary*, *Bride and Prejudice* and bawdy TV series such as *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal*, reveal a curious feminist backlash. Women and girls are cheered on in their pursuit of career, active sex lives and economic independence, yet independence is shown to be a lonely burden at best. The underlying message is as clear as having all the *Sex and the City* heroines marry at the end of the series: women are incomplete without a man, and their very success in the public domain impedes their success as women in the private sphere.

Bette Davis, playing an actress in the 1950 classic film *All About Eve*, expressed it this way:

A woman's career...the things you drop on your way up the ladder so you can move faster, you forget you'll need them again when you

get back to being a woman. That's one career all females have in common, whether we like it or not...in the last analysis nothing's any good unless you can look up just before dinner or turn around in bed and there he is. Without that, you're not a woman. You're something with a French provincial office or a book full of clippings" (Mankiewicz).

Yet feminist critics such as Devoney Looser in "Feminist Implications of the Silver Screen" argue that in the Austen movie adaptations of the 1990s the women who occupy centre stage are "intelligent female leads grappling with conventions" (166). The implication is that the eighteenth and nineteenth-century heroines of Austen's novels reflect contemporary struggles between the advances of feminism in the twentieth century and the realities of everyday life. According to Martine Voiret's essay, "Books to Movies, Gender and Desire in Jane Austen's Adaptations," "Like the movie heroines, they are strong-willed, intelligent, eager to make the right choice; they still feel, however, greatly constrained by role expectations" (237).

Indeed, as intimated at the beginning of this chapter, one of the most compelling reasons Austen's novels continue to be fodder for adaptation are the iconic fairytale qualities reflected in the majority of her heroines who are strong and self-assured despite their societal limitations and outwardly compliant appearance. These protagonists quietly embody traditionally "feminine" qualities of empathy and nurturing as well as more conventionally "masculine" qualities of enthusiasm and assertiveness (237). In the films, Anne cares for her hypochondriac sister and her children, and also knows what to do in a real crisis when Louisa is badly injured, much as Fanny is called upon to nurse the ailing Tom in *Mansfield Park*. Austen wants readers to see that a man such as Wentworth can be emotional

and romantic without losing any of his virility, and she also wants to show that a young woman can have strength of purpose and character without losing her femininity. That hybrid resonates with modern audiences, including men, who may recognize their own conflicts over gender roles in appealing characters such as Anne and Wentworth.

Some critics take issue with Dear's screenplay, accusing the screenwriter of subverting Austen's feminist message in *Persuasion*. Rebecca Dickson echoes Barthes' theory that shifting even one element of a novel may effect "a vital portion of the novel's meaning" (*Jane Austen and Co.* 45). She suggests that Dear's misrepresentation of Elizabeth in *Persuasion* reveals a lack of consideration of women's historical roles in the nineteenth century (47-48). More radically, she theorizes that Elizabeth's portrayal undermines the "subtle accomplishment of the book: Anne Elliot's and Sophia Croft's quiet espousals of pre-feminist options" (49). Dickson continues:

But in the nineteenth-century world...this soft-spoken feminist suggestion loses its force, for if Elizabeth has the freedom to be a social disgrace...then gentlewomen have the freedom to espouse feminist frustration without censure...Anne's quiet feminism is important, both as an early published expression about male authority and because gentlewomen read Austen: if she quietly complained about women's circumscribed roles, her female readers likely took note (49-50).

There is little doubt of the veracity of her last comment. Dear's and Michell's meddling with historical accuracy in Elizabeth's portrayal, however, is a mis-step, but not one that compromises the film in an important way.

Most contemporary viewers want their feminism served up with the reassurance that a man will eventually be waiting in the wings. Austen's heroines are not feminists in the modern sense, yet she delivers a strong spirit of female independence in her novels, particularly in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. Fanny turns down a proposal, preferring banishment and poverty to betraying her ideals. In *Persuasion*, her protagonist turns down two marriage proposals and only considers wedlock to the man she has always loved..

Given that Dear and Michell approached *Persuasion* as a work to be adapted gently, in keeping with its heroine's nature, their film stands as an exceptionally powerful and erotically charged depiction of what it means to love unselfishly and passionately. Unlike Rozema, *Persuasion's* filmmakers did not resort to sexual sensationalism and political revisionism to make Austen's novel palatable to modern audiences. In many ways *Persuasion* is as dark psychologically and emotionally as *Mansfield Park*, however, it is also a simply more likable and compelling story than the latter. That the majority of viewers responded more favourably to *Persuasion* may only be proof that romance is traditionally an easier sell than politics in the entertainment world. Or it may indicate that modern viewers, like their eighteenth and nineteenth-century counterparts, tend to prefer their Austen straight up without a political chaser.

Representations of public and private spheres in the film versions of *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park* also differ widely. In *Mansfield Park*, the private sphere is emotionally and morally warped by the public world of slavery and

exploitation. Everything is poisoned by the lies and corruption that lie beneath the surface of gentrified middle-class life and the Regency. *Persuasion* represents the domestic sphere through Anne Elliot's eyes as a cloistered place of sorrow and duty opened up by the public sphere of war and opportunity. There is danger in the emerging public sphere of meritocracy, just as the Crawfords represent danger and decadence in *Mansfield Park*, but there is also freedom and equality as depicted by the Crofts.

Director Anthony Minghella has adapted several novels to the screen, including the Academy Award-winning *The English Patient*. He sums up the screen equation of the private versus public spheres eloquently in a preface to his screenplay for *The Talented Mr. Ripley*:

"But if the intimate gestures of a novel, its private conversation between writer and reader, are not available to the filmmaker, they are exchanged for other, equally powerful tools. Film grammar, with its unique ability to manipulate images, flexing from the intense close up to the broadest vistas, is perfectly placed to situate personal behaviour in a public landscape...[to] remind us that how we are as individuals is in thrall quite literally to the bigger picture" (xii).

Chapter 2: Graham Greene and *The End of the Affair*

"...the creative writer perceives his world once and for all in childhood and adolescence, and his whole career is an effort to illustrate his private world in terms of the great public world we all share."

— "The Young Dickens," Graham Greene

As the previous chapter illustrates, little is known about Jane Austen's private life other than glimpses offered through her letters, other people's recollections of her and in many instances, pure speculation about how much of the writer is reflected in her novels. In contrast, two hundred years later, the private life of her countryman, prolific author, journalist and critic Graham Greene, is detailed in a myriad of ways: through a three-volume authorized biography, unauthorized biographies, his memoirs and those of his friends and acquaintances, a wealth of letters, journalism in the form of reviews, articles and commentaries, film scripts, novels, and film adaptations of those novels.

This chapter explores how Greene's private life becomes part of a public text in *The End of the Affair*, and how film director and screenwriter Neil Jordan's adaptation of the novel reflects the interaction between public and private spheres and interprets them for a new generation of viewers who may be unfamiliar with Greene's novels.

Greene amalgamated his private and public lives in a unique way through his fiction, and in his jobs as a spy and journalist in countries that he visited. He based many of his characters on people he knew either professionally or privately, and made little secret of his penchant for exploiting much of his life publicly through his art, although his complex emotional nature and strong sense of irony shrouded many of his actions. Critics such as Ruth Franklin in the online *The New Yorker* suggest that he put less of his public life into his fiction than is commonly believed, and that despite his authorized biographer's "fixation on real-life details, it is the interplay of theology and fiction that gives the novels their drama."

The latter statement is true enough, but it is also likely that Greene was a private man who believed that living his life publicly was the best disguise possible. The biographer whom Franklin critiques, Norman Sherry, believed that "Novels declare themselves as fictions not as personal histories, though they mine the personal terrain. Greene always felt that so long as he presented his intimate experiences as fiction his secrets would remain unrecognized, and this appealed to his guarded nature" (*Vol. 2* 234). The author himself maintained in his autobiography, *Ways of Escape*:

The main characters in a novel must necessarily have some kinship to the author, they come out of his body as a child comes from the womb, then the umbilical cord is cut, and they grow into independence. The more the author knows of his own character the more he can distance himself from his invented characters and the more room they have to grow in (142).

Greene may have wished to distance himself from his characters, and may have genuinely believed that he did, but the central character in novel after novel draws on his own life experience as an author, spy, journalist, Catholic, adulterer and world traveller. Additionally, much of Greene's fiction adheres to the concept of the double man, or doppelganger (Braybrooke 115). The writer narrator begins *The End of the Affair* by "seeing himself as both the pursuer and the pursued; of seeing himself as both the subject and object of his experiences" (117-118). The protagonist, Bendrix, is in many ways an emotional and psychological double of Greene at a period when he was concerned with his failed marriage and intense extra-marital relationship with Catherine Walston, his unhappiness and suicidal thoughts (Sherry 234). The idea of presenting different faces to the world simultaneously fascinated him, and throughout his life Greene was obsessed with secrecy and spying (Braybrooke 116) and to put it simply, keeping people guessing as to what his real intentions, feelings and actions were.

Greene's trilogy of religion-themed books — *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair* — are considered to be his most mature and best novels, written at the mid-point of his career between 1940 to 1951 (Sherry 192). *The End of the Affair* established his international reputation as a writer, partly because of its sensational nature and the contrast to its Catholic theme, and also because it is extremely well written. At the time of its publication in 1951, Greene graced the cover of *Time* magazine under the banner "Adultery can lead to sainthood" (Shelden 380), which further cemented the irony of the

book being published at all.³ A close publishing colleague of Greene's noted that this trilogy of books wrestles with good and evil, before adding that in person, "...the tortured conscience so frequently and movingly on exhibition in his novels was notably absent" (Sherry 192). Greene may well have been less prone to self-examination, at least publicly, and more self-contained than many of his characters, but good fiction by definition implies that ordinary life be heightened for dramatic effect.

That *The End of the Affair* is based in part on Greene's long, tumultuous affair with Catherine Walston, an American socialite and wife of a wealthy British politician and landowner, is of little doubt. The text is dedicated to her "with love," and while the time span and some events are different, several intimate details of the fictional affair are identical to the real one. The novel combines elements of his private/public affair with Greene's own quite public, if conflicted, belief in Catholicism.

"Greenland" is the world Greene created "in which his fictional fringe-dwellers and tortured souls would struggle to live" (Greene, *Ways of Escape* 80), a world he discovered in adolescence and carried with him throughout his life, although he was not fond of the description (80). Although Greene's childhood was not unusually harsh, "except perhaps that his response was more sensitive, his memory more enduring" (Sherry 8), the author constantly returned to its unhappiness in his fiction. Austen's childhood, on the contrary, was relatively

³ Neil McEwan is referring to Greene considering withholding the book from publication.

happy, and her family was close. Her childhood, however, rarely figures in her work. As noted previously, she focused more on external characters and events, rather than using her own life directly as material for her novels. Only in Patricia Rozema's film does Austen's life appear as a source for *Mansfield Park's* fiction.

Like the novel, *The End of the Affair* is a film about faith and the unfaithful, and while the novel may be conservative by contemporary standards in its depiction of lust, its spiritual sub-text is more explicit. Jordan's adaptation is not bound by the same 1950's strictures concerning sex. Maurice Bendrix, played by Ralph Fiennes, is a writer who lives across the common from Sarah Miles (Julianne Moore) and her husband, Henry (Stephen Rea), who is a senior official in the Ministry of Home Security. After Bendrix attends a party at the couple's home, he begins an affair with Sarah. A bomb blast during the blitz convinces Sarah that Bendrix is dead, and she promises God to leave him if he survives. After Sarah's death, the husband and lover form a strange bond, concluding one of fiction's more memorable love triangles.

The film makes one significant change to the novel, but is otherwise reasonably faithful. On the surface, the three individuals whose lives become fatefully entangled are stereotypical characters in a *noir* melodrama of the 1940s, which is the movie's time frame. Bendrix is haunted by memories of their affair, which he unravels subjectively in flashbacks that form the bulk of the movie. Following the novel's multilayered, splintered nature, the film begins in 1949, with the heartbroken Bendrix at his typewriter, trying to understand what went wrong.

"This is a diary of hate," Bendrix, consumed with bitterness, self-loathing and hatred of religion, writes in his first-person narration taken from the novel (69). What ensues is a sensitive, extremely moving chronicle of the end of Bendrix's affair with Sarah, jumping back and forth between 1939, when they first meet, to Sarah's sudden death seven years later. The film ends with Bendrix still at his typewriter, and still hating God, although irreversibly altered by the miracles of love and faith he has witnessed.

In marked similarity to Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park*, Jordan frames the film with images of writing and sprinkles it with writerly references. One "inside" moment has Bendrix taking Sarah to a movie he had a hand in writing. The clip in question is from *21 Days*, a 1939 romantic drama starring Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier that was adapted by Greene (Levy, *Variety*). Both *The End of the Affair* and *Mansfield Park* are about writers using their creativity to gain self-knowledge and to make sense of the world. Writing in *Mansfield Park* is used as a metaphor for Fanny's emerging independence in the context of contemporary feminism, and as a conduit to understanding Austen's life, using Rozema's post-colonial and postmodern parameters as a contrast. In Greene's text and Jordan's adaptation of *The End of the Affair*, writing represents the character's livelihood, which he also uses to analyze, understand and mask his emotional and spiritual life in much the same way Greene used his craft. At one point in the film Bendrix says, "Pain is easy to write about. In pain we are all individual, but what can one write about happiness?"

Greene chose to echo this sentiment by prefacing his novel with this quote: "Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering, in order that they may have existence."⁴ As evidenced by *The End of the Affair*, the author clearly subscribes to the notion that personal torment is essential to understanding the human experience, and that happiness is for ignoramuses.

Greene has faded in popularity as a novelist, but films of his novels such as *The End of the Affair* in 1999, and more recently, *The Quiet American* in 2002, continue to be re-made, to attract top-flight directors and actors, to be well-reviewed (IMDB), and to be Academy Award-nominated. Part of the reason is the huge range his fiction encompasses — everything from love stories, political thrillers and comedies — and the universal themes he tackles of religious faith, loyalty, loneliness, love and betrayal.

The End of the Affair is not just a revelation of Greene's love triangle with Catherine and her husband Harry Walston; it is also his most nakedly autobiographical novel. He referred to it as his "I" book (Sherry 333), which is also a reference to the fact that it is written in the first person. He wrote *The End of the Affair* between 1948 and 1950 in Capri where he owned a house and where Catherine was a frequent visitor (333), and set it partly in the Second World War during the London blitz. When he began writing it two years into his affair with Catherine, Greene was already beginning to realize that she would not leave her

⁴ This is a quote from Léon Bloy, a French poet, novelist, critic and fervent Roman Catholic convert who preached spiritual renewal through suffering and poverty.

husband for him, and that she was having many other affairs, as indeed was he (330-331). Greene was also married and a father, albeit an absent one (224). 1950 marked the real end of their affair, although it lasted for seven more years before turning into friendship.

Greene writes tellingly in *The End of the Affair*:

When I began to realize how often we quarrelled, how often I picked on her with nervous irritation, I became aware that our love was doomed: love had turned into a love affair with a beginning and an end. I could name the very moment when it had begun, and one day I knew I should be able to name the final hour...I would fan myself into anger or remorse...I was pushing, pushing the only thing that I loved out of my life (39).

In *Ways of Escape*, he recalls:

In *The End of the Affair* I had described a lover who was so afraid that love would end one day that he tried to hasten the end and get the pain over. Yet there was no unhappy love affair to escape this time: I was happy in love. There are difficulties, of course, even in a love affair, but the chief difficulty was my own manic-depressive temperament. So...I found myself tempting the end to come, like Bendrix, but it was the end of life I was seeking, not the end of love. I hadn't the courage for suicide, but it became a habit with me to visit troubled places, not to seek material for novels but to regain the sense of insecurity which I had enjoyed in the three blitzes on London...(146).

It is obvious from these passages that the novel was an emotional catharsis for Greene, and that by writing it, he explored many of his own philosophical, spiritual and emotional problems. Although Bendrix is generally considered to be based on the author's life at the time of writing, W. J. West suggests that J.D. Beresford, a writer and friend of Greene's who died in 1948, is the real-life figure behind the character (*The Quest for Graham Greene* 134). The physical description of Bendrix

resembles Beresford, and Sarah's powers of faith healing may have also been influenced by Beresford, who wrote extensively on the subject (136).

Bendrix was surely a composite figure, but there is little doubt of the huge impact Catherine had on Greene's life, and that the novel, according to Michael Shelden, "gave Greene the chance to possess a part of Catherine [Walston]. He took enough from her life to create his own version of the real woman, and surrounded it with all the confused elements that entered into the real affair — the jealousy, the bitterness, the sacrilege, the mystical attraction" (380).

Indeed, the letters, notes and postcards that Greene wrote to Catherine reveal just how much the line between fiction and life begins to blur. "I love onion sandwiches. G.," Greene wrote to Catherine cryptically in March 1947 on a postcard from Amsterdam (Sherry 261). The author has Bendrix, the narrator of *The End of the Affair*, fall in love with Sarah Miles over a dish of onions at a restaurant called Rules, which still exists. Onions had a special meaning for Greene and Catherine. It was one of their code words for making love, but it was a code within a code. Catherine's husband Harry hated garlic, and she used to eat it in front of him to prevent him from sleeping with her. Greene found this funny and changed it to onions for the book (261).

The onion postcard is one of many things in the correspondence that make clear how much Greene lifted from his life and inserted into his novels. Like Catherine Walston, Sarah had a husband whom she respected but no longer desired. Like Walston, she wrestled with the contradictions between her religion

and her passion. And like Major Scobie in another of Greene's best-known novels, *The Heart of the Matter*, Greene had a wife whom he no longer loved, and a guilty conscience (234). Greene seems to have been fascinated by Catherine not just for the pleasure of the affair, but for the way it spurred his imagination. Some critics, including Franklin and Sherry, suggest that the decline of Greene's career after *The End of the Affair* was published began when his affair with Catherine ended: "He had nothing to live for, and he was fearlessly waltzing forward into the active zone, in the direction of the battlefield" (Sherry 336).

Certainly the affair stimulated his creative life. "I believe I've got a book coming. I feel so excited," he wrote in the autumn of 1947. "Tonight I had a solitary good dinner where I usually go with My Girl [his other mistress, Dorothy Glover] and afterwards felt vaguely restless (not sexually, just restless) so I walked to the Café Royal and sat and read...and drank beer till about 10 and then I still felt restless, so I walked all up Piccadilly and back... suddenly...I saw...the beginning, the middle and the end and in some ways all the ideas I had.... I hope to God it lasts—they don't always...I'm not played out yet" (234)!

Greene's use of the blitz in the novel may be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to re-capture the first intoxicating flush of his own love affair, and to accentuate the drama between the lovers. It reinforces Greene's affinity for living on the "dangerous edge of things"⁵ in his complicated private life. The backdrop of

⁵ Greene had a fondness for this quote from a poem by Robert Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*. It reflected his self-image as a risk taker and adventurer.

danger and exhilaration that appealed to Greene heightens the affair between Sarah and Bendrix, and mixes the private and public domains together in a way that is unique to war.

All manner of people are thrust together in the public spectacle of fear and courage, yet each individual reacts privately to the experience. Life is lived more intensely; the public pulse of war is reflected in the daily experience and enhanced freedom of citizens who are not always answerable for their actions. In Sarah's case, her reaction to a bomb that nearly takes Bendrix's life is to make a promise to God to give up her lover if he survives, an act of sacrifice in the novel that eventually leads to genuine religious conviction. Earlier in the novel, the blitz also serves another useful purpose: it affords the lovers a chance to be together for sex, much as it did for countless other Londoners in either random or planned encounters, including Greene (Sherry 51).

The Second World War was waged in part over British airspace, which created a psychological terror of the unseen enemy. Fighting an enemy they could not see engaged every British citizen in the most private and public of spheres. Greene uses the chaos and destruction of the blitz as a smokescreen to hide Bendrix's and Sarah's affair, and to create a context of the "anything goes" mentality he writes about in his memoir. Everybody was at risk from the bombardment, and on some level, no one escaped from harm. The war acts as a catalyst and a metaphor for the affair, bringing it to an early death through the random loss caused by the blitz and the ferocity of the lovers' emotions.

Imminent death and destruction is fertile ground for the religious theme in the book in which God is hated and loved equally by the protagonists. Bendrix is the most spiritually polarized character, but all are affected in some way by their faith, or lack of faith, and the moral ambiguity of their actions. The motif of danger is equally essential to the eroticism of the novel and film — danger heightens passion, and influences characters to do and accept things they might reject in less heady and unnatural circumstances.

The motives for Sarah's adultery, however, are never clearly explained in the novel. Although she is not a career woman in contemporary terms, she is a partner of sorts to her civil servant husband and assists him in his career by entertaining and running a home for him. What her marriage lacks in sexual passion is compensated for with mutual respect, if not love, something that Bendrix cannot fully comprehend when Sarah repeatedly refuses to leave her husband for him. Instead, she breaks off her affair with Bendrix, and continues her life of sexual duplicity and emotional despair. She writes in her journal after leaving him:

Is one responsible for what one promises in hysteria? Or what promises one breaks...I mustn't break down because I must protect Henry. Oh, to hell with Henry...I want somebody who'll accept the truth about me and doesn't need protection. If I'm a bitch and a fake, is there nobody who will love a bitch and a fake (Greene 116).

It could be argued that Sarah, in spite of her scathing self-assessment and infidelity, is the only truly honest person in the novel, the only one who ultimately doesn't break her word, even if that word is given to God and not a human being. She may be a "bitch and a fake," but she is true to herself. The film version of *The*

End of the Affair departs radically from the novel in this aspect. Despite being a faithful adaptation for the first three-quarters of the movie, Jordan switches gears in the final quarter. He delays Sarah's death by re-igniting the affair between the lovers and having them holiday at the seaside at Brighton. Jordan introduces a blatantly false note when Henry confronts the lovers before agreeing to divorce Sarah so that she may marry Bendrix. In the novel, Henry doesn't learn about their affair until after her death.

In the DVD commentary of the film, Jordan echoes Greene, deliberately or otherwise, when he says that he "felt Greene dispatches her too quickly to deal with philosophical issues." Greene writes in *Ways of Escape*, "I did not realize the formidable problem I had set myself. Sarah, the chief character, was dead, the book should have continued at least as long after her death as before, and yet, like her lover, Bendrix, I found I had no great appetite to continue now she was gone beyond recall and only a philosophic theme was left behind" (143). But in allowing Sarah a larger life, Jordan betrays her promise to God, the promise that is at the core of the novel's metaphysical construct. He defends this alteration by quoting Dorothy Parker: "Plot is what the author wants the character to do and the story is what the character themselves wants to do and I wanted to be true to the story" (DVD commentary).

Jordan wants to give Bendrix hope, something that he feels is absent from the novel with its emphasis on sin, hate and tentative redemption. He chose Brighton as the location for their idyll because it is where people often go to end their

marriages. By changing this crucial plot point, Jordan, who is an Irish Catholic, arguably undermines the very purpose of Greene's novel, which is the story of "a man driven and overwhelmed by the accumulation of natural coincidences and miracles until he breaks and begins to accept the possibility of God, forcing on him a reluctant doubt of his own atheism" (143).

Greene acknowledges that he betrayed his own intentions by the use of too-literal miracles such as the disappearance of atheist Richard Smythe's disfiguring birthmark at Sarah's touch, and the cure of detective Parkis' son's stomach ailment (143). In a later edition of the novel, Greene changed the birthmark to a skin condition that was cured medically (143), but Jordan keeps the miracle by giving the birthmark to the boy, whom Sarah cures. This departure is not as significant, however, as the introduction of the romantic interlude where Sarah agrees to marry Bendrix with her husband's tacit blessing shortly before she dies.

Jordan's adaptations of the novel at this juncture are more suited to the conventions of filmmaking, which rely heavily on visual imagery and unspoken emotional connections. In *Brighton*, the film is infused with radiant light for the second time. The first occasion was a deep focus shot of Sarah entering a church after her confrontation with Bendrix in the restaurant, a scene that intimates that she has attained a new dimension of clarity. In *Brighton*, the sun sparkles on the water, Sarah luxuriates in their hotel room wearing red and bathed in an aura of sexuality and natural light, which gives viewers visual relief from the monotonous, somewhat claustrophobic, rain-splattered, grey-and-sepia palette of the

cinematography. When Bendrix telephones her after reading her journal, she is wearing a red dress, suggesting her sexual power. The colour represents danger and passion; she also wears red when they first meet.

Jordan introduces a playful note when he includes a tender scene in the film that is not in the text. Bendrix caresses Sarah's leg as she puts on her stockings and says, "I'm jealous of your stocking because it touches your whole leg." It is unlikely that Greene would allow his character to be quite so whimsical since Bendrix is almost unrelentingly grim and self-absorbed in the novel. Only Parkis provides any comic relief. The scene in the film acts to make Bendrix's character more sympathetic to viewers, which may have been the reason for its inclusion.

In a contemporary feminist context, Sarah's death in the novel and the film could be viewed as "punishment" for committing adultery, much like the fallen women of Hollywood melodramas, or "weepies," in the 1930s and 1940s. These women, swathed in luxurious bedclothes, often died long, luminous deaths with their beauty intact even if they repented their indiscretions.⁶ Women who strayed from fidelity, or assumed the freedoms of men, were presented as cautionary tales to others who might have similar yearnings. A wasting illness such as pneumonia or consumption was considered to be an acceptable, even respectable retribution in such instances. Sometimes women were shunned to reflect on their "sins" in solitude, or even made to commit suicide.

⁶ I am referring to films such as George Cukor's *Camille*, Jean Negulesco's *Singapore Woman* and Edmund Goulding's *Dark Victory*.

In the novel, Sarah succumbs to pneumonia after her last disastrous meeting with Bendrix. Both times that she meets her former lover after their estrangement, she walks for hours in the rain afterward until she is soaked through, a clear implication that Bendrix is indirectly responsible for her death. The inescapable conclusion is that she dies for love, a common occurrence in melodramas. Jordan describes his film adaptation in the DVD commentary as a “fight between a man and a woman’s story and in the end, she wins,” although that is open to interpretation. Her ultimate acquiescence to Bendrix in the film, and her death, do not seem like much of a victory in the context of either religion or feminism.

When Bendrix and Sarah first meet privately two years after she leaves him without warning at ‘their’ restaurant, Palmer’s, a pseudonym for Rules, the London restaurant where Greene often met Catherine and where a room is named after him, she is coughing. At the beach in Brighton, Jordan has Bendrix tell Sarah that he wants children, and she starts coughing again in a too obvious, *Camille*-like foreshadowing of events. The director follows Greene’s lead, however, in exposing the sex, betrayal and intrigue that takes place beneath the correct surface of a conventional marriage in the 1940s. Divorce was not an option for most couples, and Catholics rarely ever divorced. Greene’s long-suffering wife, Vivien Dayrell-Browning, a devout Catholic, never divorced him even though they lived apart for many decades.

While Greene hastened Sarah’s death in the novel to elaborate on his “philosophic theme,” the reality of his relationship with Catherine was quite

different. When she died in 1978 after being bedridden off and on for years with various ailments complicated by alcoholism (Sherry, *Vol. 3* 620), Greene was not by her side, and had not, in fact, visited or written to her much before her death (322). In the film, Jordan has Henry deliver the news of Sarah's terminal illness to Bendrix during the couple's final love scene at the opera in Brighton. Sarah can see, but not hear them, which enhances the emotional and visual impact of the scene. In classic cinematic fashion, Jordan relies on feeling and facial expression rather than words, causing viewers to realize instinctively that Sarah knows she is dying. The camera work accentuates this by starting out with a close up of Henry and Bendrix talking, then slowly panning out to show Sarah's face in the distance watching them. The depth-of-focus tableau of the men in the foreground and Sarah in the distance is a telling cinematographic moment in the film that represents her increasing insignificance to the story.

Her death is not drawn out for dramatic effect in the movie, but Jordan makes more crucial changes to the narrative at this point. On the train coming back from Brighton, Henry asks Bendrix to move in with him to help care for Sarah whereas in the book, Bendrix doesn't move in until after Sarah dies. The director invents a deathbed scene between the lovers in which she talks about the day of the bomb blast and her promise to God to leave him if he survived, which is the pivotal moment in the film and the novel. Sarah tells Bendrix, "You can't go on fighting [God], it's only love after all." He refuses to accept this and responds in voiceover later: "You're taking her, but you haven't got me yet...I hate you God as

though you existed.” After she dies, there is a revealing scene on the stairs between the two men when they hug with Sarah lying on the bed in the background as the camera peers at her over their shoulders. The story literally and visually shifts to the relationship between former antagonists Bendrix and Henry, and the last 10 minutes of the film completes the complex love triangle.

Jordan says in the DVD commentary to *The End of the Affair* that the end of the film is:

...about how people love. Bendrix has to possess her in some way. Sarah realizes that she loves him and that love includes the possibility of leaving him. Henry starts out as empty of love and emerges as the truest lover of all because he is the least selfish of them all. He accepts that she is not happy with him, and enables her to have another life — he loves her in a non-possessive way.

While Greene did not portray Henry as giving his blessing to their affair — much as Catherine’s husband, Harry, did not give his to Greene, although they were mostly on civil terms (*Vol. 2, Sherry 322*) — he was careful to portray a bond between the two men. Their relationship may appear artificial and unlikely, but as the two people who loved Sarah the most, it seems natural that they would turn to one another in their grief in the absence of others who might fill that role. Although Sarah’s mother appears in the book after her death, there is so much antipathy between her and Henry that she does not play a significant role, except to Bendrix. He learns from her that Sarah was baptized a Catholic, knowledge that increases his resentment and anger toward the church. Jordan trims the narrative by excising this subplot entirely, focusing on the men and their reactions to her death.

Like much of Greene's fiction, the flashback narrative structure of the novel lends itself to cinematic adaptation. If Greene's novels are more visual than most, it speaks as much to their literary power as to their cinematic quality. It could be argued, however, that even if writing like Greene's seems cinematic, it is not inherently so, since written images and metaphors lose integrity in the transposition of print to celluloid (Barthes 95). Greene was more aware of that loss than most from his experience as a film critic and author who routinely sold his novels to producers. He is quoted as saying that what one wants from adaptation is "a true reflection of character...one must allow that anything be changed so long as the characters come out whole" (Adamson 159). Jordan, who also co-produced *The End of the Affair* and has adapted several novels to the screen⁷ approaches a novel "with a scapel [and sees] if there is anything left" (DVD commentary).

That awareness of the mechanics of adaptation does not mean that Greene approved of the changes made to the first movie version (Falk 109) of *The End of the Affair*, or to the other film adaptations of his novels with the exceptions of *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol*. He often felt "like a man who has witnessed a crime and is afraid to speak, an accomplice after the fact" (Adamson 152). On a set visit in 1954, Greene was asked by Deborah Kerr, the Sarah of that adaptation, if he recognized her lines. "I recognize the people," he replied (Falk 109).

⁷ Jordan adapted the novels *The Crying Game*, *The Miracle*, *The Butcher Boy* and *The Company of Wolves*.

Greene was something of a maverick in his willingness to write screenplays, as he did for *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol* in collaboration with director Carol Reed, and turn them into novels later. His experience as a film critic, ear for dialogue and keen observance of visual details, made him a natural scriptwriter. Greene's background as a journalist also contributed to his vivid writing technique. Adamson writes that his "rapportage approach...most often resembles film technique. He uses his narrator as a cinematographer does his camera, to switch the point of view" (77).

Greene complained that writing *The End of the Affair* in the first person made him feel like a "colorblind man" (*Ways of Escape* 142) because in the book there were only "two shades of the same color — obsessive love and obsessive hate..." (142). Switching perspectives to Sarah's journal helped Greene solve this problem by providing a plausible and intimate first-person point of view without the limited field of vision usually associated with its use. The narrator is also given an opportunity to "examine himself from outside as well as from within (Adamson 80), which adds texture to Greene's writing, and makes this particular novel with its spare dialogue and "time travel" well suited to film adaptation. In *Ways of Escape*, Greene comments on how this private/public "rapportage" technique came into being in one of his early travel books, *Journey Without Maps*: "The idea of A to Z has always scared me...and I have always broken the continuity of a story with the memories of my chief character, just as I was now to break the continuity of the journey with the memories of 'I'" (51).

The technique was one that Greene used in *The End of the Affair*. In the novel, he often makes the transition from thoughts to dramatic action, such as in the bedroom scene after Bendrix pursues Sarah into a church and she chooses, or so it seems, him over her promise to God:

Suddenly I realized she was asleep....

Children are supposed to be influenced by what you whisper to them in their sleep, and I began to whisper to Sarah..."I love you Sarah," I whispered. "Nobody has ever loved you as much before. We are going to be happy. Henry won't mind...He'll find a new habit to take your place" (159-160).

By turning Bendrix's longing for Sarah's acceptance of him into dialogue, disconnecting it from ambience and combining it with the first-person point of view, Greene inserts his own comments into the text: "Children are supposed to be influenced by what you whisper to them...."

At the same time, the author acts as an omniscient voice. Bendrix is recording the story of the affair, but it is "Greene who comments on it by shifting the focus of our attention from him and by selecting information to create irony. In this way the novel becomes a study of itself; it records a process of action through which the narrator makes sense of what has happened to him" (Adamson 120). In the film, Jordan transposes Sarah's internal dialogue from Greene's novel into external dialogue in the scene right after the bomb blast. Sarah thinks "I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance" (Greene 117) and what she says is, "'Love doesn't end just because we don't see each other. People go on loving God all their lives without seeing him.'"

This process is akin to what occurs in inter-textual adaptation when a director takes the printed word and transfers it to images in an attempt to interpret it to another medium. Austen preferred to use free indirect discourse in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, but in the cinema, where an immediate connection with the viewer is paramount, such distancing tactics are less effective unless they are combined with a first-person perspective. *The End of the Affair* is essentially self-referential, a private process made public in the context of elements of Greene's own life; a meta-narrative within a narrative.

As discussed earlier, the narrative structure of *The End of the Affair* is an elaborate sequence of flashbacks edited from present to past in a kind of memory map. This constant interplay of emotion and memory is reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, all novels that use a stream-of-consciousness technique to simulate the thought process. Greene does not emulate the style of writing used by Woolf or Joyce, but his structure achieves the same purpose in a cinematic context where time is compressed. Greene noted in *Ways of Escape* that the novel was "ingeniously constructed to avoid the tedium of the time sequence (I had learned something from my continual re-readings of that remarkable novel *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford" (142). It also represents a change in his narrative strategy, telling the same events from multiple perspectives and punctuating the drama with an omniscient voice that shifts from character to character, providing threads of an intriguing puzzle that viewers can fit into a coherent whole.

Greene includes a discussion about time between Bendrix and Father Crompton in the novel: "St. Augustine asked where time came from. He said it came out of the future which didn't exist yet, into the present that had no duration, and went into the past which had ceased to exist" (225). Jordan also intends his audience to lose track of time by experiencing the same plot elements in a different order, and from different points of view, in much the same manner as Greene. In the DVD commentary, the director likens this process to looking through a kaleidoscope: "Emotions changing from tenderness to iciness to fury — a kind of kaleidoscopic feeling."

Such jumbled, out-of-time feelings are the way memories are shaped as they intermingle with the present, and Jordan expertly re-creates this mental phenomenon in *The End of the Affair* through his use of *montage* and flashbacks. The visual dynamic of the film — often shot in rain, fog, dust, debris and deep shadow, with pivotal scenes repeated and filmed from different angles — suggests the haziness of multiple perspectives. Roger Pratt's evocative cinematography creates a dream-like world that captures the ephemeral quality of memories recycled in the consciousness.

Although the novel is told in the first person from Bendrix's point of view, Greene gives Sarah a voice by having Parkis, the detective he hires to follow her, find her journal and give it to Bendrix. This is a clever plot device on Greene's part, and one that serves Jordan's film well. The camera tracks Sarah in long shot as she trudges through the rain-soaked streets of London while she voices her once-private

journal, which is now a public document. The director uses her voiceover narrative during her time trajectory after leaving Bendrix as a poem of loss (DVD commentary), and to connect viewers to her thoughts. The film's soundtrack emphasizes its elegiac atmosphere, as does the moody, dark cinematography.

Sarah's private inner sphere is filtered through Bendrix and made public to readers and spectators, yet the transference remains intensely personal. Viewers look over his shoulder as he reads her secret thoughts, which she narrates. This is a technique that adds emotional texture and dimension to the film, even more so than the novel, and gives Sarah a reality that she could not have had otherwise. The *Rashomon*-like scene⁸ in Palmer's restaurant where the couple meets for the first time since their affair reinforces this transference. It is replayed twice, once from Bendrix's point of view, and once from Sarah's. As might be expected, the differences in perception are acute: Bendrix is angry and unforgiving; Sarah is ill and riven by her interior battle. The psychological distance between them seems huge — a chasm that is at once spiritual and emotional — and makes Jordan's eventual reconciliation of the lovers seem more audience-pleasing than authentic. That Sarah escapes from this lunch into a confessional reveals the depth of her inner conflict.

Jordan is not the first filmmaker to tackle Greene's morally hazy and semi-autobiographical novel. The contrast, however, between the plodding and

⁸ Director Akira Kurosawa's epic film, *Rashomon*, in which a rape-murder is told from the points of view of four different people, has influenced countless filmmakers.

melodramatic 1955 Edward Dmytryk film version of the novel and Jordan's haunting and spiritually erotic ghost story, could not be greater. In the former, Bendrix is turned into an expatriate American writer played by Van Johnson — it is hard to imagine a worse case of miscasting than this wooden, bland actor — and always-reliable Deborah Kerr is a somewhat hysterical Sarah. The melodrama may have been magnified to make up for the lack of sexual content; the Production Code censorship⁹ that existed in Hollywood at the time prohibited the kind of frank depiction of adultery portrayed in Jordan's film. In fact, the movie was made in England to avoid the code, but it is so sexually tame it may as well have been filmed in the United States.

Dmytryk shot the film in black and white, and while the cinematography captures the bleakness of wartime London, Lenore Coffee's screenplay misses the passion and spirit of the novel. The narrative is simpler than Jordan's or Greene's with just one major flashback that shifts the perspective to Sarah. The original version of the movie followed Greene's flashback narrative, but the film's producers thought it would confuse audiences and it was re-edited to be chronological (Adamson 87). Dmytryk also left out the miracles, preferring to focus on Sarah's belief that her prayer had kept Bendrix alive (87), much as Greene did in later editions of the novel.

⁹ The Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, was a set of movie industry guidelines that were dismantled in 1967 in favour of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) film rating system.

The most important difference between the two film adaptations is the emphasis on religious inspiration over human love in the 1955 film, whereas Jordan's adaptation takes the opposite tack. More dialogue is devoted to Sarah's spiritual struggle in Dmytryk's adaptation, which mirrors the novel. That the film is somewhat unreal and unconvincing is due partly to the mis-casting of Johnson and Kerr, but as Adamson suggests, "the agonies of the soul are not photogenic" (87).

Unlike books and films based on another "saint," Joan of Arc, *The End of the Affair* presents a heroine who is not a medieval peasant girl brought up to be religious and struggling between sacred and profane love (Falk 114). She is a sophisticated, modern woman, much like Catherine Walston, who does not give religion much thought until she feels compelled to by the imminent prospect of her lover's death. In other words, Greene is inferring, and Jordan and Dmytryk's film versions support the view, that Sarah could be anybody whose life reaches a breaking point and who turns to something greater than herself for salvation, even if she doesn't actively believe in it.

As already discussed, representing abstract, personal spiritual processes visually poses problems for filmmakers, and most resort to crude symbolic imagery and voiceover narration for assistance. Jordan shoots the crucial scene of the blitz from inside through a series of windows, bedrooms and drawing rooms to keep everything as small and contained as possible, presumably to focus viewers on the characters' private suffering and not on the larger public spectacle of war.

The director arranges Sarah in a kneeling prayer position over the bed where she and Bendrix had just made love before the bomb hit, as she makes her promise to God. She is framed in light, a “halo” effect, in contrast to the blinding grey dust after the blast. Jordan contends in the DVD commentary that although this is the most important scene in the film, contemporary viewers may have trouble with it: “Eroticism and religion brought together...she is mystical and weird and can’t explain what has happened.” Religion and sex are at best an uneasy mixture in North American film culture where sex is more often associated with violence. If Sarah were dead instead of praying when Bendrix comes up the stairs alive, few would question it.

The past and present are interplayed frenetically in this crucial scene. Jordan has Bendrix recall as he regains consciousness, “I never heard the bang...I woke up to a changed world. For a moment I was free of feeling love, hate, jealousy and it all felt like happiness.” Happiness to Bendrix exists in a void of emotion. That flashback is inter-cut with Sarah’s voiceover from her journal as she kneels beside his body and says, “I’d never believed in prayer.” She goes upstairs to pray against the bed and tells God: “I’ll give him up forever if you let him live. I’ll never see him again.” When Sarah realizes that her lover is alive, that a miracle has occurred, she says, “Now I was dead. And I knew that nothing in this world would make sense to me again.”

The juxtaposition of Bendrix’s happiness with Sarah’s emotional death is telling: Bendrix (Greene) is happy in the absence of emotions, whereas Sarah

(Catherine) feels dead. In an earlier scene when Parkis first gives Bendrix Sarah's journal, she tells him in voiceover that she is leaving him: "Love doesn't end just because we don't see each other, people go on loving God all their lives without seeing him." Bendrix responds that he doesn't accept that kind of love, and she says, "There is no other kind." The film then flashes forward to Bendrix telling Henry: "And that was the end of the affair."

Jordan encapsulates the novel in these scenes, distilling the emotions and spiritual battles of Bendrix and Sarah, and indeed, of Greene's life-long private and public struggle between a desire to be "good" in the religious sense while frequently indulging in what the church considered sinful acts. In spite of the voiceover narration of Sarah's journal, her inner torment is somewhat underemphasized in Jordan's script, which may be due to the radical alteration of the atheist Richard Smythe's character, with whom Sarah does much of her soul-searching in both the novel and first film adaptation.

Perhaps the scene in the film that most powerfully depicts Sarah's struggle between her private promise to God and her semi-public passion for her lover is when she begins crying after meeting Bendrix at Palmer's restaurant against her better judgment, and runs into a movie theatre. When Bendrix finds her there, she flees into a church. He follows her and gives back her diary, an act that is an unspoken violation of her private sphere and that signifies his public possession of her. Jordan shoots this scene in close ups of their faces, and from behind in profile. The composition of the shot creates an aura of magic and mystery appropriate to a

church and to their relationship as Sarah breaks her promise to God in favour of a more public and corrupt human allegiance.

The 1955 film version is more true to the novel in its treatment of the final moments of the lovers' relationship, avoiding Jordan's sentimental escapade at Brighton in favour of a sombre tone more in keeping with the religious attitudes of the time. Although Dmytryk's adaptation is more faithful to Greene's novel, its melodramatic acting, staged sets and "old-fashioned" religion are less appealing to modern audiences who value private and public acts of self-actualization and romantic love more highly. (These cultural codes are also evident in the film adaptations of Austen's novels *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park* discussed in the previous chapter.)

Religion was an over-riding factor in Greene's life after his conversion to Catholicism in 1926 before marrying Vivien. Ironically, his faith was the catalyst for his affair with Catherine Walston (Sherry, *Vol. 2* 226). He met her after she wrote to him thanking him for influencing her to become a Catholic through his writing, and asking him to be her godfather because he had brought her into the church (226). The irony of the situation was not lost on Vivien, who later recalled, "I think she was out to get him and got him. I think it was quite a straightforward grab" (226-227). Greene remembers it differently, not surprisingly, as a meeting of two people who were meant to be together (226-227).

Yet being a Catholic clearly didn't require a life of asceticism or denial for the author, any more than it did for Catherine. Indeed, his private interpretation of

Catholicism was as much a part of his public persona as his travels to war-torn countries, dalliances with dictators and complicated love affairs. Greene was criticized harshly for his *laissez-faire* approach to religion and forgiving attitude toward the Catholic idea of salvation after sin. George Orwell, reviewing *The End of the Affair* in 1948, scoffed at Greene's "cult of the sanctified sinner: When people really believed in Hell, they were not so fond of striking graceful attitudes on its brink" (Franklin). Greene's novels, however, cannot be reduced to their Catholic elements. The spiritual dilemma is always inseparable from the fictional lives of characters such as Sarah and Bendrix. In the novel, Bendrix imagines remonstrating with her:

If this God exists and if even you — with your lusts and your adulteries and the timid lies you used to tell — can change like this, we could all be saints by leaping as you leapt, by shutting the eyes and leaping once and for all: if you are a saint, it's not so difficult to be a saint. It's something He can demand of any of us, leap" (238).

This quotation is central to Greene's personal beliefs and although Bendrix never takes the leap into faith, he remains aware of the possibility. Sarah's bargain with God is also not unique in Greene's work, or in his private life. In *The Heart of the Matter* and in *The Power and the Glory*, the central characters pray to have others' suffering taken away, even if it means they sacrifice their peace of mind, or in the case of Scobie, arguably his soul. Greene's diary and his correspondence reveal similar bargains regarding matters important and insignificant. After a pregnancy scare with one of his girlfriends, he reported to Catherine, "Secretly I made a promise that if there were no baby I would consider . . . going somewhere

like Stonyhurst”—a Catholic retreat—“for three weeks or three months. There wasn’t a baby and now I don’t see how it’s to be done” (Cullen, *Smithsonian*). Catholic critics such as Evelyn Waugh seized on such bargains as a sign of Greene’s religious superficiality — “great balls theologically” was Waugh’s opinion (Franklin). But this metaphysical Russian roulette is likely another manifestation of Greene’s profound ambivalence about God. Prayer is a one-way conversation, but a bargain, whether or not the desired result is obtained, implies the presence of someone on the other end (Franklin).

Other attacks came from directly from the church. Greene was taken to task for his portrayal of the church by Cardinal Griffin in 1953, particularly the “whiskey priest” in *The Power and the Glory* (Sherry 242). Griffin was more concerned about that than the adulterous sexual content in *The End of the Affair*, although he showed Greene a letter being read in churches that criticized Catholic writers for “their unrestrained portrayal of immoral conduct [that could] prove a source of temptation to many of their readers...” (43). The author was vindicated later when Pope Paul VI told Greene that he should pay no attention to Catholics who took offence at his work (43).

In Catholicism Greene found a sense of melodrama — an atmosphere of discriminating good and evil — that was useful to him as a novelist, although he claimed to dislike the term “Catholic novelist” (Thomson, *Times Literary Supplement*). During the sixty years of his prolific writing career he created characters who hide their weaknesses from the world and themselves, much as

Greene hid beneath a mountain of public details about his private life. As a practicing Catholic who conducted many adulterous affairs, Greene personified the tension that many of his novels dramatize between religious sanctions and human passion. Sarah and Bendrix in *The End of the Affair* are among the characters that best represent the prototype of damaged faith that haunted Greene throughout his life personally, and in his writing.

Greene writes in his first autobiography, *A Sort of Life*, that his conversion in 1926 began as an intellectual exercise (165), and that he took the name of St. Thomas the doubter (165). By 1937 he was ready to examine the effect of “faith into action” (79) and to use Catholic characters in his writing (79). He was influenced heavily in this decision by the socialist persecution of religion in Mexico, which he described in *The Power and the Glory*, and the Spanish Civil War, both of which “inextricably involved religion in contemporary life. Catholicism was no longer primarily symbolic...it was closer to death in the afternoon” (79).

Greene may not have been much of a believer in the rituals of Catholicism, but he had faith of sorts:

To his dying day he kept a photograph in his wallet of the Italian stigmatic Padre Pio, whose hands and feet were said to display the wounds of Christ. Whether these lesions were of neurotic origin — psychological rather than supernatural — Greene did not care to know: he wanted there to be a mystery at the heart of life. It may seem incredible that an intelligent man could be awed by the irrationality of stigmatism. But as Greene told the *Tablet* in 1989: “There is a mystery. There is something inexplicable in human life” (Thomson).

That human mystery is at the heart of *The End of the Affair*, just as it was at the centre of Greene's life in both his private and public spheres. Jordan's film acts as an allegory of sorts. It is a detective story on many levels: metaphysical, romantic and sexual. Bendrix has Parkis pursue Sarah to discover something sordid, but finds something spiritual instead, even if he is unwilling to accept it. Sarah is a sinner in the eyes of society and the church, but she could also be considered a saint of sorts. Although she is an unlikely saint, and Greene has her question her promise to God as hysteria, her duality parallels Greene's attraction to Catherine, although the latter was certainly no saint, and did not pretend to be.

Greene seems to have been fascinated by Catherine Walston's uninhibited combination of carnality and passionate embrace of Catholicism. Like him, she took her adopted faith seriously. And also like him, she seemed to be able to live with one foot in the sacred world and the other in the blasphemous. Greene's letters to her reflect both spheres. Sometimes he speaks of missing her at Mass, of remembering her in his prayers, and closes with "God bless you." The next day he might close, in code decipherable by any lust-struck boy: "I.W.T.F.Y" (Cullen).

Moore's performance in the film heightens these anomalies. She exudes a confident sexuality, yet she is also somewhat frail and ethereal, suggesting a deeper spiritual dimension. She is an intelligent actress who radiates duality in counterpoint to Fiennes' (Bendrix's) more consistent portrayal of anger and self-absorption that manifests itself in jealousy and self-destruction.

Sarah is the classic recipient of the male gaze as defined in the last chapter by Laura Mulvey, reflecting what each man in her life — Henry, Bendrix, Father Gilbert, Smythe and Parkis — wants from her. To Bendrix she is a lover, a whore, and a reluctant saint who eludes his grasp. He projects all of his lust and dissatisfaction onto her, and when she leaves him, he re-focuses his hatred onto her relationship with God. In his eyes, she is heartless. Sarah may be the passive recipient of the male fantasy embodied by his gaze, but she is in control in a way that Bendrix is not. Her eroticism is part strength, part weakness — a sexual power that Henry is afraid of, and that Bendrix desires. Yet carnality undermines her spiritual resolve, and her ability to be content in a sexless marriage. Others, such as Parkis, Smythe and Father Gilbert, see her as vulnerable, as a “fine lady” (Greene 197), as a convert, and as a near-holy woman.

For film audiences, she is an erotic object on two levels: through the gaze of the director, who frequently films Sarah in close up, portraying her as sensual or holy in the context of his Irish Catholicism, and as seen by the viewers who project their own fantasies and culturally gendered codes upon her. Moore’s performance is more wounded doe than *femme fatale*, however, there are elements of both in her portrayal. Jordan presents Sarah as more of a victim of Bendrix’s obsession than as an equal participant. She is a martyr to her own conflicted desires, but also to her lover’s pursuit of her. By placing her in religious poses and scenarios, filming her in close ups that highlight her paleness and illness, and having her agree to marry Bendrix before she dies, the director emphasizes Sarah’s vulnerability over

her strength, which does a disservice to Greene's original character, and to Catherine Walston, upon whom she is based.

Unlike Sarah, Catherine did not wither away and die after her affair with Greene ended; she continued to live her life as a socialite, wife and libertine. Despite Jordan's familiarity with feminist ideas in adapting material such as Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves*, he remains at heart an Irish-Catholic man who can't fully escape his dualistic feelings about women. Jordan disputes his Catholic influences in an interview with Michael Sragow on salon.com by saying:

I was brought up a Catholic and was quite religious at one stage in my life, when I was quite young...But it just sort of vanished. I like stories...that bring characters to points where reason is no longer adequate...I don't know if that is Catholic. Then again (laughter) – it's definitely not Protesant! I'd be quite a happy Hindu.

The filmmaker also addresses the movie's romanticism by saying that audience comments after previews of the film compelled him to:

"...look at these relationships from a contemporary standpoint. People are profoundly disapproving of men and women who have not sorted out their lives and lived them to moral, therapeutic patterns. They think a married woman having sex with another man is necessarily evil...and they think, 'Oh, the relationship is entirely about sexuality, it's not about love. It must have something to do with American Puritanism'" (Sragow).

That same kind of Puritanism existed in the 1950s when the first film version of *The End of the Affair* was released, and the morality, ironically, seems to have come full circle. As a direct result of Jordan's essential core of romantic and religious conventionalism, despite his protestations to the contrary of the latter,

Sarah's character in his film adaptation is more victim than vixen, and much more sympathetic to viewers than to readers.

Readers, however, perceive Sarah as more vital and in control of her life, as more of a lover than a casualty of love. Although Bendrix narrates the novel as he does the film, Sarah nonetheless emerges as a strong woman battling for her soul. Her voice remains clear and "pure" in her journal, untouched by actors or directors' interpretations, despite being filtered through her lover's perspective:

Sometimes I get so tired of trying to convince him that I love him...He is jealous of the past and the present and the future. His love is like a medieval chastity belt: only when he is there, with me, in me, does he feel safe. If only I could make him feel secure, then we could love peacefully, happily, not savagely, inordinately, and the desert would recede out of sight...If one could believe in God, would he fill the desert (111).

Because there is no specific image connected to the words her character represents on paper, readers are free to imagine her the way they choose, perhaps as a woman who, like Bendrix, turns to obsessive sex/love to escape her inner terror of the emptiness of her life. When that sex/love ends, or she believes that it ends, Sarah tries to replace that love with God while Bendrix fills it with hate and fear (238). His response to his divine rival is: "I hate you as though You existed" (239). And yet despite, or perhaps because of her death, Sarah emerges as the stronger of the two in the novel.

The first image of Sarah in the film is a low-angle close up of her legs on a staircase and it is also the scene when Bendrix first sees her. This sultry "gaze" image is in the convention of *noir* cinema and signifies to viewers familiar with the

genre that their affair could have as easily ended in murder instead of her death from pneumonia. That sense of dread and erotic tension permeates the film and the shot is used several times as a flashback, a juxtaposition that contrasts with Jordan's understated portrayal of English middle-class life. Whatever passions are raging in private, the public surface is painfully polite and mannered, a paradox that resembles Austen's novels in many respects.

An example of this is a scene where the estranged lovers pass one another on the stairs in front of Henry, who does not know about their affair, and who is speaking to them as though they are still friends. The scene is framed in several layers of irony at once, and Jordan captures in an image what took Greene several pages to convey in his novel. The relationship between Bendrix and Henry in the film and the novel is uncomfortable, and no more so than when Bendrix humiliates Henry in the film by showing him the pictures Parkis takes of her with Smythe, which Henry throws into the fire. He calls Bendrix's actions "monstrous," yet his anger at Bendrix for cuckolding him twice in a sense is portrayed, according to Jordan in the DVD commentary, in "exquisite moderation when they talk instead of punch one another."

Jordan mines the vein of cruelty that the lovers perpetrate on him just as Greene does in the novel and emulated in his real-life affair. Henry doesn't like onions (sex), yet Sarah eats them with Bendrix and kisses Henry semi-apologetically when she returns home. Sarah and Bendrix embrace on the stairs of her house, and even make love on the couch. When she climaxes, she shouts and

Bendrix claps his hand over her mouth just as Henry walks in the door. This scene is also in the novel and is taken from an incident that happened when Greene was a guest in Catherine's home and her husband was present (*Sherry Vol. 2* 260).

Neither film adaptation of *The End of the Affair* does proper justice to either of the leading male characters, Henry and Bendrix, who remain ciphers for the most part. While the theme of male bonding takes precedence in the last third of the novel and the film versions, the novel is more sensitive to the ways in which a seemingly passive character manipulates situations for his own benefit at the expense of others. As noted previously, Sarah expresses anger and resentment at her inability to leave Henry, whom she feels she obligated and protective toward, more than once. When she does leave him in Jordan's film, she castigates herself in front of Bendrix with dialogue that is not in the novel: "I've only made two promises in my life — one was to marry Henry and the other was to stop seeing you and I can't keep either."

In the novel, Sarah does not leave Henry — her guilt and his hold on her are too strong — and more importantly, Father Gilbert refuses to annul her marriage to Henry, or marry her to Bendrix. This information is tellingly divulged in a letter to Bendrix that he discovers after her death. The letter is left out of Jordan's adaptation, making viewers familiar with the text even more uncomfortable with Henry's inexplicable blessing of the lovers. Another flaw in both film versions is that Bendrix's charm is downplayed almost to extinction. He lacks the insouciance of Greene's character, which serves to make him less, rather than more,

sympathetic. He should be charming and appealing, at least in the beginning, yet Fiennes' performance errs on the side of caddishness throughout the film. And as noted previously, Van Johnson's lack of personality and wooden acting skills in the earlier film adaptation detract even more from Bendrix's appeal.

Love, jealousy, betrayal and guilt are the essential elements of many passionate love relationships and Greene is a master at portraying their permutations, particularly in *The End of the Affair*. His convoluted, emotionally unhappy life provided ample opportunities from which he drew, and his imagination fuelled the rest. Sherry, his authorized biographer, writes in reference to Vivien, and Dorothy Glover, the wartime mistress who overlapped his affair with Catherine that:

The core of Greene's unhappiness was in his nature, that mixture of extreme sensitivity and sexual desire for females who came within his orbit. Guilt was the single most powerful emotion in Greene and he came to feel that he was bad for both his wife and mistress. This guilt irrevocably bound him, through a sense of pity and responsibility, to both women when love died (234).

Greene often treated people callously, particularly his wife (234), although he knew how to make his fictional characters more sympathetic than he was. Both he and Major Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* fall out of love with their wives and have affairs. But Scobie commits suicide rather than cause further pain to his wife. Greene might have agonized for a while, but he was able to move his wife and children to a cold spot in his heart rather quickly. Late in 1947, he wrote to Catherine of "a sudden feeling of indifference about poor Vivien. A feeling that I've

done all the worrying of which I'm capable" (Cullen). That coldness of spirit is transferred to Bendrix, who, like Greene, seems to have relied on Catherine/ Sarah to thaw his frozen emotions. And just as Bendrix pined for Sarah, after Catherine, Greene wasn't satisfied with casual encounters any longer: "Second strings aren't any good and a monastery's the only possible substitute for you" (Sherry 307)!

Guilt isn't what drives Bendrix's misery, however. Jealousy of Sarah's relationship with Henry and her betrayal of him with other men, motivates his actions toward her in much of Jordan's film. Bendrix tells Parkis that "Jealousy can only exist with desire — you are on the hunt for desire" when he initially hires him. He wonders in voiceover narration a few moments later "how much of her he could reclaim for me...I am a jealous man. I measured my love by the extent of my jealousy." By Greene's own admission as cited earlier, jealousy ruined his relationship with Catherine to a large degree, who referred to his love in one of her letters as being like a "medieval chastity belt: only when he is there with me, in me, does he feel safe" (280). As noted in an previous quote, Greene incorporated that reference in the novel in its entirety (112) and added: "He thinks I still sleep with other men, and if I did, would it matter...I wouldn't rob him of some small companionship in the desert if we can't have each other there" (112) to Sarah's journal entry. It is one more example of the author making his private life — and Catherine Walston's — public by veiling it in fiction.

Greene, like Bendrix, was threatened by Catherine's other lovers and feared that he was only her "favourite" (268). As indicated in the preceding paragraph,

that Greene based Sarah's fictional journal on Catherine's real diary and conversations they had together, is certain (280). Correspondence between them indicates that she read *The End of the Affair* before it was published; suggested changes, and that Greene implemented them (280). What Sarah says later in the novel about Bendrix, and his capacity for emotional cruelty and coldness, is also true of Greene: "Sometimes I think if the time came he would refuse me even a glass of water" (112).

Jordan's adaptation of *The End of the Affair* succeeds on several levels: as a torturous deconstruction of a tragic love affair, as a mystical detective story with a secret at the centre, and as a religious drama about sin and redemption. The director's decision to emphasize the love story at the expense of Sarah's promise to God reflects the reality of the cinema marketplace, which does not trust even bankable actors such as Fiennes and Moore to carry a film with an unhappy ending. Although the movie still ends on a sad note, the lovers had their "time in the sun," and that is an emotional "payoff" for viewers uncomfortable with downbeat conclusions. That the film adaptation nevertheless meets Greene's standards of success as "a true reflection of character" (Adamson 159) is a measure of Jordan's skill and sensitivity to the mediums of film and literature.

As a novel, *The End of the Affair* sheds considerable light onto both the private and public domains of Greene's life, although it must be assumed that Greene did not reveal anything unintentionally. He was much too controlling of his many public *façades* to allow that to happen. Yet his curious insistence on weaving

details of his intimate domestic sphere into the private lives of his public characters indicates a need to live dangerously, to tantalize readers with snippets of his life, and to publicly harm or honour the people closest to him in his domestic sphere. As Greene wrote in his first autobiography, "There is a splinter of ice in the heart of a writer," (185) and it is obvious that he acted on this belief in much of his writing.

The narrative of Greene's private life during the 1940s meshes with those of his protagonists in *The End of the Affair* and reflects back into the broader public sphere — the meta-narrative of war, his literary career, his estranged family, and his love affairs. Contemporary audiences in the twenty-first century weaned on a culture of public confessionals see nothing strange in novelists interjecting their lives, or even other people's lives, into works of fiction, and indeed, few writers would claim to be innocent of this practice entirely. Greene made something of an art of these public revelations of private lives, which spanned the private and public domains well before it was a popular and accepted practice.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this project, I was primarily interested in the adaptation process that transformed three popular novels into films and how the artists' private/public spheres and cultural coding influenced their creative vision. I viewed the coding in the context of postmodernism, which I will discuss in the following paragraphs. As the work progressed, I became increasingly aware of the ways in which new media technology is blurring the lines between public and private spheres, and between Marshall McLuhan's "hot" and "cold" mediums (22), concepts that were revolutionary in the 1960s, but are somewhat dated now. They still, however, have value in the context of my project. I will begin by addressing the adaptation, private/public and cultural coding constructs.

As has been discussed in detail in the preceding chapters, Austen and Greene wrote fiction that reflected in various ways the broader public sphere of the times they lived in, as well as their own domestic spheres. The authors had little common ground in their writing styles and subject matter, yet this study in contrasts provides its own perspective on their work. This project has also examined the widely differing approaches of the directors who adapted their fiction, along with the cultural coding they brought to the adaptation process, and to a lesser extent, due to constraints of length, the filmmakers' public and private spheres.

I used a broadly postmodernist paradigm to deconstruct the cultural coding — which consists of the ideologies, social behaviour and expectations, and the environment of the time in which the artists lived — and to illuminate how that coding affects the adaptation process. In the sense in which I am using this term, postmodernism refers to late twentieth and twenty-first century concepts including post-colonialism, feminism and gender roles, social class, revisionist approaches to early-twentieth century Freudian psychoanalytic theories, and, above all, the significance in all the arts of the subject position of the reader/ viewer/consumer.

It could be argued that the directors' impositions of their cultural codes on adaptations of other artists' work is nothing new in the creative process, but in the context of this project, Austen's characters are particularly prone to late twentieth-century cultural coding. As discussed in Chapter 1, the appeal of Austen's fiction to contemporary filmmakers and audiences is wide-ranging for a host of reasons. Chief among them is the insistence of the significance, emotional, social, and intellectual, of the (romantic) love relationship in the lives of both men and women. In a generation that is experiencing a backlash against feminism, a resurgence of conservative ideologies and religions, a love affair with information technology, and the near-complete integration of the private and public spheres, Austen characters such as Fanny Price, Captain Wentworth, Anne Elliot and Edward Bertram can provide a comforting return to an imaginary past of gentler, less complicated and more romantic times. Thus these novels come to have a new commercial viability.

Filmmakers who read Austen discern the artistic and commercial potential in adapting her fiction to the screen, and re-imagine her plots and characters through their private and public cultural codes, intentionally or subliminally, to appeal to modern audiences. As discussed in the section on *Mansfield Park*, this film in particular illustrates the process. Rozema very deliberately imbued her adaptation with her own postmodern critical attitudes toward feminism, post-colonialism, social class, slavery and lesbianism, which form part of her private sphere, and to some extent, the public sphere in which she operates as a filmmaker. She achieves this in part by the self-reflexive process of placing her narrative in the context of a creative activity — writing. Her Fanny Price — unlike Austen’s — is a writer of fiction — Austen herself.

Fanny is represented not by Austen’s character in the text, but by Rozema’s interpretation of Austen the author. She is a compilation of Austen’s fiction, letters and almost incidentally, the heroine of *Mansfield Park*. She is portrayed as abused, a victim of psychological trauma and neglect, enslaved by her gender and class, and then transformed into an empowered woman, if not exactly a feminist, who speaks her mind and by the end of the movie, is supported in her “career” as a novelist by her adoring and slightly wimpy husband, Edmund. As mentioned in Chapter 1, all of these codes are instantly recognizable to a postmodern audience but it is doubtful Austen would know what to make of them.

At the other end of the postmodern spectrum, director Neil Jordan’s adaptation of *The End of the Affair* is more difficult to decipher. Like Rozema’s

Mansfield Park, it focuses to some extent on the creative process, on the act of writing. Yet unlike Rozema, Jordan finds the potential for this self-reflexive approach in his source text. Greene himself is a writer writing about a writer. In Jordan's film, it is a matter of emphasis rather than of transformation.

To return briefly to the subject of private and public in these novels and their screen adaptations, I will reiterate that in both Austen novels, the characters lived in a time of war, just as Greene's protagonists met during the terror of the London blitz. The similarity ends there, as the contrast between the public and private worlds of the Regency and wartime London could not be greater. The Regency, with its public insistence on social constraints, appearances, and control over every aspect of women's lives, and the random terror of the blitzes, which obliterated class distinctions in ordinary public life and reduced everybody to the same state of panic, excitement and loss of privacy in the air raid shelters, functioned on entirely different levels. Women were given freedom to work during the Second World War, and many became the primary breadwinners for their families, while the wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France fostered British conservatism and therefore strengthened gender constraints.

Although the Napoleonic Wars exacted a heavy economic toll on the Regency, they were not fought on British soil, and Austen refers to them in *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park* primarily through references to the navy. Her own family had connections to the wars through her brothers in the navy (Tomalin 116) and relatives in France (50-52), yet her novels bring the meta-narrative of the

public domain of war to the domestic sphere. Greene achieves the opposite effect by imposing the private narrative of his own life onto the broad public canvas of a nation at war. The blitz is a palpable presence in *The End of the Affair*, and a vivid background to the emotional and spiritual turmoil of the love affair.

The End of the Affair also differs from *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* in that the protagonists in Greene's world have much more social and economic freedom than Austen's characters. Like Catherine Walston, Sarah, although essentially a housewife, enjoys an independence and relationship of equality with her husband that very few of Austen's heroines could have fathomed in literal terms. The Crofts come closest to Austen's ideal of equality between men and women, but the concept of women leading a life independent of the domestic sphere was not commonly acknowledged in the nineteenth century.

Many critics have focused on what they assume is Austen's obsession with financial security, but in fact, the alternative for women in her class who did not marry well, who did not create their own secure domestic sphere, was grinding, genteel poverty. Of course, Austen's heroines did not marry only for money, but because their roles were severely limited in the public sphere, it took on greater significance. For Sarah in *The End of the Affair*, it could be speculated that marriage to a boring but financially stable civil servant, while not as exciting as marriage to an up-and-coming novelist, had a certain appeal to her. Her choice to stay with her husband in the novel may also reflect Catherine Walston's real-life

decision to forego marriage to Greene for the security of her extremely wealthy and remarkably understanding husband (Cullen).

Social customs have not changed as substantially as might be expected during the more than 200 years that separate Austen and Greene. Despite the frequency of divorce in the twenty-first century, personal privacy is still a central tenet of many people's lives. Although much of western popular culture thrives on the salacious accounts of the private lives of public figures, the appetite for splashing one's own intimate details in the public sphere is limited, the Internet notwithstanding.

Even more scarce, in spite of the rise of the religious right in the United States and Canada, is the discussion of religion in serious fiction. Unlike Greene, Austen is not overtly concerned with religion or spiritual life in either *Persuasion* or *Mansfield Park*. Religion in her novels is an understated, but assumed, part of the moral and social order. Male characters such as Edward in *Mansfield Park* are clergymen, and respectable women are often active in church work and local charities. Greene's intense Catholicism, and his paradoxical ambivalence about it, is reflected in Sarah and Bendrix in a manner that would probably strike Austen as ostentatious.

Greene's narcissism is evident throughout his fiction, but it reaches a zenith in *The End of the Affair*, which could not be more different than *Mansfield Park* or *Persuasion* in its depiction of relations between the sexes. Austen's fiction was no stranger to sexual intrigue or emotional complexity, but as noted previously, she

did not write about what she did not observe herself, and she did not appear to interject herself into her fiction.

The films adapted from Greene's and Austen's novels, as mentioned earlier, are the common link between the authors. Austen's immense talent for observing the minutiae of human interaction and making it simultaneously authentic and fascinating is well suited to the cinema, and partially accounts for the large number of films based on her work. It is pure speculation of course, but I have often wondered what kinds of novels or screenplays Austen might have written if she had had access to film as Greene did. Greene is one of the few serious modern novelists who rival her in respect to the sheer number of movies made from their books. John Grisham and Stephen King may come close, but they are not on the same literary wavelength as Austen and Greene, who also wrote many screenplay adaptations of his novels.

This wavelength continues to resonate first and foremost as entertainment, as a means of illuminating a particular period in time, and as an exploration of the way artists use their private spheres to reach or influence the public domain, even though in Austen's case, it was not her original intent.

I will conclude by exploring more fully the theme of how technology, at an ever-increasing pace, is erasing the lines between the private and public spheres. Viewing DVDs on television screens in the domestic sphere is one example of the transformation of boundaries between public and private spheres. Ordinary viewers can now watch films, long relegated to the public domain, in their own homes

where they are in control of the mechanics of the process. What is sacrificed, however, is the shared visceral experience of sitting in the dark with a crowd and being mesmerized by the medium of film, the director's mastery of it, and the audience's responses. The emotional message completion of McLuhan's original theory of "hot" film and literature does not transfer to the "cool" media of television and computers. Home audiences are distracted by their ability to stop, start and comment freely on what is unfolding on screen, or on topics unrelated to what they are viewing, which detracts from the immediacy and authenticity of their "hot" emotional responses.

In addition, filmmakers, video artists, authors and animators are experimenting with interactive media, allowing participants to determine plots and choose endings, a process that creates art that is personal but also public. Artists may still retain their original objectives, but some have willingly given up control of the outcome to the public sphere.

Similarly, as noted earlier, the public concept of the "right" to individual privacy has never been more sacred, yet millions of people see no apparent contradiction in baring their souls in Internet chat rooms, blogs, or other forms of interactive revelations of private life. Conversely, governments, and large corporations that influence public policy, have never had more access or power over private information than they now possess.

That filmmakers adapt and interpret novels and layer their own cultural codes onto them to attain their personal creative goals is yet another facet of the

role of art in bringing private worlds into the realm of shared, public experience, which is then interpreted individually. As technology continues to reveal new ways of presenting and manipulating the creative experience for artists and their audiences, the private and public spheres are evolving to accommodate these new processes for all who wish to participate.

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